

THE CO DESIGN PROCESS

Options review

The overarching aim of this phase of the Racecourse Together commission was to develop a RIBA Stage1-2 feasibility study for a circa 30m/sq meanwhile space for the Racecourse Estate, with a focus on facilitating co-design activity to progress the project through community-led action.

This report took a broad view of what constitutes community infrastructure. We took the proposal put forward in the options paper that was issued with our brief; the installation of a stand alone modular unit such as a converted container, and reviewed the sites suggested for its location. Alongside this, we drew upon our study of the estate; its spaces, community and local initiatives, to develop a series of high level proposals that aimed to bring about community benefit on the estate by supporting what exists there. Seven options were drawn up for discussion:

A. A Container as a Community Room
Installing a stand alone modular unit that would serve as a temporary community room for hire.

B. Landscapes of Laundry
Resurfacing under the laundry lines to create enhanced and multifunctional shared spaces.

C. An Institutional Perimeter
St Richard's kitchen garden and grounds.

D. The 4th Court
Adapting an ancilliary building to support social enterprise and local initiatives.

E. A Spatial Vision for the Childrens' Centre
Improving an existing community space : The Childrens Centre.

F. Linking the Parks
Connecting Northolt and Mandeville Parks through greening and programmed public realm improvements.

G. A Floating Community Room
Supporting, opening up and enhancing existing community spaces across the estate through a grants programme and shared online platform.

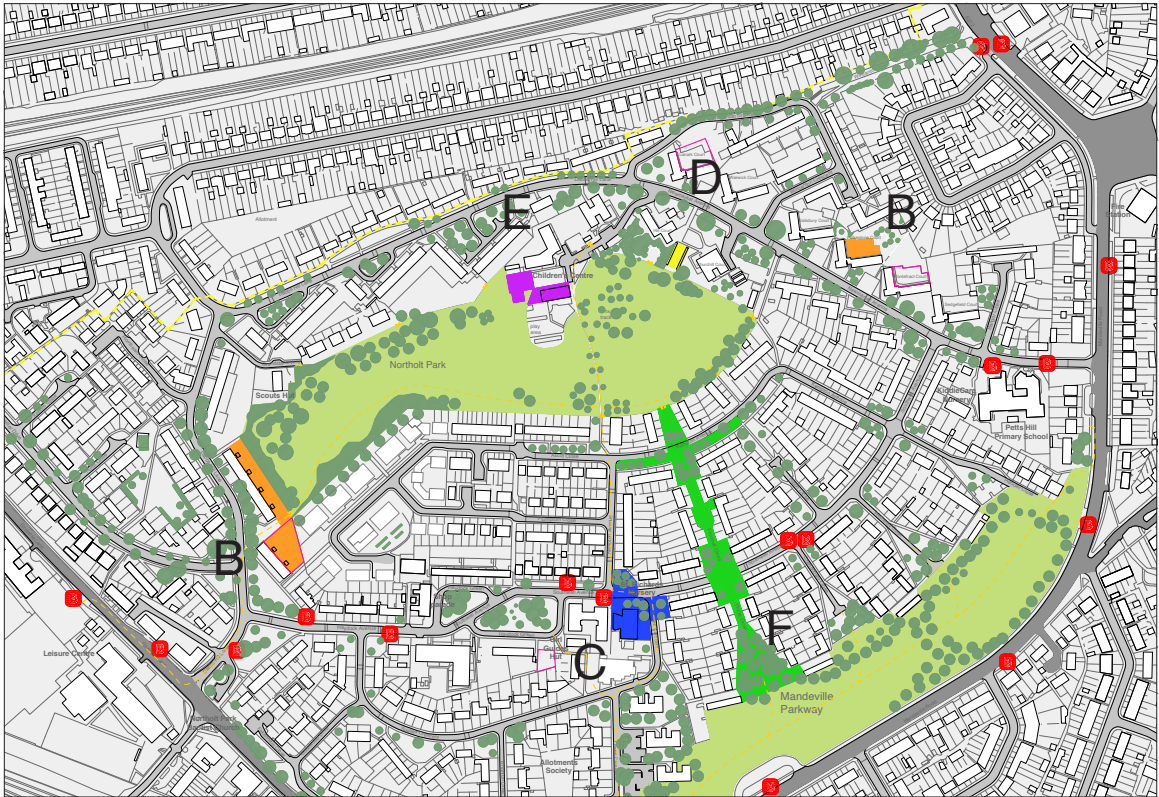
This optioning was intended to expand the thinking around what could be shared, robust and well used community space by setting out some tangible, sited, high level ideas to be discussed and compared with residents and stakeholders. The proposals were presented to the local authorities, to councillors and to the community as part of an open co design process.

Of the seven options presented, two were chosen to be taken forward to stages of further design development and implementation. The two selected proposals are A Floating Community Room and The 4th Court. They are described in more detail in the proposals section of this document.

See Supporting Documentation for descriptions of the seven options and an appraisal of their opportunities and constraints. It is noted that should funding and resources become available, multiple options could be delivered and that many of these proposals would complement one another.

Through consultation, officers sought to understand how local people would 'prioritise' or 'phase' the delivery of the options'. Whilst the Floating Community Room and The 4th Court will be progressed imminently as they received strongest community support, other options remain as ideas that could be progressed through alternative funding opportunities if there is community support to do so.

Consultation event at the Girl Guides Hut to review options January 2023, Trees for Cities event next to the 4th court, May 2023, Plan of options set out in the supporting documentation.





THE FLOATING COMMUNITY ROOM

Proposal

The ambition of The Floating Community Room project is to establish a network of indoor spaces for informal socialising and organised community activities.

There are a number of existing community spaces and rooms at Racecourse but information about them is not available. The spaces could also be used more intensively and opened up for public hire subject to liaison with their owners/ operators.

The existing spaces should be fully documented and brought together as a Floating Community Room, an online resource that coordinates and communicates what they offer and the terms of their hire. The Floating Community Room project will also include a grants programme through which the council will fund improvements to the spaces/ buildings in return for them being made more public and accessible. The project will require intensive liaison with the owners/ operators of these spaces.

A number of multi-purpose community spaces within close proximity of the Racecourse Estate were identified in the briefing paper for this study: Northolt Leisure Centre, Northolt Park Baptist Church, Northolt Park Childrens Centre, St Richard's Northolt, Northolt High School, the Girl Guides hut the Sea Scouts hut. There are also football clubs close by with spaces that are suitable for parties. These are Larkspur Rovers Football Club and Harrow Borough Football Club.

See overleaf for an overview of the availability, capacity and management of the spaces above. The content of the table is based on provisional conversations with the owners/ operators of these spaces.

There are several strands to The Floating Room project; Identity, Engagement and Communication, and two Grants Programmes.

IDENTITY (£8K)

- Identity.
Develop a graphic identity for Racecourse Together and The Floating Community Room, that will guide the design of the website, wayfinding and communications.

- Website.
Design and build the website.

- Wayfinding.
Design and oversee the fabrication of signage to identity participating spaces on the estate.

It is noted that Strategic Property are developing a borough-wide web-based platform to promote community spaces and we will seek to align with this wider piece of work. Visual content will also take account of the Visions for Northolt brand.

ONGOING ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS (London Borough of Ealing)

- Steering group.
Formally establish a steering group based on the engagement undertaken as part of Racecourse Together.

- Collate and structure content for online platform.
Develop the content for the online platform. Draft a brief for the designers, supply content to them and oversee the development of the website. This action will involve data collection, ongoing liaison with stakeholders, photographic documentation of participating spaces and a high level audit/ survey of existing spaces.

- Communications.
Promote the project through social media and further open consultation events.

ACTIVITY GRANTS (£12K)

This grants programme is an open invitation for residents and not-for-profit groups to apply for up to £1,000 to host a one-off or re-occurring activity in a Floating Community Room over a 1-year period. There will be no minimum funding request. Eligible costs include those associated with delivering the activity including hire charges, materials, facilitator fees, and volunteer expenses.

Applicants must demonstrate a connection to the Racecourse Estate and agree to be featured on Floating Community Room promotional materials and notice boards. Applicants must demonstrate that their activity will serve the local community and secure community benefit. They will be asked to specify their target audience to ensure a wide range of activities receive support and will commit to quarterly reporting on number of events / participants.

An example Mayor of London programme can be found here: <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/mayors-community-weekend-london>

GRANTS FOR ASSET OPERATORS (£65k):

This grants programme is an open invitation for existing operators of community spaces on the Racecourse Estate to apply for up to £20,000 grant funding to enhance and open-up their existing space for a wider range of community activities for 1 year. There will be no minimum funding request. Eligible costs would include capital works and staff or operational costs associated with hosting these additional activities.

In return, operators agree to:
- Open their facility for a minimum of 8 hours a week for 1 year of community use.
- Be featured on an online platform with contact details and information to book the space.
- Host and maintain a notice board advertising Floating Community Room activities.
- Display signage/ branding showing they are part the Floating Community Room network.
- Provide quarterly reporting/ evidence regarding number of events / participants.

Operators will be required to set out any restrictions on use of the space. Operators may implement hire charges; however, these must be reasonable, representative of the space available and comparable to similar spaces nearby. A suggested maximum cost per sqm will be set as part of the grant eligibility criteria. Operators must also set out the times/ days that the space will be available to ensure regular use across the estate.

This funding is intended to kickstart a programme that becomes self-sufficient after 1 year. It aims to help operators see the benefit of increased activation in terms of supporting community cohesion, promoting their services and generating income for their services.

Operators may also just apply to become a Floating Community Room with no grant funding. This option would suit those requiring promotional support only. Operators would be provided with a branding pack to display at their premises and be featured on the online platform at no charge.

As noted in the supporting documentation, there are a number of situations across Racecourse where investment has been piecemeal and there has been a lack of spatial vision that has negatively impacted the function of a building and the public realm of the estate.

As part of this grants programme, some resource should be set aside for design review so that any improvements to buildings and their surroundings can be informed by spatial vision.

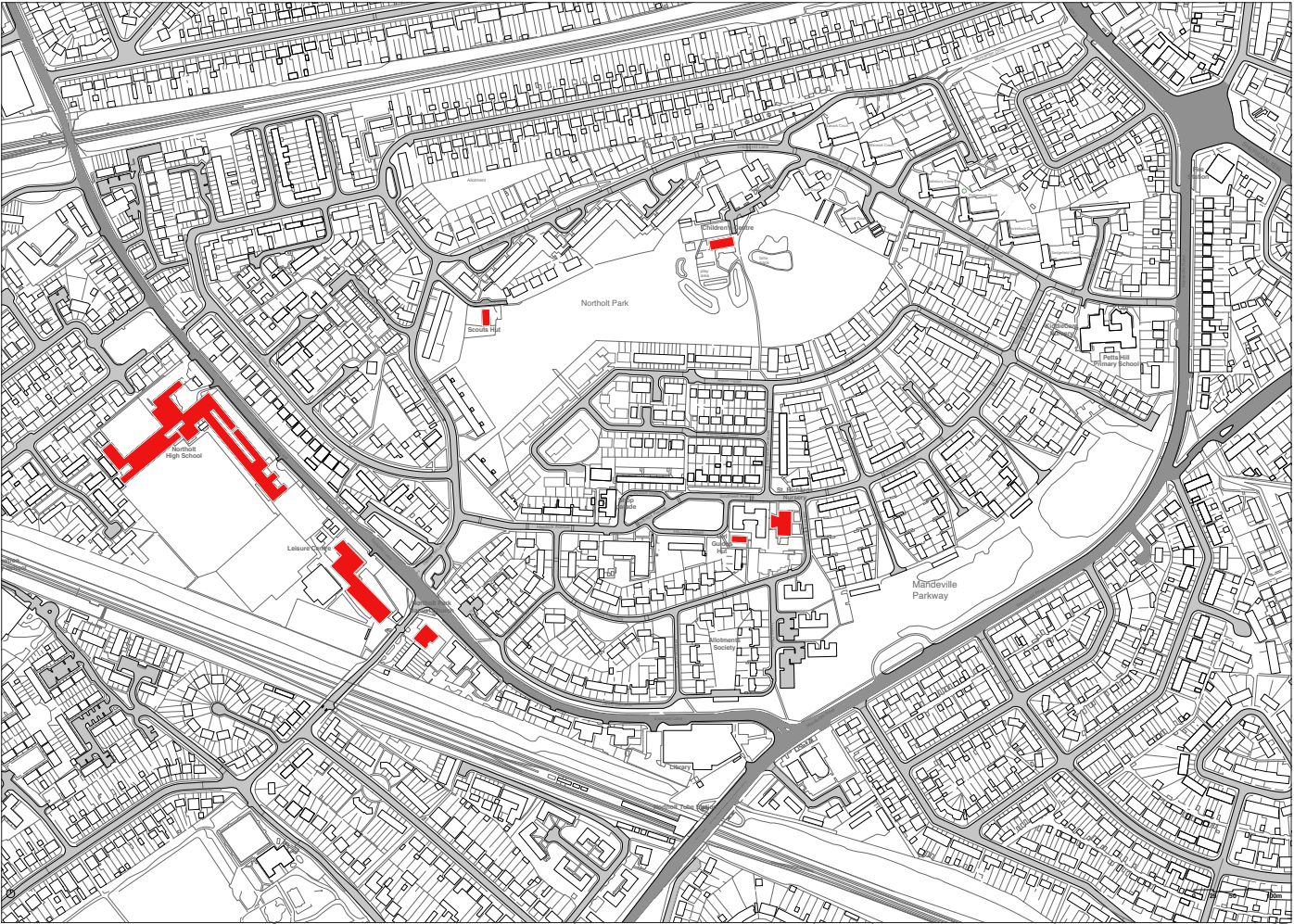
NEXT STEPS

Engage a team with a skill set that covers design, specifically graphics. London Borough of Ealing to develop the grants programmes and to lead on engagement and project management internally.

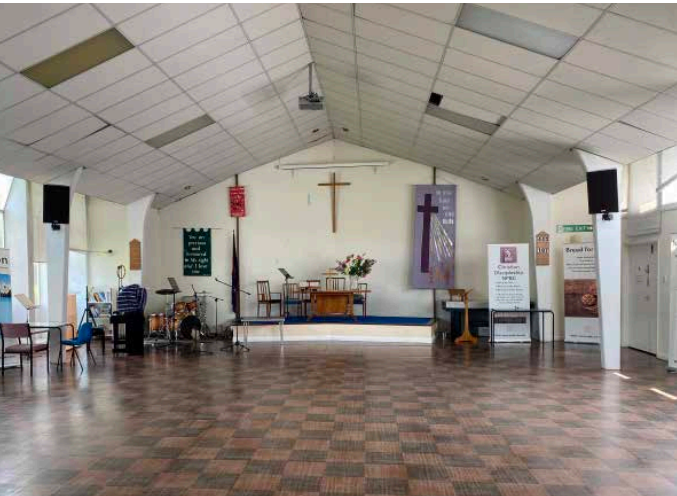
It is estimated that this work could be delivered within 12 - 16 weeks.

THE FLOATING COMMUNITY ROOM

Proposal



Leisure Centre Community Hall and Studio, Northolt Park Baptist Church, Former Social Club, Larkspur Football Club, Girl Guides' Hut, St Richard's Church, Sea Scouts' Hut used for Trees for Cities meeting, Northolt Park Children's Centre.



THE FLOATING COMMUNITY ROOM

Proposal

SITE	CONTACT	SIZE	COST	CURRENT ACCESS/AVAILABILITY	FUTURE ACCESS/AVAILABILITY	CONSTRAINTS TO USE
Northolt Leisure Centre	Everyone Active	Large studio and large community hall.	£62–90 per hr	Available to hire through Everyone Active.	As currently available.	The spaces are run by a large national sports and management company. As such they feel more commercial/ impersonal and the terms of their hire are set externally.
Northolt Baptist Church	Josephine Morris	Two rooms for hire. A large hall and a meeting/classroom with capacity for approx. 20 people. Also outdoor space.	£12/20 per hr	Managed by the church. Currently used on a regular basis by several groups such as a drama academy.	The church is keen to expand its community offer and for its spaces to be more widely used.	There may be faith based limitations on certain uses.
Northolt Park Children’s Centre	Sonia Alexander	Two nursery rooms (one private, one council run), an estates office and a shared kitchen, WC, reception and childrens centre office.	currently n/a	Currently not available to hire	The room within the centre that has the potential to be used more widely is the council run nursery space. See supporting documentation for full details on the centre.	It is a dedicated and valued children's centre so the space is set up for younger children and no other uses should compromise this. Also, it's one of a network of LB Ealing's children's centres and limited resource is currently allocated for its operation.
St Richard’s Northolt Park	Rev. Julia Jagannath	A hall and a chapel, kitchen and wcs.	£70 per hr – Flexible rates may be given to schools or charitable organisations. See https://northolt.org/hire-our-venues/ .	Managed by the church. Hall available on weekends/ evenings. Rented to private nursery during the day. Chapel used for services.	The church is keen to expand its community offer and for its spaces to be more widely used.	There may be faith based limitations on certain uses. The hall is used by the nursery during weekdays.
Northolt High School	Marion Budd	Hall with capacity for approx. 300 people.	Tbc	Available after 5pm Monday - Friday and weekends. Hired through the council. Currently used on a regular basis by a cricket club and saturday schools. Occasional use by the community e.g. lunch for the elderly.	The school has had enquiries from Racecourse residents about adult learning / evening courses	Availability is limited to hours out of school/ term time.
Girl Guides Hut	Carole Newstead	7 × 12.5m main hall plus wcs, kitchen and storage.	currently n/a	Currently not available to hire though is used by one group known to the guides.	The guides are interested in hiring out the space to cover running costs for the guides.	Adjacent to housing for the elderly so limitations on hours and noise. Primarily a valued space for children/ young people and no other use should compromise this. Also, it is currently very well cared for and any operators must respect its current standard of maintenance.
Sea Scouts Hut	Andy Frith	Approx 100sq m main hall plus WCs, kitchen and storage.	currently n/a	Currently not available to hire, though it was used by Trees for Cities for meetings and storage on an informal and in kind basis.	Tbc	Current management operating at full capacity. Primarily a valued space for children/ young people and no other use should compromise this.
Harrow Borough Football Club	Tbc	Tbc	Tbc	Available to hire through the football club.	As currently available.	Although it is not within the Racecourse estate, the football club is included as it has a bar and is suitable for large parties.
Larkspur Rovers Football Club	Andrea Gooden	Hall. Estimated capacity 200 people. Bar and kitchen.	£20 per hr	Hired out for parties and private functions.	Ambition to broaden its offer and to actively serve youth and young adults.	Although it is not within the Racecourse estate, the football club is included as it has a bar and is suitable for large parties.



THE 4TH COURT

Between Hill and Churchill Courts (the towers)

THE PROJECT

The 4th Court is a skills and store court. This project proposes to adapt an ancilliary building that is located off Northolt park between the two towers, Hill and Churchill Courts. It proposes to bring a number of different operators e.g. social enterprise, greening groups, youth groups and a library of things, together to activate this disused space.

THE SITE

The existing building is made up of approx 41 pramsheds/bin stores running along two sides of a walled enclosure that is currently accessed at one end.

The sheds/stores face each other and open onto an enclosed area of hardstanding with lines and posts for drying laundry. The structure of the walled enclosure is masonry and the setting out of the bricks leaves gaps which creates the impression of a perforated screen at either end.

Like the other drying spaces on the estate, this anciliary building was originally intended to serve the flats close by, taking a routine domestic task (laundry) and storage out of homes where there was limited space.

The layout of the existing building lends itself to multiple operators as there are a number of lockable individual units surrounding a large communal space. The project proposes to renovate individual units, supply power and water to some, and to install a canopy structure in front of all of the units to create a covered spill out area opening onto the central courtyard.

The project proposes a larger covered space at the end of the walled enclosure to allow for gatherings. There is potential to enclose and heat this space subject to thorough costed design development to assess feasibility.

See drawings, images and references overleaf.

The Housing Team are currently confirming ownership and usage of the sheds, as this could impact the feasibility of the project, but it is understood that two of the storage sheds are used by leaseholders. There are legal fees and leaseholder agreements to consider and if the current storage is converted, then replacement storage facilities may need to be provided as tenants are prohibited from leaving items in communal areas of the block due to fire safety and there is insufficient space within their properties. An allowance should be made within the budget to cover relocation/ purchase of the sheds subject to leaseholder agreement.

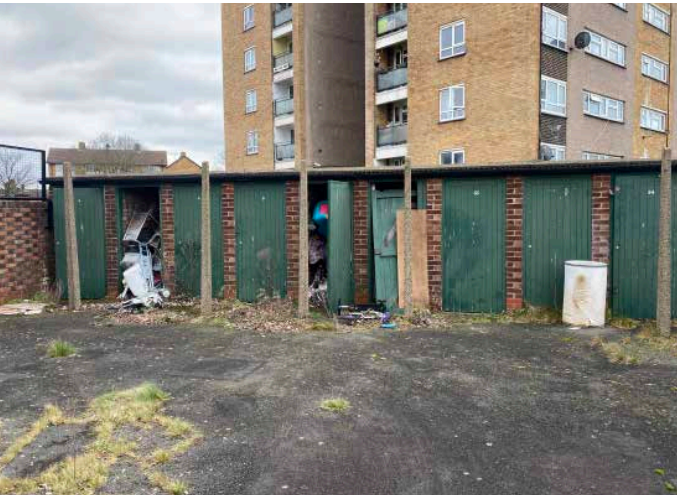
CONTEXT

The 4th court is located at the edge of Northolt Park close to the BMX track and the Children's Centre. The design development of the proposal should consider the court in its wider context.

The Children's Centre is a key institution and valued resource within the estate that is currently the target of anti social behaviour and is quite dysfunctional in its layout. One of the options explored as part of this study proposed that a clear spatial vision should be produced for the centre to direct its maintenance and development and to support its operation. (See supporting documentation). If the programme of the court were to focus on youth, taken together with the children's centre, the two, almost adjacent facilities would cater for a wide range of ages. The spatial relationship between the two should be considered as part of the design development of the 4th court proposal.

Through a programme related to bikes and bike repair, cyclists could follow the looping roads of the estate, retracing the circuits of the ponies.

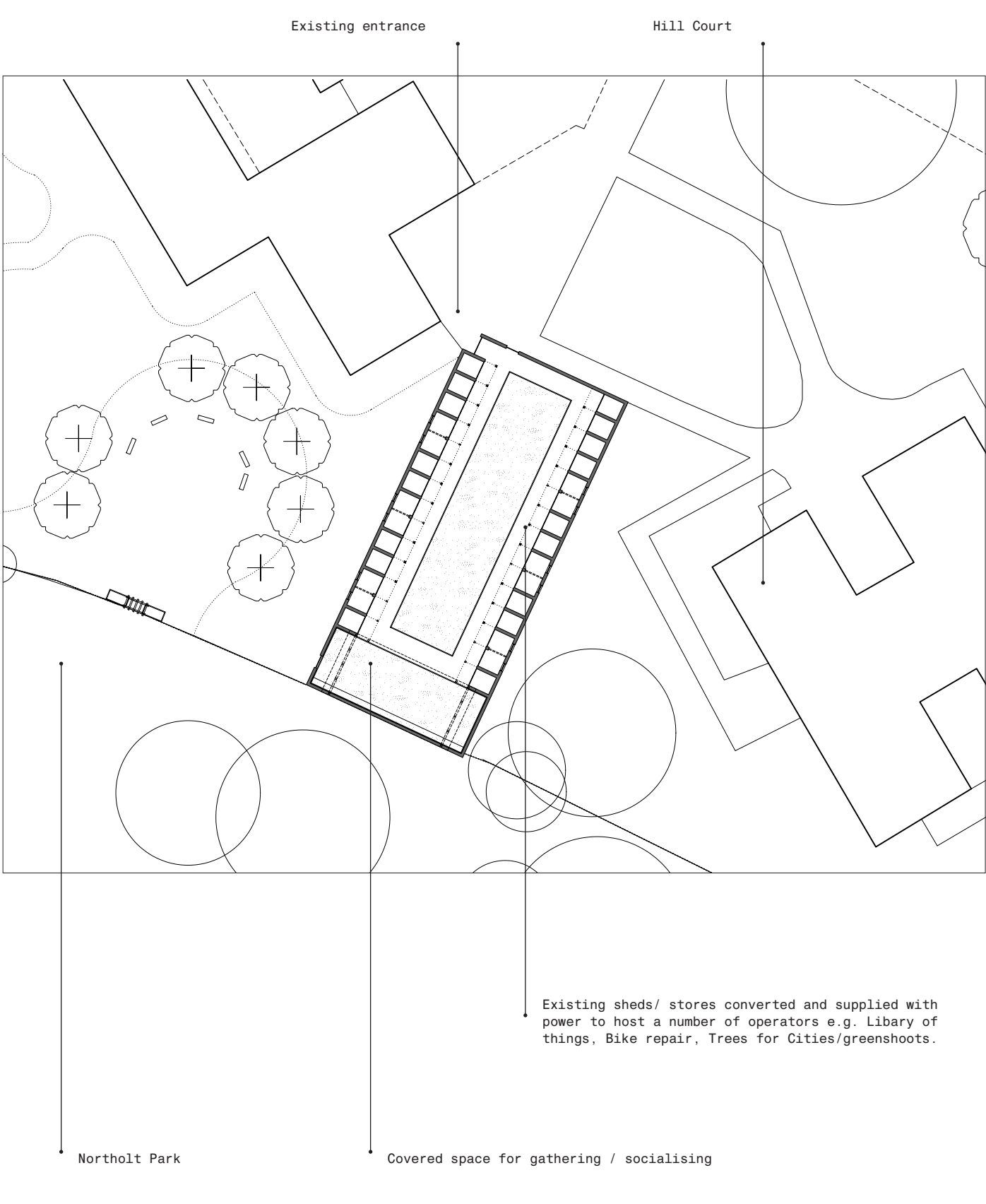
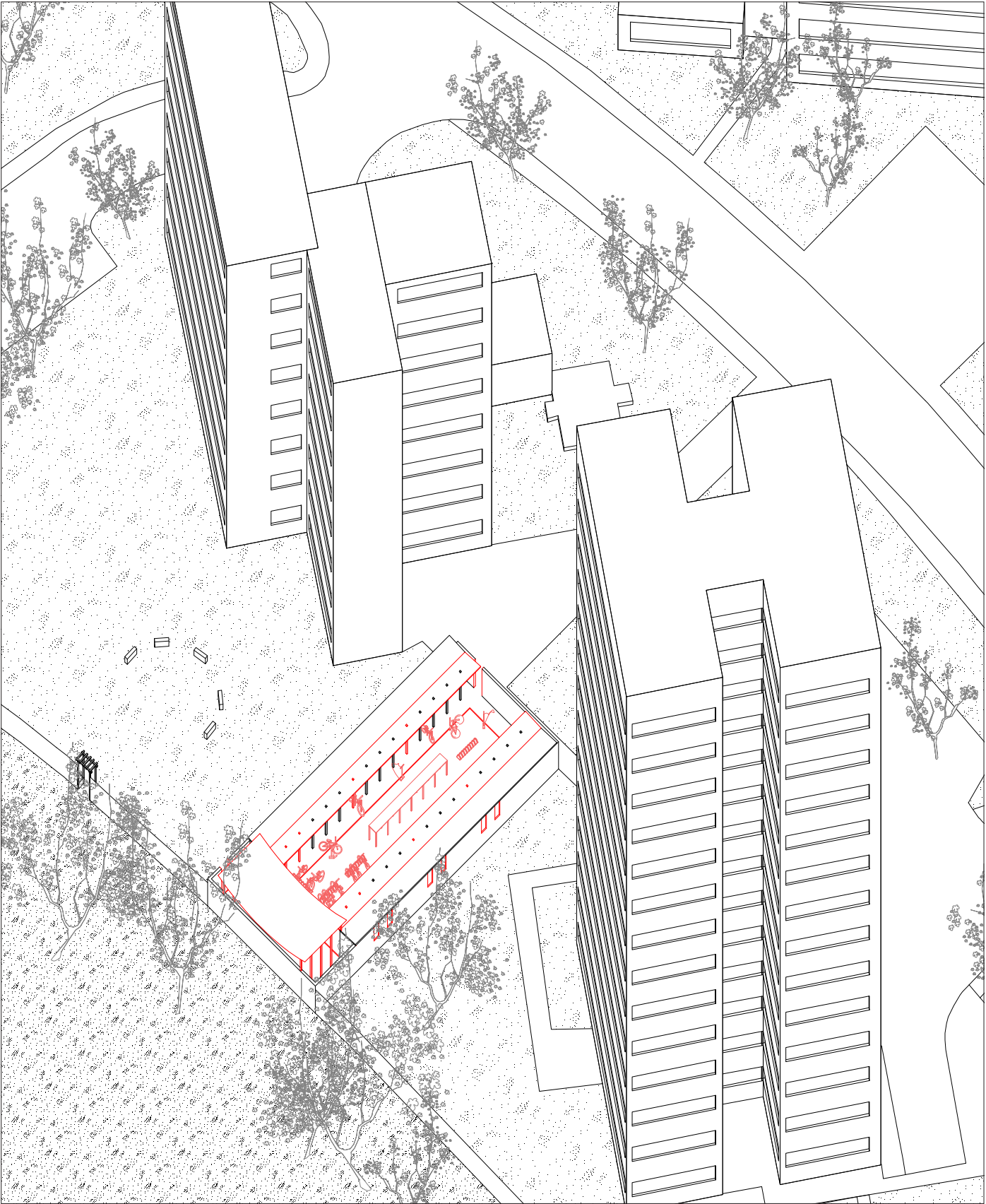
By hosting operators that focus on landscape and greening, the facility could also support some of the public realm improvement projects scoped out as part of this study and described in the supporting documentation.



Existing enclosure with perforated brick wall, stores and drying lines.

THE 4TH COURT

Between Hill and Churchill Courts (the towers)



Existing sheds/ stores converted and supplied with power to host a number of operators e.g. Library of things, Bike repair, Trees for Cities/greenshoots.

THE 4TH COURT

Between Hill and Churchill Courts (the towers)

NEXT STEPS AND TIMELINE

Concept / feasibility :

- Commission relevant surveys. Establish ownership and use of existing stores.
- Appoint a design team with the skill set to produce a costed RIBA stage 2 design.
- Develop the operational strategy and identify robust operators.
- Identify funding streams and draft funding applications.
- Set up a steering group with local stakeholders, a defined co design process and an engagement strategy

Design development (subject to funding) :

- Develop design to RIBA stage 3.
- Submit planning application (8 weeks min turnaround)
- Clear, access and activate the court to inform design development and to engage local residents in the occupation and operation of the space.

Tender (subject to funding) :

- Identify and engage potential contractors.
- Issue tender set and evaluate returns

Construction (subject to funding) :

- Oversee works on site
- Agree robust operational strategy

Estimated timeline to completion 18 -24 months.

Whilst the conversion of the existing courtyard will require planning permission, full design development and funding, the space can be tested by staging events and storing equipment in it in the short term. Trees for Cities have scheduled an event for the Spring, on the 20th May 2023, to celebrate their work on the estate and are looking for a location to store trees and equipment to support their work across West London thereafter. The activation of this disused space could start in Autumn 2023.

COSTS

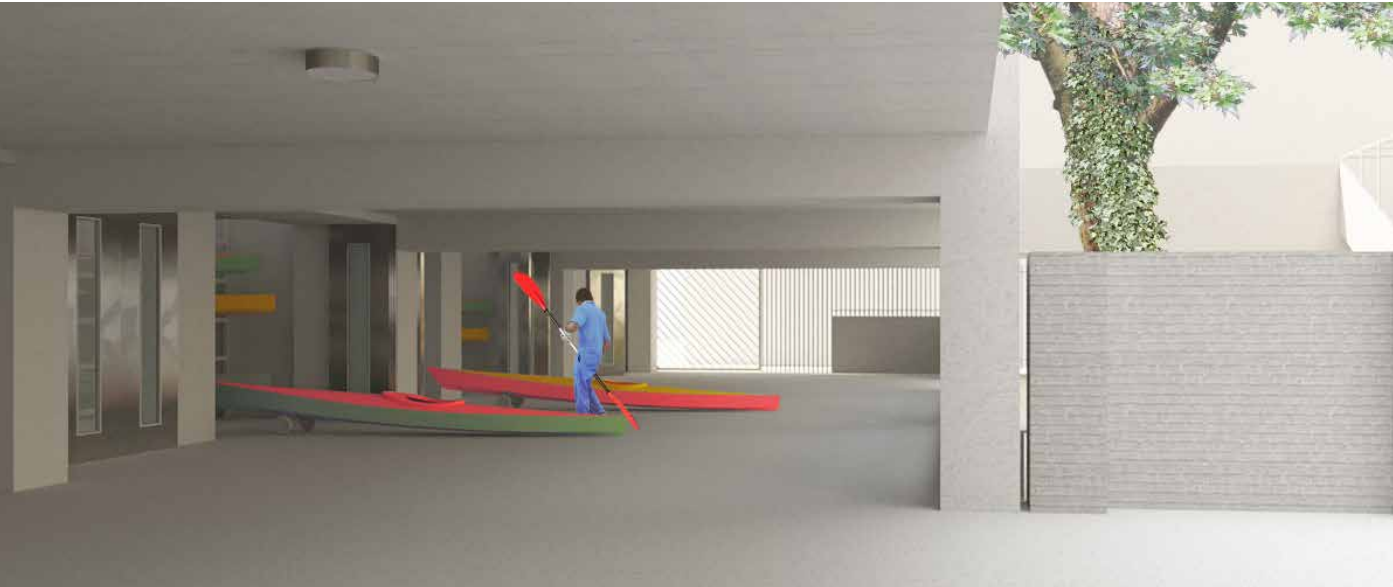
This capital project will require additional funding beyond that initially allocated for Racecourse Together. The estimated cost of the project is £450,000 with a break down as follows.

- Surveys : £5,000
- Canopy structure for spill out : Allow £90,000
- Installation of services; assume water, electricity, security systems, lighting and heating: Allow £90,000
- Clearance, fit out and remodelling of existing sheds : Allow £100,000
- Roof structure for informal gathering : Allow £60,000
- Landscaping of central court : Allow £35,000
- Professional fees: Allow £50-70,000

These estimated costs are high level and are based on precedent schemes such as Open Havelock and Totteridge Academy Quad. A detailed and measured cost plan should be produced at concept design stage.

FUNDING

The aims of the project align with the funding streams related to the circular economy and to building communities, particularly after covid.



References, Open Havelock (see openhavelock.com) and Cloister structure at Totteridge Academy Quad

THE 4TH COURT

Between Hill and Churchill Courts (the towers)

THE PROGRAMME

A robust operating model with named operators is required to progress this proposal. A number of potential programmes and operators have been identified as part of this study, see below and overleaf.

BIKE REPAIR

A bike repair workshop run by a named social enterprise. See Dr Bike's activity in Northolt/ Let's Go Southall. Through bike repair and cycling schemes there is an opportunity to build skills and engage young people, specifically 10-13yr olds who are a particularly vulnerable demographic on the estate. To create an offer around bikes relates to the context of the site and of the estate as there is a bmx track adjacent to the building and the roads of the estate loop, tracing the forms of the old pony racecourse. A programme that is cycle related also connects into London Borough of Ealing's sustainable transport ambitions and would impact flows of movement through the estate, attracting more people to use Northolt Park station to get in to Central London on the overground with their bike.

TREES FOR CITIES/ GREENSHOOTS

A base and store for Trees for Cities and Greenshoots to support their gardening and greening work on the estate. Trees for Cities will have a presence on the estate until 2025 to maintain the work they have completed to date, they are open to being engaged to work on new projects and oversee a handover with Greenshoots and they also need a place to store equipment and trees to support their work across West London.

COMMUNITY LENDING LIBRARY

The court between the towers was originally conceived as a communal space and as a store for oversized and irregularly used domestic items. There is potential for the space to host a community lending library, where tools and equipment are shared amongst residents. Precedents include Walthamstow Tool Library, Forest Recycling Project (frpuk.org)) and Library of Things (<https://www.libraryofthings.co.uk/>) These social enterprises help people save money, reduce waste and share practical skills. London Borough of Ealing are committed to delivering a Library of Things in a suitable location.

LONDON BOROUGH OF EALING YOUTH SERVICES

Potentially a base for London Borough of Ealing youth services activities. As identified in the options paper, young people in particular lack safe spaces to socialise in Northolt.

INFORMAL GATHERING

Potentially a covered/ indoor social space for informal gathering.



Trees for Cities use of the Scout Hut for tree storage, child's bike in Northolt Park, birthday party at Larkspur Football Club, Library of Things at Crystal Palace, bike repair schemes at Open Havelock,

THE 4TH COURT

Between Hill and Churchill Courts (the towers)

GREENING				
OPERATOR	CONTACT	WHO THEY ARE	REQUIREMENTS	WHAT THEY BRING
Trees for Cities www.treesforcities.org	Henry Chafor	A UK charity working at a national and international scale to improve lives by planting trees in cities.They have worked on Racecourse for 3 years and have established strong relationships with numerous local groups and institutions.	Trees for Cities are to be contracted to LB Ealing to deliver a project in the borough. They also have a commitment to maintain their work at Racecourse. They need a base to store trees and equipment to support this work.	In depth knowledge of Racecourse. Regular and purposeful activation of the space. Skills related to landscape.
Greenshoots	Odile Wythe	A volunteer group founded by residents and based on the Racecourse Estate to continue the work of Trees for Cities, protecting and enhancing the green and open spaces of Racecourse.	In order for Greenshoots to deliver landscape projects across the estate, they will need space to store equipment and plants securely, and potentially potting sheds and greenhouses.	Local knowledge of Racecourse. Regular and purposeful activation of the space. As a base for Greenshoots activities, the 4th court could support public realm and landscape improvements across the estate. See supporting documentation for examples of greening projects.
REPAIR / WORKSHOP / STORE				
OPERATOR	CONTACT	WHO THEY ARE	REQUIREMENTS	WHAT THEY BRING
Social enterprise similar to Bikeworks' Dr Bike www.bikeworks.org.uk/	-	A social enterprise that provides free-to-access inclusive community cycling initiatives.	Secure storage for cycles, repair equipment and workshop space.	Cycling has a broad appeal and is a programme through which to engage a number of different demographics on the estate, particularly youth, providing an opportunity to gain skills as well as enjoy a recreational and social activity. It would activate the streets of the estate and promote sustainable transport.
Social enterprise similar to Library of Things www.libraryofthings.co.uk/	LB Ealing	Library of Things is a social enterprise that helps people save money and reduce waste by affordably renting out useful items like drills, sound systems and sewing machines from local spaces – and by helping neighbours share practical skills.	The LoT requires storage space that is accessible and overseen. It usually operates with software and self store kiosks and partners with existing community spaces such as libraries. The 4th court project would be expanding upon this operating model.	The LoT would restore the court space to its original purpose, supporting residents of the estate by holding goods that are used occassionally or are oversized. Councillors have committed to delivering an LoT in the area. Supports low income families and the circular economy.
SOCIAL SPACE				
OPERATOR	CONTACT	WHO THEY ARE	REQUIREMENTS	WHAT THEY BRING
Youth services	LB Ealing	Department within Ealing council.	A comfortable, interior space for young people to socialise.	Support for young people outside of their homes. The service offers them independence and a sense of community in a safe environment. Youth provision is critical at Racecourse as the age group is a vulnerable demographic.
Public/residents	na	Currently there is no residents' association at Racecourse but there are informal networks and residents who were involved in the running of the former social club at Sussex Crescent.	There is a demand for an interior space for informal socialing.	A strong sense of community. Presence and an indepth understanding of the estate.



OVERVIEW

The Floating Community Room and the 4th Court are different and complementary proposals. They aim to support community infrastructure across the whole estate and to acknowledge the different areas and groups within Racecourse.

The Floating Community Room supports existing community infrastructure by mapping and communicating a network of existing spaces and organisations and by funding physical improvements to existing spaces through a grants programme.

The 4th court activates a specific site within the estate and will demand a robust operational strategy with named social enterprises to function effectively. It is a capital project that will also demand additional funding, design development and planning permission. Through this project, there is an opportunity to carefully consider the context of the 4th court, specifically its relation to the Childrens Centre and the north of the park, and to create a spatial vision for this area so that it best serves the surrounding housing.

The map of the Floating Community Room network (p.32) shows that the majority of community spaces are located towards the south of the estate. The 4th court proposal offsets this distribution, expanding what's on offer at the North of the park.

Whilst the Floating Community Room project can be developed and implemented within a short timeframe, the 4th court is a mid - longer term project.

In May 2023, we joined Trees for Cities for their celebration day in Northolt Park located by the site of the 4th court proposal. The event was an opportunity to present the project in situ and to discuss the Floating Community Room proposal. See p.27 for photographs of the Trees for Cities celebration day event.

Feedback on the proposals was positive. Attendees were interested in the prospect of opening up the ancillary space for use and also expressed interest in the upcoming grants programme, suggesting events such as bake sales, music events or workshopping to help bring communities together on Racecourse. Some specific ideas about the design of the 4th court were put forward, such as introducing a door that opens onto the park with a stage that uses the perforated brick wall as a backdrop. These will be incorporated into the design as it develops.

Generally, conversations echoed those of previous sessions in that residents want places that their children can enjoy and feel safe in. There is a lack of community space for gathering inside, which is critical particularly in the colder months, and green space on the estate is highly valued. Concerns around the loss of green space in the face of development were reiterated.



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