

June 2023

Supporting Statement for proposed changes to Highgate Newtown Community Centre Project

The purpose of this statement is to provide context and background in support of the proposed changes to the Highgate Newtown Community Centre Development.

The main proposals include:

- Changing the tenure of residential units from private for sale, to affordable housing
- Making modifications to the internal layout of a number of units, to increase their size and capacity. This is to allow larger families to occupy them

Recently, a new opportunity has arisen with the announcement by the government of a special fund for safe haven housing. Part of this fund is designed to help secure permanent homes for people who worked for the British Government in Afghanistan until they were evacuated in 2021. These evacuees have been awarded special status to come to the UK and make their lives here because of their contribution to supporting the British Armed Forces as translators, doctors, special forces, civil servants, journalists, and many other roles.

There are around 42 families still living in hotels in Camden. They have built strong links to the area: sending their children to our local schools and finding employment in Camden. They want to make a home here and continue to contribute to our community.

This new government funding, which has been secured as a result of lobbying by local councils, will allow Camden to retain ownership and convert the flats that were designated for private sale at the Highgate Newtown Community Centre site into council housing. The proposal is then to offer these homes under an affordable housing scheme to the evacuee families. To date, 37 families have been matched to the proposed accommodation. The homes would stay as part of the council housing stock for future generations. The terms of the special funding mean these new affordable properties must be let to refugee families for the first three years after which, subsequent tenants can be general needs affordable homes on intermediate rents.

The proposal to change the tenure of the flats at the Highgate Newtown site from private sale to affordable will not involve any changes to the external appearance, general arrangement or building footprints, and will not create any delays to the current construction programme. The plans for the new Community Centre will not be affected by these proposals. Highgate Newtown Community Partners are already making plans to involve new residents in their programme of activities and to support them to settle and thrive. Brookfield Primary School and the Friends of Highgate Library are also keen to welcome the new Afghan children and families to the community.

In realising these proposed changes, the Council is continuing its commitment to delivering against key priorities in Our Camden Plan 2025 and fulfilling the Camden Pledge to provide homes for refugees.

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Supporting Communities