Kipling Estate Garages
Weston Street, London SE1
Proposals for genuinely affordable homes in SE1 have been submitted for planning.

The proposed designs for new genuinely affordable homes on the Kipling Estate have been conceived by, initiated by, and designed in close collaboration with, local residents from first principles.

The development on Weston Street, SE1, comprises twenty-seven affordable flats and maisonettes, including three wheelchair-accessible flats, communal gardens, a communal terrace and three dedicated blue badge car parking spaces for the wheelchair-accessible flats.

The context

Leathermarket Joint Management Board (JMB) is a Tenant-Managed Organisation (TMO) which was established in 1996 under the government’s Right-to-Manage legislation to enable residents to independently manage their own services in relation to the housing estates within the Leathermarket Area. The organisation is responsible for managing 1500 homes in Borough and Bermondsey between London Bridge and Tower Bridge.

Leathermarket JMB set up an affordable housing group in 2011. The Group organised a questionnaire of Leathermarket residents in February 2012. The four big conclusions were:

- 94% think there should be more genuinely affordable social housing in the JMB area.
- 85% expressed support for social housing being built on unused or under used land on their estate.
- 77% think that staying in the JMB area is important. 38% are involved in local community groups.
- 93% cannot afford a rent above £200 per week or the maximum amount that housing benefit will pay.

It also found a number of key facts about the financial and family circumstances of Leathermarket JMB tenants

- 99% of households have a housing income of less than £30,000.
- 55% are registered for re-housing with the Council.
- 10% describe themselves as in housing need, but not registered with the Council.
- 70% of homes say they are overcrowded – compared with an average of 35% across Southwark as a whole.
- 56% do not have any money for a deposit if they wish to buy a property.
- 85% would not have the money for a deposit if they wish to rent privately.

In order to bring forward new genuinely affordable housing Leathermarket JMB established the Leathermarket Community Benefit Society (CBS), a new co-operative organisation that is looking to bring more ‘council-rent’ housing to the local area and improve the local environment.

The Leathermarket CBS identified an underutilised garage site on the Kipling Estate as a potential site for new housing and appointed igloo regeneration to help them bring forwards the development. Leathermarket CBS commenced negotiations with Southwark, obtained funding from the GLA and undertook a housing needs survey of local housing to help establish a brief for the new homes.
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A design team was appointed. In the spirit of the project the design team was predominantly comprised of practices from the local area.

A genuinely collaborative design process
As a community-led development the design team and client have worked closely with local residents from the outset to co-develop proposals that reflect the needs and aspirations of the local community. Preliminary workshops started with a blank sheet of paper and explored the aspirations and concerns of the local community regarding the new development. The feedback from these sessions formed the basis of the design brief.

A number of community engagement events have been held in varying formats, in order to inform, discuss or obtain feedback on proposals at every step of the process. The importance of the project to local residents has been demonstrated through the excellent attendance at the consultation events.

These consultations have been fundamental and integral to the development of the design proposals. Over the course of the past year the design team has managed to successfully address concerns of local residents and engendered overwhelming support for the design from the local community.

Design proposals
The design seeks to reinstate the fragmented streetscape of Weston Street by restoring the historic building frontage to the street. A taller corner block of seven storeys creates a modest landmark at the junction between Guy Street Park and Leathermarket Gardens. The central portion of the building steps down to three storeys to improve the quality of daylight and views from the Kipling Estate, before rising again to five storeys at the southern end of the building.

The development comprises 27 flats and maisonettes in a range of sizes. All of the flats are dual aspect, many are triple aspect, and all have exceptional private amenity space. The flats have been designed in such a way that each flat can be suited to the needs of individual residents. Because the new residents have already been identified it presents the design team with the unusual position of being able to tailor each flat to the requirements of the residents. As the detailed design develops the design team will work with residents to design their flats, making them unique and tailored to the residents’ requirements.

The development has been designed to be more than just bricks and mortar. The building has been designed as a place that promotes a strong community spirit. A place that encourages residents to interact, form friendships, look out for one another. A place that is positive, welcoming and uplifting. This has been done by incorporating opportunities for residents to pause, chat, interact and socialise and opportunities for residents to personalise the space giving the building a distinctive character. Specific measures include:

- Provision of a large communal roof terrace accessible to all residents that will be a usable, social space with attractive views.
- Large private balconies that will be large enough to accommodate a table and chairs as well as planting. This will encourage residents to use their balconies providing activation and animation to the street.
- Communal garden for the use of residents in the ground floor maisonettes. A communal, usable space that will encourage residents to socialise and interact.
- Opportunities for book-sharing clubs, communal gardening, a communal barbecue and games that will encourage the new community to thrive.

The building has been designed to be a modern, confident and forward-looking building that nevertheless acknowledges its surrounding context in its selection of materials, detailing and fenestration.

The building has a faceted form with varying heights which gives it a good degree of richness and variation. Therefore it is proposed to use one primary material on the elevations to unite the building into a strong coherent form. A red facing brick, that echoes the brick used for surrounding Victorian buildings and the Kipling Estate, is proposed as the primary material. The brick colour and hue will be carefully selected to tie in with the surrounding area. Brick will give the building a human scale and pleasing visual appearance with variation in hue, texture and colour.

The brick will be detailed to give it a real sense of solidity. Windows and doors will be set well back from the face of the building (225mm nominal) with brick reveals and soffits so that the thickness and mass of the brick is expressed. Feature horizontal courses of saw-tooth brick will be incorporated to the ground and first floors to add visual interest to the brick in the most visible and tactile area of the building. Again, this refers to the detailing of brick buildings locally which have themselves borrowed the detail from rusticated stone detailing. These strong horizontal lines will also tie in visually with the strong horizontal concrete banding found on the Kipling Estate. The saw-tooth detail will be extended to be full height around communal entrances to add further interest, prominence and hierarchy to these areas.

- Entrances to maisonettes provided with defensible space that can be used for seating and/or personalisation with planting.
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Proposed site plan
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Proposed east elevation
Kipling Estate Garages
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Proposed view from Leathermarket Gardens
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Proposed view from Weston Street
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Model showing the proposed building in context
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