

Revitalisation of Vestry House Museum

Vestry House Museum is owned and run by Waltham Forest Council. It houses Waltham Forest's local history museum and the borough archives, with exhibition space, gardens and a café.

Please submit questions and feedback about the project via the online Feedback Form by following this link: <https://forms.gle/1hEvWrwh9X7ze5HQ8>

The Case for Investment

Vestry House Museum has been in need of investment and revitalisation for some years. The Council's priorities in considering new approaches to Vestry House Museum have been driven by the following factors:

- The Council is seeking ways for Vestry House Museum to have greater social impact, to reach and support more local schools, businesses, and engage our diverse communities
- The museum collection is in need of updating and does not currently reflect the diversity of our communities in Waltham Forest
- Much of the building is underused, with 30% used for collection storage and the upper floors are inaccessible to those with mobility issues
- The Council is seeking ways for the operational model of Vestry House Museum to be more cost effective and provide a greater return on investment

Assemble's Commission

In June 2022 following a competitive tender process, Waltham Forest Council commissioned Assemble, an established architectural practice, to lead a team to research and consider a range of approaches for a revitalised Vestry House Museum.

Assemble brought together a multi-disciplinary team which included heritage architects, curators, fundraising and archive expertise and business planners. This team reviewed the current operation at Vestry House Museum and prepared a set of potential models which could be considered to revitalise the site. This work took into account feedback from engaging with over 40 groups, individuals and stakeholders. Details from Assemble's research are attached below as an Appendix.

The Assemble project was completed prior to the outcome of Waltham Forest Council's successful application to the Government's Levelling Up Fund.

Levelling Up Fund

On the 19 January 2023, £17million of Levelling Up Funding was awarded to Waltham Forest Council to deliver 'Culture for All,' a programme of capital works to develop and improve a range of cultural sites and spaces in Walthamstow*.

£4.4million (including £800k match-funding from Waltham Forest Council) has been allocated for the revitalisation of Vestry House Museum. This funding will enable the Council to deliver a two-year programme of capital improvements to Vestry House, making the building accessible, enhancing the

environmental performance of the Grade II listed building, and modernising the archive and museum service.

This project will deliver ambitious goals to increase the diversity and number of visitors to Vestry House Museum, an enhanced offer for schools and improvements to the museum and archive services. The Levelling Up Fund now enables the Council to realise a new approach for Vestry House Museum.

A New Partnership Approach

We believe that securing the right cultural partner to work with us to revitalise Vestry House Museum will ensure that we can achieve more in terms of public activities, engagement and appreciation of local history. The Council is adopting a partnership approach to several of its cultural sites, following a new approach outlined in the Destinations business plan, agreed in Cabinet on 22 November 2022. After a positive response from an Expressions of Interest process last year, as part of Assemble's wider research, we are confident that there are a range of organisations keen to work with us to help activate the Museum and develop a dynamic programme.

A key aim is to diversify Vestry House Museum audiences and activate the heritage site to its full potential. We anticipate working in close partnership with local history and heritage groups.

Archive Service

The archive service will be modernised through a process of digitising the archive and improving online access. The Council is currently exploring options for the search room and archive collection to be relocated to a new fully accessible site in Walthamstow, with the aim of diversifying and expanding the users of the archive and search room and providing greater opportunities for volunteers.

Museum Collection

The museum collection will be modernised and improved, creating more impactful displays at Vestry House Museum. The Council will explore opportunities to display more of the borough's local history collections across the borough in partnership with local heritage organisations, at libraries and in the forthcoming civic centre at Fellowship Square and optimise opportunities for digital innovation.

A key aim is to diversify the Vestry House Museum audience and offer expanded volunteer opportunities in partnership with local history and heritage groups.

Next Steps

The proposed approach will be considered by Cabinet in April 2023. If approved, the Council will embark on a procurement process to secure partner organisation(s) to work with the Council to deliver a new vision for Vestry House Museum and the archives.

*More information on the Council's Levelling Up programme and projects can be found at:

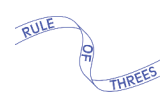
<https://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/regeneration-and-growth/regeneration-projects-and-developments/levelling-fund-waltham-forest>

Appendix: *The Revitalisation of Vestry House: Models for Consideration, Assemble 2022.*

Models for the Revitalisation of Vestry House Museum



ASSEMBLE



THE BRIEF



PUBLIC

Vestry House Museum should remain publicly accessible.

Vestry House Museum has been serving the people of Walthamstow (although not continuously) since it was built as a workhouse in the 1730s.



ACTIVE

It should be active and useful, with spaces used by people and not just objects (or storage).

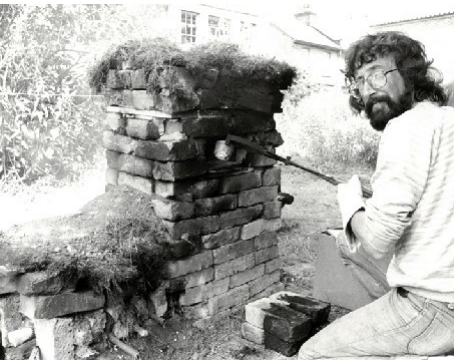
Currently around 30% of the building is used as storage.



REPRESENTATIVE

The archive and museum collections should represent and serve everyone in the Borough.

The majority of visitors to the gallery are over 55 (52%) and white (87%), in a Borough where people from a global majority background are 53% of the population, and under 55s are 70% of the population.



LOCAL

It should serve the needs of local residents and be locally relevant.

As one member of the community said: 'Local museums should be for all local people, rather than a subset of local people.'



PARTNERSHIPS

It should support local partnerships and businesses.

Currently only one SME - the café - is supported by Vestry House Museum.



ECONOMICALLY SUSTAINABLE

The building needs to explore potential for earned income and/or fundraising to ensure greater financial stability and sustainability.

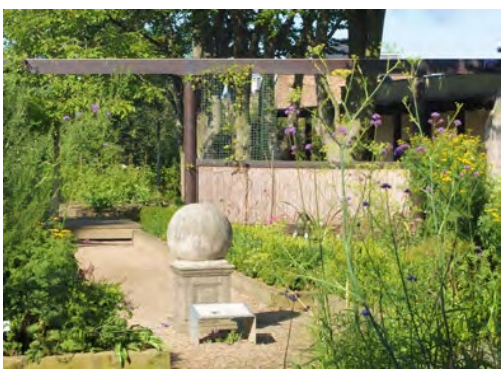
The current council subsidy is calculated to be approx. £398,000 per annum.

DEFINITIONS

The following definitions will help readers navigate this document.

ASSEMBLE

Assemble is a multi-disciplinary collective working across architecture, design and art, who have been commissioned to explore new models for a revitalised Vestry House Museum.



MUSEUM COLLECTION

Comprises the object and photographic collection.

ARCHIVE COLLECTION

Comprises collections of Waltham Forest Archives (records of Anglican parishes since 1575, local authorities, places of worship, schools, properties, clubs and societies) and the Local Studies Library (printed sources available including local newspapers, trade directories, electoral registers, Council minutes and reports, Ordnance Survey and other maps, books and secondary sources).

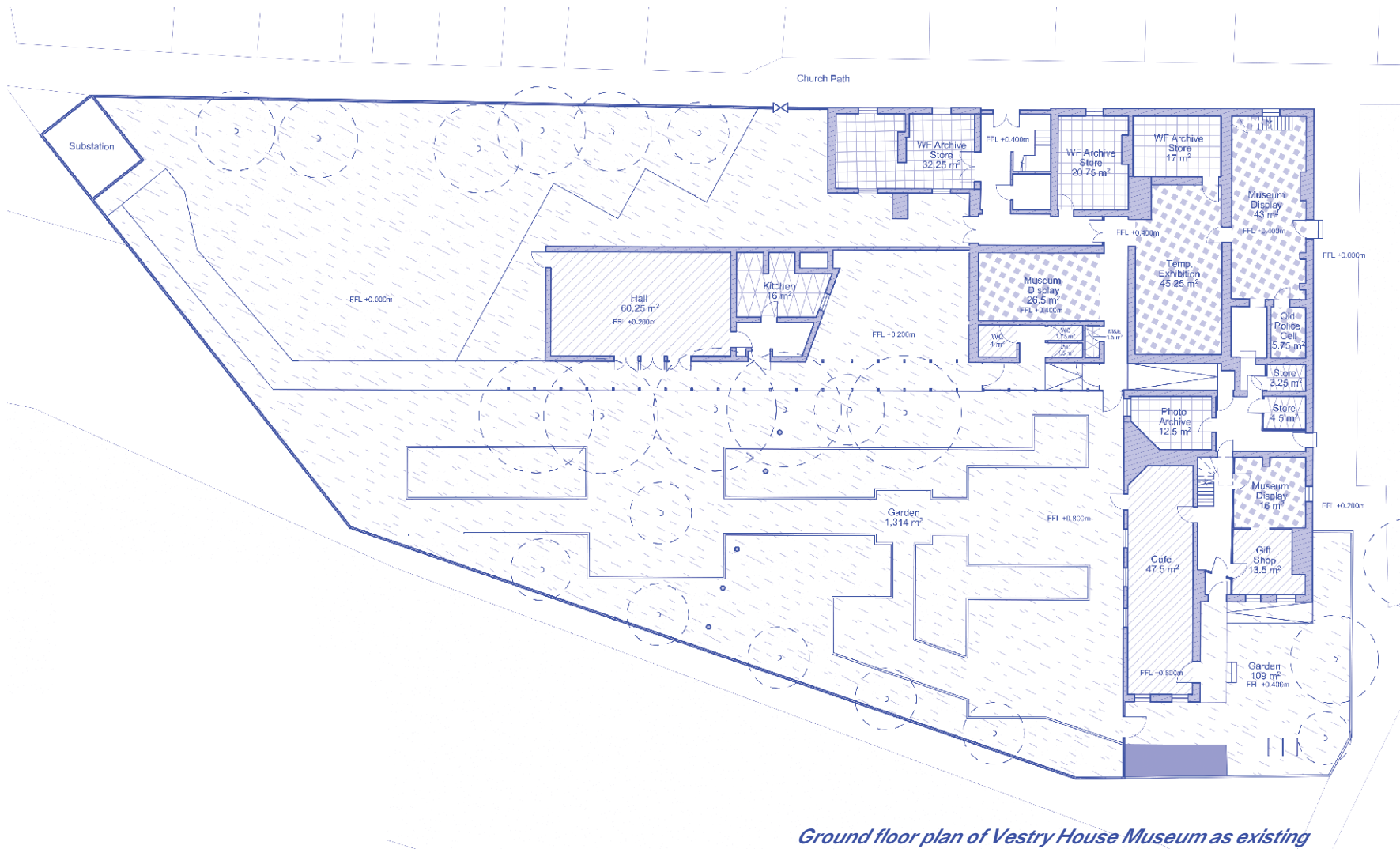
ARCHIVE SERVICE

A public service preserving and making the Archive Collection accessible. Public enquiries are answered and a search-room facility is available by appointment.

THE CURRENT MODEL

2023/24

22k visitors per annum
c.£400k cost to Council per annum
c.£18 per visitor cost to Council



CURRENT OUTPUTS		
Activity	Nos.	Detail
No. Engaged in Heritage Activity	22k	Visitors
No. Trained Volunteer Archivists	0	
No. Volunteers	6	Garden only
No. Schools Visits	38	Approx. 1 school per week
No. Community Groups	6	
No. Core Jobs (FTE)	7	Plus Casuals
No. SME's supported	1	Café
No. Artists Supported	4	
No. Cultural Programmes	2	Exhibitions

MODELS

MODEL 1 – A BETTER VERSION OF ITSELF

Vestry House Museum is a place where the living history of Waltham Forest is visible and active. With a local history centre, improved displays, reading room, rationalised collection & accessible archive service.

Core Delivery: Council run and deliver a significantly revitalised offer.

Capital: Minimal Fabric Alteration + Modern Additions and Fit Out. Estimated Cost: £4,958k.

Spatial Allocation: 555sqm of space for exhibition display, archive display. Hire space, residency space, community education space and café. Plus community garden of 1,314sqm.

Earned Income: Earned income would increase from £88k to £298k.

Grant Income: Grant income would increase from £10k to £190k for an artist in residence programme plus fundraising for education, heritage and for programmes.

Archive and Collection: This model assumes the archive is run at Vestry House Museum and the collection held on-site. Development of the collection is assumed and paid for through separate investment.

Staffing: Staff costs in Option 1 increase from £314k to £689k.

Council Subsidy: Increases from £398k to £553k.

MODELS FOR THE REVITALISATION OF
VESTRY HOUSE MUSEUM
PREPARED BY ASSEMBLE, 2022

Outputs: see following slides.

MODEL 2 – HERITAGE MODEL + PARTNERS IN RESIDENCE

Vestry House Museum holds one foot in the rich and diverse heritage of Waltham Forest and one foot in its future with a tenant or tenants that encourage public access, participation and learning rooted in the site’s history and Waltham Forest’s rich history as a place of craft and making.

Core Delivery: Council deliver a significantly revitalised offer in conjunction with partners who occupy elements of the building under lease or licence agreements.

Capital: Modern Additions and Fit Out. Estimated Cost: £1,424k.

Spatial Allocation: 193sqm of space would be dedicated year-round for programmed activity, display, archive and community hire. 351sqm would be dedicated to tenanted income-generating space for companies, small enterprises and individuals.

Earned Income: Earned income increases to £215k from the current figure of £88k. This includes £41k of income generated from tenant rental.

Grant Income: Similar levels of fundraising are assumed to Option 1 with the exclusion of the £20k artist residency income.

Archive and Collection: This model assumes the archive is run at Vestry House Museum and the collection held onsite although significantly reduced in size. Development of the collection is assumed and paid for through separate investment as per the costs above.

Staffing: Staffing costs of £398k are reduced from Option 1 but are greater than the current operational model of £314k.

Council Subsidy: Assumes a reduction from £398k in current model to £246k.

Outputs: see following slides.

MODEL 3 – RUN BY AN ANCHOR TENANT

Vestry House Museum is an active place where creativity and making connects the site to the productive history of Waltham Forest. A cultural partner takes on the site with a commitment to offering some public access.

Core Delivery: Council lease the building to an anchor tenant who sublets to other tenants under lease or licence.

Capital: Modern Additions Only. Estimated Cost: £43k.

Spatial Allocation: 544sqm leased out to the anchor tenant who runs or sub licenses the space to partners who deliver cultural and historic activity.

Earned Income: All earned income would be retained by the leaseholder.

Grant Income: Grant income could be secured for activity by the anchor tenant or licensees.

Archive and Collection: This model assumes the archive is run elsewhere and the collection held offsite. A separate financial assessment would be needed for how these aspects would be run and managed though it is presumed that appropriate alternative space in the borough would be secured and the service run by the council at a cost of c. £80k p.a. Development of the collection is assumed and paid for through separate investment.

Staffing: A low level of staffing £25k would be required.

Council Subsidy: The level of Council subsidy would depend on what financial terms were agreed.

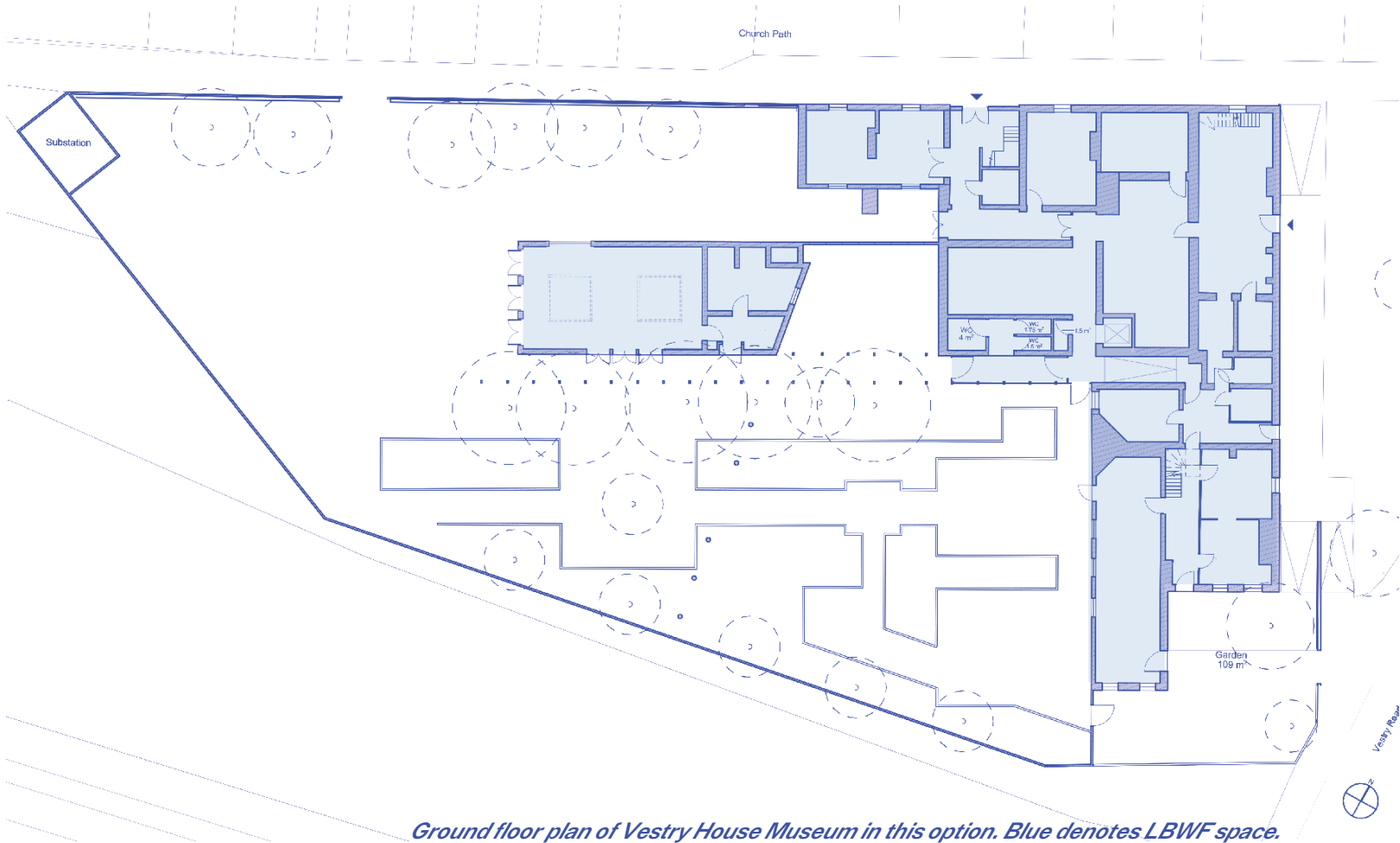
Outputs would depend on agreed terms with the anchor tenant and the programmes and heritage activity deliverable under the terms of the contract.

MODEL 1. A BETTER VERSION OF ITSELF

An enhanced museum offer run by the council. Increasing the space available to maximise programme space and earned income potential and by establishing a dedicated team. This increases the potential offer to the public at Vestry House Museum but costs the Council significantly more than its current subsidy (£553k compared to c.£400k currently projected for 2023/24). Outputs are enhanced as shown in the table.

Core delivery: Council-run
Capital Investment: £4.98m
Council Subsidy: Increase by £155k to £553k p.a.

MODEL 1 OUTPUTS		
Activity	Nos.	Detail
No. Engaged in Heritage Activity (Visitors)	60k	Visitors
No. Trained Volunteer Archivists	2	2 per six months rolling
No. Volunteers	14	Garden + Visitor assistants
No. Schools Weeks	114	3 schools pw
No. Community Groups	100	2 comm gps pw
No. Core Jobs (FTE	14	Plus casuals
No. SME's supported	8	Incl café
No. Artists Supported	6	Resi + commissions
No. Cultural Programmes	6	2 exh + garden etc

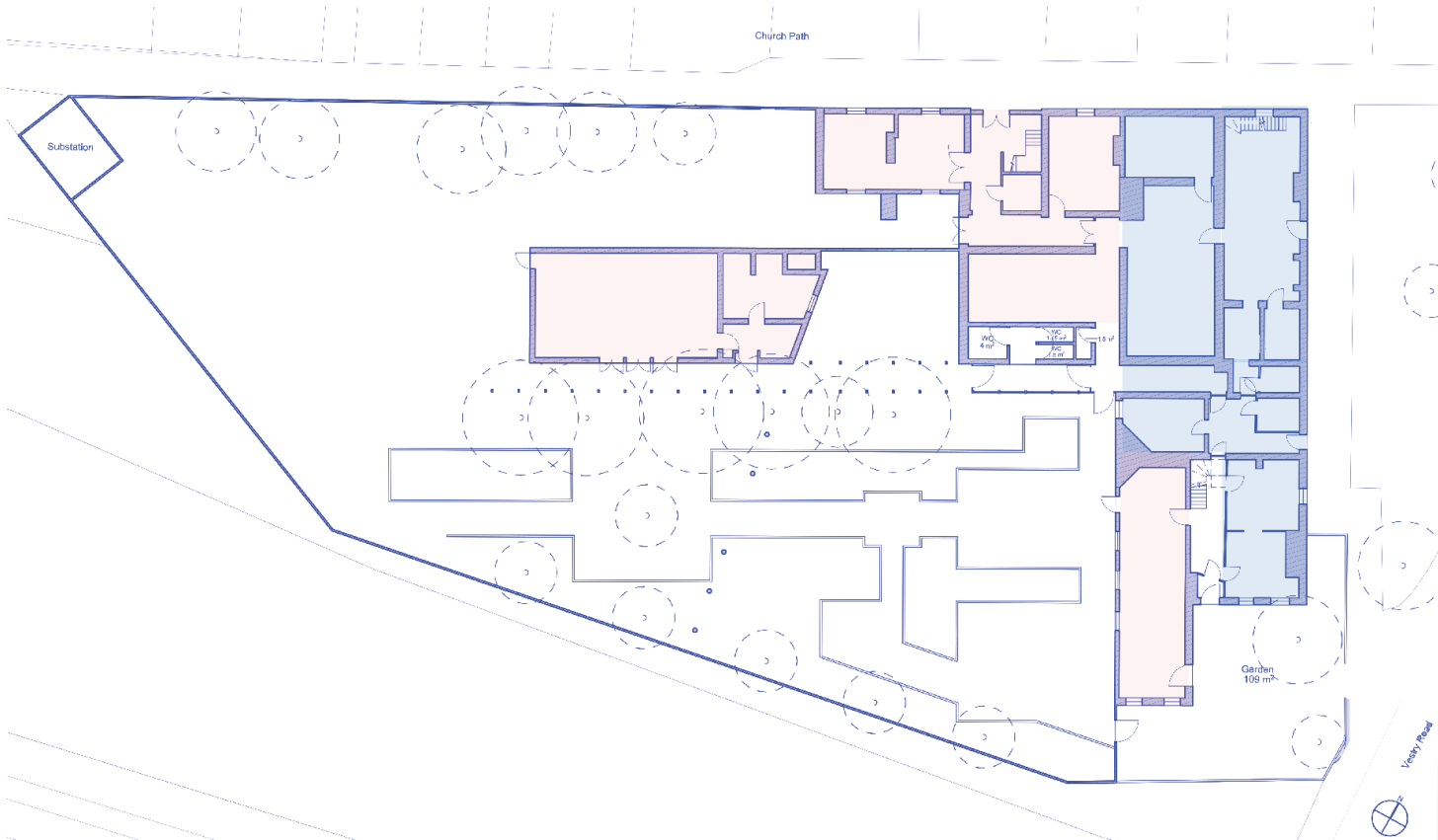


MODEL 2. HERITAGE MODEL + PARTNERS IN RESIDENCE

Excellent applications were received in response to the Expression of Interest (EOI) process and it appears there is an opportunity to enhance the offer and increase public benefit by partnering on the delivery of public programmes with others who could benefit from being located in a place that offers the kind of space and assets associated with Vestry House Museum. This potentially enhances the offer to the public and costs the council significantly less than its current subsidy (£246k compared to c.£400k currently projected for 2023/24).

Core delivery: Partner-run activation, Council-run Archive
Capital Investment: £1.4m-£3.3m
Council Subsidy: Decrease by £148k to £246k p.a.

MODEL 2 OUTPUTS		
Activity	Nos.	Detail
No. Engaged in Heritage Activity	35k	Visitors
No. Trained Volunteer Archivists	4	2 per six months rolling
No. Volunteers	18	Garden + Visitor assistants
No. Schools Weeks	76	2 schools pw
No. Community Groups	100	2 comm gps pw
No. Core Jobs FTE	8	Plus Casuals
No. SME's supported	21	Incl café
No. Artists Supported	49	Artists + commissions
No. Cultural Programmes	6	



Ground floor plan of Vestry House Museum in this option. Blue denotes LBWF space, pink denotes spaces run by or with partners.

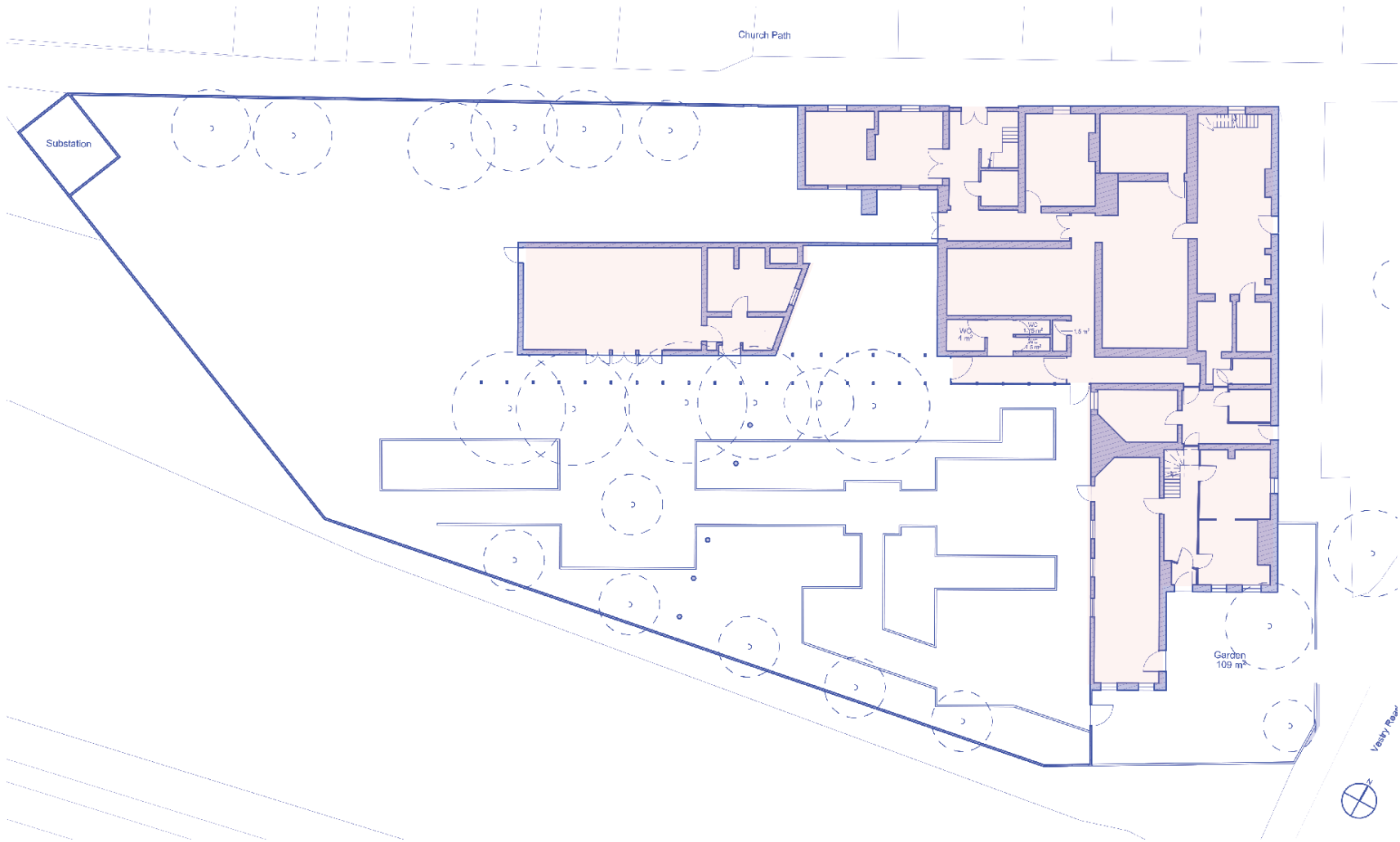
MODEL 3. RUN BY AN ANCHOR TENANT

A model also exists that relocates the archive and collection from Vestry House Museum to a more fitting environment, and frees up space for a larger mixed ecology space. Depending on the agreement, the cost burden to the Council depends on the extent of public access and commerciality applied to tenants.

The parameters of this would need consideration in regard to whether the offer to any anchor tenant is secured on affordable or commercial terms or on some mid range or hybrid option and how the heritage and public benefits would be ensured.

Note: Outputs in this option dependent on terms with tenant.

Core delivery: Partner-run site, Relocated Archive + search function led by Waltham Forest Council
Capital Investment: £50k-£3.3m
Council Subsidy: Return of £12k to £90k p.a.



Ground floor plan of Vestry House Museum in this option. Pink denotes spaces run by or with partners.

FUNDRAISING APPRAISAL

- Increasing demand on funds available and emphasis shifted outside London
- Need to consider in all models how to align investment with local need, cost-of-living crisis and sustainability of community infrastructure.
- Local Authority applicant limits the range of fundraising options available. A fundraising trust model could provide an alternative channel but requires time to establish
- Main funds considered are Levelling Up Funds (inc. UKSPF), National Lottery Heritage Fund, Arts Council England, National Lottery Community Fund, and a range of Trusts and Foundations.

MODEL 1 - A BETTER VERSION OF ITSELF

CAPITAL

- The most likely anchor funder for this option would be The National Lottery Heritage Fund, who could fund capital works alongside a heritage engagement plan, digitisation of the existing archive and the co-production of a new archive and collections policy based on the needs and wants of the local community.
- Match funding of 20-40% required and must include some direct council investment

REVENUE

Transitional support, Project Grants, Activation and Individual Giving

MODEL 2 - HERITAGE MODEL + PARTNERS IN RESIDENCE

CAPITAL

- As with Model 1, the proposition of retaining and sharing the archive on site and maximised varied community engagement through partnerships would be of interest to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Potential for ACE Capital investment to enable space- sharing, creative programming and broader audience engagement.
- Enterprise and local business development and partnership might interest the Shared Prosperity Fund as well as Social Impact Loans which could be repaid using future rental income. This could also chime with the Nesta Investment and Esmee Fairbairn.
- Match funding of 20-40% required and must include some direct council investment

REVENUE

Heritage activation funding, Project Grants/ Trusts & Foundations and Individual Giving all possible as are partner-led funding applications for programmed activity

MODEL 3 - RUN BY AN ANCHOR TENANT

CAPITAL

- Minor capital works could be funded via UKSPF
- A lease agreement of at least 15-25 years would be needed

REVENUE

- An anchor tenant with a strong track record in stewardship of public funds, effective governance and financial stability would be essential
- Project funding, Reaching Communities funding, and the Community Ownership Fund.

OTHER

- Community Ownership Funds may be possible
- The Council could apply for Archive and Collections funding to develop the collections, move them to accessible premises and provide some interpretation at Vestry House Museum.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Assemble undertook 40 one-to-one consultations with individuals and organisations including staff, regular users of the existing museum and members of some of the communities less well represented in the current usership. With each of these we discussed the current museum and its mission, and how it could be improved. Alongside these targeted consultations an open day was attended by 446 people, many of whom were local families.

Some recurring items that have been raised in the stakeholder engagement to date:

- That people valued the archive and local studies library
- That the current museum collection is not clear or representative
- That the Local Authority needs to adopt an open working process in developing its plans for Vestry House Museum
- That the current resources at Vestry House Museum are somewhat inaccessible, both physically and logistically
- That the museum could reach out into the Borough to better connect with local communities, schools and others.

It was strongly recommended by the team that this work is followed by an ongoing process of public engagement.



"I'd like to see a very active outreach programme, that was going into the community and working with the community to co-produce the output and permanent displays."

"A museum needs to reflect the community it seeks to serve"

"To me the most important thing is the people. Why the people are here, where they have come from. And then you can talk about the buildings."

SOFT MARKET TESTING

Expressions of Interest (EOI's) were sent out to gauge interest in partnership opportunities at Vestry House Museum.

The feedback was very promising. Returns were submitted by seventeen organisations including

- 6 workspace operators
- 4 community or heritage organisations
- 2 arts organisations
- 2 education organisations
- 2 food and beverage operators (both of which were social enterprises)
- 1 housing organisation

Feedback was recieved from a number of larger arts workspace operators and representatives of high-end restaurant or commercial operators that the site wouldn't work for them for reasons of viability and location.



NEXT STEPS

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

- Archive. The relationship between the archive and Vestry House Museum. Is it better that the archive stays at Vestry House Museum or are their advantages to moving it elsewhere?
- Collection. The relationship between the collection and Vestry House Museum . Is it important here, what do people value about the collection?
- Financial status. The Council should consider how to present the difference between what the current museum costs (and how much subsidy the local authority provides) and how much it is currently bringing in earned income. So that questions can be asked about what kinds of earned income people would feel is palatable or appropriate in the building. For example lots of people assume hires or the café bring in lots of income, which they don't appear to.
- Partnership. The opportunities for partnership. This could be illustrated by the models as examples for how to proceed.
- Community Building. Understand what appetite there is for people to be involved in the future of the archive, collection or building.

As well as clear questions, letting people know how this intersects with a wider programme and decision making, what its timescale is, and what its aims and outcomes are, will be key in ensuring people engage in the process.

MODELS FOR THE REVITALISATION OF
VESTRY HOUSE MUSEUM
PREPARED BY ASSEMBLE, 2022

