



St Mary's Centre Proposed Y:Cube Development FAQs January 2017

Overview

What does YMCA LSW do?

We provide short stay hostel accommodation and community programmes at YMCA Surbiton and YMCA Wimbledon, along with accommodation at our Y:Cube development in Mitcham. We also offer a wide range of activities at our community centres at YMCA Hawker in Kingston and YMCA White House in Hampton, as well as at our health and wellbeing centres at YMCA Wimbledon, YMCA Surbiton and Hampton Pool. We provide childcare services like Afterschool Clubs and Breakfast Clubs as well as children's classes in karate, tennis and dance, along with two youth groups in Kingston and Hampton. Our Inclusive Lives project provides activities for people with a disability and we run a full programme for senior members.

Building

Q: What is a Y:Cube?

A: A Y:Cube is a high quality, affordable and sustainable, self-contained housing unit. They are built in a factory and delivered to the site ready-made. This allows us to build the development more quickly and cheaply than using conventional construction methods; which in turn allows us to offer the units for rent at a far more affordable rate. They are designed by world famous architects Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners (RSH+P) and have a minimum design life of 60 years.

Q: Why do you build Y:Cubes?

A: Y:Cubes are our response to the crisis in housing today, where there is a lack of good quality, affordable accommodation available for people who are working or in education but who cannot afford the high costs of housing.

Planning

Q: How many Y:Cubes will there be?

A: Based on current plans, there will be 31 cubes – 30 residential units, plus 1 as an office.

Q: How long before the centre is built?

A: The building work will take approximately 6 months. Allowing for design development, local consultation on our designs and then the planning process we estimate that the entire project will take between 12-15 months from now.

Q: Will you open the centre or the flats first?

A: Our plan is to open the community centre first.

Q: Are there covenants on the land?

A: The question of covenants is being explored by our legal advisers with RBK. Our understanding is that these should not be an obstacle to our plans for the site. Clearly if that were the case we would not proceed.

Q: How much impact do you think this development will have on the green belt?

A: The development will not impinge on the allotments or the green area behind that.

Q: How can you ensure the design of the Y:Cube fits in with the local environment and Church Lane?

A: Our aspiration is to be a long-term member of the community and as such we want to be good neighbours. Part of being neighbourly is ensuring that the new development fits in with the local environment – just as much as ensuring that we provide what the local people want at the new centre.

We have stressed from the outset that we will consult fully and widely on the design of the project and the use of the centre and we intend to honour that commitment.

We understand the concerns people have expressed about the development. However, it is important to remember that what we build at Chessington will be specific to Chessington. We understand that the colour scheme used at Mitcham

would not necessarily fit in at Chessington. We will work closely with our architects, RSH+P and the local planning team and most importantly the local community to ensure that we come up with a design that doesn't detract from the current buildings.

Q: What about hall users parking?

A: Under current arrangements, the British Legion car park can be used by hall users. We would hope to continue that.

Residency

Q: Residency Criteria?

A: This has yet to be finalised with RBK. However, the expectation is that, like our Mitcham Y:Cube development, the local authority will have nomination rights to a proportion of the units.

This does not mean that they can impose anyone on the site.

We have established strict residency criteria for the Y:Cubes – to make them deliberately aspirational – with which the local authority nominees would also have to comply.

Q: Who will be living in the accommodation?

A: It will be single people in housing need who are able to live independently, aged between 18 and 60 years old. The majority of tenants will be working, studying or training. There is a long waiting list for Y:Cube accommodation and the selection process is rigorous in allocating units to highly motivated tenants with a good track record.

Q: How do you monitor the residents?

A: The residents do not require support and as such they will not be monitored – other than for rent payment and general behaviour as any responsible landlord would. This is the same as the model we are currently successfully operating at Mitcham. The Y:Cube development is simply a housing project. Unlike Mitcham, however, we will have a permanent presence on site since we will also be operating the community centre, so there will be more close monitoring at the facility as a whole.

Q: How long do the people stay?

A: Our residents will be granted Assured Short Term Tenancies (ASTs). These are reviewed annually. We would expect people to stay for between for 2-5 years.

Q: If 70% people are employed, what is the criteria for people who are not working?

A: This statistic is based on our experience of operating the similar development at Mitcham, where over 70% are in employment, with the remainder being in education leading to employment.

The residency criteria we will apply will require our residents to be in employment or in education. We set the bar deliberately high – and we will set the same standards for people coming off the local authority list as for YMCA residents.

Q: What happens if residents become unemployed and claim benefits?

A: We are a landlord as well as a Christian housing charity. Therefore, we have a strict policy about rent collection. If residents become unemployed and claim benefits we would still expect them to pay their rent. In the event that they fall into rent arrears, we will give them a rent plan to support them.