

## The Barbican Strategic Authority

**The Barbican is a Masterpiece, a gem,** a world-famous example of 20<sup>th</sup> Century architecture and urban development in the heart of the City of London (CoL).

The purpose of this paper is to emphasise to the CoL that their gem is worth looking after as a whole. The way it has been managed over the past decades has focused on specific aspects and not the integrated entity. The problem derives directly from the responsibility for the estate being split across many different organisations and departments. The CoL has

- 6 committees,
- 14 sub-committees and
- one consultative committee

all with separate, compartmentalised interests in the goings on in the Barbican with financing of various aspects coming from several sources within the CoL.

Let us be in no doubt that the physical fabric is in decline. We refer to the Barbican & Golden Lane Area Strategy published by the CoL in August 2015 and reproduce the following

*Summary of key findings:*

### *10. INCONSISTENCY IN CONDITION AND UPKEEP OF HARD SPACES WITHIN THE ESTATES*

*Great care from residents and cultural institutions is evident in both the Barbican and Golden Lane estates. However, some of the hard spaces within are in poor condition. This is the case in both Golden Lane and, to a lesser extent, the Barbican estate. Engagement responses, notably those from residents, cited that some spaces within each estate are considered poorly maintained or in need of repair. It was felt that this is out of keeping with each estate's listing and of detriment to their heritage value, particularly in the case of Golden Lane. Within the Barbican estate, locations highlighted included Defoe Place, Lauderdale Place and Frobisher Court.*

Today, little has changed.

- the same concerns are apparent in the residential community. In September 2019 a resolution was passed by the RCC on maintenance of public realm but still no funds have been released for adequate maintenance of the estate.
- There are leaks in the roof of the Arts Centre
- The lakes, which are an important feature of the overall architectural design, have been in a sorry state for some years. Some recent improvements were made to brick and tile embankments which was most welcome but the fountains have been out of commission for over a year due to repeated leaks into the pump systems. The Arts Centre, in whose remit the lakes fall, admits that it has insufficient money and resources to anything other than patch-up. Failure to fund and carry out proper maintenance over the years means that the public realm has degraded and that remedial works will probably end up costing more than ongoing preventive maintenance would have done.
- The exhibition halls cannot be used on account of their leaking roofs
- The CLSG has also suffered from issues of inadequate maintenance.

Though similar problems have been encountered in the residential blocks. Most of these have been or are being addressed as the CoL has been able to reclaim the costs through the residents' service charge.

Notwithstanding the above, and having just reached its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it is still a marvellous place in which people wish to live and to visit. It cannot stand another decade of neglect.

This is why we have suggested a new approach to management of the estate with the setting up of a Barbican Strategic Authority (BSA) to take an holistic view and marshal the resources to resolve the current difficulties and take the Barbican forward for the next 50 years.

Scope for this 'umbrella' organisation would need to be defined in consultation with all stakeholders. Residents envisage the following:

- Creation of a Grand Strategy for the Barbican
- Custodian of the Strategy and Champion of conservation and listed status
- Reduction in Carbon emissions across the estate
- Securing and allocating funds necessary to keep the estate world-class and fit for purpose
- Preserving the mix of residential, cultural and educational uses
- Maintenance of the fabric.
- Security across the estate
- Management of public realm
- Control of the general public.

We believe that all stakeholders working under the umbrella of the BESA would develop a full understanding of what is required for the Barbican to resolve its current problems and to prevent any new ones that emerge from being ignored. We in the Barbican Association would look forward to helping in this endeavour. We have many residents whose skill set is well matched to the needs of the umbrella organisation and who are keen to contribute.

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