

PLANS UNVEILED FOR LONDON'S LARGEST EVER SELF-BUILD PROJECT

The most innovative low cost self-build housing project ever undertaken in London has taken a huge step forward with the formal submission of a planning application. The 33 home project will cost £8.6m and will be built on a one acre site at the end of Church Grove, in Ladywell, Lewisham.

The project has been initiated by a 700-strong local community organisation – the Rural Urban Synthesis Society (RUSS) – and construction is expected to begin in 2018. Over the last few years RUSS has worked closely with Lewisham Council to progress the scheme to this stage.

Councillor Damien Egan, Lewisham's Cabinet Member for Housing said: "Lewisham has a radical housing tradition and RUSS's self-build Community Land Trust builds on that history. Most importantly this is a development that will keep homes affordable in perpetuity."

The homes range from one to four bedroom properties. Fourteen of the properties will be available on a shared equity basis; 12 homes will be shared ownership; six rooms across two shared homes will be for affordable rent, and five of the homes will be for social rent (with the occupiers nominated by Lewisham Council).

The cost of the homes will be much lower than equivalent properties. RUSS has achieved this by: -

- Working in partnership with Lewisham Council to facilitate the site on a 250 year lease. The land will be held in a Community Land Trust, so the homes will be valued based mainly on the value of the building; not the building *and* the land.
- The residents have had the homes designed so they are simple and cost effective to build. It is also proposed that they will do some of the construction work themselves, bringing the costs down further.

All this means that residents are predicted to be able to buy a 25% stake in a typical one-bedroom home from just £77,500. The monthly rent on the home would then be £429 (reduced by £104 per month because of the resident's contribution to the building work); a three bedroom shared ownership home is anticipated to cost £141,000 (for a 25% stake) with a monthly rent of £763 (reduced by £208 per month because of the resident's input during the building stages).

In addition, because the homes have been designed to be highly energy efficient, their running costs will also be much lower than equivalent new properties. This will further reduce the overall cost of occupying one of the homes.

All the properties have already been reserved for local people who meet the project's affordability criteria.

RUSS Chair Kareem Dayes said: "We're delighted we have got our detailed planning application in for the site. It's been a long journey, but after eight years of community effort, huge levels of support from Lewisham Council, the GLA and many other bodies this is a really important milestone. Our members have worked tirelessly to get here; and we are now confident that we can achieve our dream of delivering genuinely affordable community-led neighbourhoods right across London. This is the first of, we hope, many similar projects."

Planning permission is expected in the New Year and construction is scheduled to begin later in 2018. The homes should be completed in 2020.

Media enquiries should be directed to RUSS Trustee Ted Stevens on 07860 336087

A selection of high resolution images are available – see below.



The homes are arranged in two four-storey blocks



Walkways, balconies and lots of greenery are all key features of the design



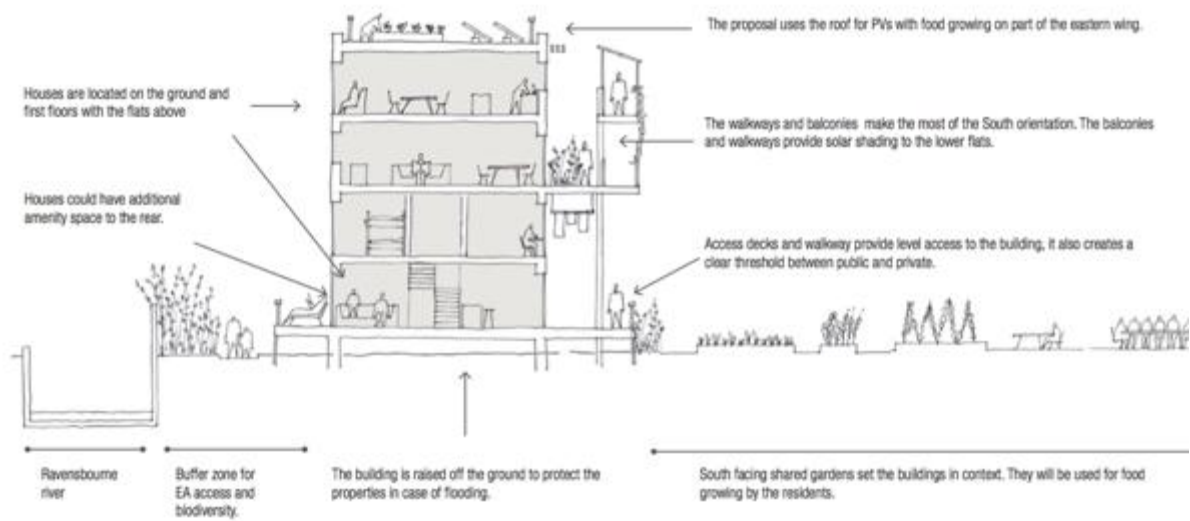
The entrance off Church Grove



The view from the other side of the Ravensbourne River



Ground floor plan showing the two main blocks, the new common space/community facility and the nature trail alongside the river



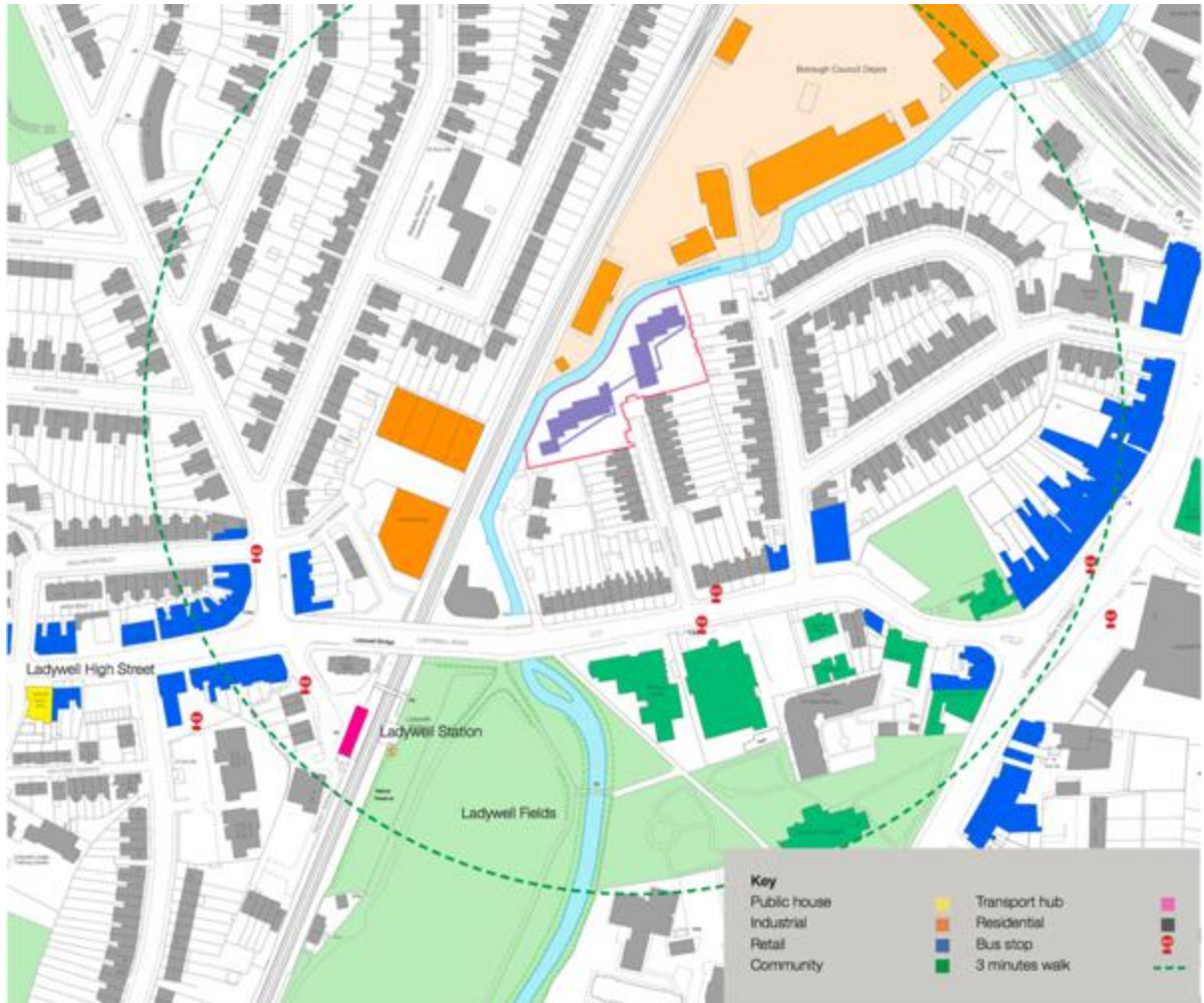
A cross section through the blocks showing how the homes are arranged over four levels



An artist's impression showing how one of the landscaped courtyards might look in the future



Birds eye view of the site (credit – Google)



The plot of land is well connected to local facilities and public transport



RUSS members on the site earlier this year (photo credit – Warwick Sweeney)