



Starter for Ten

Transitional Short-Term Accommodation

Ideas Competition

Design Brief

May 2017

I wake up at 6am.

My third morning here. Fog rises from the marsh waters and swallows the motorway so you can only see the sodium lamps hanging like lanterns in the dawn lilac haze. I pull myself up and do what the Matron bluffly says – if I want to work, I will have to tout for it outside Wickes. This is the building suppliers' in a metallic hangar where the boys are lining up for jobs. It's where you go, all over London: for cash in hand.

There are some days where eighty or ninety Romanians tout here. Here the white vans slow down, a beaten door is thrown open, and sometimes a ruddy, neck-tattooed English, with stickers for Help for Heroes on his van, will bark his price for some loading or plastering. Those are the good days. Because usually a Pakistani, a Turk or a Pole will pull up – and they make you name your wage. And this is when the striped joggers and the fleece hoodies and the fake Adidas puffas will push and jostle to grab it. This is where you get your workers for dirt.

These guys all say the same thing.

'They never pay minimum wage. They make us fight for it. And they know we have no choice. That we are hungry.'

Ben Judah. This is London. Picador. 2016.

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The context

1.1 Foreword:

At our 10th Anniversary celebration last year where we announced the Thames Reach Tent Encampment research as the winner of our Starter for 10 competition we introduced the idea or image that what we believe Commonweal does is to use the resources available to us to throw a pebble in to the 'pool' that is the status quo

- To create a **ripple of change** – that starts with a positive impact for individuals and their families.
- A ripple that spreads through our partners and practitioners
- A ripple that we hope moves beyond the front line and builds a momentum around policy change.

Why? Really the question is why not?

We recognise that injustices persist partly because current solutions don't work adequately therefore we need to identify and try out potential alternatives.

We were well aware that such an issue might be considered toxic by some, politically dangerous and open to front page newspaper outrage... but if independent charities like Commonweal can't or don't ask questions and encourage new ideas then who will? The status quo is not really working for anyone.

We are aware that this topic raises all sorts of other questions about the informal economy and British society's rather *fluid* attitude towards cash in hand working, especially in the construction industry amongst many others, but do we just stick our fingers in our ears and refuse to talk about it? Or, do we challenge the powers that be to consider such issues and in the meantime get on with seeking to address the immediate needs and the injustices of tent dwellers, rough sleepers and the communities of north and east London who have to put up with the consequences of us not being brave enough to ask let alone answer difficult questions.

Commonweal's next step is this design competition where we are picking the brains of the design and architecture community to think about what an alternative short-term accommodation solution might look like – utilising empty meanwhile use space – office buildings, light industrial units or even something that churches and faith groups might consider in their church halls and similar spaces.

We genuinely don't know what the answer is and need creative ideas. We are not looking to create a permanent housing solution - that is a wider issue that absolutely needs to be addressed. Instead the purpose of this competition is to find a viable and deliverable model for demountable, reusable, short-term accommodation options that can be deployed within existing buildings. We believe there is a real need for a safe, hygienic, sanitary and affordable alternative to the streets or tents. We hope to identify something that can allow individuals a leg-up into the system, a stepping stone to working with partners to deliver a longer term solution. The prize for Commonweal is that IF such a solution can be found the potential runs far beyond this one specific client group of east European migrant workers.



Ashley Horsey

Chief Executive, Commonweal

May
2017

Draft. V1.0

1.2 Commonweal

Extract from www.commonwealhousing.org.uk

Commonweal Housing is a registered charity, but not a housing association. This is because we want to be free to make bold experiments in housing. We are privately financed and do not seek government grants to fund any of our projects.

Our experiments aim to resolve social injustices where a combination of housing and support services will help individuals establish themselves in life, enabling them to make wise choices and so have a fair chance to realise decent aspirations.

We create housing projects with bespoke services for occupiers who are enduring social injustice. This enables us to demonstrate how these injustices can be resolved.

Generally, we provide the housing for the projects from existing housing stock. Since 2007, we have spent over £6 million on such properties.

We work with specialist partners to identify social injustices where the 'Commonweal Formula' could make a difference. We then define, provide and evaluate the services to create prototype role model solutions that are rigorously evaluated by independent third parties appointed by Commonweal.

When Proof of Concept has been achieved, Commonweal and its partners work to change public policy to eradicate the social injustices and also encourage and assist other organisations to replicate the role models.

1.3 Starter for 10

In 2016 Commonweal Housing launched the Starter for 10 research competition, to mark our 10th Anniversary – ten years of exploring diverse areas of social injustice where housing has a key role to play in any solution. The aim of the competition was to help an expert organisation, working on the front lines of injustice, find out more about a new or emerging issue as a first step towards envisaging possible solutions.

Thames Reach's winning proposal raised the issue of tent encampments, which in recent years have sprung up around parts of outer London. This was just the sort of issue that sparked the interest of Commonweal trustees and staff – an emerging problem, under-reported and little understood. The injustice faced by those living in such unsanitary, unhealthy encampments is clear enough. However, encampments also represent an injustice for those living in the local area: people unable or wary of using their own parks or other public spaces that have been turned into camps.

The main response of councils so far has simply been to clear out individual encampments – which more often than not simply pop up again elsewhere. This is no solution at all.

Before we can begin thinking about how we can solve this problem, we need answers to some basic questions. Who are the inhabitants of these camps? Where have they come from, and what has driven them to live in tents? How can they be helped out of rough sleeping, and what solutions might work for them?

The key finding of Thames Reach's research is that this is a particular group with particular drivers, motivations and potential solutions. Those in the encampments are not the benefit-scrounging beggars sometimes portrayed by lazy journalism or misinformed public opinion. As such, different – and new – solutions to avoid the growth of such encampments are needed. That is now the challenge for Commonweal and all in the homelessness and housing industry. We need to use this fascinating new research to open our eyes to issues we may have been blind to before, and rise up to this new test.

The need

2.1 The current situation

Romania and Bulgaria joined the EU in 2007. Work restrictions that initially applied to migrant workers from these countries were lifted at the end of 2013. Since this point the number of Romanians living in London has increased significantly. In parallel there has been a large increase in the number of Romanians sleeping rough. CHAIN data provided by St Mungo's to the Thames Reach research team indicate that 1,545 Romanians were contacted rough sleeping in London in 2015/16. Many live in informal encampments.

The Thames Reach research undertaken with this client group suggests that the encampments are typically in large open spaces, wooded areas, or located close to the A406 (North Circular) road.

Most of the encampment residents have not spent their entire time in the UK living outside. The decision to live in encampments has generally been driven by financial difficulties, with other reasons including very poor standards in the unregulated private rental sector.

The presence and proliferation of these sorts of encampments represent a significant social injustice on two fronts:

1. The unsanitary and unsafe living conditions present in the encampments represent a significant social injustice to the individuals living there; and
2. The informal occupation of public open space, represents a social injustice to local residents who become wary of using their local amenity spaces.

This competition seeks to explore ideas for addressing these social injustices with a design solution that will improve the living conditions of the Romanian immigrants – providing a platform for them to achieve a lawful status, whilst returning the encampment sites back to the local communities.

Figure 2.1.1: Current encampment conditions (photograph: Becky Rice & Benjamin Sebok)



2.2 The client

The research suggests that the client group are:

- Generally male
- Generally in their 20's or 30's, with some older – into their 50's and even 60's
- They have very few 'support needs' (drug, alcohol or mental health problems)
- They have limited English
- They have regular (casual) employment in the construction industry, earning between £40-60 a day – meaning they enjoy relatively good health;
- They are unemployed only for very short periods – typically less than a week; but
- They have commonly been the subject of exploitation in work
- They send significant sums of money home to family remaining in Romania; and
- They are resourceful – for example joining gyms to access showers, etc.

Social interaction does not appear to be a major consideration. The encampments are used primarily for sleeping, and are typically empty throughout daylight hours.

2.3 The research

All designers planning to submit a design proposal for this competition should study the full research paper commissioned by Thames Reach: "Research into the lives of Romanian migrant workers living in encampments in London", authored by Becky Rice and Benjamin Sebok.

The Executive Summary for this research is appended to this design brief.

A full copy of the research can be downloaded from the Commonweal website:

www.commonwealhousing.org.uk/research/starter-for-10

The research clearly demonstrates that nearly all of the clients interviewed expressed an interest in assistance with getting a National Insurance number, and finding legal employment. Furthermore, all of the clients interviewed expressed an interest in finding an improved paid accommodation option.

One of the key recommendations arising from the research is as follows:

Creative, new accommodation solutions, providing low-cost, flexible accommodation to those rough sleeping or at risk from rough sleeping, who have low support needs but struggle to access private rented tenancies, could be a useful option for this group.

To be a realistic offer, accommodation would need to be flexible (probably paid on a nightly basis, or a weekly basis with a cheaper lead-in period) and inexpensive (around £8 a night). Room sharing (preferably with just one other person) and shared toilets and showers would be acceptable and could be complemented by some communal areas including basic food preparation areas (with kettles and microwaves).

This ideas competition is seeking design proposals that respond to this recommendation.

The solution

3.1 Functional requirements

Whilst we do not know what the solution is for this challenge might be yet, we are clear on what it is not. We are not looking to improve the encampments with better accommodation – there are a multitude of well-designed emergency shelter designs that could achieve this. Instead we are looking for a solution that can be deployed within existing structures – redundant office or light-industrial space, or even church halls. For the purposes of this competition it should be assumed that the space achieves basic environmental performance – in simple terms an environment capable of achieving a level of warmth, and that affords protection from the elements.

The challenges are therefore around creating a functional temporary ‘installation’ that can serve the client group whilst transitioning into the system.

The design solution intended to provide an attractive, but short-term accommodation offer for the client group must achieve the following as a minimum:

- 1. An individual space to sleep – sized for an adult male, and for exclusive use during the client’s tenure;**
- 2. Security – the client should have an ability to secure their belongings in a locker or cupboard;**
- 3. Strategies for achieving individual privacy**
- 4. The proposal should be capable of being erected/installed and removed without resort to specialist skills – assembly should be possible without special tools or equipment.**
- 5. Consideration should be given to cleaning, repairing and servicing the installation between clients.**

As noted above, the client group are not necessarily seeking communal space for social purposes. The principle needs to be catered for are security and rest. The design solution must however consider how cohorts of up to 8 clients will be formed within the identified sites. In addition to the sleeping space, consideration should be given to the following basic additional communal facilities required:

- Access to basic sanitation – likely to be a shared bathroom (1:8 ratio);
- Access to basic food preparation facilities;
- A shared space for clients to access assistance with achieving legal status (likely to be via outreach), with a degree of privacy.

In larger spaces, it is assumed that several cohorts (of 8 clients) would be combined to optimise the use of the space – consideration of collocating cohorts is encouraged. It is assumed that an on-site concierge or attendant would be provided.

3.2 Sites

We have identified three generic structures as vehicles for this ideas competition. Candidates should explore how an installation might work in one of these structures, however consideration of flexible

solutions that could be applied to more than one structure are equally encouraged and may have more chance of being realised.

Scale plans of the plans below are provided in Appendix D of this document.

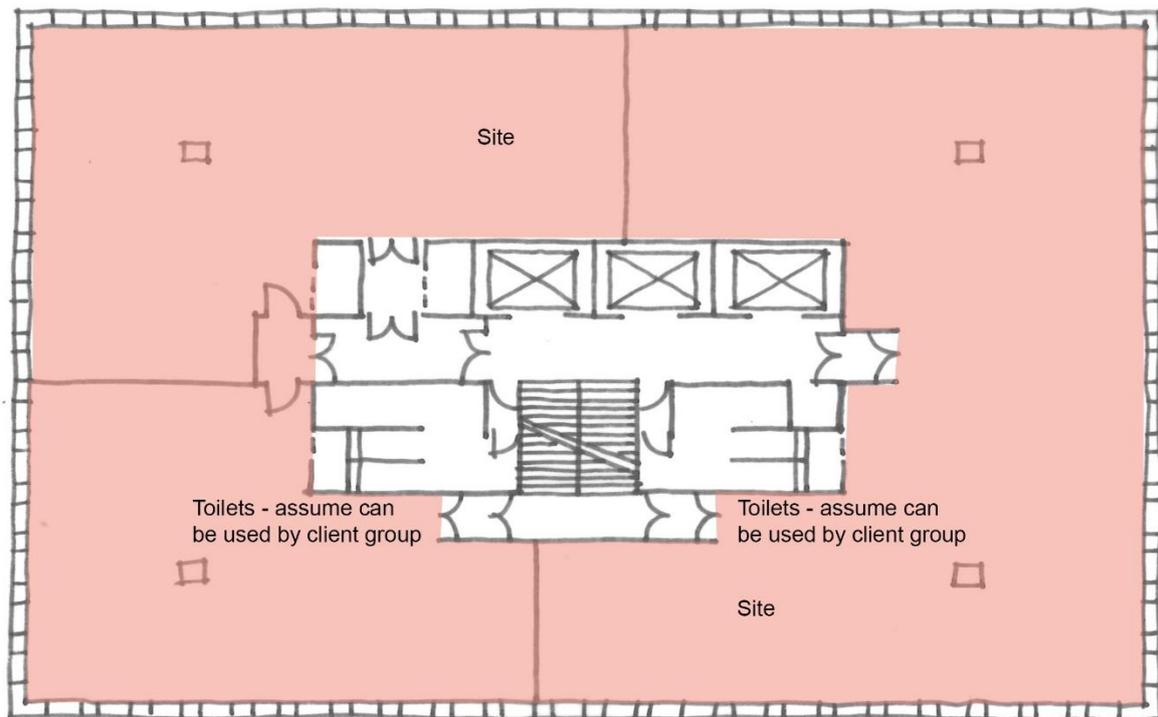
Site 1: Redundant Office

Redundant office buildings are commonplace along the North Circular and could provide an opportunity to provide the short-term accommodation facilities that are suggested in this brief.

Figure 3.2.1, below, illustrates a generic office building floorplan. The key parameters that will inform design solutions for this site are as follows:

- Internal dimensions: 21.5m x 35.5m
- Floor to ceiling height: 4m
- Designers should assume a proprietary access floor is installed – incorporating a 250mm service void below
- Existing toilet facilities located within the serviced core can be utilised by the client group
- General heating will not be provided
- It is assumed that power will be provided

Figure 3.2.1: Generic Office Floor Plan – based on Figure 12.8 of the Metric Handbook.



Site 2: Redundant Light Industrial Structure

Redundant, or temporarily out of use, light industrial structures provide another opportunity to provide short-term accommodation.

Figure 3.2.2, below, illustrates a notional light industrial structure. The key parameters that will inform design solutions for this site are as follows:

- Internal dimensions: 72m x 43m
- Floor to ceiling height: exceeding 8m
- Designers should assume that the floor slab is concrete and uninsulated
- Existing toilet facilities indicated can be utilised by the client group
- General heating will not be provided
- It is assumed that power will be provided
- For a space as large as this, consideration should be given to management of cohort size such that it can increase and decrease

Figure 3.2.2: Generic Light Industrial Structure Floorplan – based on generic design by BKR Floorplans



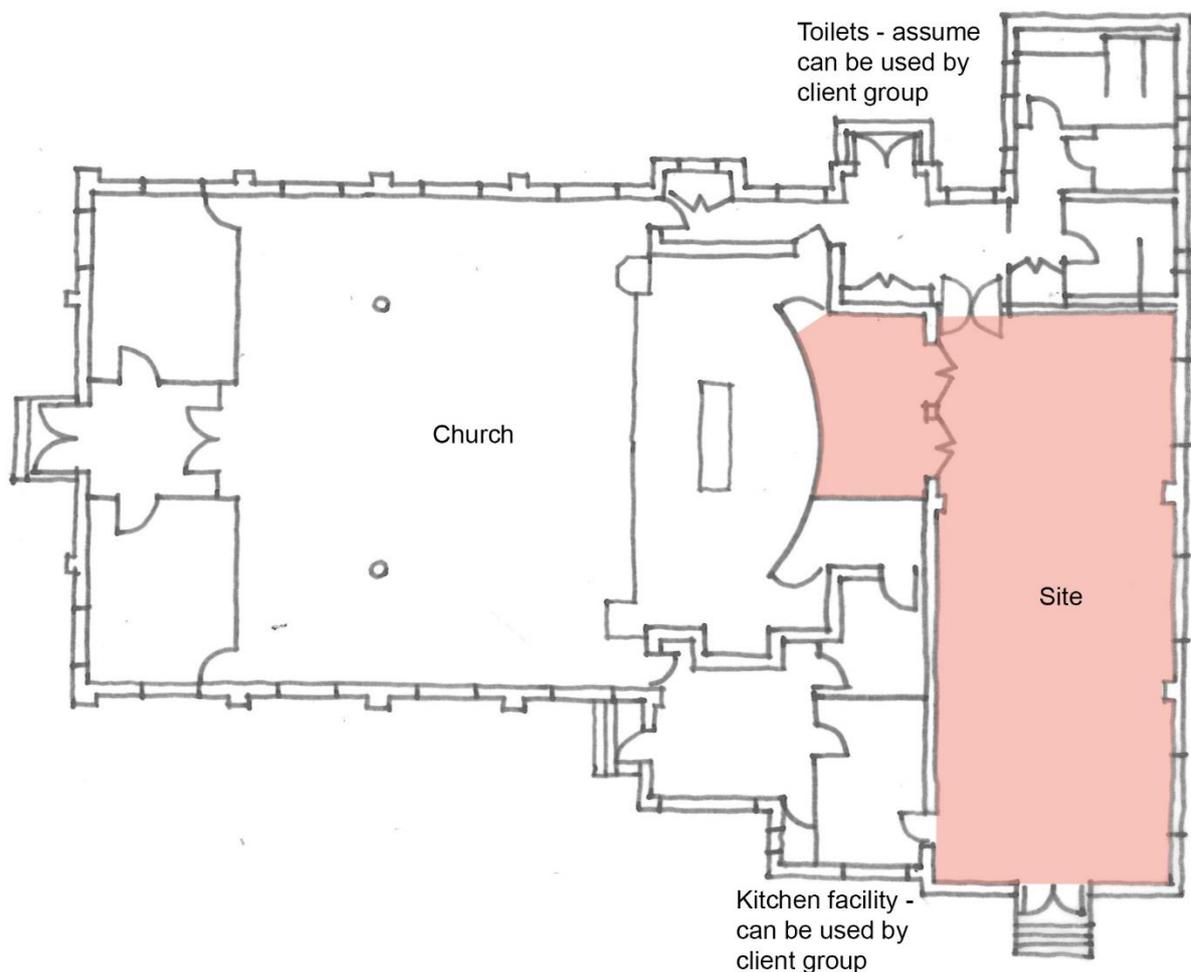
Site 3: Community Hall

It is considered that local communities might also make their facilities available on a temporary basis to provide accommodation that responds to this brief.

Figure 3.2.3, below, illustrates a generic Church or Community Hall. The key parameters that will inform design solutions for this site are as follows:

- Internal dimensions: 6.5m x 16m
- Floor to ceiling height: 5m
- Existing toilet and kitchen facilities located in adjacent spaces can be utilised by the client group
- General heating will not be provided
- It is assumed that power will be provided

Figure 3.2.3: Generic Church Hall floorplan – based on Figure 20.3 of the Metric Handbook.



3.3 Inspiration

As previously stated, we are not looking for a new design for short-term accommodation similar to disaster relief provision or containerised housing. We are looking for innovative and interesting ways to provide short-term, low-cost housing, within existing structures to assist the client group with transitioning to a lawful status. A loose fit, light-touch proposal.

During the initial brain storming period for this project, international architecture practice Gensler collaborated to generate some ideas. Some precedent ideas identified were particularly relevant:

Hajj

The annual Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca is the largest annual gathering of people in the world. A significant industry has been established around accommodating this huge influx of temporary residents – the Saudi Arabian government has invested more than \$100 billion in increasing pilgrimage facilities.

Specifically, in response to the need to provide vast amounts of temporary sleeping provision, a simple and cost effective 'product' based approach has been developed – whereby Hajji are each given a folded mattress and bedding package which can double as informal seating.

Figure 3.3.1: Photograph of temporary sleeping packs (submitted as part of Gensler brainstorming exercise by Gensler)



All(zone) Temporary Housing for Unfinished High-Rise Structures

In response to the proliferation of incomplete and abandoned high-rise structures in Thailand, Bangkok based studio All(zone) have developed a flexible temporary housing solution. The installations include a live/work space, and changing room, a storage space and a bed, complete with mosquito net. The enclosures are made from polyethylene-coated metal with nylon and fabric netting to provide additional privacy.

Figure 3.3.2: All(zone) temporary dwelling prototype, Bangkok (images: <https://www.dezeen.com/2015/10/07/micro-dwelling-allzone-abandoned-towers-parasites-chicago-architecture-biennial-2015/>)



Making Heimat. Germany, Arrival Country German Pavilion at the 15th Venice Architecture Biennale (2016)

The German Pavilion at the 2016 Venice Biennale explored the issues surrounding the mass immigration arising from Germany's refugee policies. Short term, secure and transitional housing formed a key element of the theme, and introduced a number of strategies that are relevant to this brief.

Figure 3.3.3: Interior of light-frame construction emergency hall, Munich, by Günther & Schabert Architekten, (image: http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/aktuell/pressebox/archiv_volltext.shtml?arch_1606/nachricht6075.html .courtesy Michael Heinrich).



The vehicle

4.1 Competition process

This process will be a two stage, open ideas competition. Stage 1 is the development and submission of a design proposal. A shortlist of up to 6 design proposals will be selected for Stage 2.

Questions on the brief may be submitted for a limited period as outlined below. Questions should be submitted by e-mail to: info@commonweal.org.uk, no later than close of business on 6th June 2017. The e-mail subject should include reference to the “**Starter for 10 Competition**”. Responses will be collated and made available to all designers on the Commonwealth website as per the timeline below.

Stage 2 will be the presentation of the initial submission to a jury of stakeholders. It is not anticipated that additional work is undertaken between Stage 1 and Stage 2, other than reformatting the submission material for presentation via power point.

The Jury will determine the outright winner and a maximum of two runners up. The winner will receive an honorarium of £1500, with runners up receiving £750 to contribute to their submission costs.

The shortlisted submissions will be collated into a document for the purposes of publicising the plight of the client group and the twin social injustice described in the research piece and the introduction to this competition.

4.2 Timeline

24 May	Competition launched – brief made available for download
6 June	Deadline for submission of questions on the brief
9 June	Responses to questions made available for download
23 June	Deadline for Stage 1 submissions
3 July	Shortlisted designers announced and invited to attend Stage 2 Jury
11 July	Stage 2 Jury
14 July	Winners announced

4.3 Submission requirements

Submissions should comprise:

- Design proposals provided in hard and soft copies (soft copy to be submitted on a USB memory stick or CD in PDF format)
- Completed Submission Checklist (Appendix A)
- Completed Details and Declaration Form (Appendix B)

The design proposals part of the submission requirements should adhere to the following format:

- Maximum of 2 x A2 pages
- Designer details should be included on every sheet

- Design content to include whatever visual material required to adequately describe the design proposals
- A short written commentary should be included

Please do not submit physical models – these cannot be accommodated at Stage 1. The designers invited to present their proposals to the jury in Stage 2 will be able to submit models if desired. Submissions should be directed to the following address:

Design Ideas Competition, Commonweal Housing, Unit 311 The Blackfriars Foundry, 156 Blackfriars Road, London, SE1 8EN.

4.4 Jury

The Stage 2 jury will comprise:

- Rt Hon Fiona Mactaggart, Chair of Board of Trustees, Commonweal
- Jeremy Swain, CEO Thames Reach
- Kathy Mohan, CEO Housing Justice
- Sadie Morgan, Director dRMM, Design Chair HS2, National Infrastructure Commissioner
- Amy Frearson, Editor Dezeen
- Phineas Harper, Assistant Director of the Architecture Foundation
- Jonathan Breen, Director Gensler

Russ Edwards, Commonweal Trustee and Head of Design at Pocket Living, will facilitate the process in lieu of a formal chair.

Designers are encouraged to recognise that the Jury includes lay members – as indeed will the intended broader audience for the outputs. The visual material should be developed such that they are accessible to all.

4.5 Assessment criteria

The Stage 1 assessment will be undertaken using the following criteria

- Response to the functional brief 40%
- Design quality 20%
- Practicality for implementation 20%
- Value for money 20%

The Stage 2 assessment will be undertaken using the following criteria

- Stage 1 assessment 40%
- Quality and content of presentation 60%

4.6 Eligibility

The competition is open to all. As such, there are no specific eligibility criteria. Commonweal's aspiration is to ultimately implement a housing based solution to address the social injustices identified in the Thames Reach research. The degree to which the successful designer can collaborate in this venture will however be influenced by the particular circumstances of the designer.

All submissions must be accompanied by a completed declaration form.

4.7 Next steps

Commonweal Housing is unable to give any guarantee that any design ideas will progress to a pilot project. However it is Commonweal's ambition to use any winning designs to engage in conversations with, and lobbying of, stakeholders such as the homelessness and housing sector, faith groups and public sector bodies such as the GLA, local boroughs and central Government - with a view to further develop a viable and deliverable alternative short-term housing solution.

Commonweal will wish to work with winning designers to engage further interest in the issue and the prospective solution in the trade and general media over the course of 2017.

Appendices

- A. **Submission checklist**
- B. **Details and Declaration**
- C. **Research into the lives of Romanian migrant workers living in encampments in London – Executive Summary. Becky Rice and Benjamin Sebok (May 2017)**
- D. **Scale plans of ‘sites’**

Appendix A: Submission Checklist

Name of Designer: _____

All submissions should be collated in a single package and directed to:

**Design Ideas Competition,
Commonweal Housing,
Unit 311 The Blackfriars Foundry,
156 Blackfriars Road,
London,
SE1 8EN.**

Submissions must be received no later than **5pm on 23 June 2017**.

Checklist

The following documents should be included in the submission:

Completed hard copy submission checklist (this form)

Completed hard copy Details and Declaration Form (Appendix B)

Hard copy design proposal (max 2 x A2 boards)

Digital copy of all above documents as PDF on USB stick or CD

Signed: _____

Print Name: _____

Date: _____

May
2017

Draft. V1.0

Appendix B: Details & Declaration Form

Name of Designer: _____

Principal Contact: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

e-mail address: _____

Web-address: _____

Nature of design studio (architecture practice/sole practitioner/multi-disciplinary/etc): _____

Relevant professional qualifications/registrations: _____

Declaration:

I/We certify that the information supplied in this submission, including all supporting documentation, is accurate and valid to the best of my/our knowledge. I/We undertake to bring any error or inaccuracy to the attention of Commonwealth as soon as this becomes apparent.

I/We confirm that the design proposals included within this submission are original works, and that they have been authored by the entity represented by the undersigned.

I/We confirm that Commonwealth may use the content of this submission for the purposes of publicity and lobbying around the social injustice described in the design brief, including the use of media channels.

Signed: _____

For and on behalf of: _____

Print Name: _____

Date: _____

May
2017

Draft. V1.0

Appendix C:

Thames Reach Research - Executive Summary

May
2017

Draft. V1.0

Research into the lives of Romanian migrant workers living in encampments in London

Executive Summary

Becky Rice and Benjamin Sebok

May 2017



Foreword - Commonweal

In 2016 Commonweal Housing launched the Starter for 10 research competition, to mark our 10th Anniversary – ten years of exploring diverse areas of social injustice where housing has a key role to play in any solution. The aim of the competition was to help an expert organisation working on the front lines of injustice find out more about a new or emerging issue – learning more about its scope, causes and impacts, as a first step towards envisaging possible solutions.

Thames Reach's winning proposal raised the issue of tent encampments, which in recent years have sprung up around parts of outer London. An emerging problem, under-reported and little understood, this was just the sort of issue that sparked the interest of Commonweal trustees and staff.

The injustice faced by those living in such unsanitary, unhealthy encampments is clear enough. Staying in the encampments is uncomfortable and unsafe. However, encampments also represent an injustice for those living in the local area: people unable or wary of using their own parks, canal towpaths or other public spaces that have been turned into the camps.

The main response so far has simply been to clear out individual encampments – which more often than not simply pop up again elsewhere, sometimes only 100 metres further on over the local authority boundary. This is no solution at all.

Before we can begin to think about how we can solve this problem, we need answers to some basic questions. Who are the inhabitants of these camps? Where have they come from, and what has driven them to live in tents? How can they be helped out of rough sleeping, and what solutions might work for them? The key finding of Thames Reach's research is that this is a distinct group with particular drivers, motivations and potential solutions.

Those in the encampments are not the benefit-scrounging beggars sometimes portrayed by lazy journalism or misinformed public opinion. As such, different – and new – solutions to avoid the growth of such encampments are needed. That is now the challenge for Commonweal and all in the homelessness and housing sectors. It may require us questioning our previous cosy ideals, norms and solutions; since those solutions have not worked for this group (and probably not for others either).

We need to use this fascinating new research to open our eyes to issues we may have been blind to before, and rise up to this new task. To quote Albert Einstein's view of repeating old mistakes: "Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results."

At Commonweal, we hope we can help project partners to find new solutions.

Ashley Horsey

Chief Executive, Commonweal Housing Solutions

Foreword - Thames Reach

Thames Reach works with rough sleepers on the streets of London every single night of the year. In recent years, the number of working migrants sleeping rough in London has increased and this has been a growing cause for concern. Rudimentary encampments have arisen, typically in parks, under bridges, in derelict buildings, and on patches of wasteland.

Those living in these encampments tend to have limited support needs and are evidently self-sufficient. Outreach services are confronted with a conspicuous lack of provision for them. However, these encampments raise troubling issues that cannot be ignored. The nature of these informal camps creates an environment which is unsustainable, both for the people living there and the surrounding communities. Furthermore, migrant workers are taking up unregulated, casual jobs that leave them open to exploitation.

The research presented in this report, generously supported by Commonwealth, seeks to understand encampment rough sleepers staying at these sites, specifically Romanian nationals on sites in outer north and east London, and to challenge commonly-held assumptions. In particular, the research seeks to understand the motivations and aspirations of this group, and give them an opportunity to talk about the kinds of work and housing they want.

The findings detailed here offer insights into life in London as a working migrant, and help develop our understanding of migrant homelessness. They reveal discrete communities living in the capital, each with their own needs, requiring a range of responses from homeless and statutory services.

This research is not intended to provide all the answers; this is only the beginning of the debate, rather than its conclusion.

Jeremy Swain

Chief Executive, Thames Reach

Executive Summary

In 2016, Thames Reach, a London charity supporting homeless and vulnerable people, was awarded funding from Commonweal Housing to research the situation of people living in encampments in outer north and east London.

The aims of the research were to:

- describe the nature of the problem, including the factors driving migration; the organisation of the encampments; the types of work accessed by the residents; and the options they would be willing to pursue if available
- suggest possible approaches to address this form of homelessness.

The research took place between November 2016 and January 2017. The main element of the research fieldwork comes from interviews with 21 Romanian people staying on encampments in four boroughs: Barking and Dagenham, Barnet, Enfield and Haringey. In this fairly small project it was decided to focus on this specific group, since they are the largest population currently staying on encampments. The researcher, Becky Rice, co-produced this part of the project with a Romanian-speaking outreach worker from the Thames Reach Targeted Rapid Intervention Outreach (TRIO) team, Benjamin Sebok. In addition, the researcher conducted interviews with stakeholders and undertook a desktop review of relevant information.

Background and context

Romania and Bulgaria joined the European Union (EU) in 2007. Initially there were some restrictions on the rights of nationals from these countries to move to the UK and work. However, at the end of 2013, these transitional arrangements were lifted and Romanian nationals were free to come and work in the UK under the Free Movement Directive. Since that time, there has been a large increase in the number of Romanians living in the UK overall, and in the numbers seen rough sleeping in London. In 2015/16, 1,545 Romanians were contacted rough sleeping in London compared to 496 in 2012/13.¹

Encampments are defined as sites where three or more people are staying in makeshift shelters and tents. Conditions are very poor and sometimes hazardous. The sites are often in large open spaces, wooded areas and around the A406 road. This research focused specifically on sites where Romanians were living because they are the largest group currently staying on encampments.

Data about the number of people living on encampments in outer north and east London at any one time is of limited quality. Information from CHAIN² does not provide a complete picture. This is because residents of an encampment are often not all present when outreach workers attend, or they refuse to provide details or come out of their shelters.

Various developments in recent years have affected the rights of EU citizens living in the UK. One of the most significant changes in the context of this research occurred in May 2016 when the Home Office published updated instructions for 'assessing whether to administratively remove an EEA [European Economic Area] national'. 'Administrative removal' is when 'the Home Office enforces [...] removal from the UK if [someone] does not have the right to remain in the UK'.³ The guidance issued in 2016 identified rough sleeping specifically as an abuse of the 'right to freedom of movement'.⁴ New guidance issued in February 2017 specified that enforcement action on the grounds of someone rough sleeping 'must be proportionate, and action should only be taken where it is apparent that the rough sleeper is misusing their right to reside', taking into consideration factors such as whether the individual is taking steps to find accommodation or has been forced to sleep rough due to 'sudden change in circumstances'.⁵

Those living on encampments have little contact with services and the wider community. As evidenced by the interviews below, members of the specific group in question are motivated to come to the UK purely to access work. They are healthy and ready for work, and rarely have support needs requiring services or expectations to access health services and welfare benefits.

TRIO is a pan-London service funded by London Councils to work on encampments and ‘hotspots’ (sites where three or more people are sleeping rough on the same date). The remit of the team is to support people to access accommodation and work and to improve their health. The TRIO team regularly visits sites to check conditions and the welfare of clients; they also provide advice on the dangers of sleeping rough and the risk of enforcement action. Where possible the team offers some support around employment and accommodation, although the options for this particular group are very limited. Most have No Recourse to Public Funds, for example, because they would not be able to demonstrate continuous periods of employment required to secure Job Seekers Allowance – (JSA) or Housing Benefit. For people wishing to leave the UK, TRIO can provide support with voluntary reconnections (i.e. pay for and support the client to return to their home country or somewhere else they have a connection to).

Findings from client interviews

Profile of interviewees

- Interviews were undertaken with 21 people: 19 men and two women all of working age (from 20 to 61 years). All the interviewees were Romanian. Five described themselves as Romanian Roma, but this could be an underestimate due to reticence about providing ethnic data in light of perceived prejudice against Roma people.
- Interviewees reported very few support needs (drug, alcohol and mental health problems), but two had gambling problems. All were regularly undertaking physically demanding work and appeared to have a good level of physical health.
- People interviewed tended to be resilient and resourceful, making the best of their situation and finding a way to manage with limited facilities, for example accessing showers at local gyms and regularly speaking with family back home.
- Interviewees had not been homeless in their home countries before coming to the UK. Many were working in construction or agriculture back home; this work was very poorly paid and irregular
- Most people were able to read well in their own language, but English language skills among interviewees were generally low.
- Five interviewees had arrived in the UK in 2014 or before. The most common year of arrival was 2015; seven people had first come to London to work in 2016. All but one interviewee had only lived in London since coming to the UK.

Accommodation and sleeping sites

- Most interviewees had not spent all their time in the UK living outside; 18 people had experience of shared accommodation, usually a shared room in very overcrowded, poor conditions. People had often left this type of accommodation when they had run out of money.
- Visits to Romania to see family were common. Most people planned to return home for several weeks during the colder weather (December 2016 to February/March 2017).
- People had learnt where to find an encampment to stay in from friends and family who had already lived on them, when visiting home, and from other Romanian people whom they had met in areas attended to pick up work.
- Interviewees were clear that they had not paid anyone to stay on the encampments and reported that no one is ‘in charge’. There was a sense that everyone was independent and able to find a place to get some sleep, as opposed to people talking about there being community or communal life.
- There was no evidence of crossover between the group interviewed for this research and groups

of Romanian people who beg in central London (this was an area of uncertainty in some of the stakeholder interviews, so the researcher and practitioner explored this in some of the later client interviews). Interviewees reported that they had only ever travelled into central London for work; some even commented that they would not know how to get there.

Enforcement action

- Encampments are considered problematic by local and central government because of the unsafe nature of the sites and complaints from local communities about rubbish and anti-social behaviour, for example.
- There has been a drive to stop people congregating to find casual work in some areas. (For example the Public Space Protection Order - PSPO in place in Brent prohibiting people from picking up casual labour in specified areas which has recently been extended until the end of December 2017).⁶
- Over half (13) of the interviewees had experienced encampments being closed down and having to move as a result. Most stated that they looked around for another place in which to set up their sleeping area, usually very close to the location of the original encampment.
- Nearly all this group had had their ID checked by the police while looking for work.

Work

- All the men interviewed primarily worked in construction and labouring roles. This was nearly always 'cash in hand' casual work. Nearly all (18) interviewees found work through word of mouth and by turning up and waiting for work at builders' merchants.
- The average payment was between £40 and £60 per day. People reported that they mainly worked on smaller sites (such as houses and small businesses), but would on occasion work on larger sites.
- There were four male interviewees who mentioned 'legal work'. Two people (from different encampments) had worked in recycling plants, but found this work extremely unpleasant with poor working conditions.
- Exploitation was reported as common for those working 'cash in hand'. Twelve people had one or more times not been paid the agreed amount for the work they had undertaken.
- The two female interviewees' experience of working in the UK had been markedly different from that of the male interviewees. One had a cleaning and housekeeping role in a central London hotel; another was undertaking casual warehouse work packing food. The latter's previous employment had been packing clothes, including for two major high street retailers, where she described conditions as very poor and payment of only £4.50 per hour.
- Interviewees were asked how long their longest period without work had been. Most had only experienced short periods of less than a week out of work.

Money

- Over the past three months most people interviewed had sent home more than £500; eight had sent home more than £1,000.
- Interviewees were asked what they were saving money for or what they spent it on. Nearly all (18 of the 21) interviewees were supporting people in Romania; usually children and a spouse. Most cited the everyday basic needs - such as food, fuel and clothing - of their dependants as the main use of their income. Ten also said they were using money to improve their homes in Romania. Those sending money back home said that it made a huge impact on the lives of their dependants.
- Those without dependants had not managed to save money.

Potential areas of support

- All interviewees said they would welcome support to find accommodation (i.e. a room). People were also interested in support to help them find legal work in or outside London, and to access bank

accounts and National Insurance (NI) numbers if they did not have them.

- Provided they were working, interviewees would be willing to pay for a room, on average, between £201 and £300 a month including bills; equivalent to between £7-10 a night. Interviewees would be willing to share a room with one other person. People frequently clarified that they would only be able to pay this amount if they had regular work.

Motivation, plans and perception of life in London

- All interviewees identified extreme poverty and lack of opportunity as the push factors for leaving Romania and access to relatively well-paid, unskilled work as the pull factor for coming to London.
- Nearly all respondents said they would stay in the UK ‘for as long as I can’ or ‘as long as I am allowed’. Most did not have detailed plans for the future, but rather focused on earning money on a week-to-week basis.
- Most felt their move to the UK had been successful.

Key recommendations

1. Homelessness services should consider how they could assist EU migrants living on encampments to access basic accommodation and move away from the informal labour market. Support with accessing accommodation must be paired with proactive efforts to help people move into legal employment and the promotion of legal advice services available to migrants.
2. Services targeting EU migrants living on encampments should take into account the current demands on clients – for example providing opportunities to access advice outside of working hours and making available Romanian-speaking staff.
3. For accommodation to be suitable for this group it would need to be flexible (probably paid on a nightly or weekly basis) at around £8 a night. Room sharing (preferably with just one other person) and shared toilets and showers would be acceptable.
4. The police and the TRIO team should continue to monitor encampments, undertaking basic checks on the welfare of clients where possible. Health and safety considerations for outreach workers should be regularly reviewed.
5. Expecting or seeking high-quality information about this client group is to be avoided: it would be costly and without clear advantages. However, bringing together the available intelligence across boroughs on a regular basis may provide a clearer picture without being excessively expensive.
6. Where action is planned to close down encampments, this should be done using a cross-borough approach to avoid displacement of those people staying on encampments.
7. This research focuses on a specific group of people who are in good health and able to work on a regular basis. Thames Reach is concerned that there are other more vulnerable groups living on different encampment sites who are at more immediate risk of harm from rough sleeping due to support needs such as heavy alcohol use and lack of income or greater exploitation at work. Further investigation into these groups should be undertaken. A more sophisticated understanding of cohorts within the population of EU nationals rough sleeping in London would be beneficial in developing service responses and informing policy.
8. The homelessness sector should consider options for raising the profile of issues around the exploitation of migrant workers by employers through policy and influencing work. This should include submission of this report and other relevant information to the Independent Review of Employment Practices in the Modern Economy being undertaken for the Department of Business, Industry and Industrial Strategy (DBIIS).⁷
9. While there was no evidence of modern slavery having been experienced amongst research participants, recent research has highlighted this issue in the UK including amongst homeless Romanian people. Services must remain vigilant and be equipped to identify this.⁸

Endnotes

- ¹ Source: CHAIN data provided by the CHAIN team St Mungo's. Note: figure may differ slightly from previously published figures due to retrospective updates to client data.
- ² CHAIN is a GLA-funded database used by those working with rough sleepers to record information about their work.
- ³ Right to Remain Toolkit (accessed January 2017): www.righttoremain.org.uk
- ⁴ Home Office European Economic Area administrative removal: consideration and decision instructions for assessing whether to administratively remove a European Economic Area (EEA) national. Version 2 (May 2016) See: (Reg 19 (3) (c))
- ⁵ Home Office European Economic Area administrative removal: consideration and decision instructions for assessing whether to administratively remove a European Economic Area (EEA) national. Version 3 (February 2017) See: (Reg 23 (6) (c))
- ⁶ A PSPO is 'an order that identifies the public place and prohibits specified things being done in the restricted area... Failure to comply with a PSPO is an offence': www.asbhelp.co.uk (accessed February 2017).
- ⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/employment-practices-in-the-modern-economy> (accessed March 2017).
- ⁸ Keast M (2017) Understanding and Responding to Modern Slavery within the Homelessness Sector, The Passage.

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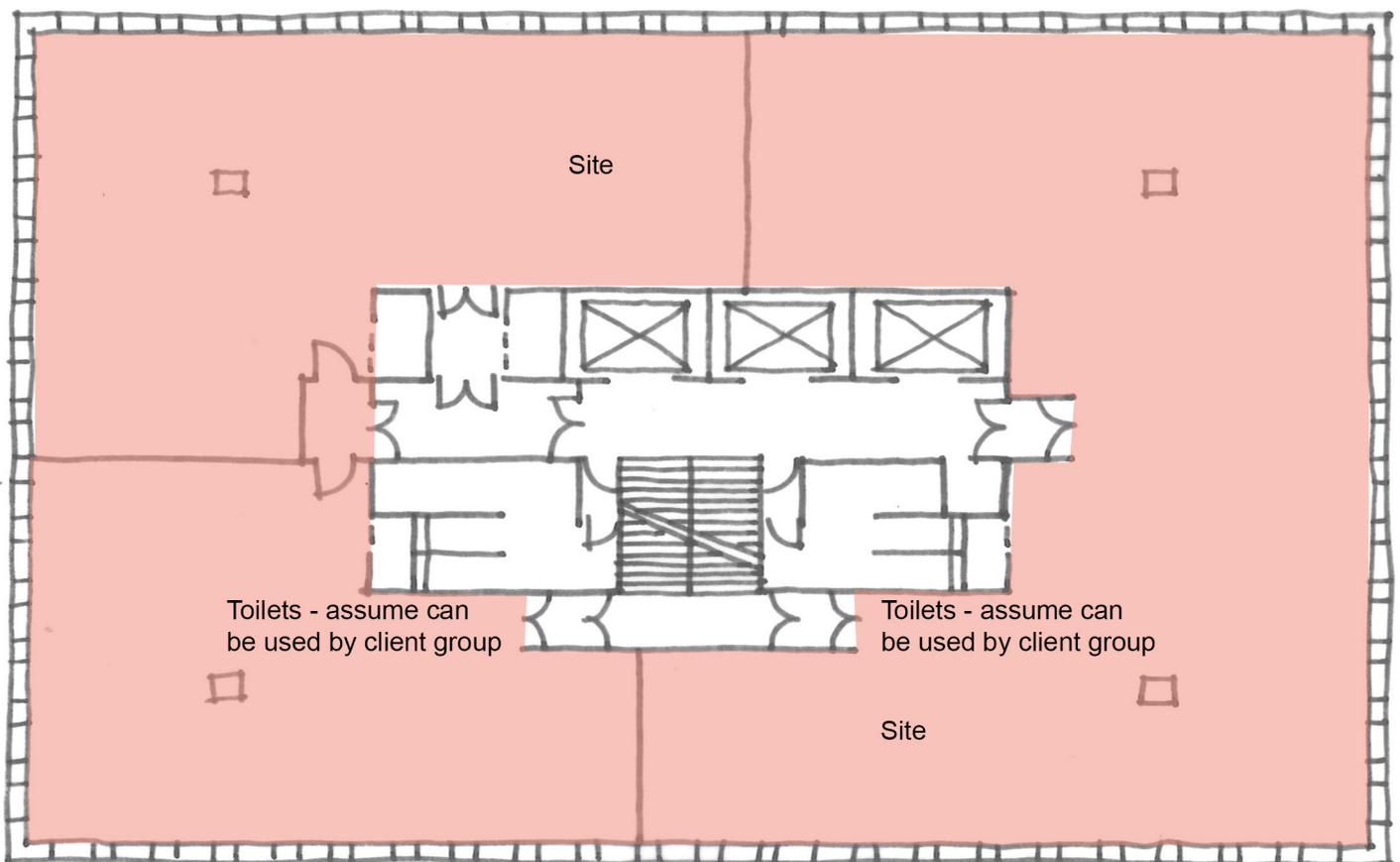
Appendix D: Scale plans of 'sites'

Site 1: Redundant Office

The key parameters that will inform design solutions for this site are as follows:

- Internal dimensions: 21.5m x 35.5m
- Floor to ceiling height: 4m
- Designers should assume a proprietary access floor is installed – incorporating a 250mm service void below
- Existing toilet facilities located within the serviced core can be utilised by the client group
- General heating will not be provided
- It is assumed that power will be provided

Plan 1:200 scale @ A4



Site 2: Redundant Light Industrial Structure

The key parameters that will inform design solutions for this site are as follows:

- Internal dimensions: 72m x 43m
- Floor to ceiling height: exceeding 8m
- Designers should assume that the floor slab is concrete and uninsulated
- Existing toilet facilities indicated can be utilised by the client group
- General heating will not be provided
- It is assumed that power will be provided
- For a space as large as this, consideration should be given to management of cohort size such that it can increase and decrease

Plan 1:450 scale @ A4



Site 3: Community Hall

The key parameters that will inform design solutions for this site are as follows:

- Internal dimensions: 6.5m x 16m
- Floor to ceiling height: 5m
- Existing toilet and kitchen facilities located in adjacent spaces can be utilised by the client group
- General heating will not be provided
- It is assumed that power will be provided

Plan 1:200 scale @ A4

