

## NON PROFIT MAKING ORGANISATIONS - APPLICATION FOR 100% DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF

### 1. Electric House Project, 296 Willesden Lane NW2 5HZ - Meanwhile Space C.I.C.

Address	Period of relief	Amount of relief	Cost of relief (25%) – to be borne by the project
Ground Floor, Electric House, 296 Willesden Lane, London NW2 5HZ	30/10/2012 – 31/3/2013	£9,791.16	£2,447.79
Total		£9,791.16	£2,447.79

### Background

1. Electric House is owned by Network Housing and is currently empty. The building is to be redeveloped during 2013/14, however whilst the property is empty, the council is delivering a project that will fill the building with meanwhile use.
2. This will complement the meanwhile use already taking place in Willesden Green – Queens Parade is a parade of shops that has been filled with meanwhile activity over the past year, supporting new businesses and attracting people back to the high street.
3. Bent Council has employed Meanwhile Space CIC as consultants to manage the second phase of work in Willesden Town Centre. Part of this work includes taking on and managing Electric House to fill the vacant space with meanwhile activity. Meanwhile Space CIC liaised with the owners, Network Housing who are agreeable for the space to be used by Meanwhile Space CIC whilst it is empty.
4. Meanwhile Space CIC signed a lease with Network Housing on 30 October 2012, initially until the end of January 2013, however it is likely that this will be extended to end of March 2013. Within the project budget funds have been set aside to cover the cost of awarding discretionary rate relief to 31 March 2013.
5. Initially it will only be the ground floor space which will be used for meanwhile activity. There is potential to use the first floor though this currently is not in use. The space will be used for mainly creative use and will look to engage the community and support local businesses, along with attracting more people to the area.

6. The activities hosted at Electric House will bring footfall to the area, support local businesses and provide space for community and creative projects. Occupants will be supported in any way they can be, drawing on Meanwhile Space CIC's expertise and experience and access to a range of networks.
7. Art exhibitions will be held, showing work by local residents and art students. This will give them an insight in to how to put on future exhibitions and generate interest in their work.
8. A 'School of Shops' will be delivered which will include hosting a series of workshops which will encourage local businesses to attend. These workshop sessions with businesses will cover topics such as visual merchandising, marketing, customer services and commerciality.
9. The workshops are to be run by local artists/facilitators who are hoping that they may be able to run similar sessions in future as a business. This provides them with the opportunity to test out their ideas and gain experience in a safe environment.
10. The space also provides opportunity to engage with young people from the local area. Ideas include working with them on a graffiti art workshop using space available at Electric House.
11. The range of activities at Electric House will provide a safe space for people to test out ideas which they may not have opportunity to elsewhere. Running alongside this, it will also deliver business support and advice to both new and existing businesses, and aims also to increase visitor numbers to the High Street. Electric House will build on the success of Queens Parade and will aim to rejuvenate the high street further.
12. Meanwhile Space CIC is a non-profit organisation and as such would normally only be considered for 25% discretionary rate relief based on the current policy (as set out in Appendix 1). Incurring the remaining 75% rates liability for these premises would mean a significant proportion of the project budget would be spent on business rates, rather than driving and delivering the social and economic regeneration of the town centre. The Council has previously agreed to award Meanwhile Space CIC 100% rates relief for properties it occupies as part of the Willesden Green project. The 25% cost of awarding the relief will be met from the budget allocated to the Electric House project.

## **Recommendation**

Meanwhile Space CIC are a non-profit making organisation working with the Council to promote the regeneration of Willesden Green. The Electric House project compliments and builds upon the work being undertaken by Meanwhile Space in respect of the units in Queens Parade. It is therefore recommended that the Council grants 100% discretionary rate relief in respect of Electric House for the periods of their occupation. The cost of awarding the relief will be met from the project's budget.

## 2. Wembley Regeneration Project - Meanwhile Space C.I.C.

Address	Period of relief	Amount of relief	Cost of relief (25%) – to be borne by the project
5-7 Wembley Hill Road	1/10/2012 – 31/3/2013	£6,412.00	£1,603.00
1 Wembley Hill Road	17/10/2012 – 31/3/2013	£1,903.31	£475.83
Ground floor, Cottrell House, 53 – 63 Wembley Hill Road	4/1/2013 – 31/3/2013 (occupied from Mid February)	£7,234.82	£1,808.71
Total		£15,550.13	£3,887.54

### Background

1. At the meeting of the Executive on 23 April 2012 it was agreed to award Meanwhile Space CIC 100% discretionary rate relief for the period 1/4/2012 to 30/9/2012 for 5-7 Wembley Hill Road. Their occupation of this unit has been extended to 31 March 2013 and so an extension of the relief is sought for the period 1/10/2012 – 31/3/2013. In addition they have taken on 1 Wembley Hill Road for 6 months from 17 October 2012 and the ground floor at Cottrell House from 4 January 2013
2. In February 2012 the London Borough of Brent entered into an agreement with Meanwhile Space CIC to deliver a project within empty shops and commercial premises within Wembley town centre and regeneration area. The project's aim is to deliver opportunities that will facilitate training and skills development of Brent residents with a view to improving people's chances of gaining employment. The project is funded by the council from the New Initiatives budget from the Regeneration and Major Projects Department.
3. The property at 5-7 Wembley Hill Road has been providing opportunities for local people to market their business ideas whilst simultaneously working to engage the local community via the "Coming Soon Club". These people have been given training in running a business as well as other commercial skills. They have used the premises for displaying and marketing their products.
4. In addition local businesses and training providers have been engaged to assist with the delivery of physical improvements to the vacant shops/premises to make them more marketable

5. Meanwhile Space have now taken on a further shop at 1 Wembley Hill Road from where one of the start-up businesses will further promote their enterprise with a view to eventually taking on the premises in their own right. Rate relief is sought for 6 months only in respect of this property.
6. In addition they have just taken on the ground floor of Cottrell House in Wembley Hill Road. This unit will provide further incubation space for the “Coming Soon Club” Project, where residents can test bed start-up business enterprise, and provide community projects with spaces to operate within their local community. Utilising the existing space, individuals will be given an opportunity to test ideas, develop business skills and access training and support, such as affordable childcare. With the right support and training, ideas could turn into businesses that earn a living for individuals and go on to provide employment for others. The aim to support between 35-40 start up businesses within the first 12 months.
7. This lease for Cottrell House is part of the Coming Soon Club project managed by Meanwhile Space and commissioned by Brent council to meet the regeneration strategy for Wembley. Meanwhile Space supports the Council’s strategic objective of bringing vacant spaces back into use by creating incubator spaces where residents can test bed start up business enterprise, helps foster sustainable built environments that drive economic regeneration and reduces poverty, inequality and exclusion. In addition community projects will promote community cohesion and improve quality of life.
8. Meanwhile Space CIC is a non-profit organisation and as such would normally only be considered for 25% discretionary rate relief based on the current policy (as set out in Appendix 1). Incurring the remaining 75% rates liability for the properties secured on a meanwhile lease would mean a significant proportion of the project budget would be spent on business rates, rather than driving and delivering the social and economic regeneration of the town centre. The 25% cost of awarding the relief will be met from the budget allocated to the Wembley Regeneration project.

## **Recommendation**

Meanwhile Space CIC are a non-profit making organisation working with the Council to promote the regeneration of Wembley. The initial use of 5-7 Wembley Hill Road has already realised benefits, it is therefore recommended that the Council continues to grant 100% discretionary rate relief to Meanwhile Space for their use of Cottrell House, 5-7 Wembley Hill Road and 1 Wembley Hill Road to 31 March 2013. In addition entitlement to 100% relief should continue if their occupations continue after 1 April 2013 as seems likely. The cost of awarding relief will be met from the project’s budget.