

## Londoner 62

### Chapter 62. Longhouse Blocks

"Indeed, my lord." Yeden pointed further ahead of the workers who were cutting trees, and said, "You can see them digging there. But instead of making individual holes for every single stake of the wall, I've told them to make a narrow trench, where we can stack the logs one by one."

Kivamus nodded. Looking at the guard captain, he asked, "Do we also have to buy ropes for tying those logs together? That might get costly though."

"No, my Lord. We don't really need any ropes for that," Hudan replied. "Ropes are usually helpful for building smaller walls, but the stakes which we will make from these huge trees, would themselves be sturdy enough to stand under their own weight, along with the support they get from the stakes on each side of them. Apart from that, we will also put in place horizontal logs, which will support the walls from inside. Those horizontal logs will themselves be supported by other slanted logs from the ground. That will make the walls strong enough to even resist a cavalry charge." He added, "Of course, once the walls have been completed, we can add some other defensive structures later."

"You seem to have a good idea about this. Make sure to find some time to regularly talk with the workers who will be making the walls."

Hudan gave a nod. "I'll do that, my Lord."

Kivamus looked at the carpenter cutting new planks on the left. "Bring Taniok here as well."

Immediately, one of the guards who had come with them jogged towards the carpenter and returned with him.

Taniok gave a bow as well, when he reached there.

"What about the second log mover?" Kivamus asked him.

Taniok looked nervous for a moment, and looked down at the ground. "It won't take long, milord," he mumbled. He looked up at Kivamus and continued, "I am waiting for my apprentice to finish making a few parts at my workshop before I can assemble it. It should be completed by tomorrow."

Kivamus didn't know the cause of the carpenter's nervousness, but chose not to ask about it for now. "Okay, that's good." He looked at the bald foreman, and said, "Now that there is enough space cleared here, we can finalize the locations of the longhouses."

"That's a good idea, milord," Yeden said. "It would be difficult for you to find enough time to visit here every time I need to make such a decision, so if we finalize at least a general location, then I can put the workers to start digging the foundations after the stumps have been removed in a couple of days."

"Let's do it then." Picking up a sharp stick of wood from nearby, Kivamus squatted down and started drawing on the ground, while others gathered around the drawing in the light of the late morning sun. He drew a simple rectangle and started explaining while pointing at its sides. "From what I have told you all earlier, the longhouse should be twenty-five meters long, and around five meters wide." He drew more lines inside the rectangle, and continued, "There will be twin bunk beds on both sides of the longer walls, so that we can accommodate forty-eight people inside."

He looked at others, "But since we have more homeless villagers than we anticipated earlier, we need another longhouse just for them. And there are many villagers whose houses are quite damaged, even if they are still standing - so that those villagers aren't considered homeless, but they will still be shivering all winter long if they live in those houses. So I want to make more longhouses to accommodate everyone who wants to move there, even if it's just for the winter."

Taniok looked at the drawing with observant eyes. "In that case, we can make the longhouses one after another in parallel, with each one maybe five meters away from the others."

Gorsazo gave his opinion as well. "But Lord Kivamus said that he wants to make wide roads around the longhouses - ten meters wide each, and not just five. So a lot of space would be wasted on roads, if we make longhouses like that." He pointed at the shorter sides of the rectangle Kivamus had drawn. "I'd say, we make the longhouses right next to each other, with their doors on the shorter sides here. We could give a gap of a few feet between the houses for ventilation, and a single wide road around the full group of longhouses would be enough in this case."

Kivamus heard their opinions, as he thought more about it. He recalled some of the square-shaped housing blocks in some cities on earth. That idea could work well here much better than what others

were suggesting. He started drawing again, and drew another rectangle in parallel, to represent another longhouse. "I think this is a better idea. We can make two longhouses like this in parallel, but we will keep around fifteen meters of gap between them."

As Gorsazo started to speak again, he said, "Let me finish first. I know it seems even more wasteful in terms of space, but by doing this, we can make a third longhouse right next to the first two longhouses," he added, while drawing a third rectangle below the earlier two rectangles, "which would complete three sides of the new design, with some empty space in the middle. We can call this group of three buildings a longhouse-block."

Gorsazo looked at it for a moment, and said, "But there is still wasted space in the middle. And what about the fourth side?"

Kivamus gave a knowing smile and said, "Now, tell me, how would the villagers cook their food, once they shift to these long houses? Usually every family cooks their food in their own home by themselves. But that is not practical here, is it?" Seeing others give a nod, he continued, "That is why, we will do this."

He drew two smaller rectangles on the fourth side of the longhouse-block to connect the first and third rectangles, leaving a small empty space between them. "Now, these will be two extra rooms for the people of that longhouse block to use, each of which will be five meters wide and maybe six meters long, which would leave a small gap of around three meters between these rooms as the entryway. One of these rooms can be made into a dedicated communal kitchen for all the residents of this longhouse block."

He stood up, and looking at others' faces, he added, "This way some of the women who are not working as manual laborers, mainly those who are staying back to take care of children and the elderly, can cook food for all the people there."

After hearing the full explanation, others gave understanding nods. Taniok said, "I understand the purpose of one of the smaller rooms now, but what about the other one?"

"It is for storage, of course," Kivamus said with a smile. "After people leave their own homes and move to the longhouses they will need a place to keep their belongings. Also, while some of the grain can be kept in the communal kitchen itself, this storage room can also be used to keep some extra sacks of grains and vegetables. This way, the villagers wouldn't have to go to the manor or the grain merchants very frequently to get grain from there. They can buy as much grain as they will need for a month or

more in a single trip with a cart. Or for now, we can provide them enough grain for a month at a time, which would save a lot of time that would otherwise have been wasted in transporting the grain."

Gorsazo suggested, "In that case, we don't need to make the gate exactly in the middle of the fourth side. Since the kitchen will be used for preparing food for more than a hundred people, it would need to be bigger. I think, in the fifteen meters of free space on the fourth side, we can make the kitchen around eight and a half meters long, while the storage room can be just four meters long, which would leave around two and a half meters for the gates."

"Hmm..." Kivamus muttered. "That makes sense. Taniok, you have the new measurements now."

Hudan said, "This design would also make it easier for the villagers to defend themselves in case the village walls are breached, or in case there is a bandit raid before the village walls are even completed. We can make a strong and easily-defensible gate connecting these two smaller rooms, and if needed, the villagers can shut it securely from inside, while the guards deal with the bandits outside the longhouse blocks."

"Exactly," Kivamus said. "That was my intention as well. And if the bandits do try to attack at those gates, only a few strong villagers with machetes - which we can provide them to keep in the storage room - can hold many bandits at the gates. That is much easier for even two or three villagers to do, compared to defending a few dozen separate houses by themselves - like they had to do till now."

"It is indeed a good design, my Lord, with many benefits," Gorsazo said appreciatively.

Taniok asked, "If we are making the longhouses in this arrangement, then can't we just make a single building in that square shape, instead of making three separate longhouses? That would be easier to build, and it'll be more structurally strong, since the buildings will be connected to each other with beams at each corner of the block."

"That's... actually a good idea," Kivamus said after a moment. "Okay, let's do it this way. Instead of the two sides of the block being twenty-five meters long, while the other two sides being thirty meters long, we can make a square shaped block with all sides being twenty-five meters long. That is a good idea for any future expansion as well, if we keep the longhouse blocks in a square shape." He added, "But this change in design would mean that the total capacity of three longhouses will be a little lower than what it would have been if we had made three separate longhouses."

Taniok nodded. "That is true, milord. But the difference shouldn't be too much." He gazed into the distance, as he calculated, "We will be losing the living space equal to two squares of five meters in each corner of the third longhouse. From the internal design that you have told us milord, that would leave the third longhouse with a length of only fifteen meters, which is just enough for seven bunks next to each other, or a total of twenty-eight bunks there."

Kivamus did the mental calculations as well. "That sounds about right. But I would still say the benefits of keeping each block in a square-shape are going to be worth it in the long term planning of any growing town. This means that instead of one hundred and forty-eight people being housed in three separate longhouses, we would be able to accommodate one hundred and twenty-four people in each longhouse block - including forty-eight each in two longhouses, and twenty-eight in the third one. That is still good enough, since even completing a single such block would be able to accommodate all the homeless villagers."

Kivamus added, "That central courtyard within each longhouse block would give safe spaces for children to play there, with older villagers watching over them, when adults go to work in daytime. Also, those women and elderly villagers who will be staying in the longhouses instead of going for manual work, can make vegetable gardens in the empty space within the blocks. It wouldn't be enough to feed them completely, but it would still add variety to their diets, while giving them a way to contribute to the village and feel helpful."

"True enough, my Lord," Gorsazo said. "That means, we would have to build another such longhouse block to provide warm living spaces to all the remaining villagers who want to shift there."

Kivamus nodded. "And as I told you all earlier, we will be making ten-meter-wide roads everywhere we are doing any construction, so each longhouse block would be surrounded by such a road." He pointed at the area right next to the original houses of the village, "So we will leave space for making a ten-meter-wide road running parallel to these houses."