

WANDSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING COMMITTEE – 16TH NOVEMBER 2022

EXECUTIVE – 21ST NOVEMBER 2022

Report by the Director of Housing and Regeneration on the Alton Regeneration  
(Roehampton)

SUMMARY

This report provides an update on proposals for the Alton Estate and recommends that steps are taken to enable planning applications to be submitted for proposals to improve the Alton Activity Centre, Downshire Field and to allow for the possible delivery of the building known as Block A, in advance of any wider proposals for the estate.

It also reports on engagement activity on the estate over the past 12 months and recommends agreement to future engagement activities and an approach to meanwhile uses.

The Director of Resources comments that any costs arising from the development of future proposals for Block A, as well as improvements to the Alton Activity Centre and Downshire Field, will need to be met from within the existing approved budgets (and wider provision within the Business Plan), or new budgets will need to be approved at the appropriate time.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The Housing Committee are recommended to support the recommendations in paragraph 2. If they approve any views, comments or recommendations on the report, these will be submitted to the Executive or the appropriate regulatory and other committees for their consideration.
2. The Executive is recommended to:
  - (a) Note the contents of this report; and
  - (b) Agree that officers commence the process to undertake the necessary design and other technical work and consultation necessary to submit planning applications for improvements to the play spaces at Downshire Field and Alton Activity Centre and the building currently known as “Block A”, and note that the capital costs of these proposals will be brought to a future meeting of this Committee for their consideration and approval; and
  - (c) Agree the Alton Estate Community Engagement Strategy Action Plan 2022/23 (Appendix 6) and note the progress with community engagement over the last 12 months.

## ***Alton estate – next steps***

### **BACKGROUND**

3. Paper No. 22-253 agreed to terminate the procurement process to find a joint venture partner for the delivery of the Alton Masterplan Regeneration and to review the objectives and options for improvements to the Alton Estate. The report also authorised officers to explore options to bring the building currently known as “Block A” forward as a stand-alone scheme and to investigate the scope to bring other improvements to the estate forward.

### **CURRENT POSITION**

4. In light of the administration’s desire to review objectives and options to improve the Alton Estate, officers recommended appointing external consultants to assist with this work. Inner Circle Consulting has recently been appointed to support this work. They have a wide range of experience both in working alongside local authorities in identifying options for regeneration and in supporting the delivery of schemes.

### **NEXT STEPS**

5. The administration has expressed a strong commitment to make quick progress with any revised proposals. The first phase of this will be to review the objectives of any investment and then identify options with a view to a short list of options being considered by the Committee in advance of a full, public consultation on the short-list options to help arrive at a preferred option.
6. At this stage any timescales for this first phase of work would be indicative as the scope and nature of the options are unknown, as is the degree of design, costing and viability advice required to confirm which options are viable. However, it is hoped the shortlisted option will be brought back to this Committee for consideration by June 2023.

### **EARLY IMPROVEMENTS**

7. Paper No. 22-253 indicated a desire to demonstrate the Council’s continued commitment to improving the lives of the residents of the Alton Estate and requested officers develop options to bring forward improvements in advance of the agreement of any wider proposals.
8. The previous masterplan’s proposals to improve the quality of community facilities and to upgrade existing open spaces had broad/strong support through the previous consultation process and also received support when the masterplan application was subject to consultation. The proposals below reflect this.

### **“BLOCK A”**

9. The proposed building known as Block A sits on the corner of Danebury Avenue and Roehampton Lane, marking one of the key gateways to the estate. The block is currently designed to deliver a replacement library, new youth facilities, a community hall, two replacement GP’s surgeries and 40 Council homes. The location of the proposed block is shown edged on the plan attached at [Appendix 1](#).
10. Officers are currently working with planning advisors to develop a stand-alone planning application to enable the potential for delivery of the block in advance of

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any wider proposals. This work entails a review of existing designs and updating of accompanying technical reports, cost estimates and strategies as appropriate.

11. As part of this process a programme of engagement and consultation will be undertaken with local residents and stakeholders in line with the key principles and core objectives set out in the Alton Estate Community Engagement Strategy.

### **ALTON ACTIVITY CENTRE**

12. As part of the previous proposals, it was always envisaged that upgrades and improvements to some existing play spaces would form part of the overall scheme.
13. The Alton Activity Centre is a Council-owned facility comprising a single storey community building with a large external play space, the extent of which is shown edged red on the plan at [Appendix 2](#). It is currently let on a short-term lease to R.O.C.K.S! International Arts Limited, a local organisation providing after school and holiday activities.
14. The Alton Activity Centre play space is currently surrounded by a secure fence, which is locked when the building is not being used. Under the terms of the current lease the tenant is required to provide a minimum of six hours free open access to the playground per week during term time and 15 hours per week during Wandsworth school holidays.
15. The masterplan proposals for this site were the result of extensive consultation with local residents and stakeholders, including over 85 young people. The proposals include the complete redesign of the external play space into zoned areas with play equipment appropriate to different age groups. This includes both a safe fenced area dedicated to the under 5's as well as a "youth 12+ zone" featuring a half MUGA and skateable areas, which has been particularly welcomed by Sport England.
16. In addition to improved play space the proposals also include improved landscaping and planting as well as a grow garden to promote health and well-being and engage young people in food production. Plans showing the indicative layout of the area is attached at [Appendix 3](#).
17. Any proposals would seek to remove all existing fencing to ensure greater access to the play spaces.
18. It is not proposed to make any changes to the building or to the current short-term letting arrangements. Alternative proposals may be considered as part of the wider options appraisal.
19. Officers are currently working with planning advisors to develop a stand-alone planning application to enable the early delivery of these improvements, this will include reviewing existing designs and updating accompanying reports, cost estimates and strategies as appropriate.
20. As part of this process a programme of engagement and consultation will be undertaken with local residents and stakeholders.

### **DOWNSHIRE FIELD**

21. Downshire Field is a large open green space sitting centrally within the Estate, the

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extent of which is shown edged red on the plan at [Appendix 4](#).

22. The existing play area is of poor quality and no longer considered fit for purpose. Improvements include completely redesigning the play space to create an informal naturalistic play area that will sit more sensitively amongst the parkland and mature trees that surround it.
23. In addition to the play space catering for all ages between 0-11 years old, aspects of inclusive play have been considered to ensure wheelchair accessible zones.
24. Landscape improvements are proposed to the main Downshire Field to include wildflower meadow areas, new pathways to connect existing blocks to the open space and a trim trail to promote healthy active lifestyles. A plan showing an indicative layout of the proposals is attached at [Appendix 5](#).
25. Officers are currently working with planning advisors to develop a stand-alone planning application to enable the early delivery of these improvements, including reviewing existing designs and updating accompanying reports, cost estimates and strategies as appropriate.
26. As part of this process a programme of engagement and consultation will be undertaken with local residents and stakeholders.

## **ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY**

27. In November 2020 the Executive approved (Paper No. 20-349) the adoption of the revised Community Engagement Strategy for the Alton Regeneration.
28. The key themes which have informed the development of the Strategy are summarised as follows: -
  - a. Putting affected residents at the heart of engagement.
  - b. Good resident engagement and representation during the construction phase so the impact of development can be well managed.
  - c. Providing space for residents to give their views generally (as opposed to set-piece consultation events on specific issues; and the role of social interaction in engagement – i.e., there are benefits of people getting together regardless of whether there is anything regeneration-related to consult on or discuss.
29. The Strategy further sets out four key principles which guide the approach to all aspects of community engagement, these are that the approach is: -
  - **Inclusive** – focusing on engagement being accessible to all.
  - **Collaborative** – focusing on establishing and promoting partnerships with the community, existing organisations and other Council departments.
  - **Responsive** – focusing on working with and responding to the community.
  - **Meaningful** – focusing on local interests and priorities.
30. In line with the Council's commitment set out in the Strategy, a Community Engagement Action Plan will be updated and presented to this committee annually. The Alton Estate Community Engagement Strategy Action Plan 2022/23 ("The Action Plan") is attached at [Appendix 6](#).

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31. During the course of the last 12 months a large variety of projects and activities have taken place across the Estate, which hundreds of local residents have attended. As set out in The Action Plan each activity is assessed against the Engagement Strategy to ensure that the identified key principles and core objectives are being achieved.
32. Additionally, more than 170 surveys have been undertaken with local residents and stakeholders to ensure that engagement activities remain responsive to the needs and ideas of the community.
33. The Action Plan sets out a number of projects and activities proposed over the next 12 months, mainly in response to feedback from the community as to what they have enjoyed and/or what they would like to see more of. However, in order to ensure that engagement remains flexible and will continue to respond to the community's needs, it is not intended to be an exhaustive list.
34. As part of the expansion of the community engagement offer, the Council is exploring a number of meanwhile use<sup>1</sup> proposals across the development area on the Alton Estate.
35. A number of projects have already been delivered and additional sites have been identified as having potential for enhancement and improvement, as set out in more detail within The Action Plan.

#### **SUPPORTING THE WANDSWORTH ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY (WESS)**

36. As options are developed, their environmental impact will be assessed.

#### **COMMENTS OF SOUTH LONDON LEGAL PARTNERSHIP**

37. We understand title reports have been carried out on the subject sites to confirm ownership and identify and third-party rights likely to be affected by the proposals. Consideration will need to be given as to the need for tenant consultation under S.105 housing Act 1985 in respect of works to Estate open space if this substantially affects secure tenants.

#### **COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES**

38. The Director of Resources comments that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan has previously made provision for significant investment in the Alton Estate regeneration project totalling £105 million. The provision remains in the HRA Business Plan for which the latest update was approved in September 2022 (Paper No. 22-259) with significant elements of the previously proposed regeneration scheme remaining in the approved HRA capital programme at this time. Given the position on the future strategy of the wider regeneration scheme these approved capital schemes remain subject to review with any amendments to existing budgets to be considered at the appropriate time.

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<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile use entails the temporary use of land or buildings, often in regeneration areas, to provide retail, business or arts space or generally any use which activates the land or building. The use is temporary (and hence meanwhile) pending a permanent use or redevelopment

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39. Any costs arising from the development of future proposals for Block A as well as improvements to the Alton Activity Centre and Downshire Field will need to be met from within the existing approved budgets (and wider provision within the Business Plan), or new budgets will need to be approved at the appropriate time.

## **CONCLUSION**

40. This report provides an update on the process for identifying future options for the Alton Estate regeneration and recommends proposals to explore bringing proposal for the building known as Block A, Alton Activity Centre and Downshire Field, in support of the administration's commitment for investment in the estate.
41. The Action Plan demonstrates the ongoing, strong commitment to resident engaging and outlines a series of activities and meanwhile use in support of this commitment.

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BRIAN REILLY  
Director of Housing and Regeneration

8th November 2022

## **Background papers**

There are no background papers to this report.

All reports to Overview and Scrutiny Committees, regulatory and other committees, the Executive and the full Council can be viewed on the Council's website ([www.wandsworth.gov.uk/moderngov](http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/moderngov)) unless the report was published before May 2001, in which case the democratic services officer can supply it if required.