

Housing and City Development Scrutiny Committee

20 January 2025

Decent Neighbourhoods Programme

1. Introduction

The Decent Neighbourhoods Programme delivers a planned scheme of capital investment focused on impactful changes that benefit the Council's tenants and the neighbourhoods that they live in. Housing Services is committed to improving the Council's estates and neighbourhoods by working in partnership with tenants, Ward Councillors and stakeholders.

The key Programme priorities link with other investments and funding to focus on improving access and purpose to green spaces within Housing Revenue Account (HRA) ownership, health and wellbeing, and fostering ownership and pride in neighbourhoods. To comply with HRA conditions, an individual scheme must generally be provided for the principal benefit of the Council's tenants and leaseholders – not the wider community – and it must be on HRA land. The Programme is funded via the HRA at £1 million each year. Any unused funding is rolled over into the next financial year, so unspent money is not lost but recycled within the Programme.

The key priorities for the Programme link with other investments and funding to focus on improving:

- access and purpose to green spaces;
- tenant and resident health and wellbeing;
- links with other key investments and funding;
- biodiversity and environmental sustainability; and
- ownership and pride in neighbourhoods.

The funding is split across the Council's wards, reflective of the number of Council properties in each ward area. Councillor referrals make up the bulk of the requests for improvements, meaning that the budget is being directly targeted at projects Councillors feel will have the greatest impact in their ward area. Schemes are also brought forward as a result of tenant feedback and the proposals are then reviewed by Ward Councillors. The information is held on an intranet site so that interested parties and referrers can see all relevant details, including progress on projects and how to make a referral. A policy is being developed to provide additional clarity on the project, budget and referral process.

Decent Neighbourhoods helps to deliver the following outcomes:

- tackling ward priorities and addressing concerns about issues such as anti-social behaviour and parking;
- better security;
- greater tenant satisfaction;
- a reduction in the cost of future maintenance;

- encouraging residents to take pride and ownership in the area where they live; and
- blending new builds with improvements to older properties.

2. What the Decent Neighbourhoods Programme has delivered to date

Table A: Historical Data – 2021 to March 2024

| Ward | No of Schemes by Financial Year | | | Grand Total |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 | |
| Aspley | 5 | 5 | | 10 |
| Basford | 3 | 3 | | 6 |
| Bestwood | 6 | 2 | 1 | 9 |
| Bilborough | 5 | 4 | | 9 |
| Bulwell | 14 | 17 | | 31 |
| Bulwell Forest | 4 | | 1 | 5 |
| City centre | | 1 | | 1 |
| City Wide | 1 | | 3 | 4 |
| Clifton East | 5 | 6 | 2 | 13 |
| Clifton West | 3 | 1 | | 4 |
| Hyson Green & Arboretum | | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Leen Valley | 1 | | | 1 |
| Lenton & Wollaton East | 4 | 1 | | 5 |
| Mapperley | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| Radford | 2 | 1 | | 3 |
| Sherwood | 3 | 1 | | 4 |
| St Anns | 6 | 5 | 2 | 13 |
| The Dales | 2 | 3 | | 5 |
| The Meadows | 4 | 1 | | 5 |
| Grand Total | 69 | 53 | 12 | 134 |

Table B: Current Schemes (Green – approved; Yellow – awaiting quotation; Red – awaiting design information)

| Schemes | Ward | Percentage | Budget (£) | Quote (£) | Variations (£) | Value (£) |
|--|-------------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|----------------------|
| UL Wilkins Gardens (Car Park) | Clifton West | 50.00% | | £45,595.48 | £0.00 | £45,595.48 |
| UL Aidan Gardens (Car Park) | Top Valley Gedling | 50.00% | | £49,214.19 | £775.38 | £49,989.57 |
| UL Camborne Drive (ACO Drains) | Estate Impact | 0.00% | | £5,379.24 | £0.00 | £5,379.24 |
| NCC Landscaping Baythorn Court | Bilborough | 50.00% | | £86,218.73 | £0.00 | £86,218.73 |
| UL Goatchurch Court (Tree Roots - Exploratory Works) | Bestwood | 50.00% | | £2,212.48 | £0.00 | £2,212.48 |
| NCC Colston & St Albans External Bins (2 x 1100L) | Estate Impact | 100.00% | | £910.00 | £0.00 | £910.00 |
| UL Rushcliffe Fencing Conway Close - Fall Protection | Estate Impact | 100.00% | | £1,264.43 | £0.00 | £1,264.43 |
| UL Rushcliffe Fencing Brayton Crescent - Gates | Basford | 50.00% | | £1,899.43 | £0.00 | £1,899.43 |
| UL Rushcliffe Fencing Didcot Drive - Gates | Basford | 50.00% | | £3,395.39 | £0.00 | £3,395.39 |
| UL Rushcliffe Fencing Duchess Gardens (58-61) - Fencing | Bulwell | 50.00% | | £12,436.02 | £0.00 | £12,436.02 |
| UL Rushcliffe Fencing Duchess Gardens (19-26) - Fencing | Bulwell | 50.00% | | £35,646.09 | £0.00 | £35,646.09 |
| NCHA College Way & Whitelodge Gardens (Highways Contribution) | Bilborough | 100.00% | | £30,000.00 | £0.00 | £30,000.00 |
| NCC Landscaping Beckhampton Rd | Bestwood | 50.00% | | £110,000.00 | £0.00 | £110,000.00 |
| UL Make Consulting (Update DN Specification / Garage Drawings / Selkirk Way) | Estate Impact | 100.00% | | £2,480.00 | £0.00 | £2,480.00 |
| UL Rushcliffe Fencing Holbrook Court - Gate Repair | Clifton East | 50.00% | | £2,788.75 | £0.00 | £2,788.75 |
| UL Rushcliffe Fencing Barbury Drive (5-9) | Clifton East | 100.00% | | £1,958.95 | £0.00 | £1,958.95 |
| UL Rushcliffe Hornbeam Gardens (41) | Estate Impact | 100.00% | | £1,863.12 | £0.00 | £1,863.12 |
| UL Erewash 3 x Projects | Bulwell Forest | 50.00% | | £97,672.87 | £0.00 | £97,672.87 |
| UL Deptford Crescent (Drying Area) | Bulwell Forest | 50.00% | £60,000.00 | | £0.00 | £60,000.00 |
| UL Springhead Court - Receptions, Doors, Porch | Bulwell | 50.00% | £200,000.00 | | £0.00 | £200,000.00 |
| UL Goatchurch Court (Tree Roots Footpath Works) | Bestwood | 50.00% | £15,000.00 | | £0.00 | £15,000.00 |
| UL Rushcliffe Fencing Duchess Gardens (22) - Fencing | Bulwell | 50.00% | £2,000.00 | | £0.00 | £2,000.00 |
| UL Rushcliffe Fencing Ridgeway - Fencing | Bestwood | 50.00% | £5,000.00 | | £0.00 | £5,000.00 |
| UL Rushcliffe Fencing Camomile Gardens - Fencing | Hyson Green & Arboretum | 50.00% | £10,000.00 | | £0.00 | £10,000.00 |
| UL Camomile Gardens - Car Park & Footpaths | Hyson Green & Arboretum | 50.00% | £50,000.00 | | £0.00 | £50,000.00 |
| UL Iona Garden | Top Valley Gedling | 50.00% | £50,000.00 | | £0.00 | £50,000.00 |
| NCC Landscaping Kennington Road | Lenton & Wollaton East | 50.00% | £100,000.00 | | £0.00 | £100,000.00 |
| NCC Landscaping Ashworth Close | The Dales | 50.00% | £100,000.00 | | £0.00 | £100,000.00 |
| NCC Landscaping Findern Close | The Dales | 50.00% | £100,000.00 | | £0.00 | £100,000.00 |
| NCC Landscaping Palmer | Lenton & Wollaton East | 50.00% | £100,000.00 | | £0.00 | £100,000.00 |
| UL Colston Bin Stores (StreetSpace) | Estate Impact | 0.00% | £20,000.00 | | £0.00 | £20,000.00 |
| UL Jacklin Gardens 3 x Projects | Bestwood | 50.00% | £50,000.00 | | £0.00 | £50,000.00 |
| UL Curlew Close | The Dales | 50.00% | £50,000.00 | | £0.00 | £50,000.00 |
| UL Chisbury Green | Clifton East | 50.00% | £50,000.00 | | £0.00 | £50,000.00 |
| UL Marchwood Close | Lenton & Wollaton East | 50.00% | £50,000.00 | | £0.00 | £50,000.00 |
| UL Haywood Court | St Ann's | 50.00% | £50,000.00 | | £0.00 | £50,000.00 |
| Make Consulting General Design & PD Fees | General Spend | 0.00% | £30,000.00 | | £0.00 | £30,000.00 |
| | | | | | | £1,583,710.54 |

The new Decent Neighbourhoods approach was developed and piloted in the Bulwell Ward during the Covid-19 pandemic and then rolled out citywide. The main priorities being addressed were to:

- deliver a proactive capital investment programme rather than a reactive one, with the aim to scope out a five-year programme with flexibility to adapt to unforeseen issues or opportunities in extra external funding;
- offer alternative, sustainable solutions rather than gates, fencing and knee rails, which had come to dominate the programme with little proven benefit;
- focus on better environmental outcomes from the investment, to link with the Carbon Neutral 2028 priorities and improved biodiversity needed in estates;
- give HRA-owned outside spaces greater purpose and make them multi-functional;
- create information that can be better shared with key stakeholders (tenants in particular) to demonstrate what is available and capture case studies of completed works;
- create a dedicated webpage for internal stakeholders to easily access information;
- ensure that the correct governance and compliance processes are followed; and
- deliver more impactful regeneration by linking other capital investment streams with the environmental budget to maximise benefits from other large-scale capital schemes such as new build, energy efficiency and 'Streets for People' funding.

In addition, two new programmes were developed from other budgets:

- the option to close chutes and implement external bins, creating more capacity for general waste and the ability for the first time for residents to recycle; and
- the garage refurbishment programme, to make garage sites more attractive and fit for purpose. This programme is self-funding from revenue generated, with additional revenue also going back to the HRA Capital Programme. Occupancy had increase from under 50% to 90/100% on newly refurbished sites and significantly improved the neighbourhood appearance, reducing anti-social behaviour.

3. Current delivery risks and constraints

A new main contract partner (United Living) is in place to deliver a significant proportion of the Decent Neighbourhoods Programme. This relationship is new and, whilst this has taken some time this year to gain momentum in output, it is now seeing traction – though it does remain the highest risk for the under-delivery of the planned Programme. The Programme is also channelling its landscaping requirements through the Council's Commercial Landscaping team, which is starting to deliver some positive outcomes. The HRA could be a significant revenue stream for the Landscaping team, but if that revenue is not directed towards staffing resource, the ability to achieve schemes in a timely manner could impact the Council's ability to deliver and so an alternative supplier may need to look at – this position is under regular review.

To mitigate the risk relating to having one main contractor to carry out this work, there are robust contract management processes in place to address any potential quality or delivery issues.

4. Decision-making – how schemes are assessed for viability

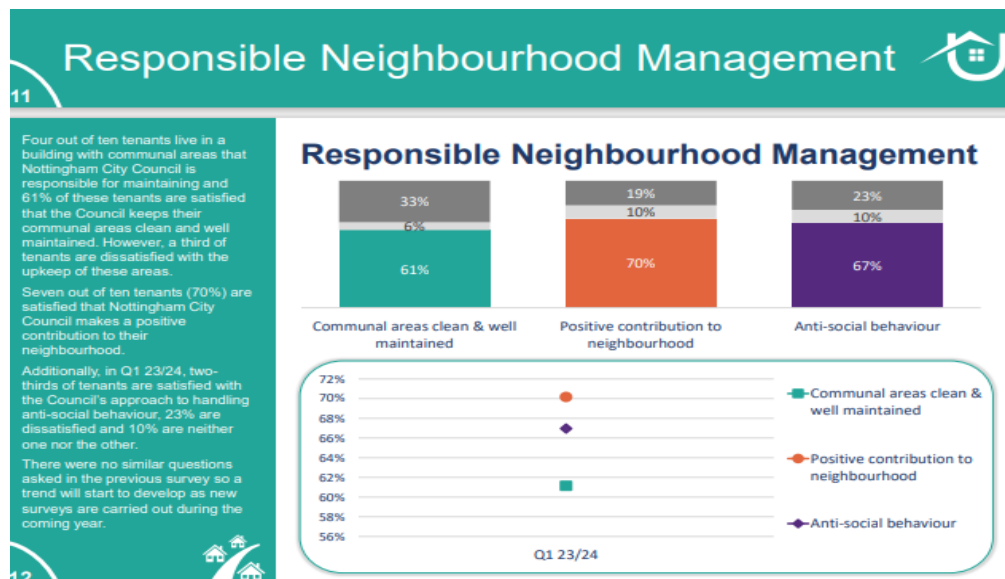
There are four main areas within the evaluation and approval process:

- identification of the project and initial checks to consider viability;
- stakeholder engagement to identify, engage/consult and seek feedback;
- plan/deliver works with audit for project compliance, obtaining quotations, selecting suppliers and delivering works; and
- project review, to ensure deliverables are met and any lessons learned are fed into future projects.

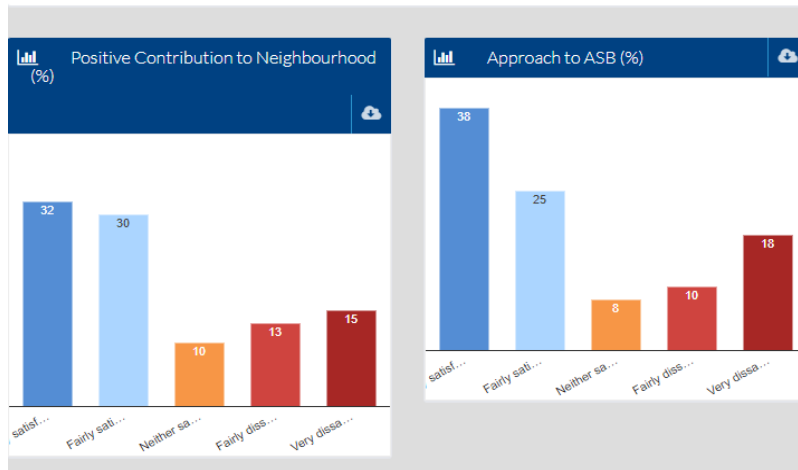
Projects are divided across three areas in the city: North, Central and South. During November and December 2024, officers have been carrying out further work to engage with Ward Councillors following feedback that there was a lack of communication regarding the progress of projects, that projects were taking too long to progress through the Programme and that the involvement of Councillors in decision-making was not clear. Quarterly engagement meetings are starting for each Ward area, which feeds into the Executive Member for Housing and Planning’s overview of the citywide position. A flowchart of the decision-making process is attached as Appendix 4.

5. How outcomes are measured

A Housing Project Liaison Officer works alongside the Council’s contract partners to ensure that processes and procedures are in place to capture pre- and post-works satisfaction, and are a point for escalation for complaints. There is a new project delivery team dedicated to delivering the Decent Neighbourhoods Programme, improving the process and measuring outputs from schemes is a priority. Case studies have been drawn up to document the challenges, goals and output from the Decent Neighbourhoods schemes (Appendices 1-3). The output from the Tenant Satisfaction Surveys are also reviewed, with a particular emphasis on Neighbourhood Management and anti-social behaviour statistics and commentary.



Your Neighbourhood



6. Further development of the Programme

During discussions with Ward Councillors, the 'Streets for People' programme has been highlighted as good practice and its templates are being adopted for Decent Neighbourhood activities. Templates will be updated and circulated quarterly. The draft templates were produced for approval in early January, so that individual templates could be produced for each ward. Meetings will be arranged by the Area Housing Managers with Ward Councillors as part of this process.

The templates will contain three tables, which will describe capital programmes that come under or are linked to Decent Neighbourhoods:

- **Table 1** will be the Citywide Environmental Budget – the £1 million funding that Councillors put forward for schemes for their wards based on the Citywide allocation.
- **Table 2** will combine the Citywide Environment Budget and other Housing capital budgets to support Decent Neighbourhoods schemes. These are projects where Councillors can contribute some or all of their budget to support more costly works that they wish to prioritise in their area.
- **Table 3** will inform Councillors of other Housing Capital Budget Priorities that have been identified under Decent Neighbourhoods and are being carried out. This is to enable Councillors to be informed about projects happening in their areas that have no funding through the £1 million Citywide budget.

The broader capital programme, which includes initiatives such as the provision of scooter storage facilities, is approved through the annual budget cycle. In some cases, funding is contingent on the submission and approval of business cases. While not all Councillors may have access to detailed information, specific project details can be provided upon request.

7. Conclusion

There are currently 134 schemes logged, with only 13 rejected – with the main reasons for rejection being that a scheme is either not HRA and/or is not primarily for the benefit of Council tenants specifically.

| | |
|--|---------------|
| Number of DN Schemes Submitted | 134 |
| | Status |
| Approved | 71 |
| Rejected | 13 |
| Schemes approved in principle <small>awaiting Pro-Forma</small> | 44 |
| On-Hold | 3 |
| Cancelled | 3 |

| Ward | No.of Schemes | Ward | No.of Schemes |
|----------------|---------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| Aspley | 4 | Hyson Green & Arboretum | 8 |
| Basford | 3 | Lenton & Wollaton East | 10 |
| Berridge | 1 | Mapperley | 5 |
| Bestwood | 36 | Radford | 4 |
| Billborough | 3 | Sherwood | 6 |
| Bulwell | 12 | St Ann's | 6 |
| Bulwell Forest | 10 | The Dales | 8 |
| Clifton East | 11 | Top Valley - Gedling | 6 |
| Clifton West | 1 | | |

The main focus is to proactively put forward opportunities to Councillors and other key stakeholders to ensure that environmental budgets are maximised for the benefit of Council tenants, and that they have promotional material and visuals to be able to discuss opportunities for investment with real case studies from across the city with tenants. The next steps will continue to be implemented and feedback sought to ensure that Decent Neighbourhoods operating as effectively as possible to deliver its needed outcomes.