

**Report for:** Cabinet 15 September 2020

**Title:** Update on Council Owned Sites in Wood Green

**Report authorised by:** Richard Grice, Director of Customers, Transformation and Resources

**Lead Officer:** Beth Kay x2640

**Ward(s) affected:** Noel Park/ Woodside/ All Wards

**Report for Key/  
Non Key Decision:** Key Decision

## 1. Describe the issue under consideration

- 1.1. This report updates Cabinet on the work underway to develop a long-term strategy to make the best use of Council owned sites in Wood Green and describe the impact of the current Covid 19 pandemic on the programme.
- 1.2. This report will set out a timetable for decisions to be made about Council owned sites in the medium term.

## 2. Cabinet Member Introduction

- 2.1. Members will be aware that before Covid 19, work was underway to prepare a business case for redeveloping the Library site to include a new library and customer services, office accommodation, and potentially additional services including democratic space and a Leisure Centre. The Council was also looking at longer term options for the Civic Centre, bearing in mind its listing, as part of the accommodation strategy.
- 2.2. However, the Covid 19 crisis has meant that the Council has had to take a step back and pause while the longer-term effect and requirements are reviewed. This is possible now with the recent acquisition of Alex House which meets the Council's short- and medium-term accommodation needs.
- 2.3. From consultation with residents, businesses and stakeholders, there is interest in changing Wood Green as it is seen as not as good as it once was and should be better. The Council is a major landowner and needs to play a key role. This report sets out pending decisions about Council accommodation property in the town centre which could lead to better use of our land to support existing and new communities.

## 3. Recommendations

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Members are asked to:

- 3.1. Note the timetable for consideration of the accommodation strategy by Cabinet
- 3.2. Note the action being taken now to temporarily protect the Civic Centre pending a decision about future investment.

#### **4. Reasons for decision**

- 4.1. In July 2019, Cabinet agreed to the principle of consolidating Council accommodation in Wood Green and work has been progressing to develop this in detail including a possible new building on the Library site and options for the Civic Centre and whether to retain it for Council use.
- 4.2. However, since July 2019, a number of events have taken place which mean that the business case for new accommodation needs to be reviewed, including the recent acquisition of Alex House and Covid 19 experience which has changed some of the assumptions which fed into the business case about accommodation requirements.
- 4.3. The condition of the current corporate buildings in Wood Green varies from fair to extremely poor. It is anticipated that should the Council decide to consolidate to one or two buildings, this will take 5-7 years to deliver in full. Therefore, a review is taking place of occupation of existing building and of short to medium term investment needs to make sure buildings are fit for purpose for that period, and a study of opportunities to vacate some buildings and potentially realise commercial income.
- 4.4. This report sets out a summary of the high-level medium-term strategy for council owned sites in Wood Green and a timetable for decisions relating to each site.
- 4.5. In March 2020 the Civic Centre was closed for safety reasons. It is necessary to prevent further damage to the Civic Centre by protecting it pending works to repair it, this report sets out the immediate protection measures which are being carried out.

#### **5. Alternative options considered**

- 5.1. Reports which are for information or noting and do not involve any actions being agreed do not require this section to be completed.

#### **6. Background information**

New Ways of Working and Localities

- 6.1. Haringey has been developing new ways of working across the Council for several years including greater collaboration and integration of multi-agency services.

- 6.2. To do this, we have been testing ways to make our workforce more agile, where individuals are empowered to choose where, when and how they work to optimise their performance and to do their best work.
- 6.3. Work is also taking place to explore the potential for a locality-based approach that enables staff and appropriate front-line services to operate close to the community, in line with our objectives to build community resilience and work in partnership with our communities. The aim is also to enable better multi-agency working alongside public sector partners, voluntary sector and the community, creating a more accessible and joined up service and better outcomes. This mix of centrally and locally based Council facilities would aim to make the best and most efficient use of Council buildings.
- 6.4. Covid 19, and the Government's response, has accelerated and focussed this work which we had already started. At a completely unprecedented rate, the Council has changed the way it operates and has delivered a range of new emergency services at pace in localities across the borough through greater integration and collaboration with a range of partners. With over 80% of the Council's workforce now working from home, our workforce has shown itself to be agile, innovative, resourceful, and flexible. Work is underway at present to prepare for a return to offices and to increase Council staff presence in Wood Green in particular, but which will build upon some of the recent experience of agile and flexible working.

#### Wood Green Context

- 6.5. The draft London Plan (2018) identifies Wood Green as an Opportunity Area and one of 14 Metropolitan town centres. Wood Green is also a Growth Area in The Local Plan: Strategic Policies (2013). The adopted Site Allocation DPD allocates several sites for redevelopment.
- 6.6. The draft Wood Green Area Action Plan (AAP) will set out a framework for building on the existing policy context and delivering additional new jobs and new homes and aims to ensure that investment decisions meet the aspirations of the local community and the Council for the area, as well as specific places and locations within it.
- 6.7. Wood Green has historically played a vital role in meeting residents' retail, leisure and civic needs in Haringey and surrounding boroughs but recently the Centre has failed to attract top brands, with little destination appeal. There is a lack of quality leisure and wellbeing opportunities in the town centre, and a lack of employment space and community and social infrastructure.
- 6.8. A number of projects have already been delivered or are currently underway to address these challenges, including the creation of the Future Wood Green, Haringey's first Business Improvement District and a range of public realm projects funded by the GLA Good Growth Fund Round 1. Further funding has recently been secured through GLA Good Growth Round 3 which will support the delivery of and interim youth facility to prototype a long-term youth facility in Wood Green.

6.9. Covid 19 has had, and is likely to continue to have, a significant impact on the Wood Green economy creating further challenges to the revitalisation of the Metropolitan Centre. In the immediate term, Haringey businesses and residents will receive help to deal with the effects of Covid 19, following the launch of Haringey's Good Economy Recovery Plan in August 2020.

#### Council Owned Corporate Accommodation in Wood Green

6.10. In July 2019, Cabinet agreed to the principle of consolidating Council accommodation in Wood Green to a reduced number of sites to deliver a better and more accessible service, realise cost savings, provide a more effective working environment for staff, and release several sites for a range of other uses.

6.11. At that time the Council occupied eight council owned buildings, in a total area which far exceeded the amount which should be required by modern office standards. By consolidating the council accommodation located in these sites, the Council had the potential to reduce office costs and release land which could be used to deliver new community infrastructure, housing and employment on council owned sites as set out in the Borough Plan, and/ or provide the council with sources of capital and revenue funding.

6.12. The consolidation of Council owned sites was an opportunity to enable all services to become fully accessible and create modern and fit-for-purpose facilities for staff, Members, customers, clients, and visitors. This optimal use of resources would both reduce spending on council accommodation and improve efficiency in delivering services resulting in improved value for money for the council.

6.13. Before Covid 19, work was underway to build a business case for redeveloping the Library site to include a new library and customer services, office accommodation, and potentially additional services including democratic space and a Leisure Centre. Officers were also looking at longer term options for the Civic Centre, bearing in mind its listing, as part of the accommodation strategy.

6.14. The work included progressing the business case for the Library site, a feasibility study for works to the Civic Centre and a review of the Council's accommodation in Wood Green and, if a decision was made to proceed with the accommodation strategy, what would be done with vacated buildings and when.

6.15. It was planned to bring a further report to Cabinet in July 2020 to enable an initial decision to be made between new accommodation on the Library site or new accommodation at the Library site alongside the Civic Centre.

6.16. Since the report in July last year, the Council took the decision to acquire Alexandra House for accommodation purposes as it would support the Council's requirements pending the implementation of the accommodation strategy.

6.17. More recently and with far greater consequences, the Covid 19 crisis has completely changed the way the Council operates, and this requires a pause in the previous plans for use of council buildings while the longer-term effect and requirements are reviewed. Officers have had to work with great flexibility and resourcefulness through this period, and the scale of the crisis means that further

innovation will be needed to support residents in a difficult period. At a completely unprecedented rate, new services have been delivered through greater integration and collaboration with a multi-agency and cross departmental response.

- 6.18. Covid 19 has had a significant effect on how staff are now working, which needs to be reflected in the accommodation strategy. Of the Council's 2,250 permanent employees, approximately 80% are working from home, and the proportion is much higher for "office-based" functions. Surveys carried out during lockdown suggest that staff are now interested in working in a more flexible and agile way in the future.
- 6.19. Covid 19 has both accelerated the focus on locality working and is likely to change the Council's Headquarter requirement. Council office accommodation may in future become places for team contact, collaboration, and innovation, rather than day-to-day administration and this will support employee wellbeing as well as allowing staff to be more productive. This may mean less space or different space than the Council currently occupies.
- 6.20. Covid 19 has also had, and is likely to continue to have, a severe impact on the Wood Green economy. In reviewing its decisions about the accommodation strategy and its property in Wood Green, the Council will need to consider how it might best support economic growth in the future and the extent to which this should have any bearing on decisions about staff accommodation. The Library site is potentially a key site in the economic recovery of Wood Green.
- 6.21. The business case for new accommodation therefore needs to be reviewed, and a series of discussions and decisions need to take place to agree a short and medium term strategy for council accommodation in Wood Green and also the future of council owned sites in Wood Green.

#### Current Corporate estate

- 6.22. Haringey's corporate estate refers to the Council's core corporate buildings in Wood Green, where council accommodation functions including democratic and ceremonial, customer facing services and back office are located. The eight where council staff are located in Wood Green are listed below, refer to location map in Appendix 1:

- Wood Green Library
- River Park House
- Alexandra House
- 38 Station Road
- 48 Station Road
- 40 Cumberland Road
- Civic Centre (currently closed)
- George Meehan House

- 6.23. It is anticipated that should the Council decide to consolidate to one or two buildings, this will take 5-7 years to deliver in full. Therefore, a review is taking place of occupation of existing buildings and of short to medium term investment

needs to make sure buildings are fit for purpose for that period, including consideration of opportunities to vacate some buildings and potentially realise commercial income.

- 6.24. The condition of the corporate buildings in Wood Green varies from fair to extremely poor. A high-level commentary on the estate can be found in Appendix 2.
- 6.25. Pending decisions about the accommodation strategy, and in recognition of the necessity to continue to use Alex House and River Park House for a minimum of 5 years in any circumstances, essential maintenance work is in hand to ensure these buildings are fit for purpose. The cost of this is limited and will not have any significant impact on the decisions about the accommodation strategy to be taken at a later date.

#### Civic Centre

- 6.26. In March 2020, the Civic Centre was closed awaiting refurbishment as it was considered to be unsafe to occupy following heavy rainfall and water ingress which had caused deterioration of the ceiling tiles in the council chamber. It is necessary to prevent further damage to the Civic Centre by protecting the building while we actively work towards a decision about further works and its future use.
- 6.27. Options to protect the building were explored, and preliminary engagement with contractors has taken place to identify the best approach. The approach needs to protect members of the public in case any masonry from the concrete cladding panels/copings worked loose and fell and to prevent further water ingress. It also needs to take account of the Listed Building status and its location in a Conservation Area.
- 6.28. Two principal options identified during this engagement were considered and evaluated from a technical and cost perspective, as well the aesthetic considerations noted above. These were: (1) timber hoarding around the perimeter of the building with scaffolding supporting temporary roofs over the main building and west wing and (2) timber hoarding around the perimeter with a temporary patch repair of the roof.
- 6.29. Once the future improvement works at the Civic Centre are agreed, it is likely that further work to scaffold the building will be needed, it is likely that any scaffolding designed now purely for protective purposes would not be suitable for the future works and therefore would not represent value for money. The projected spend for this option is below £500k, whilst the scaffolded option was significantly more expensive. The project timeline now indicates construction phase completion for these works by early December, whereas the scaffolding option could not be delivered before late January 2021. In addition, the cost of Option (2) is significantly less than Option (1).
- 6.30. Therefore, the second option is being implemented.

- 6.31. The timber hoarding will be designed with visual imagery to provide an appealing set of images reflecting the Civic Centre in its hey-day and the emerging plans for its future place in the community.
- 6.32. As the Civic Centre is now Grade 2 Listed, the building now needs to be retained and repaired and made viable for future use. In addition to the immediate and urgent reasons for closure, a range of other works also need to be carried out including replacement of heating systems, mechanical ventilation, electrical systems and WCs, deteriorating glazing, fire safety upgrade, removal of asbestos containing materials in working areas and extensive repairs and replacement of the exterior cladding and coping.
- 6.33. The capital programme currently includes £9.5m for these repair works to the Civic Centre which will address these immediate issues, but would not be sufficient to fully restore the building to a good standard, or fulfil the Council's Climate Change ambitions. A recommendation will be brought to a Cabinet meeting in a further Civic Centre report in late 2020 setting out options for investment in the Civic Centre.

#### Decision Timeline

- 6.34. The table below summarises the different reports and sequence of decisions that are required relating to all the different corporate buildings in the accommodation strategy and an indicative date for each decision.

Decision	Date
Future of Civic Centre	December 2020
Localities Strategy	Spring 2021
Future of Library Site	Summer 2021
Future of Station Road	Summer 2021
Interim Use of Station Road	Summer 2021

Table 1 – Summary of decisions which need to be made across the council owned corporate sites in Wood Green

## 7. Contribution to strategic outcomes

- 7.1. Borough Plan Economy Priority: Outcome 17: Investment with local people at its heart, focused on Tottenham and Wood Green;
- 7.2. Borough Plan Your Council Priority: Outcome 20: We will be a Council that uses its resources in a sustainable way to prioritise the needs of the most vulnerable residents.

## 8. Statutory Officers comments (Chief Finance Officer (including procurement), Assistant Director of Corporate Governance, Equalities)

## **Finance**

8.1. The proposed expenditure that Members are asked to note is included within the approved capital programme.

## **Procurement**

8.2. No procurement implications

## **Legal**

8.3. The proposed expenditure that Members are asked to note is included within the approved capital programme.

## **Equality**

8.4. The Council has a Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share those protected characteristics and people who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not.

8.5. The three parts of the duty applies to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/faith, sex and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership status applies to the first part of the duty.

8.6. The report proposes that members note the timetable for consideration of the accommodation strategy. The groups of people affected by the accommodation strategy are Haringey Council staff and Haringey residents who access Council services via buildings in Wood Green. Among Haringey staff, 68% of employees are non-White British, 65% are women, 2% are under 24, 3% are over 65, and a significant minority have disabilities or limiting health conditions. The Council will have a duty to consider the needs of these groups of people in the formulation and implementation of the accommodation strategy, and in so doing take measures to prevent any foreseeable direct or indirect discrimination based on the protected characteristics.

8.7. It can be reasonably anticipated that residents of wards in Wood Green will tend to access services in buildings in Wood Green more than other Haringey residents. BAME people, working-age people, people from faith communities, and people with disabilities or limiting health conditions are over-represented among residents of Noel Park, Bounds Green, and Woodside relative to the population of Haringey. The formulation and implementation of the accommodation strategy will reflect the needs of these groups where they are different to the needs of other people in order to prevent any direct or indirect discrimination based on the protected characteristics.



## **9. Use of Appendices**

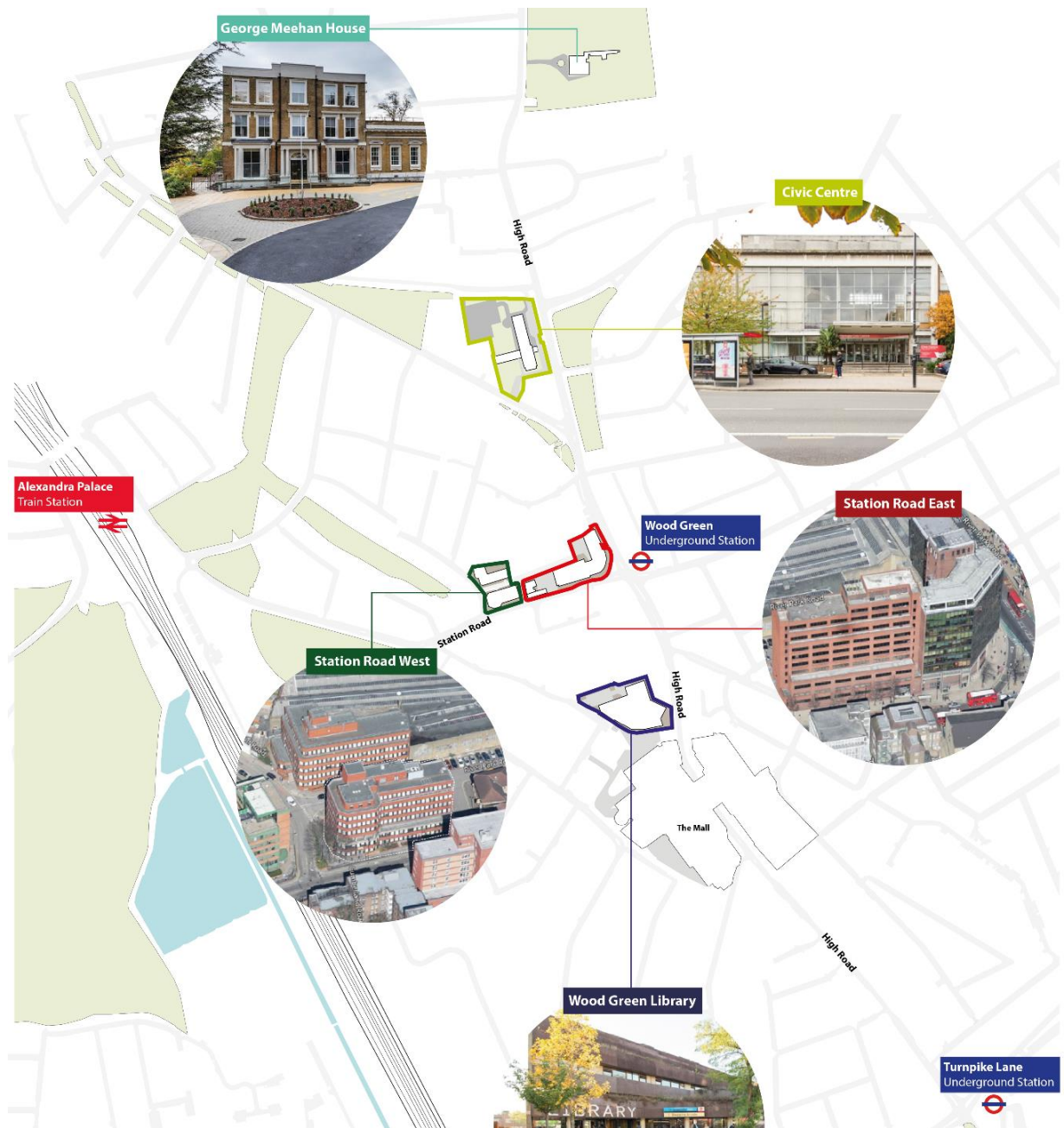
Appendix 1 – Map of Council owned corporate accommodation in Wood Green  
Appendix 2 – Overview of condition of Council owned corporate accommodation in Wood Green

## **10. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**

10.1. Council Owned Sites in Wood Green – July 2019 Cabinet Report

<https://www.minutes.haringey.gov.uk/documents/s110207/1907CouncilOwnedSitesinWoodGreenFINAL%205.30pm.pdf>

Appendix 1 – Map of Council owned corporate accommodation in Wood Green



<b>George Meehan House</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• George Meehan House</li> </ul>
<b>Civic Centre</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civic Centre</li> </ul>
<b>Station Road West</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 38 Station Road and Blue House Yard</li> <li>• 48 Station Road</li> <li>• 40 Cumberland Road</li> </ul>
<b>Station Road East</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• River Park House</li> <li>• Alexandra House</li> </ul>
<b>Wood Green Library</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wood Green Library</li> </ul>

Appendix 2 – Overview of condition of Council owned corporate accommodation in Wood Green

	River Park House	Alex House	38 Station Road/ Blue House Yard	48 Station Road	40 Cumberland Road
Condition	Poor	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair
Key Issues	End of life M&E	Poor decorative condition		Poor liveability esp solar gain	Poor liveability esp solar gain
Energy efficiency rating:	G	D	TBC	C	E
7 Year Strategy for Corporate Use	Refurbish for 7 years as main corporate office	Refurbish for 7 years as main corporate office	Exit	TBC	Exit
2020-21	Redecorate & renew services as needed	Redecorate & renew services as needed	Continue use of 38 Station Road and extend meanwhile at Blue House Yard	Redecorate & renew services as needed	Redecorate & renew services as needed
2021-24	Maintain in use as Corporate HQ	Maintain in use as Corporate HQ	TBC	TBC	May be required as temporary library / or improve commercial income
2024-27	Maintain in use as Corporate HQ	Maintain in use as Corporate HQ	TBC	TBC	
Long Term Strategy for Building	Redevelop	TBC	Redevelop	TBC	TBC

Appendix 2 – Overview of condition of Council owned corporate accommodation in Wood Green

	Wood Green Library	Civic Centre	George Meehan House
Condition	Poor	Very Poor	Very Good
Energy efficiency rating:	E	D	TBC
Key Issues	Poor M&E Poor liveability	Dilapidated, H&S risk Grade II Listed	Issues with wider surrounds
7 Year Strategy for Corporate Use	Library and Customer Service Centre	Could retain as office and democratic space	Depends on whether Civic is retained
2020-21	Improvements to Library interior to pilot multi- agency approach, maintenance	Closed	Maintain use for essential services
2021-24	If a decision is made to redevelop this site, a planning application may be submitted during this period	Major works programme	Greater commercialisation
2024-27	If a decision is made to redevelop this site, and subject to approvals etc construction could commence during this period.	Return to active use	Depends on whether Civic is retained
Long Term Strategy for Building	TBC	Heritage site	Heritage site