



ALEXANDRA PARK AND PALACE CHARITABLE TRUST BOARD MEETING

14 JULY 2025

Report Title: The Grove - Next Steps
Report of: Louise Johnson Head of Strategic Projects &
Mark Evison Head of Park & Environmental Sustainability

Report Authorised by: Emma Dagnes OBE, Chief Executive

Purpose: To update the Board on the recommended next steps for the Grove and to obtain approval to proceed.

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 To note the recommended next steps with regards to upgrades and interventions into the Grove;
- 1.2 To delegate to the Chief Executive to enter new lease negotiations with the existing tenants, permitting leases up to a maximum of five years from the end of their current terms.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 There are four buildings in the Grove with established uses and long-term occupiers. In 2022, with the end of the leases approaching, the Trust began a process of options analysis, culminating in a public engagement exercise in 2023/2024. This looked at the potential future options for the Grove, in line with the Strategic Vision and the Trust's commitment to be responsible stewards of the charitable assets.
- 2.2 Following an appraisal, where a number of options were considered, taking into account all contributing factors such as internal resource and capacity, reputation and future financial and environmental sustainability, a recommendation was put to the Trust's Board on 29 September 2022 to offer lease extensions to the 345-Preschool and Little Dinosaurs up to the year 2027 (to align with the expiry of the lease for the Grove Café).
- 2.3 The recommendation was approved and the decision allowed for the opportunity for the Grove lease end-dates on the three buildings to align (should the current leaseholders wish to extend to the year 2027) allowing the Trust the time to undertake the necessary research and master planning work to establish the best use for the Grove post-2027, whilst giving the existing leaseholders certainty and clarity for five years as a minimum.
- 2.4 In late 2023, the Trust appointed Unit38 and Studio Hyte to undertake a public engagement exercise to understand what works well in the Grove and what improvements visitors, tenants and stakeholders would like to see. This culminated in a free family event in June 2024, *Into the Grove*, as part of the London Festival of Architecture celebrations.

3. Summary of findings

3.1 Nearly 1,000 survey responses were submitted, and 500 people attended the *Shaping the Grove* event in June. Suggestions for improvements included:

- 3.1.1 More space for play, whether it be a natural place, dedicated equipment or indoors. Play should be accessible, in multiple locations and suitable for all ages and equipment should be designed to encourage social interaction
- 3.1.2 There was a desire for more live music in the Grove, building on the performance events the Friends of the Park have been organising over recent years, including improvements to the bandstand
- 3.1.3 A need for public toilets
- 3.1.4 More and a wider range of seating options to make socialising easier including accessible, sheltered seating
- 3.1.5 Improved safety including lower-level, consistent lighting to avoid glare and dark spots
- 3.1.6 More planting, improved environments for wildlife and a community growing space
- 3.1.7 A desire for increased staff visibility
- 3.1.8 Opportunities for co-production on projects

4. Work to date

4.1 Since collating the responses, we have used existing funding and worked with our partners and friends to make changes:

- 4.1.1 Created the Alexandra Park Security forum, where tenants and Park user groups meet with the Alexandra Palace security teams to discuss concerns
- 4.1.2 Enhanced our focus on dealing with graffiti – offensive graffiti has been removed, and extra patrols are planned to maintain vigilance
- 4.1.3 Refreshed the corner shrub bed with gardening volunteers, including new planting
- 4.1.4 Trimmed and tidied shrubs by the Grove Cafe and started a project which includes reshaping planting around the Muswell Hill pedestrian entrance, building a new raised bed, tidying up old vegetation, adding new soil and new plants
- 4.1.5 Started refurbishing all the Park noticeboards across site
- 4.1.6 Maintaining existing lighting whilst simultaneously investigating future improvements (LEDs) to reduce environmental and financial impact
- 4.1.7 Installed new bollards by the Grove car park entrance
- 4.1.8 Worked with the Friends of the Park and gardening volunteers to plant new bulbs in the spinney to improve the spring display

5. Capital Fundraising Campaign: 2025 - 2040

- 5.1 Alongside other workstreams, the Trust team have been working on the next capital fundraising campaign for the Park and Palace. This work has been extensive, culminating in a detailed assessment of a range of projects. We have implemented a scoring system to assess all projects fairly, researched comparable sites, we are in the process of checking our assumptions on costs, and we have assessed likely funding streams.
- 5.2 The Capital Fundraising Campaign includes the Grove under the Community pillar alongside other key areas of the Park (Campsbourne, the play area, skate park and boating lake). All projects in the Capital Fundraising Campaign will require significant financial investment, and it will likely take more than twelve months of applications to trusts, foundations and statutory funders to unlock the necessary funding required to move projects forward.
- 5.3 In the meantime, incremental improvements have been programmed into existing maintenance budgets for 2025/2026 and include investigation works into surface water issues, works to install a drop kerb to allow easier access for buggies and wheelchairs, continued upgrade of light fittings to LEDs and investigation into solutions to retrofit and refurbish leaking historic lanterns.

6. The Grove leases: Recommendation

- 6.1 Following the 2022 Board decision to offer lease extensions to 2027, Little Dinosaurs and 345-Preschool took the opportunity to extend. The rationale for the extension to 2027 was to give the Trust time to undertake the necessary research and master planning work to establish the best use for the Grove post-2027.
- 6.2 It was clear from the public engagement findings that the majority of recommendations were focused on improving the overall look, feel and experience of the Grove. As highlighted in section 4, a number of these recommendations have already been implemented. The intention is to continue to work through the list of recommendations and continue to make steady and incremental improvements to the Grove as funding permits. In tandem, the Trust team will be focusing their efforts on establishing the Capital Fundraising Campaign, which includes more extensive major interventions in the Grove, such as constructing toilets and replacing the Parks Yard buildings.
- 6.3 It is recommended that the current leaseholders are offered the opportunity to enter into new lease negotiations, for new leases of up to a maximum of five years. This will give certainty to the leaseholders, ensuring continuity in the Grove offer, whilst the Trust can focus on the Capital Fundraising Campaign and the other Major Strategic Projects.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 The Council's Head of Legal & Governance has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no comments.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 Whilst there are no significant/ material financial implications arising directly from this report, the lease negotiations may result in some uplift in revenue generation for the Trust, and ensures that the buildings remain activated.
- 9.2 The Council's Chief Financial Officer has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no comments.

10. Use of Appendices

Appendix 1 – History of the Grove

Appendix 2 - Shaping the Grove summary report

11. Background Papers

None

