

When telephoning, please ask for: Democratic Services
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Our reference:
Your reference:
Date: Monday, 1 September 2025

To all Members of the Cabinet

Dear Councillor

A Meeting of the Cabinet will be held on Tuesday, 9 September 2025 at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Rushcliffe Arena, Rugby Road, West Bridgford to consider the following items of business.

This meeting will be accessible and open to the public via the live stream on YouTube and viewed via the link: <https://www.youtube.com/user/RushcliffeBC>
Please be aware that until the meeting starts the live stream video will not be showing on the home page. For this reason, please keep refreshing the home page until you see the video appear.

Yours sincerely



Sara Pregon
Monitoring Officer

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Declarations of Interest

[Link to further information in the Council's Constitution](#)

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 8 July 2025 (Pages 1 - 8)
4. Citizens' Questions

To answer questions submitted by citizens on the Council or its services.

5. Opposition Group Leaders' Questions

To answer questions submitted by Opposition Group Leaders on items on the agenda.

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KEY DECISION

6. Technological, Digital and Customer Access Strategy 2025-2028 (Pages 9 - 38)

The Report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services is attached

NON-KEY DECISIONS

7. Quarter 1 Finance Report (Pages 39 - 54)

The Report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services is attached

8. Confirmation of Rushcliffe Borough Council (67-69 Loughborough Road and 2A Patrick Road, West Bridgford) Article 4(1) Direction (Pages 55 - 84)

The report of the Director – Development and Economic Growth is attached

9. Exclusion of the Public

To move “That under Regulation 4 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.”

10. Proposed Sale of Telecom Mast Sites (Pages 85 - 102)

The Report of the Director – Development and Economic Growth is attached

Membership

Chair: Councillor N Clarke

Vice-Chair: Councillor A Brennan

Councillors: R Inglis, R Upton, D Viridi and J Wheeler

Meeting Room Guidance

Fire Alarm Evacuation: in the event of an alarm sounding please evacuate the building using the nearest fire exit, normally through the Council Chamber. You should assemble at the far side of the plaza outside the main entrance to the building.

Toilets: are located to the rear of the building near the lift and stairs to the first floor.

Mobile Phones: For the benefit of others please ensure that your mobile phone is switched off whilst you are in the meeting.

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Recording at Meetings

National legislation permits filming and recording by anyone attending a meeting. This is not within the Council's control.

Rushcliffe Borough Council is committed to being open and transparent in its decision making. As such, the Council will undertake audio recording of meetings which are open to the public, except where it is resolved that the public be excluded, as the information being discussed is confidential or otherwise exempt

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**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
CABINET
TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025**

Held at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber Area B, Rushcliffe Arena, Rugby Road,
West Bridgford
and live streamed on Rushcliffe Borough Council's YouTube channel

PRESENT:

Councillors N Clarke (Chair), A Brennan (Vice-Chair), R Inglis, R Upton, D Virdi
and J Wheeler

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor J Walker

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

A Hill	Chief Executive
L Ashmore	Director of Development and Economic Growth
D Banks	Director of Neighbourhoods
P Linfield	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
R Clack	Deputy Monitoring Officer
E Richardson	Democratic Services Officer

1 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

2 Minutes of the Meeting held on 13 May 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 13 May 2025 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

3 Citizens' Questions

There were no citizens' questions.

4 Opposition Group Leaders' Questions

Question from Councillor J Walker to Councillor Virdi.

"The New Homes Bonus, brought in by the Coalition Government in 2011 and used to incentivise local authorities in England to increase the building of homes in their areas, has disproportionately went to already wealthy authorities such as ours.

How will the imminent loss of New Homes Bonus impact this Council?"

Councillor Virdi thanked Councillor Walker for her question and confirmed that

the New Homes Bonus was an incentive to encourage local authorities to support housing development by encouraging local authorities to build more homes and increase housing stock, supporting economic growth as housing increased jobs, infrastructure and community investment and promoted long-term planning by aligning with government to address the national housing shortage. He was pleased to note that as a forward looking and responsible authority, the Council had done all of the above.

Councillor Virdi disputed Councillor Walker's assertion in the question regarding 'already wealthy authorities such as ours' and said that the Council was a well-run authority which had made sensible operational and financial decisions and which would continue to ensure that it provided excellent services to its residents, enabled economic growth and crucially, balanced its books. He noted that this was against a background, over a number of years, of the Council not receiving significant levels of external funding running into tens of millions which other authorities had received, such as via the Towns or Levelling-up funds. He said, therefore, that such rhetoric had to be corrected and it was important for residents to understand and appreciate the ongoing financial challenges that the Council faced, that such messages were clear and also in liaison with central government, particularly with the likely implications that both Fair Funding and Business Rates reset changes would mean for the Council.

Councillor Virdi added that all types of authority in all areas, specifically those committed to economic growth had generated New Homes Bonus as the Council had and that it was not simply wealthy authorities, however you chose to define them.

Councillor Virdi said that the simple answer to the question was that the Council had prudently set its Medium-Term Financial Strategy and had assumed there would be no further New Homes Bonus from 2026/27 and that it would potentially be losing a significant income stream after 2025/26. He said that as Finance Portfolio Holder and Cabinet member, the Council supported New Homes Bonus continuing as it wanted economic growth and for that economic growth to be supported with funding. He said that the Council would make that point in its response to the Fair Funding Review and that it was the New Homes Bonus which had helped fund the magnificent offices and leisure centre of the Council and that such funding was necessary, even for the longer term with local government reorganization, as capital resources would continue to diminish and capital projects would require funding, hopefully not borrowing, with the Council currently, of course, being debt free.

Councillor Virdi summarised that although it was a significant impact, the Council had mitigated against the loss of the Bonus in its Medium-Term Financial Strategy, demonstrating, once again, its responsible and diligent approach to managing its finances, particularly with the volatility of the current government's decision making.

Councillor Walker asked a supplementary question.

"What are we doing to make sure that we insulate our residents for what is coming down the tracks as was mentioned in the Peer Review"

Councillor Virdi thought he had answered this in his response in terms of the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy which was a five year review and that the Council was anticipating and had planned and mitigated for this eventuality and that it knew that there would be an impact, which he would cover in his delivery of the end of financial year report this evening. He said that the Council had created in-year efficiencies which would further help it mitigate some of the financial impact of losing the Bonus.

5 Financial Outturn 2024/25

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance, Transformation and Governance, Councillor Virdi presented the report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services, which outlined the year-end financial outturn for 2024/25, linked to the closure of the accounts process and previous financial update reports.

In introducing the report, Councillor Virdi said that the report had been to the most recent Corporate Overview Group where no significant issues had been raised, and noted that there were challenges to the Council's public finances which meant that it was imperative that it continued to drive improvement and efficiency, including to meet the challenges that lay ahead in relation to the government's financial reforms and local government reorganisation.

Councillor Virdi referred to the Council's revenue and capital budget positions as well as the reserves and special expenses and was pleased that the final Outturn position was projecting a net revenue efficiency of £2.407 million. Councillor Virdi referred to page 4.5 and Table two of the report which detailed the main variances and said that the primary adverse variances arose from planning appeals and reduced fee income, rent increases from supported housing providers impacting housing benefits along with the cost of maintaining and replacing the Council's fleet and tankers. He said, however, that in counterbalance, there were several areas of efficiencies, including from investment income and treasury activities and unallocated contingency for several projects, savings from the Depot and some additional grant funding. He drew Cabinet's attention to one technical adjustment highlighted at paragraph 4.6 where lease payments had been removed in line with new accounting practices.

Councillor Virdi said that the report highlighted the specific challenges that the Council faced and how it would fund them, for example in relation to carbon reduction, local government reorganisation activities and the simpler recycling measures. He said that all were significant and required reserves to fund them in order to protect the Council and ensure that it was in the best possible place to meet them. In relation to reserves, Councillor Virdi referred to appendix B and pages 21 to 23 which highlighted the overall movement in usable reserves which had increased to £24.28 million from £20.9 million and to paragraph 4.13 which detailed where the reserves were going to be used and what they were required for. He noted that while the Council had reserves, there remained severe service pressures which were being carried forward. He said that the favourable projected position enabled the Council to protect itself from the risks that materialised in what remained a challenging financial environment and to carry forward balances or replenish its reserves for alternative

opportunities such as local government reorganisation.

In relation to the capital programme, Councillor Virdi referred to paragraphs 4.6, Table three and Appendix C and pages 24 to 21 for the overall position. He summarised that the Council had had approximately 58% of the budget spent, which resulted in a £4.308 million underspend which would be carried forward for project rephasing commitments.

In relation to special expenses, Councillor Virdi referred to appendix D and paragraph 4.17 which showed a projected overspend of approximately £50,000, which was mainly due to a shortfall of income from venue hires, but that it was hoped that current refurbishment activities would result in an increase in those income levels.

In conclusion, Councillor Virdi thanked Councillors and Officers, in particular the Director – Finance and Corporate Services and the Finance Team for their work in ensuring and supporting financial process and was pleased to report that the Council had again met its statutory deadline to produce the end of year financial statements and thought that solid finances were the bedrock of a strong performing organisation which the Council was, but that it would not rest on its laurels and would continue its diligent and prudent decision making and innovative approach to remain ahead of the curve.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor J Wheeler said that the report reflected the culture of the Council and demonstrated how every department had played its part in looking for efficiencies. He noted the challenging financial environment, with inflation and growth in wages and the Council receiving less funding in the last budget review. He referred to some other councils who had been poorly run in the past and hoped that the government recognised the work of the Council and funded it correctly to enable it to continue the fantastic work that it did.

The Leader concurred with the comments made and thanked Officers for their hard work.

It was RESOLVED that:

- a) the 2024/25 revenue position and efficiencies identified in Table 1, the variances in Table 2, and Appendix A to the report be noted;
- b) changes to the earmarked reserves as set out at Appendix B along with the carry forwards and appropriations to reserves in Appendix E to the report be approved;
- c) the capital carry forwards outlined in Appendix C and summarised in Appendix F to the report be approved; and
- d) the update on the Special Expenses outturn at paragraph 4.20 and in Appendix D to the report be noted.

6 Rushcliffe Design Code Supplementary Planning Document

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing, Councillor Upton presented the report of the Director – Development and Economic Growth, which outlined the Rushcliffe Design Code Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

Councillor Upton said that the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act required every local planning authority to produce a design code, either as part of the local plan or as a supplementary planning document, which was what the Council had chosen to do. He said that there was a requirement for the design code to reflect local architectural character and design preferences and that the Council had appointed a specialist architectural consultant to help with its preparation. He said that it had undergone many hours of scrutiny through the cross party Local Development Forum over the past year and been through several workshops with designers and developers and had six weeks of public consultation. He said that this Design Code would replace the existing one from 2009 and would be user friendly and available online.

Councillor Upton said that it would provide a set of design rules which would form material considerations in the determination of relevant planning applications and would provide greater certainty for applicants as to the Council's expectations for design quality, including a list of mandatory requirements and links to further explanatory guidance.

In conclusion, Councillor Upton thanked Harper Parry Architects for their technical expertise, the Local Development Forum for their hours of scrutiny and Officers Emma Fawcett and the Planning Policy Manager for their hard work and rigorous overview.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Brennan noted the extensive work and consultation in the creation of the Design Code and thought it to be accessible, easily readable, very well presented and user friendly, enabling applicants to identify the relevant areas for relevant developments that they wished to bring forward. She said that it provided a starting point and demonstrated the Council's ambition that future developments in the Borough should be of a very high standard that reflected the communities alongside which they were being built and should produce great living spaces for residents.

The Leader echoed comments made and said that the Code was important in helping to ensure that the standard of design in the Borough remained high.

It was RESOLVED that:

- e) the proposed revisions to the Rushcliffe Design Code Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) be supported;
- f) the Director– Development and Economic Growth be granted delegated authority to adopt the Rushcliffe Design Code SPD, and to publish an Adoption Statement at the point of adoption; and

- g) the Director– Development and Economic Growth be granted delegated authority, in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing, to make any necessary final minor textual, graphical and presentational changes required to the SPD prior to adoption.

7 Management of Open Spaces

The Leader and Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough-wide Leadership, Councillor Clarke MBE presented the report of the Director – Development and Economic Growth, which provided an update on the management of open spaces on new developments within the Borough.

In opening his comments, the Leader said that he would first like to suggest alterations to recommendation a) in replacing the word ‘adopt’ with the word ‘endorse’ and adding wording that Cabinet ‘gives delegated authority to the Director for Development and Economic Growth to make updates in line with the core principles of the guide’, as this reflected that it was a living document.

The Leader said that Cabinet had decided not to adopt open spaces on new developments due to the considerable financial burden that would place on the Council and said that since 2011 open spaces had been the responsibility of the developer. He noted that various concerns have been raised as to how the management of those open spaces took place and as such he had hosted a roundtable with residents and a cross party of Councillors and representatives from housing developers and management companies and had written letters to The Secretary of State for Housing and Communities, which had been passed on to the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Housing and Local Government Department who he was in conversation with.

The Leader highlighted that the Good Practice Guide had four themes, which were service, fairness, transparency and community and these sought to reflect the issues and concerns raised by residents to assist in discussions with government and the possibility of regulation of the management of open spaces. He said that the Guide provided a good basis in the start of ensuring that good practice was maintained and to reassure residents that the Council understand and acknowledged their concerns.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Upton highlighted that the management of open spaces was a national issue and not just pertinent to the Borough and he was pleased that the Council was at the forefront of preparing a guide. He hoped that there would be some national regulation of the sector in the future. He said that the Guide was advisory and whilst not legally enforceable was good to have.

Councillor Upton noted that housing developments and design had changed over recent years with the introduction of community areas which the residents were responsible for and paid for, but often which non-residents could use. He hoped that the government would pick up the challenge and that developers would get on board with the Good Practice Guide and hoped that a copy would be shared with prospective buyers by the developers and solicitors and that copies would be made widely available and given much publicity.

The Leader clarified that the Guide applied to freehold property as opposed to leasehold property.

Councillor J Wheeler said that the Guide aimed to provide clarity about what the Council wanted both for residents and management companies for open spaces and encouraged developers to look at both how they were managing the spaces and how they were communicating with residents to avoid confusion and promote openness. He said that a development may not always look like the brochure in early days but this could change as the environment developed and that positive communication could help avoid future issues.

Councillor Brennan reiterated comments about working with developers and management companies which Officers were doing and said that as Chair of the Fairham Growth Board conversations were already taking place with those developers who had been responsive and happy to work with the Council about providing information to residents. She said that the Guide was written in plain English and was clear, was a great initiative taken by the Council and provided a good step forward.

The Leader emphasised that it was an ongoing process.

It was RESOLVED that:

- a) the Good Practice Guide for the Management of Open Spaces to allow officers to engage with developers and management companies be endorsed and that delegated authority be given to the Director for Development and Economic Growth to make updates in line with the core principles of the Guide; and
- b) the Leader be requested to continue to lobby Government to regulate the governance of management companies to ensure transparency and remove charges unrelated to the direct management of open spaces.

The meeting closed at 7.43 pm.

CHAIR

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Cabinet

Tuesday, 9 September 2025

Technological, Digital and Customer Access Strategy 2025-2028

Report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services

Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Wellbeing, ICT and Member Development, Cllr J Wheeler

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. This report presents the Technological, Digital and Customer Access Strategy 2025-2028 for Cabinet approval.
- 1.2. The Strategy consolidates and modernises three existing strategies: ICT, Digital-by-Design and Customer Access; while aligning with the Council's Corporate Strategy 2024-2027 and strategic priorities.
- 1.3. It outlines how the Council will leverage emerging technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), to improve service delivery, enhance digital access, and strengthen cyber security.
- 1.4. The Strategy and a detailed Action Plan is included at Appendix One.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet approves the Technological, Digital and Customer Access Strategy 2025-2028.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1. This Strategy has been created to provide a clear plan for how the Council can use technology to improve its services, processes and digital access for both residents and staff. It provides a positive framework to update the Council's core systems, improve online security and explore helpful new tools like AI. The accompanying Action Plan lists a number of projects to increase awareness of Council services, improve customer experience, and support the Council's workforce with the skills they need to succeed.
- 3.2. Approving this Strategy is an essential step in continuing to make Council services modern, helpful and responsive to residents' needs. It will allow the Council to use technology to remove barriers for people, reduce costs, and to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to benefit from its digital services. Importantly, it also aims to nurture a positive and supportive culture where our staff feel empowered to develop new ideas that deliver high quality services for the benefit of all.

- 3.3. The accompanying Action Plan outlines specific initiatives across three strategic strands: Technological Access, Digital Access and Customer Access, with measurable outcomes and timelines.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1. In recent years, the Council has made great progress with its digital services based on previous strategies. Key achievements include moving its backup systems to more secure cloud services, launching a new website that met high accessibility standards, and introducing popular online features like MyAccount. These successes show the Council's commitment to using technology to deliver better and more reliable services for residents.
- 4.2. The Council recognises that it must continue to improve to meet the changing expectations of its residents and keep up with the fast pace of technology. Bringing three strategies into one gives the Council a clearer and more unified plan. It allows the Council to better embrace the opportunities offered by new developments like AI and prepare for potential future changes in local government.
- 4.3. A core principle of the Strategy is to nurture a positive and forward thinking culture, where innovations can flourish. This means creating a supportive environment that encourages staff to explore new ideas and test creative approaches to improve services for residents. It is an approach centered on learning quickly from the Council's experiences, sharing its findings constructively, and continuously adapting to ensure the Council always deliver the best possible outcomes.

5. Alternative options considered and reasons for rejection

- 5.1 The Council could have chosen to simply refresh the three existing strategies separately. This option was rejected because a single, unified plan avoids duplication and is more effective for delivering a clear and consistent improvement to both Council digital services and customer accessibility.
- 5.2 Alternatively, the Council could have chosen not to renew its Technology Strategy at all. This was not considered a suitable option, as it would be out of step with the Council's commitment to continuous improvement and would mean missing out on new opportunities to make Council services better for residents, in a fast changing environment. Furthermore, ensuring Council services can operate in a secure environment.

6. Risks and Uncertainties

- 6.1. There are clear risks to the Council if it does not continue to develop its services. These include not meeting the needs of residents, having out-of-date security that cannot provide against the thousands of daily online threats and not providing the convenient 24/7 digital services that people expect.

- 6.2. This Strategy directly addresses these risks through planned investment in modern systems, a strong focus on online security, and clear oversight of the Council's digital work. By promoting a culture of security awareness and providing ongoing training, the Council can ensure it remains protected and that its services are safe and reliable.
- 6.3. With Local Government Reorganisation on the horizon the Council needs to be in the best place it can be to deliver modern effective services for its residents and make any transfer or merger of hardware, systems and information as easy as possible.

7. Implications

7.1. Financial Implications

The advent of developing AI, preparing for LGR and ensuring we operate in a secure environment is likely to lead to resource issues. Any budget growth will be reported in financial reports to Corporate Overview Group and Cabinet and to Full Council as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

7.2. Legal Implications

Implementation of the Strategy will help to ensure ongoing compliance with GDPR and Data Protection legislation and guidance.

7.3. Equalities Implications

The Strategy is supported by an Equality Impact Assessment and will be reviewed accordingly.

7.4. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Implications

There are no Section 17 implications contained in this report.

7.5. Biodiversity Net Gain Implications

There are no biodiversity net gain implications contained in this report.

8. Link to Corporate Priorities

The Environment	Supports carbon neutrality through cloud adoption, reduced paper usage and enabling digital usage rather than physical travel
Quality of Life	Enhances access to services and empowers residents through digital inclusion
Efficient Services	Streamlines processes and improves service delivery through automation
Sustainable Growth	Builds digital infrastructure to support future growth

9. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet approves the Technological, Digital and Customer Access Strategy 2025-2028.

For more information contact:	Pete Linfield Director – Finance and Corporate Services 0115 914 8439 plinfield@rushcliffe.gov.uk
Background papers available for Inspection:	Communications and Engagement Strategy Equality Impact Assessment
List of appendices:	Appendix One – Technological, Digital and Customer Access Strategy 2025-2028



Rushcliffe
Borough Council

RUSHCLIFFE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Technology, Digital and Customer Access Strategy

2025 - 2028





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Foreword



“With this Technological, Digital and Customer Access Strategy we will increase the diversity of our digital services and use technology to maintain easy access and reliability of Council services. Our goal is to work with technology to remove barriers and reduce costs, all whilst continuing to tackle digital inequality and embrace technological transformation.

We aim to invest in and empower our workforce to improve our processes making use of emerging technologies ensuring residents can access our services quickly and efficiently at a time, and in a way, that suits them. And, crucially at this time, we aim to increase data security through physical measures, increased training and awareness, and more robust and more regular testing of our security measures.

Through the delivery of this Strategy, we will create digitally enhanced dynamic systems and processes delivering high quality access to Council services for both residents directly (including our Councillors) and our employees”.

Councillor Jonathan Wheeler – Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Wellbeing, ICT and Member Development

“The Technological, Digital and Customer Access Strategy 2025-2028 defines how Rushcliffe Borough Council will leverage technology to enhance services, processes and digital access to customers and our workforce.

We will invest in technology, modernise our infrastructure, enhance our cyber security, and explore innovative solutions like Artificial Intelligence. We will prioritise training and support internally to ensure the successful adoption and exploitation of new technologies. We will also prioritise accessible design for our customer-facing digital services so that all stakeholders can access the services they need anytime of the day.

This strategy is flexible and will be updated as technology changes, ensuring the Council stays ahead in technological and digital service delivery, for the benefit of all stakeholders”.

Peter Linfield - Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Corporate Services



The Technological, Digital and Customer Access Strategy ('the Strategy') is aligned with the Council's Corporate Strategy for 2024-2027 and the Council's Strategic Priorities of the Environment, Quality of Life, Sustainable Growth, and Efficient Services. It consolidates three existing strategies (ICT, Digital-by-Design and Customer Access strategies) where there is overlap and modernising these with the impact of emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence.

The Strategy not only outlines our previous successes more importantly this Strategy looks ahead to what the future may bring, horizon scanning and learning from the private sector and other councils to bring the best of the new technologies to Rushcliffe. It enables all stakeholders to access Council services at a time and in a manner that suits a range of individual preferences.

The context within the which the Strategy operates and successes of the past strategies are detailed at Appendix A.

This Strategy provides a framework within which the Council can explore, and exploit, new technology to deliver more economic, efficient, and effective services to our residents. It provides support for all front-facing service delivery teams as well as the Council's extensive support services in terms of awareness raising, skill development and implementation support.

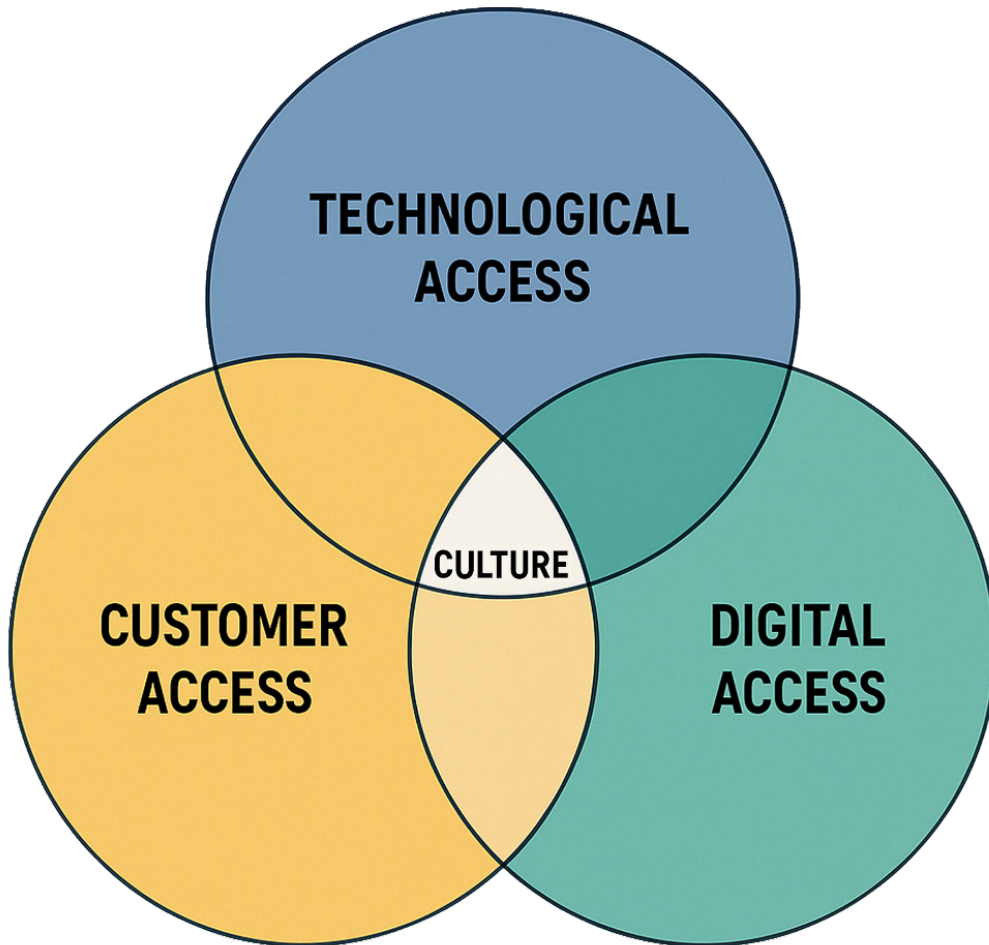
The main challenges the Strategy aims to deliver are to:

- Capitalise on the Council's existing systems to ensure users are making the most of what these systems already offer.
- Extract and utilise data to drive innovation in areas where it is likely to deliver the biggest gains.
- Identify, assess and introduce emerging technologies for their ability to improve customer access and experience, streamline internal processes, reduce the cost of processes and / or reduce human errors in processing.
- Upskill the Council's workforce to enable them to understand and exploit emerging technologies, and support the development of skills for other stakeholders such as local business owners and residents by signposting to external courses and information.
- Increase the Council's technological defences to prevent infiltration by cyber criminals, whilst also increasing the Council's resilience to attack and strengthening its ability to recover if such attacks are ever successful.

To meet these challenges there are 3 strands, each having their own objectives and specific actions and work streams identified in Sections 3 to 5. The effective interaction of these should enable excellent service delivery. Underpinning the strands is the culture of the Council.



Council Culture underpinning the 3 Key Work Strands to innovate



The three work strands are defined as follows:

- **Technological Access** - addressing technological transformation in an ever fast paced sector with AI advances, reviewing infrastructure, data governance and IT resilience and mindful of possible Local Government Reorganisation
- **Digital Access** - using data and insight to empower people and communities, enhancing skills to deliver a more rounded technological culture for an increasing number of stakeholders
- **Customer Access** - ensuring our customers and residents can access services ever more conveniently and using innovative projects to meet changing expectations of service delivery.

Culture

It is important the Council has the right culture in place to develop services. Taking services forward is the responsibility of everyone. To this end this strategy aims to harness the following to optimise the development of technological, digital and customer access:

- Focus on being agile and both iterative, and if necessary ‘big bang’, development;
- A ‘fail fast – learn faster’ culture, not being afraid to make mistakes but important that we identify and learn from them and share the lessons learned. To this end there is not a ‘blame culture’.
- That project feedback is constructive and there is psychological safety so individuals are not afraid to innovate and also having the headroom to innovate is important. Furthermore that we collaborate across teams aided by effective project management;
- Empowering our employees and councillors to continue to develop. Both ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ innovation and also maintaining excellent governance and that stakeholders are aware of ‘railguards’ to protect both individuals and the Council. The balancing act of having both ‘digital first’ thinking and a culture of ‘security and ethics’; and
- Our commitment to ongoing training and development and investment in technology, so employees can both identify and acquire the tools they need, maximise their use and continue to take services forward for the benefit of customers.



Introduction

Keeping up-to date with technology is important to make life easier, tasks more efficient, improving resilience and work more cost-effective. Artificial Intelligence has the potential to change the way we work yet again providing faster access to information, reducing low value tasks to free up staff to work on high value activities, and increasing data security. To take advantage of these new technological developments we need to ensure we are making the most of our existing technologies, understand how best to use the new tools, and create an environment within which they can perform effectively. This strand of the strategy focuses on ensuring our existing technology performs at its best whilst also looking forward to develop the processes of the future is about creating technological access.

The challenges Technological access focuses on is to:

- Capitalise on the Council's existing systems to ensure users are making the most of what these systems already offer.
- Increase the Council's defences to prevent infiltration by cyber criminals, whilst also increasing the Council's resilience to attack and strengthening its ability to recover if such attacks are ever successful.

Rationale

Looking ahead, the future ICT landscape will be defined by rapid technological advancements and evolving security threats. We anticipate significant growth in cloud computing, offering opportunities to leverage innovative technologies and enhance service delivery. This shift necessitates a heightened focus on cyber security to protect sensitive data and infrastructure. This Strategy will prioritise staying ahead of emerging threats, implementing robust security measures, taking full advantage of new cloud-based technologies to drive efficiency, resilience, and customer-centric services. Furthermore, we recognise that our users are key stakeholders in driving technological advances.

Looking forward, there is no doubt that Artificial Intelligence (AI) provides significant opportunity for service improvement and efficiencies within the Council. Reducing the time spent on common tasks such as minute taking, document creation and data analysis frees up staff time for focus on more complex tasks. AI tools already incorporated into the Microsoft 365 suite of products that are making day-to-day work more efficient. The challenge is training staff to take advantage of these tools to make routine tasks easier in an environment that is constantly evolving whilst also ensuring that adequate data security measures are in place.

As well as transforming the way individuals undertake their work, AI also presents the opportunity to transform Council services through the automation of processes both internally and for resident facing services.

Within any projects, managing our data is critical and developing the measures needed to ensure security of data is robust moving forward.

Service Objectives

The Technological Access work strand has four objectives, which are underpinned by six key initiatives detailed below:

Objective	Initiatives
<p>1. ICT Future Proofing and Security:</p> <p>Adapt ICT capabilities to meet evolving business needs and exploit emerging technologies and ensuring resilience against cyber attack.</p> <p>2. ICT Service Improvement:</p> <p>Continuously enhance ICT services and processes to increase efficiency, effectiveness and user satisfaction.</p> <p>3. ICT Infrastructure and Platform Management:</p> <p>Establish and maintain a reliable, scalable and secure ICT environment including hardware, software, networks and platforms.</p> <p>4. ICT Service Request and Delivery:</p> <p>Maintain a robust, secure and scalable ICT service that effectively supports all council services.</p>	<p>a. Digital Governance, Security and Compliance:</p> <p>To establish and maintain robust governance frameworks, implement stringent security measures, and ensure ongoing compliance with relevant regulations to protect the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of all systems and data assets.</p> <p>b. Infrastructure improvement:</p> <p>To modernise and enhance the foundational IT infrastructure, ensuring scalability, reliability, and performance to support current and future business needs.</p> <p>c. Applications Development:</p> <p>To accelerate digital transformation by modernising existing applications (merging where possible) and developing new digital solutions that improve customer experience, streamline internal processes, and drive business growth.</p> <p>d. Data governance:</p> <p>To establish a comprehensive framework for managing, governing, and optimizing the use of data as a strategic asset, enabling data-driven decision-making and insights.</p> <p>e. Cloud Technology:</p> <p>To strategically leverage cloud technologies to enhance business agility, improve operational resilience, and optimise IT costs through a well-defined cloud adoption strategy.</p> <p>f. AI and Automation:</p> <p>To strategically explore, evaluate, and deploy artificial intelligence and automation solutions across the organisation to drive efficiency gains, foster innovation, and improve operational processes.</p>

Appendix B details various actions against the key objectives.

Introduction:

Introducing new technologies to improve cannot work on its own unless we invest in the digital skills of our staff enabling them to be able to use the right tools, develop new processes that actually meet customer need; and increase their understanding of how technology can assist in streamlining internal processes. Thus reducing the potential for error, and automating repetitive work, creating capacity, potential efficiencies and releasing staff time to focus on more complex tasks.

We also need to better analyse the data we have creating a better understanding of what customers need and their expectations, as well as how our existing processes operate, and where improvements will be most beneficial. We need to encourage all of our different stakeholders to access our services digitally, and to look at 'upskilling' if digital access is a barrier. Accepting there are more vulnerable groups and some traditional channels may remain.

Digital access is the second strand of this Strategy and is focused on expanding the ways residents can access Council services, giving our staff the skills they need to develop these new access channels, and using the data these new methods provide to drive further improvements.

The challenges digital access focuses upon is to:

- Upskill the Council's workforce to enable them to understand and exploit emerging technologies, and support the development of skills for other stakeholders such as local business owners and residents by signposting to external courses and information
- Extract and utilise data to drive innovation in areas where it is likely to deliver the biggest gains.





Rationale:

The Council wishes to build further foundational digital literacy for Councillors and employees. To help stakeholders develop starter, intermediate or advanced digital skills aligned to their needs. We will promote a comprehensive training program to enhance our digital literacy and empower us to effectively utilise new systems and tools internally.

It will seek to define skill levels of the Council's employees based on:

- **Basic Skills:** Email, online safety, digital communication, internet navigation.
- **Intermediate Skills:** Microsoft Office, digital collaboration tools (e.g., Zoom, Teams), data entry and management.
- **Advanced Skills:** Data analytics, cybersecurity, software development, AI/ML, cloud computing, data ownership (retention, governance and GDPR)
- **Leadership and Strategy:** Digital transformation leadership, IT governance, innovation management.

We are also aware that in order for residents to make use of an expanded range of digital access tools then they also need to be comfortable with their use. Some of this will form naturally as the Council catches up with the private sector who have already deployed chat bots and intelligent agents but for other residents' access to information and signposting to training opportunities will be required.

Service Objectives

The Digital Access work strand has four objectives, which are underpinned by seven key initiatives detailed below:

Objective	Initiatives
<p>1. ICT Infrastructure and Platform Management:</p> <p>Establish and maintain a reliable, scalable and secure ICT environment including hardware, software, networks and platforms.</p> <p>2. Extending tools and learning:</p> <p>So the council grows with new technology, systems and processes.</p> <p>3. Reducing digital exclusion:</p> <p>Upskilling councillors, staff etc so they can use technology and data.</p> <p>4. Making increased use of data and trends:</p> <p>So the council can make better informed decisions.</p>	<p>a. Partnerships with universities, businesses, D2N2 and public sector organisations through public sector reform to drive innovation and skill</p> <p>b. Improve transactional services with increased convenience to report, apply, register and access information on the Council's website</p> <p>c. Improve and review digital self-help advice and information</p> <p>d. Review how services are designed with innovations for improvements for resident and customer accessibility</p> <p>e. Upskill and develop the Council's workforce and ensure they are digitally enabled, trained and supported, reducing the digital inclusion gap and leading to a more digitally agile and flexible workforce. Also infrastructure training in relation to Cloud technology</p> <p>f. Link relevant improvements with the Council's Communications and Engagement strategy 2025-2028</p> <p>g. Create a transition plan for new systems and solutions to create a tangible legacy of improved skills for Council staff.</p>

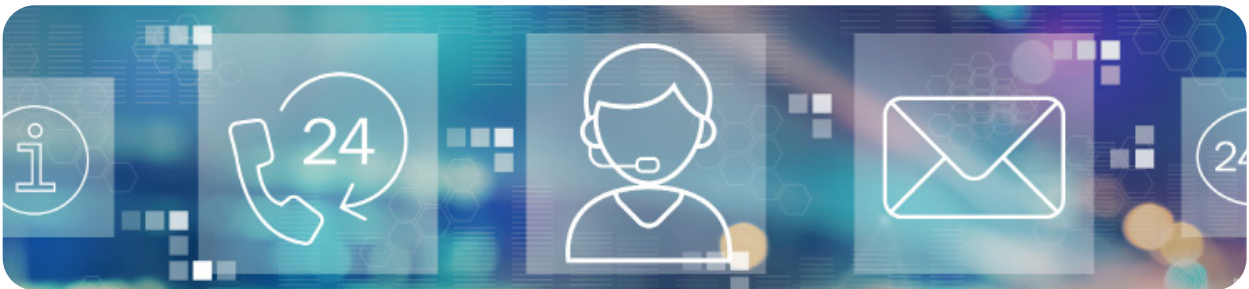
Appendix B details various actions against the four objectives.



Introduction:

We appreciate that many of our residents rarely have cause to contact the Council. For some, the only communication is limited to the receiving, and payment of, the annual Council Tax bill, or the regular emptying of household waste and recycling bins. For others, contact can be a lot more regular, more complicated and sometimes fraught with difficulty. It is vitally important that those residents who need to access help and support can do so easily, conveniently, and at a time, and in a way, that suits them. Understanding and meeting this expectation is called Customer Access and it forms the third strand of this Strategy.

The challenge customer access focuses upon is to identify, assess and introduce emerging technologies for their ability to improve customer access and experience, streamline internal processes, reduce the cost of processes and / or reduce human errors in processing.



Rationale:

To improve services for our customers, we need to have a better understanding of who they are, how they expect services to be delivered, and their expectations of Council services.

Traditional methods of contact, such as 'face-to-face' can be more expensive and time consuming. Understanding why certain customers prefer these channels can help us to help them to move to quicker and more efficient channels. Examining the customer journey, and the cost of delivering each process, can identify key areas for development as well as identify the areas customers consider to be less important to help us prioritise resources.

Consulting with different customer groups and using customer insight data will help us to understand the requirements of our customers. It can also help to develop end to end digital transactions and ease of access to online services allowing in-person and telephone conversations to be focused on vulnerable customers or those with complex needs or queries.

Identifying these customer groups for whom digital services and self-service may not be the most suitable type of access, will enable us to target our resources to meet all of our customers' needs and ensure no one is excluded from accessing services.

Understanding our customers will enable us to make decisions based on real data and real customer feedback instead of making assumptions about what our customers want.

Service Objectives

The Customer Access work strand has four key objectives, which are underpinned by seven key initiatives detailed below:

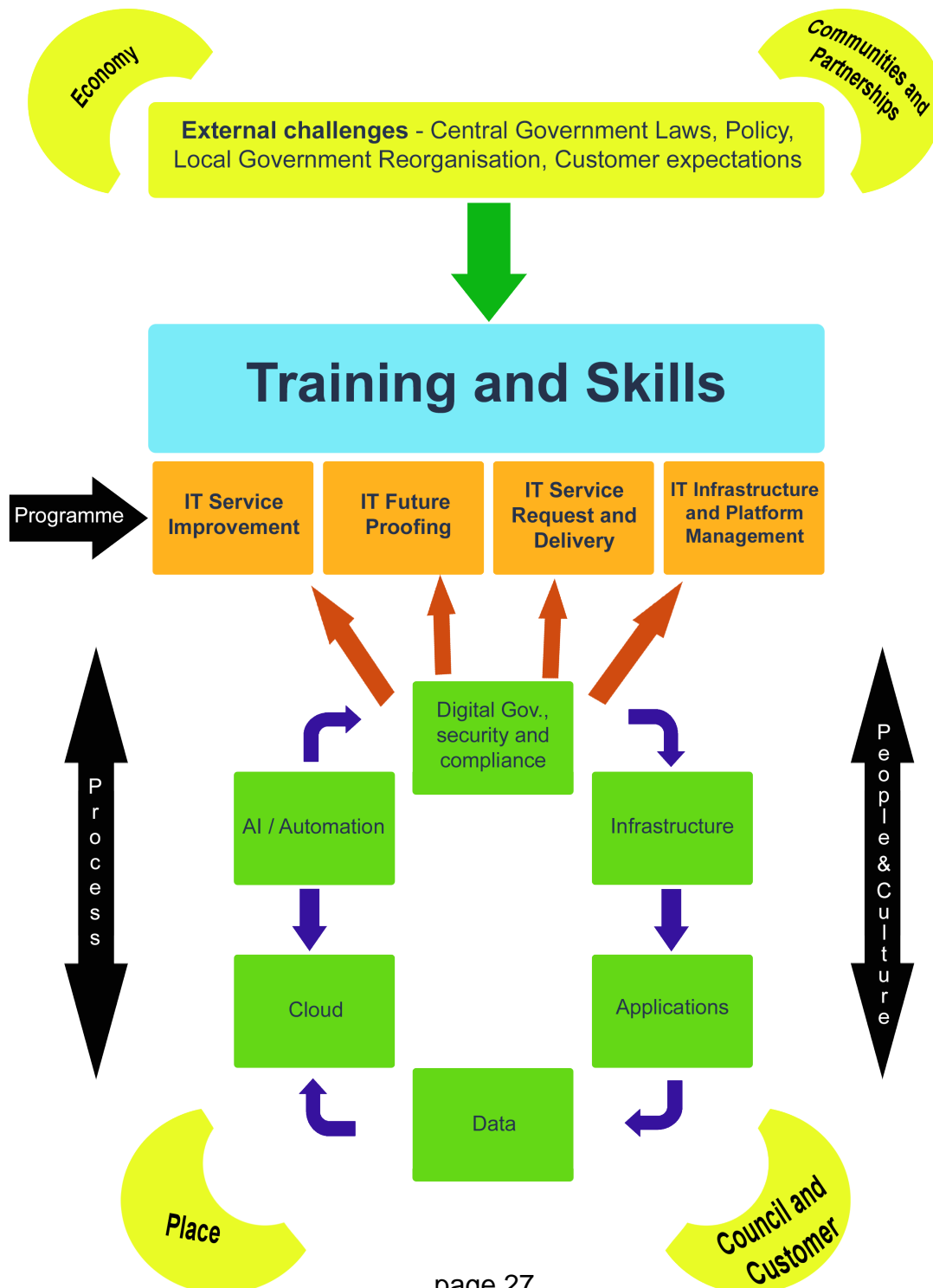
Objective	Initiatives
<p>1. To progress digital and in-person self-help:</p> <p>Improving and expanding communication channels.</p> <p>2. To be innovative:</p> <p>Looking at the latest technology including AI.</p> <p>3. To review and build partnerships:</p> <p>How customers are using the council's contact centres.</p> <p>4. Listening and responding to evolving trends:</p> <p>To inform how services are delivered.</p>	<p>a. Improve transactional services with increased convenience to report, apply, register and access information on the Council's website.</p> <p>b. Continue to develop more understanding of who our customers are through analysis of our ESB Customer Relationship Management and other systems' data on enquiries.</p> <p>c. Understand further why services are used in the ways they are by customers and whether this is an active choice or lack of awareness regarding alternatives.</p> <p>d. Understand further and define the needs and expectations of customers across different communities including the provision of in-person contact points.</p> <p>e. Continue to capture accurate customer data to guide which services can be delivered more effectively digitally.</p> <p>f. Understand further the cost of delivering our services and where we can identify partner organisations who can benefit from shared services or space at our sites.</p> <p>g. Develop our systems to collect and monitor customer feedback and satisfaction from all access channels.</p>

We will deliver the above objectives by undertaking the 12 tasks contained in the Action Plan appended to this Strategy.



The diagram overleaf depicts how processes and culture interact with the ICT Programme and the influence of external factors on the Council's Technological, Digital and Customer Access Strategy.

The world of ICT is extremely fast paced and dynamic. The strategy and associated action plan is under continuous review so the Council can take advantage of emerging technologies for the benefit of all stakeholders. We know even now Local Government Reorganisation will lead to significant transformative change and the Strategy is designed to ensure that the Council will be on the front foot when this change materialises.



Resourcing

Maintaining existing points and forms of access to Council services, as well as looking to the future and developing new access channels, is the responsibility of all officers at Rushcliffe Borough Council. However, the driving forces behind this Strategy fall mainly within the Council's Corporate Services team and more specifically within ICT and Customer Services.

Some projects contained within the three action plans appended to this Strategy are significant enough to require additional funding, for example an investment in new software, and these costs have been incorporated into future budgets where they are already known. For more explorative projects currently in the very early stages of investigation, funding options will be considered as part of the business case and provision made, if necessary, in future years.

A significant part of the Digital Access strand, is upskilling officers to enable them to see the possibilities new technologies can bring for increasing efficiency, reducing costs and expanding on Customer Access. The cost of this upskilling is contained with the Council's training budget and will be constantly assessed along with other Council priorities.

Recognising the ongoing discussions surrounding Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), this Strategy balances the need to be proactive and innovative in ways that benefit all stakeholders but also recognises the potential of an 'as yet' unknown demand on the service as we move into LGR. Resources, and the respective action plans, will be reassessed once the outcome of LGR is clearer for Rushcliffe as an organisation.



ICT Strategy

Our previous successes from the 2022-25 ICT Strategy include:

- Delivered an enhanced backup solution from tape to Cloud storage
- Introduced Endpoint Detection and Response solutions to enhance security
- Achieved Cyber Assessment Framework “READY” status
- Introduced Microsoft Teams to all staff
- Upgraded to Windows 11 for all devices
- Established a new secondary ‘fail-over site’ to enhance business continuity
- Improved network connectivity and wireless access.

It is worth understanding in terms of context and the scale of support that ICT has to deliver:

- 350 individual ICT users
- 267 staff laptops
- Sending and receiving over 16,000 emails each day
- 32TB (Terabytes) of data stored on 10 physical servers
- 62 different software applications with 61% operating from physical servers on our sites and 39% operating from the Cloud
- Supported by seven ICT staff
- Physical support over eight RBC sites
- A partnership approach with the Cutter Group to deliver more responsive and resilient services
- Over 1,500 spam or phishing attempts per day highlighting the importance of robust cyber security.



Digital by Design

Key outcomes from the Council's Digital by Design Programme over the last few years have included:

- The digitisation of our Home Alarms service ensuring customers continue to receive vital piece of mind following the switch over to digital only phonelines
- The introduction of Hybrid Mail automating the printing and posting of outgoing mail using an external service provider
- The development of electronic internal processes such as digital recruitment, licensing applications, benefits claims, and tree preservation orders
- The introduction of a brand new website for the Council which meets the WCAG 2.2 Accessibility Standards meeting the needs of a more diverse group of residents.
- Better methods of data analysis allowing managers to identify where digital development will make the biggest impact both in terms of customer access but also cost reduction and higher levels of productivity.

Current statistics – see below Customer Access Strategy



Customer Access Strategy

Key outcomes from the 2022-2025 Customer Access Strategy include:

- Introducing self-serve terminals at Customer Contact Points, reviewing their use and removing them in favour of more online development
- Introducing the online MyAccount feature enabling customers to easily access key information about services that matter to them ignoring internal operational boundaries
- Introducing clear customer services standards that make expectation of Rushcliffe Staff and Customers clear

Current statistics

From April 2024 to March 2025, on average:

- 6,500 customers phoned us each month
- 3,000 customers emailed us each month
- 800 customers used an enquiry form on the website each month
- 5,500 customers used the electronic payment line each month
- 480 customers visited us in person each month
- 142,300 web hits per month.

Technological Access Action Plan

Theme	ICT Future Proofing	ICT Future Proofing	ICT Future Proofing	ICT Future Proofing	ICT Future Proofing
Initiative	1. Capitalise on existing Microsoft licenses including the introduction of Hyper-V . Hyper-V is Microsoft's virtualization platform that enables multiple servers to run on a single physical machine, reducing hardware costs, improving efficiency, and enhancing security	2. Introduce solutions to enable... PowerBI and PowerAutomate to enable quicker access to data Power BI is Microsoft's business analytics tool that transforms data into interactive visual reports to support smarter decision-making. Power Automate is a cloud-based service that automates repetitive tasks and workflows across apps to boost productivity and reduce manual effort	3. Work with software and hardware suppliers to maximise our current contracts	4. Simplify and improve the Data Protection Impact Assessment	5. Test and improve Disaster Recovery provisions
What are we going to do?	Transferring to the Cloud where appropriate, extending the use of Sharepoint and exploring the benefits of Azure technologies	Introduce the tools across the organisation laying the groundwork for more advanced use of Artificial Intelligence	Create plans for maximising future developments	Review the due diligence process to make it easier to do business with the Council whilst meeting our statutory responsibilities	Further assessments to assure business continuity and resistance to cyber attacks
Why?	To make the most of the tools we already pay for, which will help us run our systems more efficiently, save money, and prepare our technology for the future	We are introducing these tools to help everyone get the information they need more quickly and easily, which will also help us explore how newer technologies like Artificial Intelligence can benefit our work in the future	To ensure we are getting the best possible value and performance from the technology and services we already use, and to plan ahead so we can take full advantage of new opportunities and improvements from our technology partners	To make our data protection checks simpler and more efficient, so it's easier for others to work with us while ensuring we always meet our legal duties to protect information	To make sure that if something unexpected happens, like a major system failure or a cyber attack, we can get our essential services back up and running quickly and keep our information safe
When are we going to do it?	Phased approach starting August 2025.	March 2026 (after successful staff training)	As and when the contracts are due for renewal with vendors and system owners	CIGG meet every quarter and will be addressed September 2026	Scheduled for every six months
How will we know we have delivered?	A reduction in the number of physical servers and data stored on premises.	Clear examples where new PowerBI reports or automated PowerAutomate workflows have led to quicker, more informed decision-making. We can measure a reduction in the time it takes to compile or access information that was previously difficult to obtain	There's a general understanding and readiness within relevant teams about how these tools can support future AI initiatives. Staff express increased confidence in the organisation's data and its potential for more advanced analysis	A measurable reduction in the average time it takes to complete a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) from initiation to approval. A similar reduction in the time it takes to complete due diligence checks for new partners or suppliers	Regular Disaster Recovery (DR) tests, and these tests are consistently carried out for critical systems and services. After each test, there's a clear report on what worked, what didn't, and lessons learned. Recovery Time between tests has not increased.

Technological Access Action Plan

Theme	ICT Service Improvement	ICT Service Improvement	ICT Infrastructure and Platform Management	ICT Service Improvement	ICT Service Request and Delivery
Initiative	6. Create a programme of support for system owners	7. Migrate the Council's internal data from the Y drive to SharePoint	8. Move towards cloud-based networks	9. Assess security access	10. Make processes paperless and digitalise manual service sheets
What are we going to do?	Create workshops highlighting responsibilities and building relationships, and a rolling evaluation to ensure systems are meeting the needs of the organisation, internal and external users	Deliver staff training to highlight smarter ways of working collaboratively using new technology	Provide automated updates, alerts and systems management	Replace the security access systems to provide continuity across all physical sites	Increase the acceptance of digital signatures and electronic stock control
Why? page 32	To better support the people responsible for our different technology systems, helping them understand their roles clearly and work together, while also making sure these systems are always doing what our organisation and our users need them to do	To move our shared files to a more modern and accessible system, and to help everyone learn how to use these new tools to work together more effectively and efficiently	To modernise our network infrastructure, which will help keep our systems up-to-date automatically, alert us to any issues quickly, and make managing everything simpler and more secure	To update our building security so that we have a consistent and reliable way to manage access across all our locations, making them more secure with identity management, easier to manage and track any unauthorised entries	We are doing this to make our work more efficient, reduce waste, and speed things up by moving away from paper-based tasks to digital methods for things like service records, approvals, and managing our supplies
When are we going to do it?	September 2025 and then every quarter	Before December 2025	Before July 2026	Before December 2026	RBC teams with piloting this and rollout if successful in 2026
How will we know we have delivered?	System owners demonstrate a clearer understanding of their responsibilities (e.g., for system maintenance, security, user support, future planning). There's improved collaboration and communication between system owners and with IT/digital teams. System owners proactively engage with the support programme and the evaluation process, rather than it being a purely top-down exercise. fewer escalations or issues arising from a lack of clarity around system ownership or responsibilities	All relevant data from the Y drive has been successfully migrated to the designated SharePoint environment with data integrity maintained. The Y drive (or relevant sections) has been made read-only and eventually decommissioned, with staff successfully redirected to SharePoint for their files. There's a clear and logical information architecture in SharePoint, making it easy for staff to find what they need	Consistent network configurations and policies are applied across all sites, managed from the central cloud platform. IT staff report spending less time on manual network maintenance and firefighting, and more time on service improvement and strategic initiatives. It's quicker and easier to deploy new network services or make changes to existing configurations across multiple sites	The new security access system is installed, tested, and fully operational across all designated council sites. The old access systems have been completely decommissioned. Relevant staff (e.g., facilities management) are trained and proficient in using and managing the new system New system accurately logs and allows authorized personnel to generate reports detailing who entered specific rooms or zones, and at what precise times, providing a consistent and auditable trail across all equipped sites	Manual service sheets are replaced by a digital system (e.g., staff using tablets or mobile apps to record service delivery). Data from these digital sheets is accurate, captured in real-time, and easily accessible for reporting and auditing. Field staff find the digital solution efficient to use

Technological Access Action Plan

Theme	ICT Infrastructure and Platform Management	ICT Infrastructure and Platform Management	ICT Infrastructure and Platform Management	ICT Infrastructure and Platform Management	ICT Service Request and Delivery
Initiative	11. Refresh the Council's infrastructure to increase resilience, stability and decrease the Council's impact on the environment	12. Replace the Council's Audio Visual and meeting room technology	13. Install layer two networking (Layer 2 networking helps connect directly and securely, making local communication fast and reliable) providing secure digital links between our physical sites	14. Explore and advantage of SAAS products. SaaS (Software as a Service) is a cloud-based model where users access software via the internet, eliminating the need for installation or maintenance	15. Introduce chat bot and single sign on to access different systems
What are we going to do?	Provide capacity to deliver better options, and the opportunity to exploit cloud technology	Make it easier to use and more secure providing a stable platform from which to expand the business and increase revenue	Assess sites to promote a zero-trust environment (A zero-trust environment helps protect sensitive data by always verifying who's trying to access it)	Put the onus on suppliers to ensure their equipment and services are upgraded, maintained, and secured in line with current security standards	Make our services more accessible through smarter access methods
Why? page 33	To update our core technology foundations to make our systems more reliable and stable, ensure we can support new and better services, and allow us to take advantage of modern cloud-based solutions all contributing to the Council's goal to be Carbon Neutral by 2030	To upgrade our meeting room equipment so it's simpler for everyone to use, more secure, and provides a reliable setup that will help us conduct business more effectively and explore new opportunities for growth	To create stronger and more secure direct connections between our different office locations, which helps ensure that only authorized people and systems can access our information, making our overall network much safer	We are doing this to align with Central government's direction for using cloud technologies, a key reason being the enhanced security these modern systems provide, alongside benefits like efficiency and keeping our services current	To make it much easier for people to use our services by providing instant help through a chatbot and allowing them to access different systems with just one login
When are we going to do it?	Phased approach starting August 2025	Before August 2025	Before September 2026	September 2025 and then every quarter	Jan 2026 – May 2026
How will we know we have delivered?	Old, end-of-life equipment is decommissioned, potentially leading to reduced maintenance costs and risks. Faster system performance, quicker response times, and fewer incidents related to hardware failures or capacity bottlenecks Reduction in reliance on non-renewable energies, better energy management and lower emissions	All targeted meeting rooms are equipped with the new, fully functional AV technology (e.g., high-quality displays, reliable audio, seamless video conferencing, intuitive control systems). The old AV equipment has been decommissioned. Staff (and any external users, if applicable) report that the new technology meets their needs for various meeting types	The new layer two network links (e.g., dedicated fibre, VPLS - VPLS (Virtual Private LAN Service which securely connects multiple office locations, making communication between sites seamless, fast, and private). are successfully installed, tested, and fully operational between all specified council sites. Inter-site network performance (bandwidth, latency) meets the agreed-upon service levels, ensuring efficient data transfer. Network monitoring shows stable and reliable connectivity across these links	A majority of key council services or internal functions are successfully running on well-chosen SaaS platforms. Council staff are effectively using these SaaS products, and user satisfaction is positive	The chatbot is live, easily discoverable on the council website, and available 24/7. A significant and growing number of residents are using the chatbot to ask questions and find information. The chatbot is successfully handling a high percentage of common enquiries without needing to escalate to a council officer (e.g., queries about bin collections, council tax, reporting minor issues)

Pillar Two: Digital Access Action Plan

Theme	Extending tools and learning	Making increased use of data and trends	Reducing digital exclusion	Extending tools and learning	Reducing digital exclusion
Initiative	1. Manual workforce upskilling	2. Improve data analysis across Councils teams	3. Empower opportunities for partners and local business owners to gain digital skills	4. Enhance AI options such as Co-pilot for improved communication	5. Increase opportunities for residents to access further digital and cyber awareness
What are we going to do?	Make use of new technology ensuring our devices meet the needs of staff on the frontline including a smart phone app supported by location services	Work with internal stakeholders to make it easier to analyse the data in a timely manner to facilitate responsive services and performance management	Identify and signpost further digital and cyber awareness workshop opportunities in conjunction with D2N2 and other partners	Introduce training to highlight the tool's effectiveness at honing written communications	Signpost to workshop and bootcamp opportunities with local partners
Why Page 34	To equip frontline staff with modern tools, like specialised smartphone apps that use location information, to help them perform their jobs more effectively and efficiently while they are out serving the community	To help teams quickly understand the information to make smarter decisions, and respond faster to needs	So increasing numbers of partners and business owners can increase digital skills to strengthen their economic outlook	So colleagues can improve communication to stakeholders and each other and convey more effective exchanges and responses	To ensure more have the skills to learn and navigate digital opportunities and ways to engage with Council and other services more easily
When are we going to do it?	September 2025 and then every quarter	September 2025 and then every quarter	Annual review in conjunction with Economic Growth team	September 2025 and then every quarter	Annual review in conjunction with Economic Growth team
How will we know we have delivered?	The supplied devices are secure and managed according to council IT policies. Demonstrable improvements in the quality, speed, or efficiency of services delivered by frontline staff	Key performance indicators (KPIs) readily available to relevant stakeholders in a timely fashion. Meetings more data-driven, with stakeholders using up-to-date information to assess progress and make decisions	Volume of businesses and partners who engage with the signposted initiatives reviewed each year in December 2025, 2026 and 2027	100% of office staff to have completed training by March 2026	Volume of businesses and partners who engage with the signposted initiatives reviewed each year in December 2025, 2026 and 2027

Pillar Two: Digital Access Action Plan

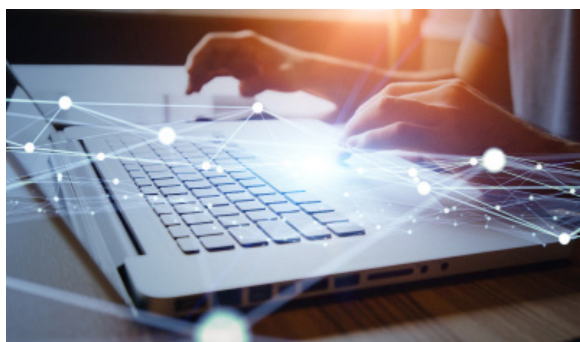
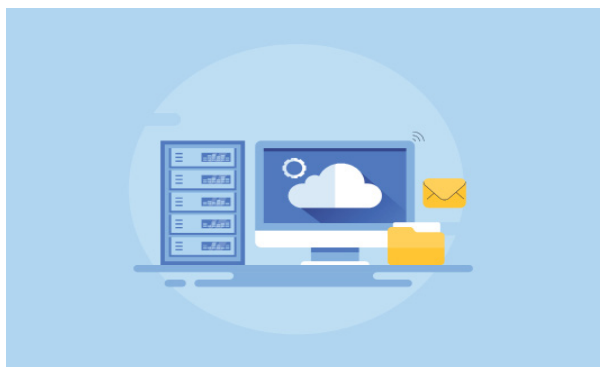
Theme	Developing infrastructure	Extending tools and learning	Extending tools and learning	Developing infrastructure
Initiative	6. Cloud storage adoption increase	7. Upskill colleagues on project delivery	8. Upskill colleagues in Power BI, SharePoint, Co-pilot, Teams and Power Automate tools	9. Review disaster recovery systems to further protect Council IT infrastructure
What are we going to do?	Increase cloud footprint to 70% while reducing on-premise workload	Train colleagues to minimise missing project milestones and ensure a much higher project completion rate	Train system owners and admins with the new tools and increase knowledge	Tests with on-prem system owners every 180 days
Why? Page 35	To ensure Council files are ever more protected in a robust Cloud setting	To increase consistency of project completion, in conjunction with Project Framework	So colleagues are aware of the ways the tools can help their every day tasks	So this links in with our Emergency Planning protocols and upskills colleagues of the need to protect systems
When are we going to do it?	September 2025 and then every quarter	March 2026 after successful staff training	September 2025 and then every quarter	September 2025 and then every quarter
How will we know we have delivered?	Reaching the 70% footprint by December 2027	No more than 5 missed milestones; 95% project completion rate	Train a minimum of 40 system owners/ admins	180 day test completed with all system owners by December 2026

Pillar Three: Customer Access Action Plan

Theme	Progressing digital and in-person self-help	Building on and exploring innovation	Progressing digital and in-person self-help	Listening and responding to evolving trends	Reviewing and building partnerships	Listening and responding to evolving trends
Initiative	1. Identify and explore new communication and transactional channels to engage customers and stakeholders further	2. Further explore Artificial Intelligence (AI) options to improve automation and system integration	3. Explore ways to showcase further digital solutions	4. Use data insight to aid decision making on where services can be enhanced	5. Review existing contact point locations and opening times	6. Engage customers on possible Local Government Reorganisation
What are we going to do?	Improve the range of options to contact, report, apply, register and access Council services	Work with contractors to implement new AI solutions answering common queries, utilising chat bot, virtual assistant and automated chat technologies	Identify ways to nudge customers to further ways they can self-serve online and receive information to aid increased channel shift	Collect and analyse further detail on each contact channel	Analyse further how customers are engaging with the Council through non-digital methods	Digitally and in-person ensure latest information available at Customer Service contact points. Ongoing benchmarking with fellow local authorities' sharing LGR info
Why?	So residents and stakeholders can access services ever more conveniently with digital 24/7 options	To make it easier and more convenient for people to get in touch with the Council by offering more ways to communicate	For increased channel shift to digital methods, freeing up resource for team to respond to more complex queries	To innovate, improve and provide accessible value for money customer service functions	To ensure customers can access face to face services easily and conveniently and maximising opportunities with partners	So residents feel informed as to possible new shape of Councils and their services
When are we going to do it?	2025-2027	Throughout 2025-2028 as the tools evolve	Review in December of 2025, 2026 and 2027	Review in December of 2025, 2026 and 2027	Review at end of 2025 and 2027 in line with existing contracts	As and when key LGR milestones take place
How will we know we have delivered?	The volume of new channels available reviewed in December 2025, 2026 and 2027	The volume of interactions through the new channels increasing year on year and measured December 2025, 2026 and 2027	The volume of residents signposted to digital methods of accessing services or to learning opportunities with external providers	Annual review of what functions have been increased, decreased or reshaped to meet changing customer trends.	Ongoing interactions with partners such as Inspire and NHS to listen and explore if different opening times can better meet customer need	Ensuring each milestone is communicated appropriately

Pillar Three: Customer Access Action Plan

Theme	Listening and responding to evolving trends	Progressing digital and in-person self-help	Listening and responding to evolving trends	Reviewing and building partnerships	Listening and responding to evolving trends	Listening and responding to evolving trends
Initiative	7. Continue to work with Customer Service Advisors to further explore key themes and insights from their experiences	8. Continue to reshape postal communications	9. Communicate clear Customer Service Standards across channels and sites	10. Review service level agreements with partners to identify further areas where services can be shared or enhanced	11. Build on ways to routinely monitor customer groups, trends and feedback	12. Regularly evaluate all software including Customer Relationship System
What are we going to do?	Consult and listen to advisors' recommendations on where we can improve the service based on week to week feedback.	Continue to amend and reduce postage and printing costs in line with digital options increasing to contact stakeholders	Publicise standards so stakeholders' expectations on queries being resolved can be clearer	Engage with partners on the contracts across Customer Service Contact Point sites	Gather more data to analyse customer interactions to highlight where team resource is prioritised	Annual reviews of each software solution with contractors to ensure the systems are as effective as possible
Why?	Identify where the service could be ever more adaptable to customers' needs	To realise efficiency savings in line with digital channel shift and environment priority	So customers are aware of likely response times and keep these under continued review	To continue to provide value for money service and ensure locations are convenient for residents	To align resources correctly to where the services needs to respond more effectively	To ensure a consistent and contemporary, responsive service
When are we going to do it?	Discussion item during team days four times a year	Annual review with BSU in December 2025, 2026 and 2027	Reviewed annually in December 2025, 2026 and 2027	Review the agreements in November 2025, 2026 and 2027	Review in line with monthly reporting dashboards to Director	Review annually in November 2025, 2026 and 2027
How will we know we have delivered?	Volume of ways advisors shape the service reviewed annually	Assess the volume of postal interactions at the end of 2025 and compare with 2026 and 2027	Notices at Customer Service Contact Points updated in line with annual review	Ongoing exchanges with partners and reviewing contract dates at each site	Focus team resources on solutions to reduce higher intensity contact methods	Review system annually to ensure it is meeting service need



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Cabinet

Tuesday, 9 September 2025

Quarter 1 Finance Report

Report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services

**Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance, Transformation and Governance,
Councillor D Viridi**

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. This report outlines the quarter one position in terms of financial and performance monitoring for 2025/26.
- 1.2. The Council continues to face significant financial challenges including rising costs, increased demand for services, and the need to balance budgets while maintaining service quality. Furthermore, complex policy changes and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) has added an additional level of complexity, presenting both cost pressures and demands on officers and resources. It is imperative that the Council maintains due diligence with regards to its finances and ensures necessary action is taken to ensure a balanced budget is being maintained.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet approves the attached report noting:

- a) The projected revenue budget efficiency for the year of £0.637m and proposals to earmark this for cost pressures given in Appendix A and paragraph 4.1.
- b) The projected capital budget efficiencies of £0.681m including the budget changes in Appendix D.
- c) The projected overspend on Special Expenses of £11.3k (paragraph 4.7).

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1. To demonstrate good governance in terms of scrutinising the Council's on-going performance and financial position.

4. Supporting Information

Executive Summary

- 4.1. At Quarter One 2025/26 there is a projected net revenue efficiency of £0.637m. Significant variances are highlighted in **Table 1**, arising mainly from savings in refuse collection resulting from housing development progressing slower than expected, and an unallocated contingency budget. This represents a variance of 4.34% against budgeted net service expenditure. This is proposed to be earmarked for additional cost pressures and financial challenges shown in **Appendix A** mainly to support LGR and Simpler Recycling. Previously we have reported to Cabinet and via the MTFs to Full Council the underfunding from Government for Simpler Recycling. Consequently £0.2m is proposed to be transferred to the Simpler Recycling Reserve.
- 4.2. There is a capital budget underspend projected of £0.681m. Significant variances are highlighted in **Table 2**, notably a £0.610m reduction in expenditure on Warm Homes Grants to match final indicative funding notification.
- 4.3. The position is likely to change as further variances are identified during the year.
- 4.4. The most significant pressures are the effect of inflation and employers National Insurance increases on Council budgets. There is also a potential knock-on effect to income receipts as increased costs affect residents and business and the services they use. Council Tax and Business Rates could also be affected, although current collection rates appear to be stable. LGR is beginning to place demands on both the Council's finances and on officer time, an allocation of £0.661m was made to reserves from 2023/24 underspends with a further £0.377m proposed to support any additional costs incurred from projected 2025/26 budget efficiencies.
- 4.5. The Council is still experiencing increased levels of demand compared to previous years, but performance is stable or above target in most areas, demonstrating the ability of services to respond and adjust resources. There are some indicators not reaching target in the quarter but still highlighting no significant increase in the volume of indicators when compared to quarters in 2024/25. Actions are being taken in each service areas to address any decreases in performance wherever possible.

Revenue

- 4.6. Table 1 below summarises the main variances, with a full summary of all significant variances at **Appendix B**

Table 1 – Significant revenue variances

Directorate	Projected in year cost/(efficiency) £000	Reason
Chief Executive	77	£64k LGR consultancy
Development & Economic Growth	(48)	Part year savings on posts due to staff turnover
Finance & Corporate	(456)	£74k saving on insurance due to lower than anticipated premiums, £40k additional interest income, £339k saving on contingency this includes saving on national payaward compared to budgeted estimate circa £100k
Neighbourhoods	(369)	Mainly due to £175k salaries for Fairham Pastures refuse collection not required in year
Other Grant Income	(46)	Asylum Dispersal, Land Registry, and New Burdens grants
Collection Fund	205	
Projected (under)/over spend	(637)	

Special Expenses

- 4.7. **Appendix F** shows the Quarter 1 position of the Special Expenses budget. The expenditure is projected to be £11.3k above budget. This is mainly due to security improvements to gates at Bridgford Park and responsive works at West park including, doors and grounds repairs. Costs have been incurred due to increased anti-social behaviour patrols at Bridgford Park, however this is offset by funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) which has been secured to cover these costs. This could present a budget pressure for Special Expenses going forward.

Capital

- 4.8. The opening capital budget was £8.344m this has been revised to £13.582m, mainly due to carryforwards from 2024/25 and acceleration of schemes from 2026/27. A full list of all budget adjustments can be seen in **Appendix D**.
- 4.9. Table 2 below summarises the main variances, with a full summary of all significant variances at **Appendix C & E**.

Table 2 – Significant capital variances

Directorate	Projected in year cost/(efficiency) £000	Reason
Development & Economic Growth	(150)	Bingham Leisure Hub £150k reduction in projection for enhancement works required
Neighbourhoods	(591)	Expenditure on Warm Homes scheme reduced by £610k to match actual grant allocated (indicative grant was £750k actual grant £140k)
Finance & Corporate Services	60	Financial Management System £60k projected overspend, budget was based on estimated costs
	(681)	

Pressures Update

- 4.10. Inflation remains above the Bank of England’s target of 2%, at 3.6% in June 2025, an increase from 3.4% in May. Cost pressures continue for the Council, businesses and residents with the potential to impact collection rates and income from discretionary services. Interest rates, although reducing slowly, remain high at 4.25% and consequently the Council continues to benefit from interest on cash and investments which partially offsets some of the increased costs. If we were externally borrowing, then there would be adverse consequences for the budget.
- 4.11. In addition to general cost of living increases, the increase in Employers National Insurance Contributions has impacted both the Council and local businesses. The position on collection rates for sundry debtors, Council Tax and Business Rates will continue to be monitored. Given the challenges, this represents a relatively positive position and will change during the year.

Table 3 – Collection Rates Quarter 1

Description	Q1 2025/26	Q1 2024/25	Increase/(Decrease)
Sundry Debtors	96.68%	97.05%	-0.37%
Council Tax	29.30%	29.40%	-0.10%
Business Rates	39.30%	38.20%	1.10%

- 4.12. The Council’s Transformation and Efficiency Plan (TEP), is designed to meet emerging financial challenges and is budgeted to deliver £0.824m savings in 2025/26. The three most significant savings targets are; Leisure Strategy (£0.385m) from contract renegotiations, Garden Waste Scheme (£0.132m) and Car Parking (£0.110m) both due to price increases. At quarter one a total of £0.186m has been achieved against a target of £0.206m. Garden waste is behind target with less subscriptions than the same time last year, although this could improve over the summer. Overall though Garden Waste income has increased compared to the same point last year. Other efficiencies ensures the Council is on course to have a positive budget position.
- 4.13. LGR will continue to gain pace throughout the remainder of the financial year, potentially requiring significant financial outlay, officer time and staff training. This is a challenging time for the Council, navigating the most significant

change to Local Government in decades whilst maintaining day to day service delivery. An appropriation was made from 2023/24 underspends of £0.661m (proposed to be topped up by a further £0.377m) in anticipation of the cost of transition.

Conclusion

- 4.14. The revenue position remains relatively healthy but the position can quickly change especially so early into the new financial year.
- 4.15. The position on capital is positive and whilst long term capital resources are diminishing, it is anticipated that there will be no need to externally borrow this financial year. The capital programme is delivered with little external funding and it is a credit to the financial position of the Council it can continue to invest in its assets for the benefit of its residents. Existing budgets are under pressure from inflation and rising costs of labour and materials, however capital contingency budget is available, followed by reserves if necessary to mitigate the impact. The focus remains on delivering the capital programme alongside demands of LGR.

5. Alternative options considered and reasons for rejection

There are no other options proposed for consideration.

6. Risks and Uncertainties

- 6.1. Failure to comply with Financial Regulations in terms of reporting on both revenue and capital budgets could result in criticism from stakeholders, including both Councillors and the Council's external auditors.
- 6.2. Areas such as income can be volatile and are particularly influenced by public confidence and the general economic climate and Government legislation. Particularly susceptible to volatility will be areas such as Planning Income. Ongoing due diligence with regards to the budget will highlight any potential concerns or indeed upside risk.
- 6.3. The Council needs to be properly insulated against potential risks hence the need to ensure it has a sufficient level of reserves to ensure the Council can withstand unexpected financial shocks, and things we do know about but are unclear of the full financial implications such as the costs of LGR.
- 6.4. There remains much uncertainty as the Government starts to legislate for, and implement, new policies (e.g. Simpler Recycling) and funding reform (FairFunding Review, Council Tax and Business Rates) aimed at equalising funding support across regions. The full financial impact of this will not be known until the Government's financial settlement is announced, however early indications are that the Government's Settlement Funding Assessment (it's grant income from Government) for Rushcliffe will significantly reduce.

6.5. Local Government Reorganisation not only presents financial risks, but it also has the potential to disrupt service delivery (impacting on performance) and makes the recruitment of good employees even more challenging and increases the risk of employees switching sectors; not to mention continuing to ensure staff remain motivated and are upskilled for the changes that lie ahead. Other demands such as digital transformation, climate change targets, recycling legislation and increased demand for services present a complex and evolving landscape.

7. Implications

7.1. Financial Implications

Financial implications are covered in the body of the report.

7.2. Legal Implications

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. It supports the delivery of a balanced budget and the delivery of excellent services.

7.3. Equalities Implications

There are no direct equality implications arising from this report.

7.4. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Implications

None.

7.5. Biodiversity Net Gain Implications

None.

8. Link to Corporate Priorities

The Environment	The budget resources the Corporate Strategy and therefore resources all corporate priorities.
Quality of Life	
Efficient Services	
Sustainable Growth	

9. Recommendations

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet approves the attached report noting:

- a) The projected revenue budget efficiency for the year of £0.637m and proposals to earmark this for cost pressures given in Appendix A and paragraph 4.1.
- b) The projected capital budget efficiencies of £0.681m including the budget changes in Appendix D.

- c) The projected overspend on Special Expenses of £11.3k (paragraph 4.7).

For more information contact:	Peter Linfield Director of Finance and Corporate Services Tel: 0115 9148439 plinfield@rushcliffe.gov.uk
Background papers available for Inspection:	Council 6 March 2025 – 25/26 Budget and Financial Strategy Cabinet 8 July 2025 – Financial Outturn 2024/25
List of appendices:	Appendix A – Revenue projected position 2025/26 – June 2025 Appendix B – Revenue Variances over £25k – June 2025 Appendix C – Capital Programme Summary 2025/26 – June 2025 Appendix D – Changes to Capital Budget Appendix E – Capital Variance Explanations June 2025 Appendix F – Special Expenses Monitoring June 2025

Projected Revenue Outturn Position 2025/26 – June 2025

2025/26	Original Budget £000	Revised Budget £000	Projected Outturn £000	Projected Variance over/(under) £000
Chief Executive	1,613	1,611	1,688	77
Development & Economic Growth	467	531	483	(48)
Finance & Corporate	4,892	5,155	4,699	(456)
Neighbourhoods	7,939	7,361	6,993	(369)
Sub Total	14,912	14,659	13,863	(796)
Capital Accounting Reversals	(1,895)	(1,895)	(1,895)	0
Minimum Revenue Provision	1,174	1,666	1,666	0
Total Net Service Expenditure	14,191	14,430	13,634	(796)
Grant Income (Including New Homes Bonus)	(3,239)	(3,239)	(3,285)	(46)
Collection Fund	(16,650)	(16,650)	(16,445)	205
Total Funding	(19,889)	(19,889)	(19,730)	159
Net Transfer to/(from) Reserves	5,699	5,460	6,096	637
Financial Management System Upgrade				60
LGR				377
Simpler Recycling				200
Total Committed from underspend				637
Net Budget Deficit/(Surplus)				(0)

Revenue Variances over £25k – June 2025

Adverse Variances in excess of £25,000

Department	Reason	Projected Outturn Variance £000
Executive Management Team	LGR proposal	64
Strategic Housing	Emergency accomodation due to increase in demand and shortage in follow on housing	51
Property	Shortfall on Bridgford Hall rents due to changover in tenancy	49
Revenues & Benefits	Council tax support scheme local discounts (care leavers/annexe)	26
Total Adverse Variances		190

Favourable Variances in excess of £25,000

Department	Reason	Projected Outturn Variance £000
Depot & Contracts	£175k salaries due to Fairham Pastures refuse collection not required in year, £43k savings on diesel, £38k new car parking contract based on charge per ticket expected to deliver savings, £35k sale of waste bins not budgeted as ad hoc	(291)
Financial Services	£40 additional interest, £74k saving on insurance premiums, contingency £336k	(453)
Community Development	£27k Biodiversity Net Gain grant, £30k running costs for Edwalton Community Hall not required in year	(57)
Environmental Health	Taxi licence income projected to be higher than budget as per prior year and current trend	(39)
Economic Development	Salary savings due to maternity and transitional arrangements re Head of Service vacancy	(39)
Planning & Growth	Part year saving on Planning/Environmental Health system officer for IDOX, post now filled	(25)
Total Favourable Variances		(904)
Other minor variances		(82)
Total Variance		(796)

Capital Programme Summary – June 2025

2025/26	Original Budget £000	Current Budget £000	Projected Actual £000	Projected in year cost/(efficiency) £000	Reason
Development & Economic Growth	761	1,783	1,633	(150)	Bingham Leisure Hub £150k reduction in projection for enhancement works required
Neighbourhoods	7,065	10,602	10,011	(591)	Expenditure on Warm Homes scheme reduced by £610k to match actual grant allocated (indicative grant was £750k actual grant £140k)
Finance & Corporate Services	368	807	867	60	Financial Management System £60k projected overspend, budget was based on estimated costs
Contingency	150	390	390	-	£286k carry forward from 24/25 less allocations to ICT replacement Programme £16k, AV Replacement Programme £30k plus £150k original budget. Remaining £390k not yet allocated (potential £100k each needed for Manvers and Watercourse works)
Total Expenditure	8,344	13,582	12,901	(681)	
Funded By					
Capital Receipts	2,719	4,363	4,337	26	
Government Grants	1,650	2,277	1,667	610	£610k reduction in Warm homes Grant to budget (total grant £1.2m over 3 years) expenditure projection reduced to match
Other Grants & Contributions	56	56	56	-	
Section 106 / CIL	0	692	603	89	
Use of Reserves	3,919	6,194	6,238	(44)	To fund carryforwards
Borrowing	-	-	-	-	
Total Funding	8,344	13,582	12,901	681	

Changes to Capital Budget – June 2025

Budget Change / Scheme	Adjustments £000	Comment	Funded by	Approval
Original Budget	8,344			
Rephasing/carryforwards from 2024/25	4,938	Mainly carryforwards including; £1.5m Land aquisition for carbon offsetting, £0.398 Cotgrave and Keyworth Leisure Centres, £0.338m Rushcliffe Oaks Crematorium		Approved at Cabinet 2024/25
Disabled Facilities Grant (Discretionary)	80	Budget moved from Mandatory DFG	Virement	Authorised - Director / S151
Disabled Facilities Grant (Mandatory)	(80)	Budget moved to Discretionary DFG		Authorised - Director / S151
AV Replacement System	30	Area first floor meeting room audio visual equipment replacements	Virement	Authorised - Director / S151
Body worn cameras	16	Body worn cameras for Environmental Health & Planning staff	Virement	Authorised - Director / S151
Contingency	(46)	Allocation from contingency		As above
Manvers Business Park Enhancements	16	To meet increased cost of improvements - Budget virement from Colliers BP	Virement	Authorised - Director / S151
Colliers BP Improvements	(16)	Budget not required - Budget virement to Manvers BP		Authorised - Director / S151
Watercourse Improvements	30	To meet increased cost of improvements - budget virement from Walkers Yard	Virement	Authorised - Director / S151
Walkers Yard	(30)	Energy Efficiency works not required - Budget virement to Watercourse Improvements		Authorised - Director / S151
Bridge Field	100	Acceleration of programme	Grant - UKSPF	Authorised - Director / S151
West Park Enhancements (SJC pavillion)	100	Additional works required due to tree roots issues and to include AV & fit out	Grant - UKSPF	Authorised - Director / Cabinet Portflio Holder
Edwalton Golf Course Enhancements	100	Acceleration of programme	Reserves	Authorised - Director / S151
Current Budget	13,582			

Capital Variance Explanations – June 2025

Name	Opening Budget	Current budget	Actual YTD	Projected Outturn	Projected Outturn Variance	Comment
Development & Economic Growth						
BINGHAM LEISURE HUB	0	250,000	0	100,000	(150,000)	Post opening enhancements. £72k potential cost of corrections to air conditioning, currently in negotiations with original contractor. £10k Parkwood window tinting.
BINGHAM MARKET PLACE IMPS	0	6,000	(1,205)	6,000	0	
BRIDGFORD PARK KIOSK	25,000	25,000	0	25,000	0	Creation of staff toilet for kiosk.
COLLIERS BP CP SURFACE/DRAIN	16,000	0	0	0	0	Budget moved to Manvers BP.
COTGRAVE BUSINESS HUB	70,000	178,000	0	178,000	0	Cold water supply improvement / enhancement
HIGHWAYS VERGE IMPS	200,000	237,000	0	237,000	0	EMT currently considering, County Council may deliver.
KEYWORTH CEMETERY 22-23	25,000	25,000	0	25,000	0	Awaiting local diocese approval
MANVERS BP ENHANCEMENTS	200,000	220,000	(2,177)	220,000	0	To complete roof repairs. Out to tender soon (end July). £16k virement from Colliers scheme. Risk of increased costs since original estimate, may need up to £100k from contingency.
RBC TOURISM/SIGNAGE	70,000	70,000	770	70,000	0	UKSPF funded project
STREETWISE DEPOT	100,000	176,000	0	176,000	0	Vehicle wash, improvements to warehouse and pedestrian safety. Currently out to tender.
THE CREMATORIUM	0	338,000	3,758	338,000	0	Series of schemes, water feature, external landscaping schemes, air conditioning, enhance PV provision. Meeting mid July to discuss scope of works.
THE POINT	25,000	40,000	235	40,000	0	
WALKERS YD 1a/b and 3	30,000	0	0	0	0	Not cost effective to do anything energy efficiency wise at present. Budget moved to support requirement for Watercourse improvements Radcliffe On Trent.
WATERCOURSE IMPROVEMENTS	0	218,000	0	218,000	0	Additional funding is required for these works due to adopting solution that minimises impact on local houses. Awaiting quote from supplier mid July, approval required from EMT to proceed, risk projection may increase to £300k and require contribution from contingency.
Development & Economic Growth Total	761,000	1,783,000	1,381	1,633,000	(150,000)	

Name	Opening Budget	Current budget	Actual YTD	Projected Outturn	Projected Outturn Variance	Comment
Neighbourhoods						
ARENA ENHANCEMENTS	0	65,000	0	65,000	0	Furniture for reception area £11k. Potential £15k window retinting - Parkwood part funding. Further requirement for flooring replacements not yet quantified.
BRIDGE FIELD TEEN PARK	100,000	271,000	11,496	300,000	29,000	Proludic, £292k including 4 play areas, Bridge Field Teen Park £116k total, Bridge Field MUGA£ 50k, Abbey Park adult gym (Section 106) £39k, West Park MUGA (Multi Use Games Area) £89k.
BRIDGFORD PK PLAY AREA SPEC EXP	0	0	(10,000)	0	0	Actual expenditure is a reversal accrual and will be matched with an invoice.
CLC AND KLC ENHANCEMENTS	1,200,000	1,598,000	420,580	1,598,000	0	Complete refurbishment of Cotgrave Lesiure centre is complete and Keyworth Leisure Centre in progress.
DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT	1,040,000	1,307,000	199,568	1,307,000	0	Committed £473k Q1
DISCRETIONARY TOP-UPS DFGs	56,000	136,000	30,029	136,000	0	Discretionary funding has been reintroduced for 2025/26 with £80k moved from mandatory budget.
EDWALTON COMMUNITY FACILITY	840,000	939,000	798	939,000	0	Starting August. Ceiling of £750k for build plus fit out and associated costs.
EGC ENHANCEMENTS	0	130,000	0	130,000	0	Going out to tender re floodworks.
EXTERNAL DOOR & WINDOW UPGRADES VARIOUS	0	46,000	0	46,000	0	
GAMSTON COMMUNITY CENTRE ENHANCEMENTS	0	116,000	0	120,000	4,000	Works due to commence on site July, with completion by September.
GRESHAM SPORTS PARK REDEVELOPMENT	0	62,000	0	30,000	(32,000)	CCTV consultant appointed, project progressing. Exploring grant fund from FA for further work to catering hut, grants up to £50k to 75% of project required £25% match. Other option is to carry forward balance to bolster 26/27 project for Gresham plumbing decarb/Wifi.
GREYTHORN DRIVE PLAY AREA	0	14,000	(2,000)	30,000	16,000	Quotes currently being obtained likely to be around £30k (surface of pitch removed rather than repair, hence expected increase for replacement cost). Potential Sec 106 funding to cover overspend.
LAND ACQUISITON CARBON OFFSETTING	0	1,500,000	0	1,500,000	0	£500k Upper Broughton expected completion in August. Two other land holdings due to be considered by AIG (asset Investment group) in due course.
RCP PLAY AREA	25,000	25,000	26,704	26,700	1,700	Works complete, minor overspend
SUPPORT FOR REGISTERED HOUSING PROVIDERS	0	36,000	0	36,000	0	£36k was carried forward for Platform Housing for 2 affordable units. There is low risk that funds may be required to be accelerated from 26/27 for 21 affordable units.
TOOTHILL SPORTS COMPLEX IMPROVEMENTS	100,000	200,000	0	200,000	0	Ongoing negotiations re athletics track/ hockey pitch lighting, progress may be affected by school rebuild.
VEHICLE REPLACEMENT	2,511,000	2,708,000	0	2,708,000	0	Vehicles - R2Go £231k, £265k Streetwise, £460k 2x Glass Recycling Vehs, £1.250m Glass Recycling Bins .
WARM HOMES GRANT	750,000	750,000	0	140,000	(610,000)	Budget was set on indicative funding of £750k 25/26 and £1.8m 26/27, final allocations are £1.3m over next 3 years £140k capital in 25/26. Fully funded scheme so no realisable saving.
WB - CAR PARK RESURFACING	18,000	38,000	16,851	38,000	0	Any balance after resurfacing will be spent at Bridgford Park.
WEST PARK ENHANCEMENTS	425,000	661,000	88,364	661,000	0	£100k UKSPF funding. Contract Value £610k (SJC Developments) £661k forecast to include AV (£30k) plus fit out
Neighbourhoods Total	7,065,000	10,602,000	782,390	10,010,700	(591,300)	

Name	Opening Budget	Current budget	Actual YTD	Projected Outturn	Projected Outturn Variance	Comment
Finance & Corporate Services						
APPLICATIONS & APPS	0	31,000	0	31,000	0	
AV REPLACEMENT SYSTEM	81,000	189,100	184,740	189,100	0	
DIGITAL STRATEGY	20,000	60,000	0	60,000	0	
FMS REPLACEMENT	0	197,400	0	257,400	60,000	Original budget funded from 23/24 underspends based on estimated costs, additional be funded from 25/26 revenue underspends.
ICT REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME	75,000	103,500	3,118	103,500	0	
ICT SECURITY	0	21,000	0	21,000	0	
TECHNICAL INFRASTRUCTURE	192,000	205,000	(6,990)	205,000	0	
Finance & Corporate Services Total	368,000	807,000	180,867	867,000	60,000	
CAPITAL CONTINGENCY	150,000	390,000	0	390,000	0	£0.286m carry forward from 24/25 less allocations to ICT replacement Programme £0.016m, AV Replacement Programme (£0.030m), potential demand on balance from Manvers £100k and Watercourse improvements £100k.
Contingency Total	150,000	390,000	0	390,000	0	
Grand Total	8,344,000	13,582,000	964,638	12,900,700	(681,300)	

Special Expenses – June 2025

2025/26	Original Budget	Projected Outturn	Variance	Reasons
West Bridgford				
Parks & Playing Fields	496,000	504,900	8,900	£5k Bridgford Park security improvements £3.2k West park maintenance works,
West Bridgford Town Centre	117,400	119,400	2,000	Potential vehicle mitigation under Martyn's Law
Community Halls	131,300	131,200	(100)	
Repayment of Revenue Deficit	16,000	16,000	0	
Annuity Charges	110,400	110,400	0	
Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay	100,000	100,000	0	
Sinking Fund (The Hook)	20,000	20,000	0	
Total	991,100	1,001,900	10,800	
Keyworth				
Keyworth Cemetery	9,600	9,600	0	
Annuity	500	500	0	
Total	10,100	10,100	0	
Ruddington				
Ruddington Cemetery	10,400	10,900	500	
Total	10,400	10,900	500	
Total Special Expenses	1,011,600	1,022,900	11,300	

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Cabinet

Tuesday, 9 September 2025

Confirmation of Rushcliffe Borough Council (67-69 Loughborough Road and 2A Patrick Road, West Bridgford) Article 4(1) Direction

Report of the Director Development and Economic Growth

Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Planning, Councillor Roger Upton

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. On 19 May 2025 the Council made a direction under Article 4(1) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (the GPDO) with the effect of revoking a permitted development right otherwise granted by that Order for demolition of buildings subject to prior approval (Appendix 1 – Sealed Direction). This was a temporary direction made without advance notice for a period of 6 months to allow time for public consultation ahead of a decision on whether to confirm the direction, giving it permanent effect. The direction applies to three buildings, being Grafton House, Welbeck House, both located on Loughborough Road, and the neighbouring property at 2A Patrick Road.
- 1.2. Owing to the threat of demolition and short timescales on a prior approval application submitted by the owners of two of the properties (Grafton House and Welbeck House), the making of the initial Direction was authorised under the scheme of delegation by the Director Development and Economic Growth. As such this matter has not been previously reported to Cabinet.
- 1.3. This report is brought before Cabinet to consider whether the Council should now confirm the direction, removing the permitted development right for demolition permanently in respect of these properties. If the direction is not confirmed prior to 20 November 2025, i.e. six months after it was made, it will lapse unless a decision is taken to withdraw the direction sooner.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet confirm the Rushcliffe Borough Council (67-69 Loughborough Road and 2A Patrick Road, West Bridgford) Article 4(1) Direction 20 May 2025 giving it ongoing effect in revoking permitted development rights for demolition under Schedule 2, Part 11, Class B of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) until such time as it be withdrawn.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1. The owners of Grafton House and Welbeck House had made an application to demolish the properties utilising permitted development rights under Schedule 2, Part 11, Class B of the GPDO (Reference: 25/00794/DEMOL). The owners made this application despite having no approved plans for the future of the site as a previous planning application (Reference: 24/01261/FUL) for demolition and redevelopment had been refused. Whilst an appeal against that refusal of planning permission has now been submitted to the Secretary of State at the time that the prior approval for demolition was submitted to the Council and the Direction under Article 4 was first made, no such appeal had been lodged.
- 3.2. The Council as Local Planning Authority (LPA) was concerned that the buildings could be demolished without any secured and appropriate scheme for the redevelopment of the site. Had the Council been obliged to grant prior approval then the buildings could be demolished even if the subsequently submitted appeal failed.
- 3.3. The submission of an application for prior approval for demolition, demonstrated to the LPA that these buildings faced an imminent threat of demolition. This group of buildings occupy a prominent site in accessing West Bridgford at the junction of Loughborough Road, Melton Road and Wilford Lane and are Non-Designated Heritage Assets. The loss of Heritage assets, including Non-Designated Heritage Assets (NDAs), is addressed at paragraph 217 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), where it is stated that local planning authorities should not permit their loss, in whole or in part, without taking all reasonable steps to ensure the new development will proceed after loss has occurred.
- 3.4. When determining prior approval applications for demolition of buildings, the LPA is only permitted to consider the method of demolition and post-demolition remediation of the site. The only way to avoid allowing the demolition of these buildings with no plan in place to redevelop the site, and therefore no way for the LPA to ensure that redevelopment took place, was to take action to revoke the relevant permitted development right. Confirmation of the Article 4 direction will ensure the buildings continue to benefit from ongoing protection against demolition.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1. In July 2024 a planning application was submitted proposing the demolition of both Grafton House (67 Loughborough Road) and Welbeck House (69 Loughborough Road) and the redevelopment of the site with a 32 unit apartment block (Reference: 24/01261/FUL – Decision Notice included as Appendix 2).
- 4.2. The application was refused in February 2025 on a number of grounds, summarised as:
 - Substantial harmful effect on the significance of Grafton House and Welbeck house as Non- Designated Heritage Assets including harm to their group value

- Remaining reasons related to the replacement proposals rather than the loss of the existing, these can be found summarised in Appendix 1.
- 4.3. Following this refusal of planning permission for the demolition of these buildings and the redevelopment of the site, a prior approval application for the demolition of the buildings via permitted development rights within Schedule 2, Part 11, Class B of the GPDO was submitted on 28 April 2025.
 - 4.4. There are limited considerations which the Council can take into account when determining such a submission, effectively limited to the method of demolition, primarily to ensure that the demolition work respects neighbouring amenity in respect of noise, dust, vibration and other matters, and the remediation of the site – the condition the site is left in following demolition to ensure that it does not pose a hazard or present harm to amenity.
 - 4.5. Such an application does not, however, allow the Council to consider the planning merits of demolition and as such it would not be possible to object to such an application on the basis of the loss of Grafton House or Welbeck House.
 - 4.6. When the full planning application was being considered the Council received some 124 objections from members of the public, all of whom gave addresses local to Nottingham, many of which raised concerns about the loss of character buildings, traditional architecture or loss of heritage which the demolition element of the proposal would cause. Beyond that, objections typically raised issues with the nature and design of the proposed replacement development.
 - 4.7. The Council identified Grafton and Welbeck House as Non-Designated Heritage Assets (NDAs), with the reason for refusal on 24/01261/FUL also referencing the wider value of the two properties as part of a group. Whilst the owners of Grafton House and Welbeck House have made submissions objecting to the Article 4 direction within that submission, they do not challenge the identification of the buildings as NDAs.
 - 4.8. Paragraph 217 of the NPPF states: *“Local planning authorities should not permit the loss of the whole or part of a heritage asset without taking all reasonable steps to ensure the new development will proceed after the loss has occurred”*.
 - 4.9. The submission of a prior approval application sought to demolish the buildings under the permitted development right for demolition (GPDO Schedule 2, Part 11, Class B) following the refusal of planning permission for the demolition and redevelopment could be considered to signal an intention on the part of the owner of Welbeck and Grafton House to demolish their buildings regardless of whether any plan was in place for what would happen to the site afterwards.
 - 4.10. At present there is no “new development” which can be undertaken as no scheme has the benefit of planning permission; the only scheme which has been presented to the Council has been refused planning permission. As such, had the Council not taken action to prevent the loss of these buildings as

permitted development by the use of an Article 4 direction, it would have failed to discharge its obligation under paragraph 217.

- 4.11. Under the circumstances, the only course of action which would avoid the loss of two NDAs with no appropriate scheme for the redevelopment of the site on the table was by revoking the permitted development right which would otherwise allow demolition via the prior approval route.
- 4.12. Paragraph 217 makes clear that local planning authorities should not permit the loss of a heritage asset, which would include non-designated heritage assets, without taking reasonable steps to ensure new development will proceed after loss has occurred. In this instance the Article 4 direction represents the only step that could be taken to avoid loss of the non-designated heritage assets without any plan for what happens next.
- 4.13. The NPPF also makes clear, at paragraph 202, that heritage assets, including non-designated assets, are an “*irreplaceable resource*”, and “*should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations*”.
- 4.14. Paragraph 54 of the NPPF discusses the use of Article 4 directions, and in situations where the direction does not seek to restrict permitted development rights which would otherwise allow a change of use to create dwellings the use of such directions should “*be limited to situations where an Article 4 direction is necessary to protect local amenity or the well-being of the area (this could include the use of Article 4 directions to require planning permission for the demolition of local facilities)*” and in all cases “*be based on robust evidence, and apply to the smallest geographical area possible*”.
- 4.15. Clearly from paragraph 217 and 202 the use of an Article 4 direction was necessary, in this instance, to protect an irreplaceable component of the local historic environment, which contributes to local amenity as a place with a distinctive identity and character. Demolition of a non-designated heritage asset would amount to total loss of its significance, and in this instance also a high degree of harm to the neighbouring 2A Patrick Road as part of the group which the 3 properties form. The Article 4 direction was drawn so as to only apply to the heritage assets at risk and those most immediately contributing to their added value as part of a small group in a highly prominent location adjacent a major road junction.
- 4.16. As such it is considered that the thread of policy within paragraph 54 has been met, the owners of Grafton and Welbeck House disagree and have objected to the making of the Article 4 Direction (Objection Letter included at Appendix 3) They suggest that the action was unnecessary, although they offer no clarification as to how the loss of an irreplaceable heritage asset could have been avoided without resort to an Article 4 direction, or why an Article 4 direction should be considered disproportionate such that the loss of the assets should have simply been accepted by the Council as unavoidable. They do not argue that the buildings are not heritage assets, indeed they agree that they are, nor do they suggest that there was no genuine threat to demolish the buildings. The

objection does not provide any information to refute the LPA's view that the decision to make the direction was based on robust evidence.

- 4.17. The direction was focused on three buildings, with those forming a distinct and focused group and being the examples most prominent of their type and status owing to their position adjacent to a busy road junction.
- 4.18. Buildings further south are modestly less detailed architecturally whilst also being both smaller and sitting within smaller plots. These examples whilst of a similar style and period are not considered to be of the same status or architectural quality.
- 4.19. Whilst there are similar properties in terms of scale, plot size and architectural character to the north they are separated by intervening modern development which keeps them separate from the group subject of the direction. As such it is considered that the direction is focused on the grandest examples in sizable plots in the most prominent and visible location.
- 4.20. The objector highlights the loss of domestic gardens, these being replaced with parking courtyards as part of the change to a commercial use as offices and suggests this has devalued the significance of these buildings as NDAs. However, the properties of similar scale and status further north have similarly lost their domestic gardens, being in similar commercial uses. Whilst properties further South are still mainly dwellings and do retain gardens these are, as mentioned previously, of smaller scale and more densely spaced than the buildings under consideration here. The loss of gardens would ultimately be reversible should there ever be a change of use back to residential and does not fundamentally undermine the ability to understand and appreciate the significance of the buildings as NDAs.
- 4.21. The owners of the building suggest that internal alterations have robbed the buildings of internal significance, however, whether or not this is the case is not relevant in the circumstances as internal works are not within the definition of 'development' and so do not fall within the scope of planning control.
- 4.22. Taking no action would have led to the loss of heritage assets as an irreplaceable resource and would have demonstrated a failure to implement policy within paragraph 217 of the NPPF.
- 4.23. Following the making of the immediate Article 4 direction without notice, the Council has 6 months in which to undertake consultation with the building owners, occupants and the public and to then make a decision on whether or not to confirm the direction.
- 4.24. A period of statutory consultation was undertaken from 21 May 2025 (two site notices were erected and occupant letters were delivered by hand as well as notifications to Nottinghamshire County Council and the Secretary of State were sent electronically on 21 May, letters to building owners were posted via next day 'special delivery' on 20 May, and the press notice published in the Nottingham Post 22 May, on 21 May) to 19 June 2025 for the required minimum 21 day period.

- 4.25. The responses received have raised an issue in that some commenters appeared unclear as to whether they should select the 'object' option on the basis that they object to the loss of the buildings by demolition, or the 'support' option because they support the Article 4 Direction which will protect the buildings from demolition via permitted development. The majority of representations made written comments which clarify their position and where it is clear that the commenter objects to the loss of the buildings rather than the Article 4 direction these comments have been counted as 'support', indeed two commenters noted this issue and expressed that people clearly in support of the direction would not be counted as objecting simply because they appeared to have ticked the wrong box.
- 4.26. On this basis there are 83 comments in support of the direction (27 of whom selected 'object' but provided written comments which make it clear they object to demolition, not the Article 4 direction).
- 4.27. There was 1 comment against the Article 4 direction, that coming from a legal representative of one of the two companies which own Grafton and Welbeck House jointly. A copy of the objection letter is attached at Appendix 3.
- 4.28. There were 6 further comments which must be reported separately. 2 had ticked the "support" box and 3 had ticked the "object" box but had made no further comments. On the basis of the uncertainty of the tick box alone as to indicating the intention of the commenters, it is not considered safe to assume that all 3 objections were intended as objections, or that the 2 support comments can be reliably interpreted as intending support. One final comment was unclear as to its intention, the 'object' box was ticked and the comment "I really disagree with the proposed development" was made, unfortunately the Article 4 direction is not development, the only development which has been proposed for the site was the demolition of the buildings and redevelopment of the site proposed under the earlier planning application. As such this comment is considered to be unclear as to its intentions.
- 4.29. All commenters gave addresses within the Nottingham area.
- 4.30. In all the circumstances, it is considered that the Article 4 direction is necessary to protect local amenity or the well-being of the area and is based on robust evidence and limited to the smallest geographical area possible. By confirming the Article 4 direction, the demolition of any buildings within the area covered by the direction must be subject to a planning application process which includes the usual statutory consultation and is assessed against relevant local and national policy.
- 4.31. If in future, the Council decides the Article 4 is no longer necessary, then it can take steps to modify or cancel the Article 4 direction.

5. Alternative options considered and reasons for rejection

- 5.1. Given that there is no alternative way to prevent the demolition of these important non-designated heritage assets without utilising a direction under

Article 4 of the GPDO the only alternative to be considered would be taking no action to confirm the order, allowing the potential demolition of Welbeck House and Grafton House without any plans in place for the future redevelopment of their sites. This would result in complete loss of their significance as non-designated heritage assets and also result in a diminution of the significance of 2A Patrick Road as the then sole remaining member of the immediate group of similar properties.

- 5.2. The only alternative would be to do nothing and allow the loss of two non-designated heritage assets and the reduction of the significance of the group of which they form part, contrary to national planning policy. This is not considered to be an appropriate course of action hence the recommendation is to confirm the direction.

6. Risks and Uncertainties

- 6.1. The main risks are that the owners of the properties in having their permitted development right removed would seek judicial review of the Council's decision to make the direction (covered under Legal Implications) or apply for compensation (covered under Financial Implications).
- 6.2. Beyond these matters there would be no other risks or uncertainties arising from the recommendation.

7. Implications

7.1. Financial Implications

There are limited financial implications in the making of an Article 4 direction beyond the costs of officer time, postage for notifications and a fee for the requisite press notice.

There is a potential for the owners to seek compensation for costs directly associated with the impacts of the direction. The Council considers this to be a low risk.

7.2. Legal Implications

There is no right of appeal against the decision of an LPA to confirm an Article 4 Direction but that decision can be subject to challenge by way of judicial review, in line with usual public law considerations.

7.3. Equalities Implications

The Article 4 Direction would have no adverse implications for the business use and occupants of Welbeck House and Granthem House, nor would there be any adverse implications for the residential occupants of 2A Patrick Road as the Article 4 Direction would not interfere with the continuation of such uses.

The only real impact on these occupants would be greater certainty about the future of the buildings which they occupy.

The removal of permitted development rights would not prevent renovations and maintenance of the 3 buildings and would only mean that plans to demolish the buildings would be subject to the scrutiny of a full planning application, rather than the limited assessment that prior approval provides.

This may delay any plans for the demolition of buildings, however any subsequent re-use or redevelopment of the land would require planning permission in any event such that any delay created by the direction would be minor at most.

It is not considered that these impacts would have any greater impact on any particular social or cultural group and as such these implications are not considered to equate to equalities impacts.

7.4. **Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Implications**

There are not considered to be any adverse implications of confirming the Direction in terms of crime or disorder. It could be argued that if the buildings were demolished via permitted development and their site subsequently left vacant for a protracted period whilst permission is secured for some alternative use or redevelopment the vacant site could attract anti-social behaviour. In that sense the confirmation of the direction has potentially positive implications on crime and disorder issues locally.

7.5. **Biodiversity Net Gain Implications**

There would be no biodiversity net gain implications arising from the recommendation within this report.

8. **Link to Corporate Priorities**

The Environment	The buildings subject of the Direction are identified as non-designated heritage assets – considered to represent an ‘irreplaceable resource’ within national planning policy. With the proposal for demolition under prior approval the recommended confirmation of the direction is the only way to ensure they are retained and continue to make a positive contribution to the local built environment and/or to ensure that the quality of the existing development on site can be weighed into the planning balance when considering any future proposals for redevelopment.
Quality of Life	To the extent that the recommendation impacts upon quality of life those impacts would be through securing attractive and historically significant components of the local environment as above.
Efficient Services	There would be no implications, positive or negative, for efficiency of local services.
Sustainable Growth	By ensuring that the demolition of the existing buildings is controlled by the need for planning permission it can be

ensured that any replacement development which might be approved in future makes an at least equal contribution to the quality of the local built environment and that any such approved development does take place promptly after demolition occurs as advised in paragraph 217 of the NPPF.

9. Recommendations

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet confirm the Rushcliffe Borough Council (67-69 Loughborough Road and 2A Patrick Road, West Bridgford) Article 4(1) Direction 20 May 2025, giving it ongoing effect in revoking permitted development rights for demolition under Schedule 2, Part 11, Class B of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) until such time as it be withdrawn.

For more information contact:	James Bate Team Manager: Planning – Monitoring and Implementation 0115 914 8483 jbate@rushcliffe.gov.uk
Background papers available for Inspection:	Article 4 of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 Schedule 3 of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015: Procedures for making Article 4(1) directions
List of appendices:	Appendix 1 – Sealed Direction - 20 May 2025 Appendix 2 – 24/01261/FUL Planning Decision Notice (Refusal) Appendix 3 – Objection Letter; Roythornes LLP on behalf of Rockwood Developments LTD Appendix 4 - Signed Delegated Report for Direction Under Article 4

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RUSHCLIFFE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (GENERAL PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT)
(ENGLAND) ORDER 2015 (AS AMENDED)**

**DIRECTION MADE UNDER ARTICLE 4 (1) TO WHICH PARAGRAPH 2(1) (a) OF
SCHEDULE 3 APPLIES**

**RUSHCLIFFE BOROUGH COUNCIL (67-69 LOUGHBOROUGH ROAD AND 2A PATRICK
ROAD, WEST BRIDGORD) ARTICLE 4(1) DIRECTION 20 MAY 2025**

WHEREAS the Council of the Borough of Rushcliffe (hereafter called the "the Council") being the appropriate Local Planning Authority within the meaning of Article 4 and Schedule 3 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 as amended (hereinafter called "the Order"), are satisfied that it is expedient that development of the description set out in the Schedule below should not be carried out on the land shown edged red and buildings coloured red on the attached plan unless permission is granted on an application made under Part III of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

AND WHEREAS the Council considers that development of the said description would constitute a threat to the amenity of the area.

NOW THEREFORE the said Council in pursuance of the power conferred on them by Article 4(1) of the Order hereby direct that the permission granted by Article 3 of the said Order shall not apply to development on the said land of the description set out in the Schedule below.

THIS DIRECTION is made under Article 4(1) of the said Order and, in accordance with Paragraph 2(6) of Schedule 3 of the Order shall remain in force until 20 November 2025 (being six months from the date of this direction) and shall then expire unless it has been confirmed by the Council in accordance with Paragraphs 1(9) and 1(10) of Schedule 3 of the Order before the end of the six month period.

SCHEDULE

Development to which the Direction shall apply (specified by reference to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended):

Schedule 2, Part 11 - Heritage and Demolition

1. Any building operation consisting of the demolition of a building which is coloured red on the attached map, being development comprised within Part 11, Class B of Schedule 2 of the Order, and not being development comprised within any other Class.

THE COMMON SEAL OF
RUSHCLIFFE BOROUGH COUNCIL
WAS HEREUNTO AFFIXED

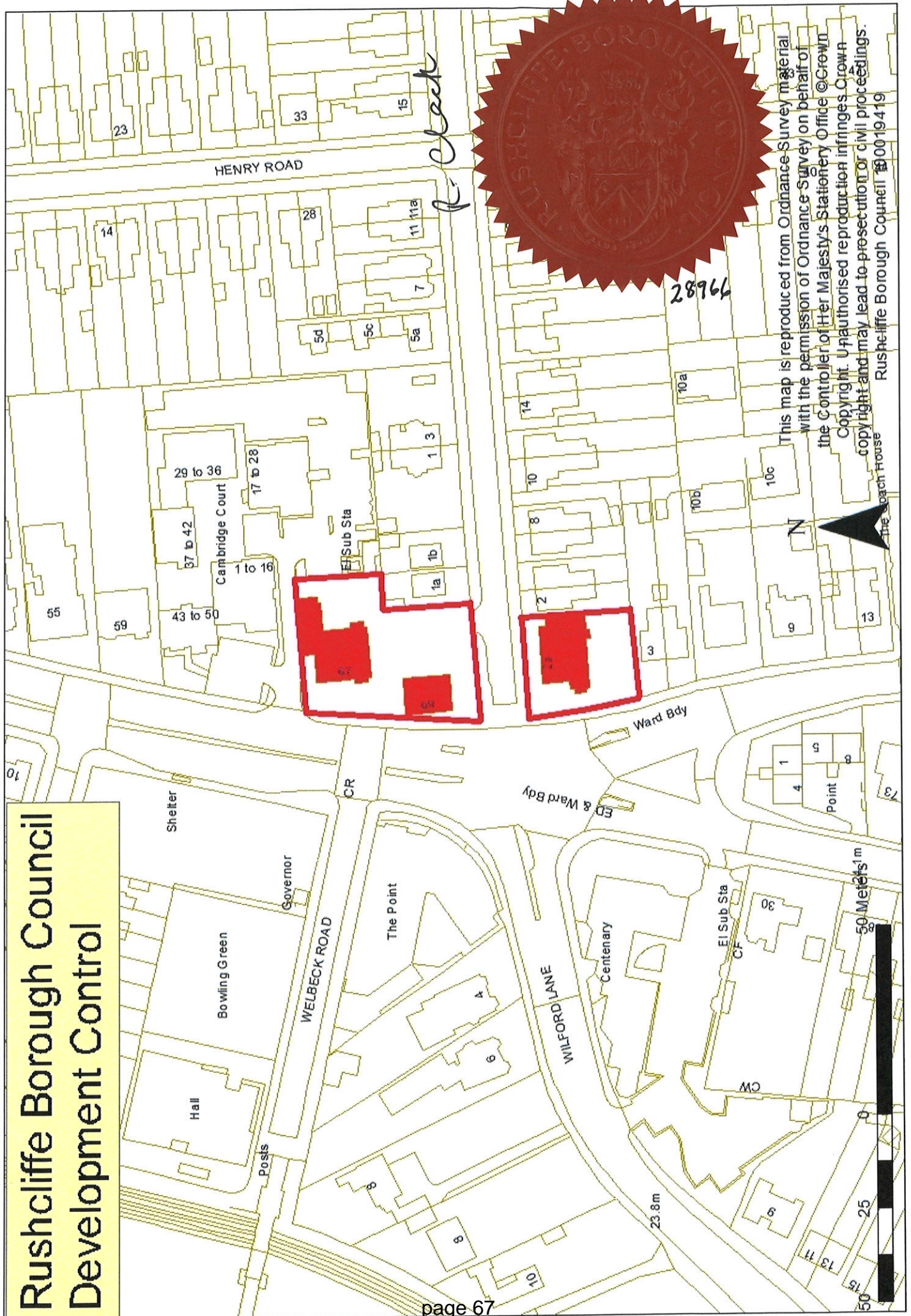
In the presence of:

Rachel Clad
.....
Authorised signatory

Dated... *20th May 2025*



Rushcliffe Borough Council Development Control



28966

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Rushcliffe Borough Council 0019419

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Rushcliffe
Borough Council

RUSHCLIFFE BOROUGH COUNCIL
Rushcliffe Arena, Rugby Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 7YG

NOTICE OF REFUSAL OF PLANNING PERMISSION

TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

Mr P Dunn
c/o Mr Alan Brown
ABDS Ltd
79 Orchid Close
Hereford
HR4 7FJ

REFERENCE NO : 24/01261/FUL
APPLICANT : Mr P Dunn
DEVELOPMENT : Proposed Demolition of Grafton House and Welbeck House and construction of 32 No apartments, including car parking and alterations to existing vehicular access.
LOCATION : Grafton And Welbeck House 67-69 Loughborough Road West Bridgford Nottinghamshire NG2 7LA

RUSHCLIFFE BOROUGH COUNCIL having considered an application, which was validly submitted on 26 July 2024, for the above development hereby in pursuance of their powers under the above-mentioned Act,

REFUSE PERMISSION

for the development described in the application for the reasons set out below:-

- 1. The proposed development would have a harmful effect on the significance of Grafton House and Welbeck house as Non- Designated Heritage Assets and the proposal would cause harm to their group value. The harm arising from the demolition of these NDHAs would be substantial. It has not been demonstrated that clear justification exists for the proposal given the level of harm arising from the complete loss of NDHA's.**

The development would not therefore accord with paragraph 216 of the NPPF which states "The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset".

The proposal would be contrary to criterion d) of Policy 11(1) of the Local Plan Part 2: Land and Planning Policies which states, inter alia, that planning permission will be granted for development on unallocated sites within the built-up area where the proposal would not result in the loss of any existing buildings considered to be heritage assets unless the harm is, in the case of designated heritage assets, outweighed by substantial public benefits or, in the case of non-designated heritage assets, the loss of significance to the asset is justified.

The proposal would be contrary to Policy 28 of the Local Plan Part 2: Land and Planning Policies as it would not conserve or enhance the character and appearance of the heritage asset. In applying the balanced judgement under paragraph 9.13 of the LPP2, it is not considered that the scale of harm to the heritage asset is justified.

2. The proposed building by virtue of its scale, massing, height, layout, and design would result in a dominant, overbearing development that would result in harm to the visual amenities of the street scene. The scale and footprint of the scheme would fill a large proportion of the site, resulting in a significant loss of the current open character and appearing at odds with the pattern and grain of the surrounding built environment.

The design of the scheme therefore would be unsympathetic to the surrounding built form, resulting in harm to the historic character of the street scene.

The proposal would be contrary to criterion 4 of Policy 1 of the Local Plan Part 2: Land and Planning Policies which states Planning permission for new development, changes of use, conversions or extensions will be granted provided that, where relevant, the following criteria are met:

- 4) the scale, density, height, massing, design, layout and materials of the proposal is sympathetic to the character and appearance of the neighbouring buildings and the surrounding area. It should not lead to an over intensive form of development, be overbearing in relation to neighbouring properties, nor lead to undue overshadowing or loss of privacy.

The proposal would be contrary to criterion b) of Policy 11(1) of the Local Plan Part 2: Land and Planning Policies which states, inter alia, that planning permission will be granted for development on unallocated sites within the built-up area where the proposal is of a high standard of design and does not adversely affect the character or pattern of the area by reason of its scale, bulk, form, layout or materials.

The proposal would be contrary to paragraph 135(a,b,c) of the NPPF which states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping

- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);

A decision to refuse planning permission would accord with paragraph 139 which states, inter alia that development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design. In considering development that should be given weight under this paragraph, the scheme would not reflect local design policies, nor would it comprise an outstanding or innovative design which promote high levels of sustainability, or that would help raise the standard of design more generally in an area.

- 3. The proposal would result in a cramped and over-intensive development as indicated by the substantial footprint of the building, very limited space for landscaping and amenity areas, and limited provision for service vehicles such as refuse collections and delivery vehicles within the site .

The proposal would be contrary to criterion 3 and 4 of Policy 1 of the Local Plan Part 2: Land and Planning Policies which states Planning permission for new development, changes of use, conversions or extensions will be granted provided that, where relevant, the following criteria are met:

- 3. sufficient space is provided within the site to accommodate the proposal together with ancillary amenity and circulation space;
 - 4. the scale, density, height, massing, design, layout and materials of the proposal is sympathetic to the character and appearance of the neighbouring buildings and the surrounding area. It should not lead to an over intensive form of development, be overbearing in relation to neighbouring properties, nor lead to undue overshadowing or loss of privacy;
- 4. The proposed development by virtue of its height, scale, massing, siting, layout and proximity to Nos. 1a and 1b Patrick Road would result in a harmful overbearing and overshadowing impact on these neighbours. The windows in the east and north elevations would result in a loss of privacy to Nos. 1a-1b and the facing habitable room windows at Cambridge Court.

The proposal would be contrary to Policy 1 (Development Requirements) of the Local Plan Part 2: Land and Planning Policies, which states that permission for new development, changes of use, conversion or extensions would normally be granted provided that, inter alia;

"4. the scale, density, height, massing, design, layout and materials of the proposal is sympathetic to the character and appearance of the neighbouring buildings and the surrounding area. It should not lead to an over intensive form of development, be overbearing in relation to neighbouring properties, nor lead to undue overshadowing or loss of privacy".

The proposal would be contrary to criterion f) of Policy 11(1) of the Local Plan Part 2: Land and Planning Policies which states, inter alia, that planning permission will be granted for development on unallocated sites within the built-up area where the proposal would not cause a significant adverse impact on the amenity of nearby residents and occupiers.

5. The revised plans do not detail the finished floor levels of the ground floor communal access hallway and bike storage area. The Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) does not comply with the requirements for a site-specific floor risk assessment. It has not therefore been adequately demonstrated that the development would not result in flood risk to future occupants and to property. The FRA does not therefore comply with the requirements for a site-specific FRA as set out in paragraphs 20 to 21 of the Flood Risk and Coastal Change planning practice guidance.

The development is contrary to paragraph 181 of the NPPF which states, inter alia, that where appropriate, applications should be supported by a site-specific flood risk assessment with footnote 63 requiring a site-specific flood risk assessment should be provided for all development in Flood Zones 2 and 3.

There are fundamental objections to the proposal and it is considered that this/these cannot be overcome. However, discussions have taken place with the agent in an attempt to address a number of issues and to limit the reasons for refusal to those which cannot, in the opinion of the Borough Council, be overcome and reduce the areas for debate in any subsequent appeal.

Any site notice displayed for the purpose of this application may be removed following the issuing of this decision. The location of any notices displayed can be viewed on the Council's website at <http://planningon-line.rushcliffe.gov.uk>



.....
Authorised Officer on behalf of Rushcliffe Borough Council
28th February 2025

Your Ref:

Our Ref: BDA/RJ/ROS0088-0449

Date: 18/06/2025

Planning & Growth
Rushcliffe Borough Council
Rushcliffe Arena
Rugby Road
West Bridgford
Nottingham
NG2 7YG

Roythornes LLP
2nd Floor East West
Tollhouse Hill
Nottingham
NG1 5FS

Dear Sirs

Grafton House and Welbeck House Loughborough Road and 2A Patrick Road, West Bridgford – Article 4 Direction

We act for Rockwood Developments Ltd and write to you to object to the making of the Article 4(1) Direction made on 20 May 2025 in respect of Grafton House and Welbeck House Loughborough Road and 2A Patrick Road, West Bridgford (**WBA4D**) by Rushcliffe Borough Council (the **Council**). This letter refers to the Grafton House and Welbeck House as the **Property**.

Planning Application (24/01261/FUL)

On 28 February 2025, the Council refused our clients' planning application for the "proposed Demolition of Grafton House and Welbeck House and construction of 32 No apartments, including car parking and alterations to existing vehicular access" (although the Officer's report on the WBA4D states that this application "was previously approved"). There were five reasons for refusal, but it is the first that has most bearing on this matter:

"1. The proposed development would have a harmful effect on the significance of Grafton House and Welbeck house as Non-Designated Heritage Assets and the proposal would cause harm to their group value. The harm arising from the demolition of these NDHAs would be substantial. It has not been demonstrated that clear justification exists for the proposal given the level of harm arising from the complete loss of NDHA's.

The development would not therefore accord with paragraph 216 of the NPPF which states "The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset".

The proposal would be contrary to criterion d) of Policy 11(1) of the Local Plan Part 2: Land and Planning Policies which states, inter alia, that planning permission will be granted for development on unallocated sites within the

Also at:

Alconbury
Birmingham
Langham
Peterborough
Spalding

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built-up area where the proposal would not result in the loss of any existing buildings considered to be heritage assets unless the harm is, in the case of designated heritage assets, outweighed by substantial public benefits or, in the case of non-designated heritage assets, the loss of significance to the asset is justified.

The proposal would be contrary to Policy 28 of the Local Plan Part 2: Land and Planning Policies as it would not conserve or enhance the character and appearance of the heritage asset. In applying the balanced judgement under paragraph 9.13 of the LPP2, it is not considered that the scale of harm to the heritage asset is justified.”

Prior Approval Application (25/00794/DEMOL)

On 23 May 2025, three days after making the WBA4D, our clients’ application for prior approval for the demolition of Grafton House and Welbeck House was refused by the Council for the following reason:

“Permitted development rights for demolition under Class B of Schedule 2, Part 11 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (As Amended) are revoked under Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (As Amended).

Accordingly, the demolition of the building does not constitute permitted development and therefore full planning permission is required.”

History

The history of the Property has been set out comprehensively in the Heritage Statement and its Addendum submitted as part of the Planning Application and we don’t intend to rehash this here. However, it is worth emphasising that the Property comprises buildings of the late nineteenth century vernacular with their brick construction. The houses were originally dwellinghouses but have been used as offices/commercial space since the 1960s which has necessitated the extensive alterations and the disappearance of the gardens backing the houses to make way for parking spaces, eroding the demarcation between the two houses.

Heritage

As for the history of the Property, all the heritage issues have been covered in depth by our client’s heritage consultant. It is worth noting some key points in relation to what is purportedly the *raison d’être* for the making of the WBA4D.

1. In Historic England’s HEAN12 Statements of Heritage Significance, heritage interest is said to comprise: (a) archaeological interest (evidential value); (b) architectural and artistic interest (aesthetic value); and (c) historic interest (historical and communal value). In the Heritage Statement, the following is stated:

“Grafton House and Welbeck House are architecturally unexceptional. Both are also altered with few remaining original fixtures and fittings. Their settings have been significantly altered. The historic association of Grafton House with the Trivett family adds a degree of associative historic value, otherwise the buildings have only a limited degree of historic value as buildings illustrative of the widespread construction of suburban housing in the late 19th century and the development of West Bridgford, and very limited aesthetic value as buildings that are altered examples of late Victorian housing, constructed on a large scale and with no attributed architect. Built originally as private residences both have been in use as offices for

a number of years and are no longer domestic in character, both having signage and settings that are clearly commercial.”

2. In relation to the type of houses which comprise the Property, Historic England, in Domestic 3: Suburban and County Houses Listing Selection Guide, states:

“As the building industry became more highly organised in the last quarter of the nineteenth century to meet massive demand, so the plan of the suburban house became more uniform and generally unexceptional.”

We do not dispute the fact that the houses comprising the Property are non-designated heritage assets because they are example of housebuilding of the late nineteenth century which lends itself to being of a minor historic interest but, given their uniformity and unexceptional nature, they are devoid of aesthetic value, which has been further eroded by their extensive alterations and extensions.

3. Historically, the houses had separate gardens. These gardens are now hardstanding with the Property sited in a car park which serves both offices, i.e. no demarcation between the two, thereby further diminishing further their historic value.
4. As our client’s Heritage Statement Addendum makes clear, the Council’s Conservation Officer “finds harm to the group value of late 19th century villa-style dwellings of a similar architectural style and siting along Loughborough Road. However, the officer also concludes that the proposal would not cause harm to the nearby listed buildings or have a harmful effect on the significance of the other non-designated heritage assets.” The Conservation Officer also makes reference to the character of Patrick Road and that “the planning of street trees and shrubbery here has created a more sylvan quieter nature in this residential area”. It is worth noting our clients’ Heritage Statement notes that the Property fronts Loughborough Road, a major artery of Nottingham city centre and the junction outside the Property is a “five-lane section of highway with modern street furniture and road markings”.

Article 4 Directions

The purpose of directions made pursuant to Article 4 of the General Permitted Development Order 2015 (as amended) (GPDO) (A4Ds) is to take away certain permitted development rights as set out in the GPDO. It does not prevent any development but, rather, requires planning permission to be sought for those specific types of development set out in any such A4Ds.

The test for the making of A4Ds is one expediency: the local planning authority must be “satisfied that it is expedient that development...should not be carried out unless permission is granted...” The GPDO does not define “expedient”. The National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) (NPPF) deals with A4Ds in paragraph 54:

- “54. The use of Article 4 directions to remove national permitted development rights should:
 - a. where they relate to change from non-residential use to residential use, be limited to situations where an Article 4 direction is necessary to avoid wholly unacceptable adverse impacts (this could include the loss of the essential core of a primary shopping area which would seriously undermine its vitality and viability, but would be very unlikely to extend to the whole of a town centre)
 - b. in other cases, be limited to situations where an Article 4 direction is necessary to protect local amenity or the well-being of the area (this could include the use of

Article 4 directions to require planning permission for the demolition of local facilities)

- c. in all cases, be based on robust evidence, and apply to the smallest geographical area possible.”

(Our emphasis.)

NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

In its Glossary, the NPPF defines a Heritage asset as being:

“A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).”

In the PPG, non-designated heritage assets are defined as being:

“locally-identified buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by plan-making bodies as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets.”

In Local Heritage Listing: Identifying and Conserving Local Heritage Advice Note 7, Historic England sets out

“By providing clear and up-to-date information, backed by the policy in the National Planning Policy Framework, a local heritage list which has been made available on the website of the local planning authority (LPA) and via the Historic Environment Record provides clarity on the location of non-designated heritage assets and what it is about them that is significant. Decisions are best made on the basis of published criteria, publicly available, so that clarity and certainty on their location and significance is available for communities, developers and decision-makers, therefore ensuring that they are given due consideration when change is proposed.”

Neither of the buildings comprising the Property is listed, and neither is recorded by the Council in a local list or by the local Historic Environment Record.

WBA4D

The question has to be asked: does the significance of the Property (as well as the building at 2A Patrick Road) merit permitted development rights being curbed? In short, no. In the NPPF, as highlighted above, A4Ds are deployed where is necessary to protect local amenity or the well-being of the area. However, it is clear from the Officer’s report in relation to the WBA4D that the ultimate decision maker at the Council had not had Paragraph 54 brought to their attention, given the signal failure to even mention it. It is clear from our clients’ heritage assessment and from the Council’s Conservation Officer’s assessment that the continued existence of the Property is not necessary to protect either the local amenity or the well-being of the area. The Property has been altered so extensively, internally and externally, that it is devoid of much value, historic and aesthetic. Indeed, the Council has not published the Property in a local list or on the local Historic Environment Record, begging the question of how much value it places on the Property. Perhaps it is the lack of robust evidence that precludes the Council from doing so: to use as a defence against the demolition of a property the fact it is located in an area which is “sylvan” and “quiet” when the Property fronts a five-lane road is fatuous.

Concerning our client's application for prior approval for the demolition of the Property, it is worth noting that a large number of objections raised the issue of our client trying to get permission "through the back door" for the development the subject of the Planning Application. However, such comments detract from the purpose of the prior approval application, namely to seek approval for the demolition of the Property. It would, of course, be odd to suggest that seeking prior approval for the demolition of a building would not lead to an application, at some point, being made for some form of development. However, the Council needs to understand that the prior approval application at hand was for the demolition of the Property not for any subsequent development. Each permission/prior approval is sovereign and to allow the refusal of the Planning Permission to cloud the Council's judgment in relation the determination of the Prior Approval (as it has the objectors), would be an egregious dereliction of its duty to determine matters on their own merits.

In the words of Lord Hewart in *Rex v. Sussex Justices*, [1924] 1 KB 256: "*It is not merely of some importance but is of fundamental importance that justice should not only be done, but should manifestly and undoubtedly be seen to be done*". There is a real danger that the Council has made the WBA4D simply to ensure that the Property is left to gradually self-ruin rather than, potentially, generate housing needed for Rushcliffe. There are already modern buildings within the close vicinity of the Property; it fronts a five-lane road; the Property is wholly unremarkable in heritage terms; it does not appear on the local heritage list nor the local Historic Environment Record; the evidence for the making of the WBA4D is not "robust"; housing (in one form or another) is needed. A kneejerk reaction to a developer proposing to make something better which the Council and its constituents don't like could be seen as a misuse of the purpose of A4Ds. We are sure the Council would agree that the timing of the making of the WBA4D on 20 May 2025 and the refusal of the application for prior approval on 23 May 2025 appears to be odd and serendipitous for the Council.

Whilst we appreciate there are always going to be objections to anything so emotive as planning, it is a strange stance of the Council to use such a sledgehammer (in the form of the WBA4D) to crack a nut (the demolition of two unremarkable and extensively altered properties fronting a main road). Further, it is hard to believe that the Council is desperately keen to keep the Property as it is given that the WBA4D requires, solely, planning permission to be applied for and granted in relation to the demolition of the Property. No other permitted development rights come within the ambit of the WBA4D meaning it can avail itself of plenty of other rights which may alter its status as a shining beacon of mediocrity.

The raison d'être for the making of the WBA4D appears to be in order to oppose any redevelopment of the Property which, to our minds, fails the protection of local amenity and well being tests. There is also scant evidence for the requirement to have the Property protected, failing the test in paragraph 54 c of the NPPF (which requires **robust evidence**). Indeed, the Officer's Report on this matter, makes not a single mention of Paragraph 54 of the NPPF which is strange given that this is the paragraph that deals, specifically, with A4Ds and we are, therefore, concerned whether the ultimate decision maker in the Council, responsible for signing the WBA4D had been properly informed in relation to the requirements of paragraph 54 of the NPPF.

We would request the Council to revoke the WBA4D.

Yours faithfully

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West Bridgford Article 4

Recommended By James Bate

Date

Location Grafton House and Welbeck House (Loughborough Road); and 1A Patrick Road, West Bridgford

Proposal Article 4 Direction (Without Notice Mechanism) relevant to revoking PD Rights for Demolition

Parish N/A

Ward Trent Bridge

OFFICERS REPORT

SITE DESCRIPTION & PROPOSAL

Grafton House (67 Loughborough Road) and Welbeck House (69 Loughborough Road) are two substantial high Victorian properties dating to the 1890's. Whilst different in detail the two properties have similarities in terms of form, scale and architectural character and sit at a prominent location at the junction of Melton Road, Loughborough Road and Melton Lane.

The two buildings are accompanied by a similar building immediately to their south (2A Patrick Road) which has similar qualities of scale and architectural character such that it forms a group with Grafton and Welbeck houses at the prominent road junction.

There are similar buildings further north along Loughborough Road but separated from this group by intervening modern development and they lack the prominent position along a key highway junction, similarly there are further houses to the south however these are largely of lesser scale and marginally lesser architectural quality as well as being in less prominent positions.

The buildings are amongst the largest and best detailed examples of buildings of a type and period typical of the late Victorian expansion of West Bridgford.

RECENT SITE HISTORY AND THREATS TO BUILDINGS

An application was received in July of 2024 (24/01261/FUL) which proposed the demolition of Grafton House and Welbeck House and their replacement with a substantial building to house 32 residential apartments.

The application was refused in February of 2025 on a number of grounds, summarised as:

- Substantial harmful effect on the significance of Grafton House and Welbeck house as Non- Designated Heritage Assets including harm to their group value.

Remaining reasons related to the replacement proposals rather than the loss of the existing:

- The proposed building by virtue of its scale, massing, height, layout, and design would result in a dominant, overbearing development that would result in harm to the visual amenities of the street scene. The scale and footprint of the scheme would fill a large

proportion of the site, resulting in a significant loss of the current open character and appearing at odds with the pattern and grain of the surrounding built environment.

- The proposal would result in a cramped and over-intensive development as indicated by the substantial footprint of the building, very limited space for landscaping and amenity areas, and limited provision for service vehicles such as refuse collections and delivery vehicles within the site.
- The proposed development by virtue of its height, scale, massing, siting, layout and proximity to Nos. 1a and 1b Patrick Road would result in a harmful overbearing and overshadowing impact on these neighbours. The windows in the east and north elevations would result in a loss of privacy to Nos. 1a-1b and the facing habitable room windows at Cambridge Court.
- The Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) does not comply with the requirements for a site specific flood risk assessment. It has not therefore been adequately demonstrated that the development would not result in flood risk to future occupants and to property.

A copy of the decision notice is appended to this report and provides fuller reasons for refusal including references to local and national planning policy.

Following this refusal of planning permission for the demolition of these buildings and the redevelopment of the site a prior approval application for the demolition of the buildings has been submitted.

Whilst there is no immediate threat to 2A Patrick Road the property does form part of a prominent group with Welbeck and Grafton House such that impact on group value was highlighted in part of the reason for refusal on 24/01261/FUL. As such the proposed Article 4 direction is recommended to extend to 2A Patrick Road for completeness.

FEEDBACK ON 24/01261/FUL

The application for demolition which was previously approved attracted much attention during public consultation.

The local ward councillor objected to the loss of Grafton and Welbeck Houses, stating “The destruction of these handsome Victorian buildings will have a detrimental effect on the street scene”.

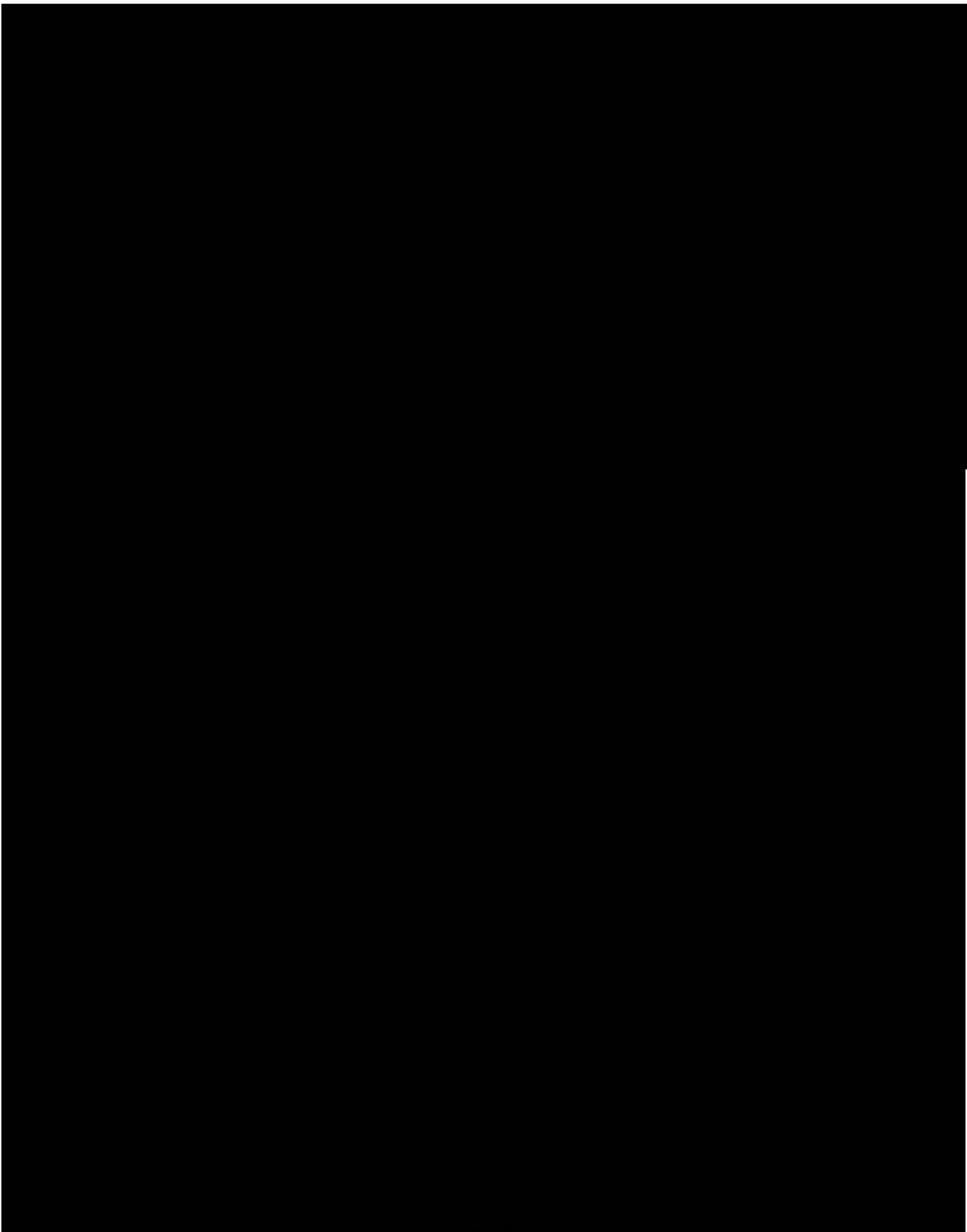
Nottinghamshire County Council objected, stating *“the proposed demolition of Grafton and Welbeck Houses is considered clearly harmful to the built character and historic interest of this part of West Bridgford. The Heritage Impact Assessment and addendum are considered overly dismissive of the group value of these buildings and the individual contributions that they make”*

The Borough Conservation Officer objected, stating *“it is considered that the proposal would have a harmful impact on the significance of Grafton House and Welbeck House arising from their total loss. The level of harm would be substantial. Their loss would cause harm to the group value of the late 19C detached and villa-style dwellings of a similar architectural style and siting along Loughborough Road”*

124 Objections were received from members of the public (together with 1 comment in support), these objections included references to loss of character buildings, traditional architecture and heritage as well as suggestions that the existing buildings should be reused. Local media also picked up on the proposals to demolish the buildings; including headlines such as “Outrage in West Bridgford over Victorian buildings set to be knocked down for 32 new flats” (Nottingham Post 28.8.24); “Objections grow on plans to demolish two West Bridgford Victorian buildings” (West Bridgford Wire 23.08.24) and “West Bridgford Victorian buildings saved as council refuses demolition plans” (West Bridgford Wire 04.03.25).

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are limited financial implications in the making of an Article 4 direction beyond the costs of officer time, postage for notifications and a fee for the requisite press notice.



INTERNAL CONSULTATION

Alongside the drafting of this report discussions have taken place with both the Planning Portfolio Holder (Cllr Upton) and the Leader of the Council (Cllr Clarke) both of whom have indicated that they would support the Council making a direction under Article 4 to prevent the demolition of the building.

ASSESSMENT

The currently pending prior approval submission for the demolition of Grafton and Welbeck Houses is linked to permitted development demolition works under Schedule 2 Part 11 Class B of the General Permitted Development Order 2015 (as amended). Whilst it is possible to impose controls and conditions on demolition via the prior approval process options for refusing such submissions are limited, and the fact that the demolition affects a non-designated heritage asset would not represent a reason for refusal, despite the National Planning Policy Framework advocating at Paragraph 217:

“Local planning authorities should not permit the loss of the whole or part of a heritage asset without taking all reasonable steps to ensure the new development will proceed after the loss has occurred”

The prior approval demolition route does not secure permission for any replacement development, and as such there would be no opportunity to take steps to ensure that appropriate replacement development will be proposed less still that it would proceed.

Given that 2A Patrick Road is of similar architectural character and occupies a similarly prominent position of the major road junction it is considered that the three properties have an element of group value in forming the architectural character of the locality. Whilst only 2 of the 3 properties are currently under active threat of demolition their inter-relationship is such that the loss of any one would diminish the sense of place that they bring to the location.

Much of the architectural character, contribution to local amenity and character that these buildings make relate to their Loughborough/Melton Road fronting elevations at the major road junction. They are amongst the best examples of a phase of expansion of the settlement of West Bridgford which has a large number of surviving buildings to represent it. This is perhaps well illustrated by buildings further south along Melton Road from the 3 buildings subject to the proposed Article 4 Direction. These are of similar period and architectural character, with some of the same types of architectural embellishment, but these further buildings are smaller and whilst collectively they feature a range of architectural embellishment as seen on Grafton, Welbeck and 1A Patrick Road none individually have the same degree of architectural embellishment.

As such these 3 buildings are considered to be the best and most prominent examples of a wider type and period of property which is characteristic of West Bridgford.

Whilst there are potential financial implications in terms of compensation around making the recommended direction the value attributed to the buildings as non-designated heritage assets

is such that their loss, particularly with no approved scheme for their replacement with anything that might make a comparable contribution to local architectural character, is something that cannot reasonably be considered, and which would conflict with the stipulation within the NPPF at paragraph 217. Under the circumstances the only way that the Council can prevent the loss of the buildings and ensure that their importance as non-designated heritage assets remains a consideration on any applications for their replacement is to make a direction under Article 4 to revoke permitted development rights applicable for their demolition.

As such it is considered reasonable and necessary to revoke, via the use of an Article 4 Direction, the permitted development right for demolition, subject to prior approval. This would ensure that demolition of the buildings only takes place in accordance with an appropriate approved scheme for the redevelopment of the site, in line with NPPF Paragraph 217. The granting of such a planning permission would allow proper consideration of the proposed redevelopment scheme and ensure that the demolition is appropriate and necessary to allow the delivery of such a scheme within an appropriate timeframe.

Without taking this step it will be difficult, if possible, to avoid granting permission for the pending prior approval application, and any subsequent redevelopment proposals would come forward in the context of a large vacant plot in a prominent location which, for understandable reasons, it may be unpalatable to allow to lay vacant for a protracted period.

The refusal of planning application 24/01261/FUL is still open to appeal (until 28th August 2025), but at the time of this report no appeal has been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate. If the buildings were demolished before any appeal could be considered clearly reasons for refusal relating to the significance and value of the existing buildings would fall away, and could no longer be defended at appeal.

The buildings have attracted a significant degree of public and media attention and it is clear that the local community values the buildings for their historic architectural significance and the contribution they make to sense of place and amenity.

RECOMMENDATION

Make a Direction Under Article 4 of the Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended) via the ‘without notice’ mechanism in Schedule 3(2) of that Order, to remove permitted development rights for demolition under Schedule 2, Part 11, Class B of that Order for a period of 6 months pending confirmation.

This would allow time for consultation on the matter with the owners of the buildings and other key stakeholders before a decision on whether the direction should be confirmed is taken.

Following consultation a report will be produced either recommending that the direction be confirmed and made permanent (with or without amendments), or that the direction should be withdrawn / allowed to expire. The decision on confirming, or otherwise, the direction would be taken by Cabinet.

Decision Approved by 
Authorised Officer on behalf of Rushcliffe Borough Council

Date: 19 May 2025

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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