

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>FUTURE OF NEIGHBOURHOOD WORKING</b>
<b>DIRECTORATE:</b>	<b>HOUSING AND INVESTMENT</b>
<b>REPORT AUTHORS:</b>	<b>PAUL CARRICK, NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGER; MICHELLE HOYLES, HOUSING STRATEGY MANAGER</b>

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To update the Executive on the progress of commissioned work delivered by Rose Regeneration, in relation to regeneration and neighbourhood working in Sincil Bank/Park Ward;
- 1.2 To note that the Corporate Management Team has endorsed the Rose Regeneration report (**Appendix A**), which evaluates the impact of Neighbourhood Working in Sincil Bank and makes recommendations on the future role of the Neighbourhood Team in the city;
- 1.3 To propose the next steps that will inform the future direction of Neighbourhood Working, including the key principles for a managed and sustainable withdrawal from Sincil Bank/Park Ward over a 12-month period starting in Summer 2025, and proposals for future workstreams for the team; and
- 1.4 To propose accommodation for the Neighbourhood Working Team from Summer 2025 onwards, including contingency plans if Investors in Lincoln's plans to purchase 22 – 30 Portland Street do not come to fruition and the Council's lease is terminated.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 In January 2024, the Council commissioned Rose Regeneration to work with partners to:
  - a) Measure the impact of the Council's intervention in Sincil Bank since 2018
  - b) Review what measures are needed to ensure the ongoing sustainability of partnership working in the area, and recommend an effective exit strategy for the Council
  - c) Identify any lessons learnt that could inform the next phase of neighbourhood working in the city.
- 2.2 At the time of commissioning this work, Rose Regeneration was asked to co-ordinate partners to explore the feasibility of applying to the Community Ownership Fund to purchase 22-30 Portland Street (part of which is currently occupied by the Neighbourhood Working Team). Whilst this approach was ultimately discounted at an early stage, a bid from Investors in Lincoln has subsequently been accepted by Lincolnshire County Council. Investors in Lincoln has Preferred Bidder status.

- 2.3 The purchase of 22 – 30 Portland Street has not yet completed. Lincolnshire County Council has recently extended the building lease so that the team can continue to occupy the building for a temporary period; under this new arrangement both parties can terminate the lease by giving one month's notice. Investors in Lincoln are still pursuing the purchase of the building, and further details are provided in section 5 of this report.
- 2.4 The Neighbourhood Team has co-ordinated the delivery of substantial and measurable improvements to the Sincil Bank area since 2018. Rose Regeneration has supported the evaluation of this work, and an updated version of its evaluation report is attached as '**Appendix A**.' Decisions are now needed to inform the next steps for neighbourhood working in the city, including where the Neighbourhood Team will be based and what the priorities for the team will be.

### **3. Neighbourhood Working Evaluation**

- 3.1 The Rose Regeneration evaluation (**Appendix A**) contains three options, reduced from the original five options, for potential models for how the Neighbourhood Team can continue to support communities in the city beyond Summer 2025.
- 3.2 In addition to proposing options for future neighbourhood working models, '**Appendix A**' also details several key achievements during the Neighbourhood Team's time working in Sincil Bank. Examples include:
- For every £1.00 invested in Neighbourhood Working, £3.20 of social value has been generated
  - Neighbourhood Working has a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of £2.48/£1. The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government appraisal guide (2023) ranks BCR, with anything above £2 as offering 'high' value for money.
- 3.3 Other notable achievements referenced in the evaluation report include:
- Implementation of a residents' parking scheme
  - Redevelopment of Hermit Street Garage site to deliver 11 new family homes for social rent
  - Introduction of restrictions on 'to-let' boards
  - Implementation of one-way traffic system
  - Green corridor for cyclists and pedestrians
  - Cleaner and safer streets and open spaces, including enhanced CCTV and improvements to public realm
  - Formation of a local community land trust
  - Improved access to services
  - Enhanced community spirit, supported by community events and activities
- 3.4 It is proposed that this report is endorsed, with option one selected as the preferred option that the Council will take forward. This option would enable the Neighbourhood Working Team to undertake a managed withdrawal from Sincil Bank and begin working in another area of the city with appropriate support and collaboration with partners.
- 3.5 A managed withdrawal from Sincil Bank would need to deliver the following:

- A communications plan, including provision of advice/support information so residents know who to go to for help with different issues after the team leaves
- Further exploration with key partners to identify ways of working that continue to support the community's needs on an ongoing basis
- Agreement with key community leaders and key partners about how they can host accessible support and advice for residents. Key delivery partners include Citizens Advice, Sincil Community Land Trust, and Lincoln Embracing All Nations (LEAN). These organisations will require some form of support to attract external funding
- The closing down of the Sincil Bank Community Hub, which currently offers advice and guidance four days per week, and identification of options for a temporary base for the team in the event the lease at Portland Street cannot be extended beyond March 2025. This approach, supported by the communications plan, will encourage residents to seek advice and engage with services without the need to visit a local office in person
- Support the delivery of the Town Deal Highways Improvements, including the Gateways element of this programme that is not due to be completed until summer 2025

3.6 It is proposed that a managed withdrawal from Sincil Bank could be completed within 12 months, starting in Summer 2025. This would allow withdrawal from the area over that period whilst simultaneously building up neighbourhood working activity elsewhere in the city.

#### **4. The Next 12 Months (June 2025 Onwards)**

- 4.1 The Council requires an appropriate exit strategy from Sincil Bank, in order that the benefits of neighbourhood working can be delivered elsewhere in the city. Option one of the Rose Regeneration evaluation (**Appendix A**) proposes focusing resources on one area of the city and gaining the commitment of key partners at the outset. This approach would enable the Council to explore how the Neighbourhood Working team's resources could be used in different ways, potentially increasing the team's capacity to take on other initiatives or projects in other areas.
- 4.2 An opportunity has arisen in Ermine to pilot this approach. Open Plan, who co-ordinated the Sincil Bank place shaping framework, is undertaking a similar exercise in Ermine using UKSPF funding. This place shaping framework is nearing completion. A board has been created to oversee this work, of which the Neighbourhood Manager and Housing Strategy Manager are members.
- 4.3 Alongside the development of the place shaping framework, UKSPF has funded Alive Church to develop part of Sudbrooke Drive Community Centre into a health and wellbeing hub. Additional funding has also been allocated to Bishop Grosseteste University (BGU) to enable them to extend their provision at Ermine Library. As part of the allocation of funding to Alive Church, activities are being delivered to engage with young people and the wider community, and a newsletter will be produced and distributed to all residents in the new year.

- 4.4 'Ermine' in the context of this new place shaping framework is defined as the Ermine East estate, and the Ermine West estate comprising majority Council housing. A plan showing the extent of these areas is attached as '**Appendix B**' to this report.
- 4.5 Ermine is very different to Sincil Bank and presents an opportunity to pilot a different approach to neighbourhood working. The Council is the majority landowner in Ermine and therefore has more influence in the area in terms of land uses, regeneration opportunities and environmental improvements. Trialling a new neighbourhood working pilot in this area could be advantageous, as there is ample scope to deliver significant benefits to the area that align with the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 30-Year Business Plan, utilising the place-shaping framework as a springboard for developing partnership working and enhanced community engagement in the area. Selecting Ermine as the next location for neighbourhood working therefore presents an opportunity to build on this place shaping exercise and deliver meaningful benefits to a community in one of the city's deprived areas.
- 4.6 Ermine has strategic significance to the Council, both in terms of its HRA 30-Year Business Plan and the city's housing pipeline. The area is expected to undergo substantial change over the lifetime of the Business Plan through newbuild development at Queen Elizabeth Road and likely regeneration of Trent View and surrounding land; it is therefore important for the Council to develop and sustain a positive and meaningful dialogue with the local community, so these changes are tenant and community led. These workstreams are likely to align with the place shaping framework in multiple ways; aligning neighbourhood working to these other workstreams at this early stage would therefore deliver wider benefits.
- 4.7 Population data supports focusing the next phase of neighbourhood working on Ermine. Current Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) data from 2019 highlights that parts of Ermine East (OO1D) and all of Ermine West (001A & 001B) fall within the top 10% of deprived areas in the country. These three Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA's) also feature in the top ten deprived neighbourhoods in the city. IMD data also indicates that deprivation increased in Ermine East (LSOA OO1D) between 2015 and 2019, moving from being the city's tenth most deprived neighbourhood to the city's sixth most deprived.
- 4.8 A detailed neighbourhood comparison has been undertaken, which compares Ermine to the following areas in terms of deprivation and access to local services:
- Moorland
  - Birchwood
  - Stamp End and Tower
  - St Giles

A copy of this comparison, including its methodology and findings, is attached as '**Appendix C**' to this report. Whilst all neighbourhoods have similar levels of deprivation, overall deprivation is more prevalent in the North of the city and there is a lack of local services and community facilities in Ermine West. There are therefore characteristics specific to Ermine, and Ermine West in particular, that justify focusing on these areas for the next phase of neighbourhood working.

- 4.9 Compared to Ermine, these other neighbourhoods have each been subject to more intensive neighbourhood working initiatives led by the Neighbourhood Team.

- 4.10 Focusing the next phase of neighbourhood working in Ermine therefore presents opportunities to deliver services, and explore barriers to accessing services, across both Ermine East and West with a view to improving outcomes for residents in those communities. The growth opportunities present in this part of the city improve the Council's ability to work with partners to achieve these outcomes. The Council is currently working with partners on a range of anti-poverty initiatives, and as Ermine is one of the city's most deprived areas there are also opportunities to link neighbourhood working into these initiatives. If approval is given to focus neighbourhood working in Ermine, this can be further explored to deliver a wider range of outcomes linking to other aspects of the Council's 'Reducing Inequality' strategic priority.
- 4.11 If it is determined that the next phase of neighbourhood working is to focus on Ermine, it is suggested this should be for an initial five-year period. This would be a sufficient period in which to make meaningful progress in the area. The objectives and activities that would be delivered during that period would be partly informed by the anticipated Place Shaping Framework; at this stage it is proposed that the following should be aimed to be delivered:
- Build trust and engagement between the community, the Council and partners
  - Devise a timeline of operational activities that can be delivered in the short and medium term, based on the recommendations Place Shaping Framework and any other community feedback/engagement that builds on this further
  - Develop a wider masterplan for future growth of the area, and engage with residents, partners, and other stakeholders to ensure this is genuinely community-led
  - Commence delivery of the masterplan, accompanied by a longer-term delivery plan for the area
- 4.12 Whilst the primary focus of the Neighbourhood Team would be on Ermine, the team would be able to continue to support initiatives in other neighbourhoods across the city as it has done in recent years with UKSPF-funded projects and community connectors.

## **5. Accommodation Needs of Neighbourhood Working Team**

- 5.1 Whilst Investors in Lincoln has been approved by Lincolnshire County Council as the preferred bidder to purchase 22 – 30 Portland Street, the matter is still being negotiated and there is currently no guarantee that this purchase will definitely go ahead. If the agreement with Investors in Lincoln does not proceed, the County Council is expected to sell the building to one of the other parties who expressed interest in purchasing it.
- 5.2 The Council's lease of Sincil Bank Neighbourhood Office at Portland Street has recently been extended and is now a rolling lease that enables both the City Council and County Council to terminate this arrangement by giving one month's notice. As the Council is likely to only be able to continue to occupy 22 – 30 Portland Street for a limited period, the team needs to secure alternative accommodation that supports

both a managed exit from Sincil Bank and the commencement of neighbourhood working initiatives elsewhere in the city.

- 5.3 If Ermine is supported as the next location for neighbourhood working, it is proposed that the team can begin to have a formal presence in the area from Summer 2025 onwards. The team could, if Investors in Lincoln proceed to purchase 22 – 30 Portland Street, split their time between Portland Street and Ermine and gradually extend the proportion of time spent at Ermine as the next phase of neighbourhood working progresses. Initial scoping suggests a range of possible accommodation options; Ermine Library and Sudbrooke Drive Community Centre may be feasible options, due to both having space available and the Council's existing positive relationships with BGU and Alive Church.
- 5.4 Other options could also be explored, such as the team occupying one of the Council-owned vacant shop units at Sudbrooke Drive for a temporary period to build presence and trust at an early stage. During early engagement as part of the place shaping framework residents have highlighted these shops as an area of concern; using one of the units would embed the team in the community for an initial period as they build trust and engagement. Using a shop unit could therefore deliver localised benefits by providing springboard to embed the team within the community and reduce the number of vacant premises.
- 5.5 Other organisations would be impacted by termination of the Portland Street lease. A key part of the exit strategy from Sincil Bank was the creation of an organisation called Lincoln Embracing All Nations (LEAN). LEAN currently offer immigration advice and support to residents and are presently co-located with the Neighbourhood Team at Portland Street. LEAN is currently exploring taking on the lease of a nearby church hall, so they can continue to provide advice and further develop community activities in the area.
- 5.6 Citizens Advice also delivers an outreach surgery each Thursday, from the Portland Street office. The Neighbourhood Team would work with Citizens Advice to identify suitable alternative sites.

## **6. Strategic Priorities**

### **6.1 Let's Reduce All Kinds of Inequality**

This report seeks to agree and formalise the next phase of neighbourhood working in the city and proposes focusing most of the Neighbourhood Team's work on one area of the city to deliver the greatest benefit to those living there. The area proposed is affected by multiple forms of deprivation, and the current UKSPF-funded work in the area creates an opportunity to further develop trust and engagement with the community; improve understanding of how residents feel about their community and how they want it to change over time; and work with partner organisations to improve these neighbourhoods and the quality of life for residents.

### **6.2 Let's Deliver Quality Housing**

The Housing Revenue Account is the majority landowner on Ermine East and West, with both estates expected to change significantly through implementation of the

HRA 30-Year Business Plan. Both incorporate land that will be used to deliver additional social housing, with Trent View and surrounding land at Ermine West having potential for large-scale regeneration. It is vital that any substantial changes to either area are genuinely tenant- and community-led, and therefore focusing the next phase of neighbourhood working in this part of the city would create optimal conditions for this to be explored with the community.

### **6.3 Let's Enhance Our Remarkable Place**

The proposals set out in this report would, if approved, help to improve access to green space and other community facilities in an area of the city that is currently under-provided for. Community engagement, delivered through neighbourhood working, would enable this to be further explored so that any enhancements to the area meet residents' aspirations.

### **6.4 Let's Address the Challenge of Climate Change**

The HRA 30-Year Business Plan commits to decarbonisation and aims to contribute towards the Council achieving net zero carbon by 2030. As the majority landowner at Ermine, the Council has significant influence over how this part of the city will contribute to that commitment.

## **7. Organisational Impacts**

### **7.1 Finance (including whole life costs where applicable)**

The current property budgets for the Team's accommodation are £14,890 p.a. Any future accommodation requirements will need to be met from this budgeted amount, or alternative savings identified within the Directorate's cash limited budgets.

### **7.2 Legal Implications Including Procurement Rules**

### **7.3 Equality, Diversity and Human Rights**

The Public Sector Equality Duty means that the Council must consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work, in shaping policy, delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

It requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

Equality impacts have been considered, and there are no identified negative impacts arising from the recommendations set out in this report. The proposal to focus neighbourhood working in Ermine seeks to improve outcomes for residents living in one of the city's most deprived areas, and therefore the equality impacts if the proposal is approved are expected to be positive.

## 7.4 Human Resources

The proposal to focus neighbourhood working in Ermine would change the Neighbourhood Team's work location. However, the team have historically relocated from time to time and therefore there are no anticipated HR issues arising from this.

## 7.5 Land, Property and Accommodation

The Neighbourhood Team will require a different work location, either at the end of when the current lease for the Sincil Bank office ends, or when the team have fully withdrawn from the Sincil Bank area. This report proposes a range of accommodation options for the team; when a preference has been confirmed, accommodation options can be finalised and pursued.

## 7.6 Significant Community Impact &/or Environmental Impact

None identified.

## 7.7 Corporate Health and Safety Implications

An area health and safety risk assessment will be necessary for the Neighbourhood Team when their next working location is confirmed and activity-based assessments will require to be reviewed.

# 8. Risk Implications

## 8.1 (i) Options Explored

- **Do nothing** – this is not a viable option as the current neighbourhood working at Sincil Bank is coming to an end. Next steps for the team are therefore required, including meeting the team's accommodation needs
- **Enact the other recommendations set out in 'Appendix A'** – this approach is feasible, however for the reasons set out in this report, it is considered that focusing the Neighbourhood Team's efforts in one part of the city would deliver the greatest outputs and outcomes
- **Focus the Neighbourhood Team's work on a different part of the city** – other parts of the city, including Moorland, Glebe, and Birchwood wards, are also significantly impacted by deprivation. The evidence presented in section 4 of this provides a basis for why Ermine has been proposed and coincides with UKSPF-funded work to develop a place shaping framework that the Neighbourhood team can build upon.

## 8.2 (ii) Key Risks Associated with the Preferred Approach

The risk associated with the proposed approach is low and is likely to deliver greater benefits to local residents due to existing partnership working in Ermine.

# 9. Recommendations

- 9.1 That Executive notes the report produced by Rose Regeneration and attached as '**Appendix A**' to this report;

- 9.2 That Executive resolves to approve a managed withdrawal from neighbourhood working initiatives in Sincil Bank over a 12-month period, starting in Summer 2025;
- 9.3 That Executive approves the managed withdrawal from Sincil Bank to be undertaken so it coincides with building neighbourhood working capacity in Ermine;
- 9.4 That, subject to a formal decision being made on the next phase of Neighbourhood Working, Executive delegates the final decision on the Neighbourhood Team's accommodation to the Housing Strategy Manager;
- 9.5 That Executive approves the Neighbourhood Team to co-ordinate development of an Ermine Partnership Board and delivery of key recommendations as highlighted in the UKSPF-funded Ermine Place Shaping Framework; and
- 9.6 That Executive gives approval to fully base the Neighbourhood Team at Ermine from 2026 until March 2030, with a review to be commissioned at that time.

**Is this a key decision?**

Yes

**Do the exempt information categories apply?**

No

**Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply?**

No

**How many appendices does the report contain?**

Three (A, B, C)

**List of Background Papers:**

None

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