

Title of Report	STENSON SQUARE GARDENS – PRESENTATION OF DESIGNS POST PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND APPROVAL TO FUND AND SUBMIT PLANNING APPLICATIONS	
Presented by	Richard Blunt Leader of the Council PH Briefed x	
Background Papers	Coalville Regeneration Framework (2023) Council Delivery Plan Council February 2024 Cabinet October 2024 Community Scrutiny February 2026	Public Report: Yes Key Decision: Yes
Financial Implications	It is proposed that the next stages of work for Stenson Gardens are funded from the Council Regeneration Capital programme where an allocation has previously been agreed at Council on 22 February 2023. Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	The Stenson Square site is predominately located on land owned by North West Leicestershire District Council. At its periphery the proposals extend on to Leicestershire County Council Highways land. Public realm works will be undertaken using Permitted Development rights so do not require a specific planning consent. All procurement activity associated with consultant appointments, the preparation of RIBA Stage 4–5 documentation, and subsequent contractor procurement will be undertaken in accordance with the Procurement Act 2023. Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	The project will be delivered using existing Economic Regeneration staff resources. Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes	
Purpose of Report	To present the latest RIBA 3 design proposals for the Stenson Gardens project To seek approval to appoint Arup to undertake RIBA Stage 4 design work To seek approval to appoint consultants to prepare an outline planning application for the former Council offices site. To seek approval to make an outline planning application for the former Council offices site	

Reason for Decision	Cabinet approval required to enable progress with the next stages of the Stenson Gardens project in compliance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and procurement legislation.
Recommendations	<p>THAT CABINET</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) NOTES THE FEEDBACK FROM THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SESSION CARRIED OUT 8 OCTOBER 20252) CONSIDERS THE COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON 25 FEBRUARY 20263) RECOMMENDS TO COUNCIL THAT A SUM OF £276,258 IS MOVED FROM THE DEVELOPMENT POOL TO THE ACTIVE PROGRAMME IN THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME AS OUTLINED IN SECTION 4.0 OF THE REPORT4) AGREES TO APPOINT ARUP TO PROVIDE DESIGN SERVICES FOR RIBA STAGE 4 OF THE STENSON GARDENS PUBLIC REALM PROJECT TO A POINT WHERE TENDERS FOR CONSTRUCTION HAVE BEEN OBTAINED WITHIN THE AGREED BUDGET OF £276,258 SUBJECT TO COUNCIL AGREEING THE MOVEMENT OF FUNDS TO THE ACTIVE PROGRAMME.5) DELEGATES AUTHORITY TO THE DIRECTOR OF PLACE (IN CONSULTATION WITH THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER) TO APPOINT CONSULTANTS TO PREPARE AN OUTLINE PLANNING APPLICATION FOR THE FORMER COUNCIL OFFICES SITE WITHIN THE AGREED BUDGET OF £276,258 SUBJECT TO COUNCIL AGREEING THE MOVEMENT OF FUNDS TO THE ACTIVE PROGRAMME.6) DELEGATES AUTHORITY TO THE DIRECTOR OF PLACE (IN CONSULTATION WITH THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER) TO SUBMIT AN OUTLINE PLANNING APPLICATION FOR PLANNING CONSENT FOR RESIDENTIAL USE ON THE FORMER COUNCIL OFFICES SITE

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The regeneration of Coalville is a key priority within the Council Delivery Plan and the Stenson Gardens project is one of the flagship schemes highlighted in the Coalville Regeneration Framework.
- 1.2 The creation of Stenson Gardens will contribute to the Council's long held ambition to deliver the Prince's Foundation '4 squares' strategic vision for Coalville.
- 1.3 The Stenson Gardens project comprises two principal parts; firstly the creation of a new public realm to the front of Stenson House, incorporating London Road car park, and secondly the redevelopment of the now cleared former Council offices site for residential use.
- 1.4 Through work by Arup (a leading land use consultancy), the public realm element of this project has been progressed to RIBA Stage 3 designs (a level of design evolution sufficient to show general arrangements and material choices). The associated proposals for residential development on the former Council offices site have been developed in parallel up to RIBA Stage 2, also by Arup. RIBA Stage 2 residential designs are concept design only.
- 1.5 The project has benefited from cross-party input from members during the design process to date.
- 1.6 There has also been input from stakeholders such as the Registrar's service, Citizens Advice Bureau and Council staff that work from Stenson House to inform the public realm design. In addition, a public engagement session was held on 8 October 2025. The feedback report is appended at Appendix 1 and a draft response to comments raised at the engagement session is appended at Appendix 2.
- 1.7 Engagement with the Council's Planning Service has clarified that the public realm proposals that have been developed to RIBA Stage 3 do not require the making of a separate planning application but can be delivered under Permitted Development rights. Should any elements of the scheme be found to not be permissible under Permitted Development then appropriate planning applications will be made.
- 1.8 An outline planning consent is required for any redevelopment of the former Council offices site and to establish the principle of a new use an outline application is proposed to be made.
- 1.9 The Council's Community Scrutiny Committee reviewed both elements of the project, specifically noting the feedback received as part of the public engagement and commenting on the RIBA Stage 3 designs. Their comments are appended here at Appendix 8.

2.0 NEXT STEPS - PUBLIC REALM

- 2.1 The project has achieved RIBA Stage 3 (planning consent) For the public realm element of the project planning consent is not required as the works can be undertaken using Permitted Development rights.

- 2.2 The next stage of project development is RIBA Stage 4 which is the preparation of detailed construction drawings, specifications and bills of quantities for construction of the scheme. It is now intended to appoint Arup to undertake this stage of work.
- 2.3 It is intended to appoint Arup using the Crown Commercial Services Framework via a Direct Award. This recognizes the specialist knowledge of the scheme that Arup have gathered through designing the proposed works to RIBA stage 3.
- 2.4 Following the completion of RIBA Stage 4 the construction works will be procured with support from the procurement team using a mini competition or direct award against a suitable framework.
- 2.5 The project will be brought back to Cabinet once tenders for construction have been obtained.

3.0 NEXT STEPS - RESIDENTIAL

- 3.1 The next stage to progress the residential element of the project is to make an outline planning application for this part of the site. This will de-risk the residential development project and give confidence to potential purchasers when the site is placed on the market as well as increasing the land value.
- 3.2 Consultancy support will be required to progress and submit the outline residential planning application including commissioning all supporting documentation e.g. Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy.
- 3.3 Delegated authority from Cabinet to make associated appointments is requested.

4.0 FINANCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Arup has provided a fee quotation of £156,258 to progress the public realm element of the project to the point at which a Construction Contractor can be appointed.
- 4.2 As described in Section 2 above, this quotation is believed to offer good value to the Council because of retained knowledge and project continuity. The fee can be met from the existing capital programme allocation, subject to moving the required sum from the development pool to the active programme.
- 4.3 Fee proposals for the preparation of the outline planning consent are being sought. An initial fee proposal of around £120,000 has been received but officers are seeking lower prices. Any fee that is accepted can also be funded from the existing capital programme allocation.
- 4.4 A full report on the cost of construction of the public realm will be presented to Cabinet on completion of contractor procurement prior to the award of contract.

- 4.5 It is expected that the net proceeds from sale of the former Council Offices site will make a significant contribution towards recovering the public realm works costs.

5.0 PROJECT OUTCOMES

5.1 The desired outcomes for the Stenson Gardens project are as follows:

- To create a high quality visually attractive arrival point in the town, at the junction between two key roads and outside Stenson House.
- To create a space from which residents can draw civic pride, but which can also be used for socialising.
- To link the London Road public car park (adjacent) to Stenson House.
- To support the use of Stenson House particularly by the Registrars Service by providing an attractive environment for wedding photographs etc.
- To guide pedestrians towards the town centre and the town's other public places such as Memorial Square, and Marlborough Square.
- To create a wider attractive environment for high quality residential accommodation on the former Council Offices site.
- To create an attractive street scene on Whitwick Road.
- To continue to provide vehicular access for residents on Park Road.
- To continue to provide vehicular access for the Coalville Bowls Club.
- To ensure through good design that the residential development and Stenson House and Stenson Square Gardens operate in a coordinated way.

6.0 STENSON GARDENS PROPOSALS - DETAILED OVERVIEW

6.1 The draft general layout arrangement and designs for the public realm are set out in the attached appendices (Appendices 3-7). These drawings also include details of materials and planting schedule and lighting design proposals.

6.2 A boundary plan of the former council offices site is included at Appendix 9

7.0 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FEEDBACK

7.1 A community engagement exercise was conducted to seek input from the public and stakeholders into the Stenson Gardens project. Key takeaways from the exercise include:

- Suggestion to include a water pump as part of public realm – given that the town pump was located in the vicinity of Stenson Gardens.
- Desire to ensure that any public realm improvements are properly maintained in the future

- Concerns that the public realm works will attract anti-social behaviour
- No strong support for either the public realm or the housing elements of the scheme, largely citing that Council funds could be better spent elsewhere.
- Opinion was divided regarding the best form of tenure new housing could take (e.g. social housing or market housing).

7.2 A copy of the post engagement feedback report and a revised 'you said, we did' document are appended at Appendices 1 and 2. These comments have been taken on board by the design team when preparing the RIBA Stage 3 draft designs.

8.0 COMMUNITY SCRUTINY FEEDBACK

8.1 A report was considered at the Community Scrutiny meeting on 25 February 2026. Feedback is tabulated below at 8.2.

8.2

	Comments/recommendations from scrutiny	Advice provided by officers at the Scrutiny meeting	Cabinet response
C1	Proposed housing on site: The financial implications of affordable housing versus market housing were raised. The consensus was that a mixed-use development was preferred which included social housing. Members stressed the need for proper proportion of social housing. It was also suggested that homes be accessible for specific demographics.	Officers explained the budget allocation and the funding plans. The potential for a mixed-use development was acknowledged, and it was confirmed that more work was needed on this once the principle was agreed for housing on the site.	
C2	Project timeline: The timing of the project was questioned due to the risk of funds being absorbed into the new authority as part of Local Government Reorganisation.	It was acknowledged that time was critical and the aim was to secure maximum revenue within the current lifetime of the authority.	
C3	Public consultation: The mixed public feedback was noted. Members felt that future marketing and public communication were essential.	Officers clarified they were committed to continued public engagement and communication during the project.	
R1	Recommendation: That Cabinet encourages the Coalville Heritage Society to investigate the options available to help fund some archaeological investigations on the site when works begin and there is access to the ground.	-	

R2	Recommendation: That Cabinet undertakes more marketing to showcase the design visuals and promote the project with the aim to gain more community involvement.	-	
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8.3 LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL HIGHWAYS

8.4 Part of the RIBA 3 design proposals include proposed resurfacing work to Leicestershire County Council (LCC) footways on Whitwick Road and London Road, adjacent to the Stenson Gardens site. Approval for resurfacing of the public footway with a material consistent with that proposed to be used in Stenson Gardens will require LCC consent and approval for this is now being sought.

9.0 PROJECT RISKS

9.1 Detailed project risks are identified in the RAID Risk Register and include materials availability, contractor pricing, further pandemics, Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), inflation etc.

9.2 The project timetable has been assessed in the context of the anticipated LGR timeline, and a delivery plan will be maintained to ensure continuity should governance arrangements change.

10.0 PROJECT TIMESCALES

10.1 Arup has advised officers that as part of their fee proposal for RIBA Stage 4-5 that they are likely to require 15 weeks from appointment to prepare documentation ready for contractor procurement.

11.0 APPENDICES

The appendices can be viewed by following the links below:

[Appendix 1 – Public engagement feedback report](#)

[Appendix 2 – Draft Response to Engagement](#)

[Appendix 3 – Draft General arrangement drawing](#)

[Appendix 4 – Draft Outline specification](#)

[Appendix 5 – Draft Stage 3 Design Report](#)

[Appendix 6 – Draft Stage 3 Lighting Design Report](#)

[Appendix 7 – Illustrative drawing of Stenson gardens](#)

[Appendix 8 – Comments from Community Scrutiny Committee 25 February 2026](#)

[Appendix 9 – Boundary plan of former council offices site](#)

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	Planning and regeneration
Policy Considerations:	Coalville Regeneration Framework
Safeguarding:	Principles of safeguarding have been taken into account through the design process
Equalities/Diversity:	The public realm has been designed for all users
Customer Impact:	Creation of new public amenity space for enjoyment and relaxation (wellbeing/quality of life)
Economic and Social Impact:	Outline planning permission for circa 40 new dwellings in Coalville Creation of new public amenity space for enjoyment and relaxation (wellbeing/quality of life)
Environment, Climate Change and zero carbon:	Climate resilient planting in Stenson Gardens public realm Tree planting Sustainable Urban Drainage Greening of London Road car park Provision of 4 EV charging points Biodiversity improvements
Consultation/Community Engagement:	Community engagement event undertaken on 8 October 2025 – please see attached feedback report Engagement with stakeholders undertaken as part of RIBA 3 design works e.g. Leicestershire Police Designing Out Crime Officer, Registrars Service, Citizens Advice Bureau, NWLDC staff using Stenson House
Risks:	See 9.0 Project Risks section
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