

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Cabinet – 20 October 2025

Report Title

Oaktrees Extra Care Scheme

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

Yes

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Ian Spicer, Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Sitwell

Report Summary

This report provides an update and next steps in relation to a former decision by Cabinet to permanently close the Resource Centre at the Oaktrees site, previously an Extra Care Housing scheme. This was due to significant fire safety concerns which were deemed unviable to remediate. This report seeks Cabinet approval for Together Housing to demolish the existing building and repurpose the land, to create an outdoor asset for tenants.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Approve Together Housing to demolish the Resource Centre on the Oaktrees site.
2. Approve Together Housing to repurpose the land into an enclosed communal garden with seating and two additional car parking spaces, for the exclusive use of tenants.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Consultation Report
Appendix 2 Equality Screening Part A
Appendix 3 Equality Analysis Part B
Appendix 4 Climate Impact Assessment

Background Papers

[The Future of Oaktrees Extra Care Scheme \(Stag Willow\) 18 September 2023.](#)

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

No

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Oaktrees Extra Care Scheme

1. Background

- 1.1 Oaktrees, also known as Stag Willow, was originally commissioned and built to operate as an Extra Care Housing scheme. It was built on Council-owned land in 2006 by Together Housing, under a lease agreement. The housing provision is funded through the Housing Revenue Account and care and support through the General Fund. The scheme comprised 8 self-contained apartments situated in a Resource Centre and 20 bungalows.
- 1.2 The Resource Centre also provided communal facilities for tenants and an office for the on-site support team. The Resource Centre building has remained closed since 30 October 2020 due to the outcome of a fire risk assessment which identified significant fire safety defects and immediate remedial works required to secure confidence in the limitation of fire spread. These required works were significant, including the replacement of all internal and external combustible materials used in the fabrication of the building.
- 1.3 At the time, the Resource Centre and one adjoining bungalow were fully vacated. Tenants were supported into suitable alternative housing provision and the Council's staffing team which operated from the Resource Centre were relocated to the nearby Extra Care Housing scheme at Bakersfield Court. Fire safety concerns identified in the bungalows were remediated by Together Housing. 19 of the bungalows are currently occupied. One of the bungalows remains vacant due to being adjoined to the Resource Centre.
- 1.4 In January 2023, a further fire risk assessment found that compartmentation between areas within the Resource Centre was inadequate to prevent the spread of fire, compounded by a lack of fire stoppable materials. The assessment concluded that it was not viable to remediate the building in its current format and therefore a decision was made to permanently close the Resource Centre.
- 1.5 In September 2023, for the remaining tenants living in the bungalows at Oaktrees, Cabinet approved the proposal to permanently change support services to an offsite, wrap around offer for existing tenants; Cabinet also approved a change in the housing-type status to general need for older people, and therefore, Oaktrees is no longer defined as an Extra Care Housing scheme. Tenants were given the opportunity to opt-out of the service and anyone moving into a property on the Oaktrees site will access care and support on the same basis as residents living in the wider community.
- 1.6 Whilst Together Housing owns the Resource Centre, the Council has legal responsibilities in relation to the future of buildings as it owns the land and continues to support 13 tenancies on a responsive basis, staffed through a 24/7 satellite model of provision. 4 households opted out of the support and 2 households have moved into properties since they were reclassified as general need for older people.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 The Council continues to support 13 properties, on the Oaktrees site. The remaining 7 bungalows (plus one vacant) are now housed as general needs, restricted to older adults.
- 2.2 Oaktrees is not currently operating as originally commissioned, as there are no longer communal facilities or support staff available on-site. Following closure of the Resource Centre, Together Housing now reference the scheme as 'Retirement Living'.
- 2.3 Together Housing has made provision within its budget plan for 2025-26 to fund the cost of demolishing the Resource Centre and make good the area, subject to Cabinet approval.
- 2.4 The land was originally leased to Together Housing under a 125-year lease to enable the development of the Extra Care Housing scheme. The lease provides that the tenant (Together Housing) may only use the property for the permitted use which is defined as for creation and provision of social housing units only.
- 2.5 Two options for consideration have been identified, including repurposing the land into additional communal garden space and/or additional car parking for tenants of the bungalows. Options proposed are based on minimising the maintenance costs and the impact this would have on tenant service charges, which form part of the gross rent costs.
- 2.6 Together Housing has updated tenants on the proposed demolition, which must be completed within this financial year in line with Together Housing's budget plan for 2025-26. Together Housing have also consulted with tenants in relation to the future use of the land.
- 2.7 The one bungalow adjoined to the Resource Centre, which is currently vacant, will be relet once the property is no longer physically attached and remedial works are complete.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 This report provides Cabinet with an update on the previously approved recommendation to permanently close the Resource Centre. Therefore, in relation to the future use of the land, the recommendation to Cabinet is to:
 - Approve Together Housing to demolish the Resource Centre on the Oaktrees site.
 - Approve Together Housing to repurpose the land into an enclosed communal garden with seating and two additional car parking spaces, for the exclusive use of tenants.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 Together Housing, with support from the Council has continued to engage with tenants since 2020 to ensure regular updates are provided. All current tenants were invited to formal consultation led by Together Housing on the future use of the land. Tenants are content with the proposal to demolish the Resource Centre and fed back on the proposed options for the future use of the land.
- 4.2 The proposal included two financially viable options, that would minimise any associated maintenance costs, ensuring minimal impact on tenant service charges.
- 4.3 **Option 1 – a working garden area** maintained by tenants for recreational purposes to cultivate vegetables and plants as well as some seating. The area would be fenced to provide privacy for tenants and include raised beds, given that the bungalows remain restricted to older age tenants.
- 4.4 **Option 2 – a garden with seating and two car parking spaces** providing additional, communal outdoor space for tenants of the bungalows to socialise. The area would be fenced to provide privacy for tenants. This option provides two additional car parking spaces for residents or visitors, in addition to the existing turning space.
- 4.5 16 of the 19 tenancies consulted fed back on the proposal. 15 of which preferred option 2, one tenancy favoured option 1, however not strongly and following further discussion with family was accepting of the majority view.
- 4.6 Tenants fed back concern that a working garden would likely become unkempt as it would be dependent on tenants being interested in and being able to undertake gardening activities.
- 4.7 Tenants preferenced an enclosed community garden with bench-style seating for their exclusive use. This option provides tenants with additional, communal outdoor garden and parking space in addition to their current personal gardens and own parking spaces at their bungalows.
- 4.8 During the consultation, tenants raised several queries in relation to aesthetics, security, lighting and water supply to the area, to which Together Housing responded. A full consultation report can be found at Appendix 1.
- 4.9 Three tenants/relations chose not to participate in the consultation and did not respond to calls or visits, however all tenants/relations continue to be engaged through regular updates.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 As part of Together Housing's budget setting for this financial year, funding has been included for the demolition costs and the work needs to be completed by March 2026.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 There are no financial implications for the Council in respect of the proposed demolition. Any on-going maintenance costs of the space would be the responsibility of Together Housing, paid for by the service charge.
- 6.2 As the land is leased to Together Housing, there are no procurement implications associated with the recommendations detailed in this report.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

- 7.1 The pertinent clauses and definitions within the lease are:
- 7.2 **Permitted Use**
Use of premises only for creation and provision of social units consistent with the objects of the Lease and the requirements of the Housing Corporation.
- 7.3 **Social Housing Units**
This means a unit of accommodation or letting by the Lessee to provide Housing at affordable rents for those who cannot afford to acquire it in the open market and/or the provision of accommodation designed for use by the elderly.
- 7.4 In long leases such as this one, it is not uncommon for the originally agreed Permitted Use to change during the term. It is always within the rights of either party to a lease to agree a change and these will be documented by a simple licence to change use. It is possible that the change of use could trigger an uplift in value in which case a premium should be payable to the Council. Considering the recommended use of the land, this is not considered likely. However, this point will be investigated prior to any agreement being finalised.
- 7.5 The recommendations of this report are in line with previous authorities and the prevailing statutory regime.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

- 8.1 The recommendations have no direct impact on the current staffing establishment. Through natural attrition, as tenancies become general housing needs, the staffing resource will move to support Extra Care Housing schemes in the Borough and any future assessed needs would be provided on the same basis as residents living within the wider community.
- 8.2 There are no HR concerns associated with the report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 9.1 The recommendations in this report are inclusive for vulnerable adults within the Borough. There are no implications for children and young people.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 The proposals in this report support the Council to comply with legal obligations encompassed in the:

- Human Rights Act (1998), to treat everyone equally with fairness dignity and respect with a focus on those who are disadvantaged because of disability and Page 12 of 13.
- Equality Act (2010) to legally protect people from discrimination in the wider society.
- Care Act (2014) six core principles guiding the provision of care and support services – empowerment, protection, prevention, proportionality, partnership, and accountability.

10.2 The Equality Analysis provides further detail and is attached at Appendix 2 and Appendix 3.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 A Carbon Impact Assessment has been completed, refer to Appendix 4.

11.2 In summary, the current building is deemed unsafe and therefore the recommendation is the best course of action. Although it is difficult to quantify with any reliability emissions from demolition, this will be a one-time impact. If the building was retained, it would require remedial works to a higher minimum standard and there would be emissions to consider from ongoing use of the building. Whilst any construction related to the future use of the land will have some degree of impact on the climate, the social need to use the land outweighs this. It is therefore concluded that the recommendation will have no significant impact on the climate.

12. Implications for Partners

12.1 The Council continues a positive working partnership with Together Housing. There are no implications on wider partners.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 There is a risk that funding secured by Together Housing to demolish the Resource Centre will not be carried forward to the next financial year and the building would become derelict. The timescale for approval allows sufficient time for works to start in this financial year and therefore mitigates the risk.

13.2 There is a risk of anti-social behaviour on the site until the Resource Centre is demolished. This is being mitigated through Together Housing monitoring the site. As part of the consultation, Together Housing confirmed to tenants that there will be security presence on the site out of hours, for the duration of the demolition works. The housing association will inform tenants of the arrangements as part of the communications about the demolition programme.

14. Accountable Officers

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Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers:

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	John Edwards	22/09/25
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	18/09/25
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	18/09/25

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