



Friends of  
West Ham Park



Friends of West Ham Park  
Plant Nursery Site – Update Meeting  
7.30pm Thursday 29 February 2024



# About Friends of West Ham Park

- ▶ The Friends of West Ham Park are a group of local residents who love and use the park regularly.
- ▶ We are independent of the park management and ownership.
- ▶ We were formed to help the local community gain the most benefit from the park through increased involvement in activities and making people aware of nature on their doorstep.

- ▶ We undertake voluntary activities including:

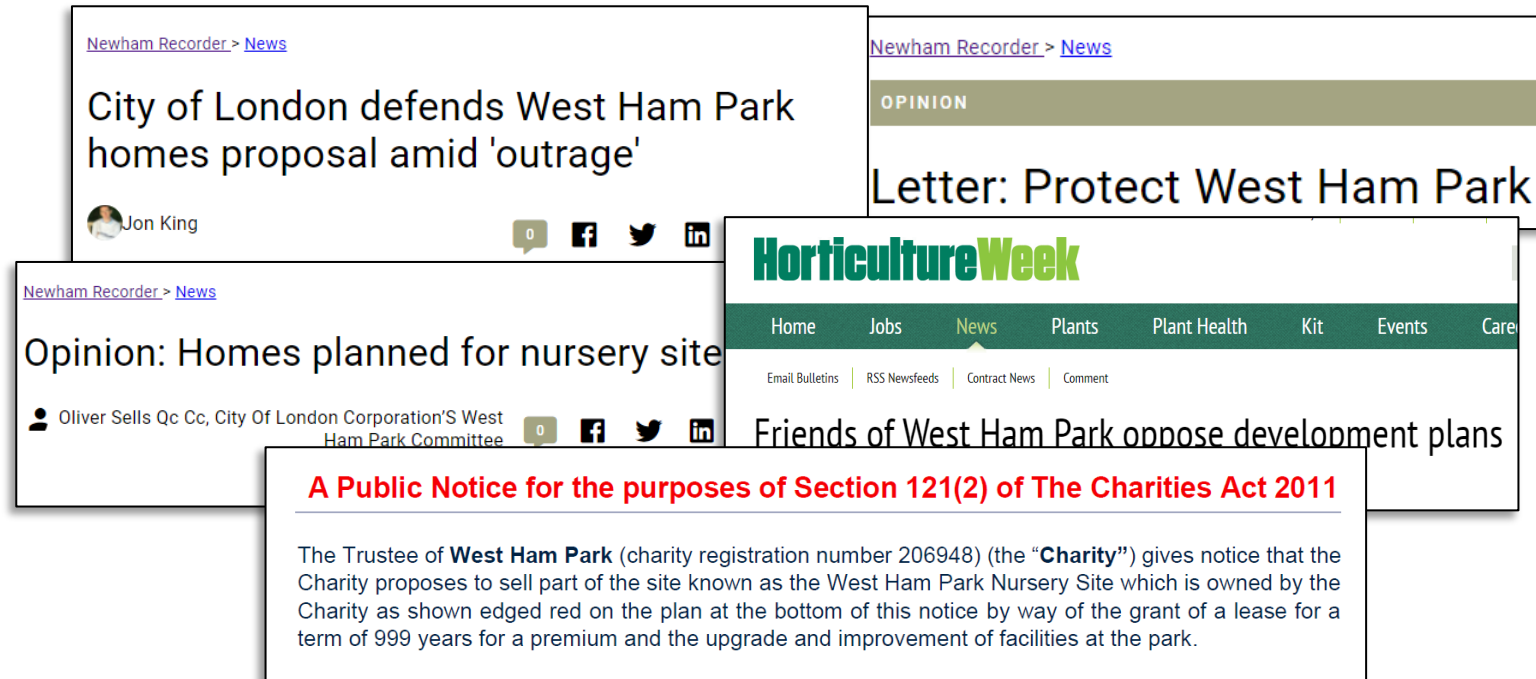
- ▶ Bat walks
- ▶ Litter picking
- ▶ Leaf pile
- ▶ Park in the dark
- ▶ Vegetable garden



**Park  
in the Dark**

- ▶ Anyone can join, there is no cost, and we welcome new members.

# Purpose of Meeting – Inform, Listen & Respond



The collage features several overlapping screenshots. At the top left, a news article from 'Newham Recorder' is titled 'City of London defends West Ham Park homes proposal amid 'outrage'' by Jon King. To its right is another article titled 'Letter: Protect West Ham Park'. Below these is a screenshot of the 'HorticultureWeek' website with a navigation menu (Home, Jobs, News, Plants, Plant Health, Kit, Events, Care) and a sub-menu (Email Bulletins, RSS Newsfeeds, Contract News, Comment). A central article on the website is titled 'Friends of West Ham Park oppose development plans' by Oliver Sells Qc Cc, City Of London Corporation'S West Ham Park Committee. At the bottom center is a public notice titled 'A Public Notice for the purposes of Section 121(2) of The Charities Act 2011'.

**A Public Notice for the purposes of Section 121(2) of The Charities Act 2011**

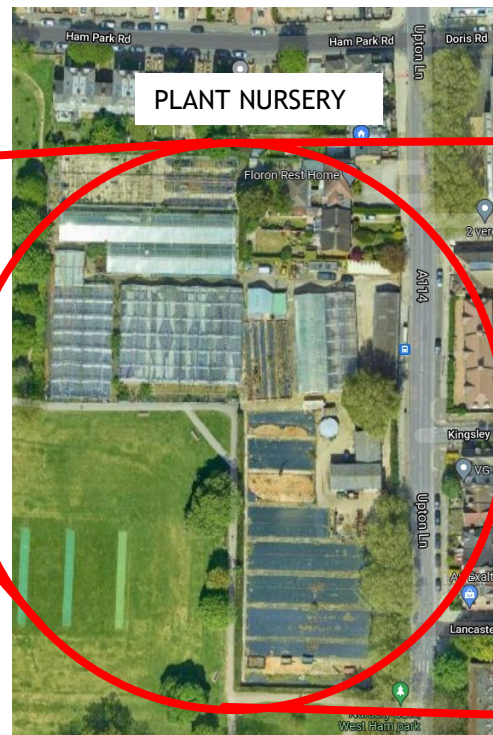
The Trustee of **West Ham Park** (charity registration number 206948) (the “**Charity**”) gives notice that the Charity proposes to sell part of the site known as the West Ham Park Nursery Site which is owned by the Charity as shown edged red on the plan at the bottom of this notice by way of the grant of a lease for a term of 999 years for a premium and the upgrade and improvement of facilities at the park.

- ▶ **INFORM** you of the details of the proposed residential flats development of the plant nursery within West Ham Park - as we best understand it.
- ▶ **LISTEN** to what you think.
- ▶ **RESPOND** in a thought-out, coordinated manner to maximise affect.

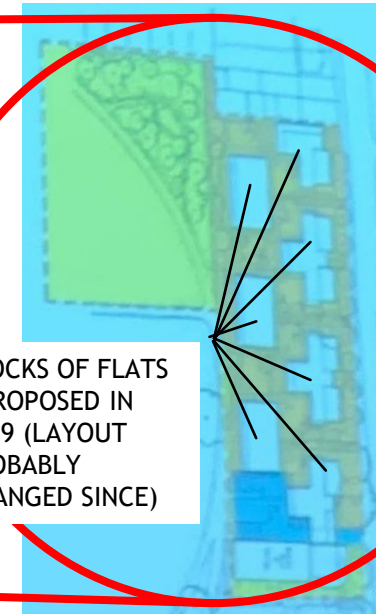
# Overview



Friends of  
West Ham Park



Source: 2019 Corporation of  
London Public Meeting 19 Dec 19



- ▶ Substantial plant nursery and greenhouse area.
- ▶ Previously supplied plants for use by the City of London.
- ▶ Shut down several years ago as it was deemed by the Corporation of London to be no longer economically viable.
- ▶ Sits within Grade 2 listed park.
- ▶ Plan of Corporation of London to develop approximately half of the nursery into large residential blocks of flats. Process to develop commenced in 2019.



# Previously - Public Notice, Preferred Developer & Local Plan

## A Public Notice for the purposes of Section 121(2) of The Charities Act 2011

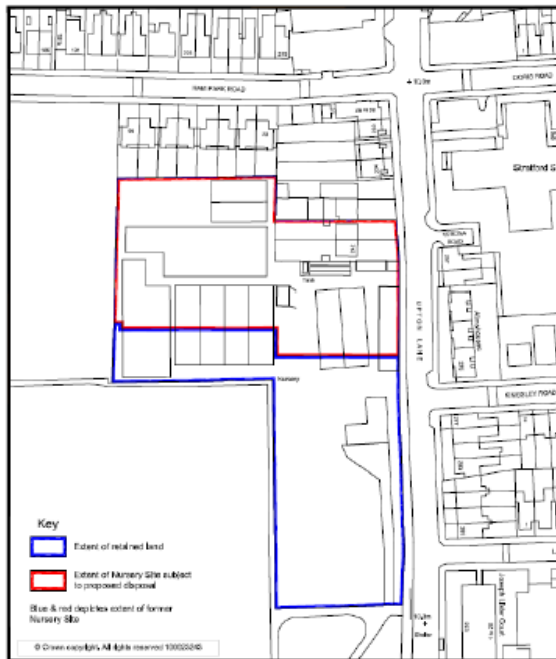
The Trustee of West Ham Park (charity registration number 206948) (the "Charity") gives notice that the Charity proposes to sell part of the site known as the West Ham Park Nursery Site which is owned by the Charity as shown edged red on the plan at the bottom of this notice by way of the grant of a lease for a term of 999 years for a premium and the upgrade and improvement of facilities at the park.

The Trustee of the Charity has marketed the property using national marketing with an advertisement in the Estates Gazette published on the 10<sup>th</sup> July 2021 and otherwise marketed the Property in line with advice from its appointed agent (Savills).

Any representations or comments in relation to the proposed transaction should be sent for consideration to the following address by no later than 16<sup>th</sup> April 2022 for:

The Trustee of West Ham Park c/o Savills, 33 Margaret Street, London, W1G 0JD For the attention of Alex Soskin (alex.soskin@savills.com) and Hugh Bushell (hbushell@savills.com).

Dated: 16<sup>th</sup> March 2022



## Q1 2022 - Public Notice at the entrance of the Park and in the Newham Recorder.

- ▶ What it told us - that the red area is in effect for sale (999 year lease) and going through Charity Act procedure to affect this.
- ▶ What it did not say is - what land will be used for, how will it benefit the Park and what happens with the blue area of the nursery site.
- ▶ Many objections (and we believe not a single supportive one) from local residents, politicians and conservation organizations.

## Q1 2023 - Preferred Bidder Selected?

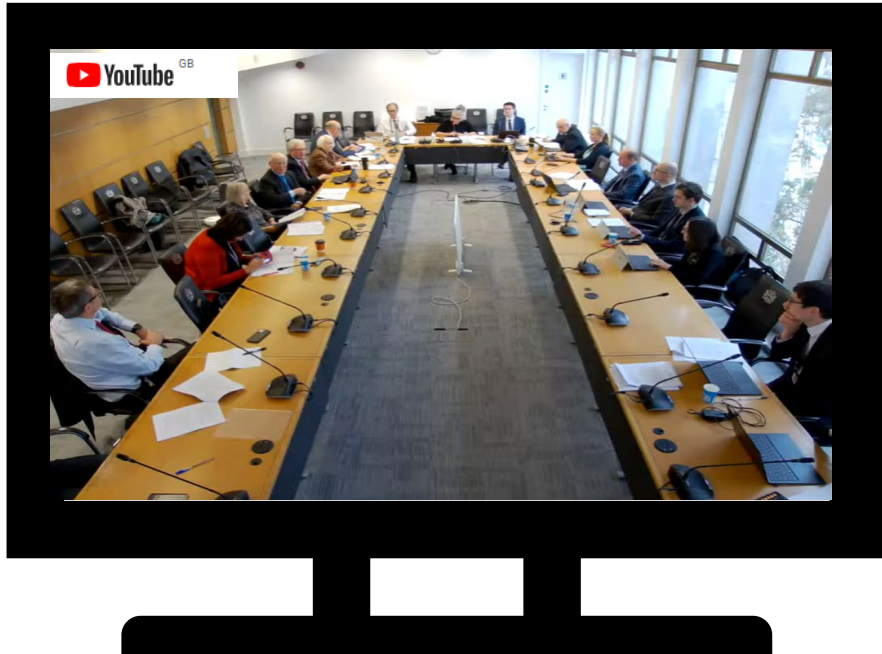
- ▶ Believed that a preferred developer, Cala, had been selected and negotiations on possible sale (which are likely to be dependent on planning permission) were ongoing.
- ▶ Cala is one of the UK's largest house builders. Owned 100% by Legal and General, which is a very large financial services and asset management group.



## Q1 2023 - Newham Local Plan

- ▶ A "Local Plan" document is prepared every few years which sets out the Council's views on a range of different local issues, including planning, and how it intends to base its future policy, decisions and efforts.
- ▶ A new Local Plan was undergoing public consultation in. Unfortunately, on close inspection the Nursery Site was highlighted as an area for potential housing rather than parkland. Asked Friends to object in the consultation to the categorization of the nursery site.
- ▶ No new Local Plan published yet as at February 24.

# West Ham Park Committee – 4 December 2023



<https://www.youtube.com/live/NheAqCFoOWE?feature=shared>

- ▶ Listen from 7:05 on update on nursery site.

- ▶ First open discussion of issues around the nursery site.
- ▶ Public consultation in early 2024 “...seek views on what would be an acceptable and viable redevelopment...”. Appears to be consultation with no choices! Part of the site has to be developed for residential not returned to park.
- ▶ Oliver Sells KC (former Chair of West Ham Park Committee) “...everyone knows that we have taken a decision to develop part of this site for housing...and that we are going to proceed on that basis and no other basis...”
- ▶ Newham Council have been consulted on planning. The Council appear to regard the proposal as a potential loss of open space. The Council have concerns on heritage issues and have referred the Park to Historic England.
- ▶ Public opposition from non-City member of the Committee on plans to develop the site.
- ▶ Finding a new developer – has Cala walked away?
- ▶ Reconfirmed approach in February 24 Committee documents (Video not yet available)
- ▶ Appears that progress on development has slowed but intent to develop is retained.



# Next Step of Campaign

- ▶ We appear to have made some progress but we have definitely not won.
- ▶ We are continuing to work very closely with several leading conservation campaign groups – specifically Campaign for Protection of Rural England (London Branch). Plan for our campaign:
  - ▶ Thought out campaign.
  - ▶ Co-ordinated campaign.
  - ▶ To maximise effect of campaign.
- ▶ **BIG ASK**: Proposed next steps of the campaign in this order:
  1. Objection to Newham Council through letter to Mayor of Newham. We will circulate a proforma letter as soon as possible.
  2. Detail potential alternative uses with considered funding options.

# Suggested Alternative Uses?

Restore parkland



Craft village



Allotments



Tiny forests





# Your Views and Q&A





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# Appendix





# Misconceptions / Fake News?

**“The nursery site is not part of West Ham Park.”**



**INCORRECT**

The nursery site sits within the park based on the official HM Land Registry deeds and Historic England's Grade II register, where the nursery site is specifically mentioned.

**“The nursery site has never been open to the public.”**



**INCORRECT**

The nursery site has approximately trebled in the 20<sup>th</sup> century primarily expanding into previously publicly accessible parkland based on official Ordnance Survey maps.

**“The nursery site is a brownfield site.”**



**INCORRECT**

The nursery site is not a registered brownfield site according to the official Newham Brownfield Register.



# Need for Housing in Newham

- ▶ Clearly a need for more housing in Newham.
- ▶ However, should it be at the expense of parkland?
  - ▶ Newham has the lowest proportion of public open space per person in London. This situation has been highlighted during the pandemic.
  - ▶ Busiest corner of park that being developed.
  - ▶ Affordable / social housing does not appear to be part of the plan.
  - ▶ Once parkland is developed it is lost forever.

# History of the Park



Kitchen garden of Ham  
House now nursery site

Map 1869



Cedar House residence of Elizabeth  
Fry, Victorian social reformer, now  
Territorial Army base

Ham House now part of  
Ornamental Garden

- ▶ West Ham Park is a 77-acre Grade 2 listed green oasis in East London.
- ▶ Previously the private park for Ham House which was owned by the Gurney family who founded a bank which was later merged into Barclays.
- ▶ The Park was purchased, at a below market price, in 1874 from John Gurney provided that it was to be held on trust forever:  
*“...as open public grounds and gardens for the resort and recreation of adults and as playgrounds for children and youth”*
- ▶ A significant portion of the monies to purchase the Park was raised from local public donations.
- ▶ The West Ham Park Charity is constituted as a charitable trust with the City of London Corporation as the corporate trustee.

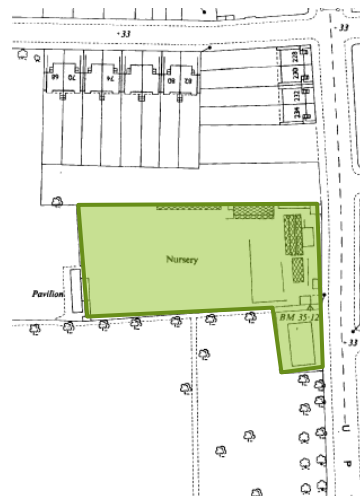


# History of the Nursery Site

- ▶ Although public do not currently have access the site has never been developed and remains as green open space comprising plant beds, greenhouses and sheds.
- ▶ Approximately trebled in size over the 20<sup>th</sup> Century most significantly to the South. Most of the additional areas consumed into the Nursery appear to have had full public access previously.
- ▶ Always part of the Park and is within the boundaries of the Park as recorded at the HM Land Registry and is included within the areas subject to the Grade 2 listing at Historic England.
- ▶ Corporation of London has not maintained the site for the last 9 years allowing it to become derelict and dangerous possibly to strengthen their position that it is a problem site that needs development.



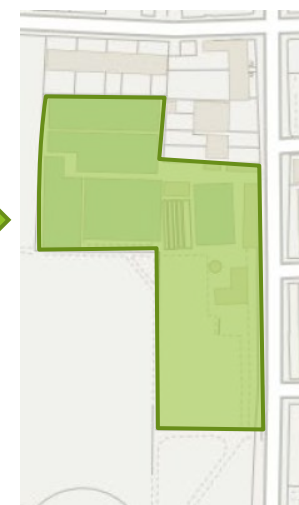
1919



1950



1971



Current



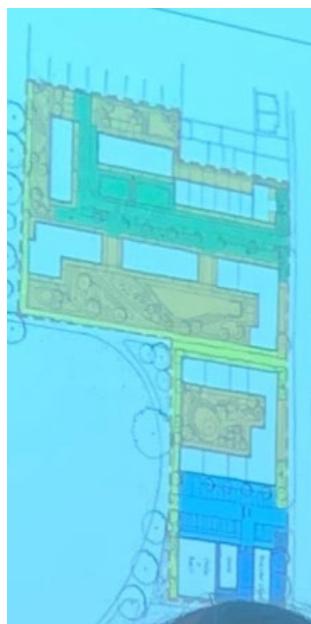
# Proposed Development *as presented in 2019*

- ▶ After significant pressure from Friends of West Ham Park members and other stakeholders the Corporation of London revealed their already selected plan for the nursery site in a public meeting on 11 December 2019.
- ▶ Three options had already been considered and decided on by the Corporation of London:
  - ▶ Return to parkland
  - ▶ High density – all residential blocks of flats
  - ▶ Medium density – approx. half parkland / half residential blocks of flats – **SELECTED OPTION IN 2019**
- ▶ Due to Public Notice made in March 2022 it is now unclear what their plans are.

Return to parkland



“High” density

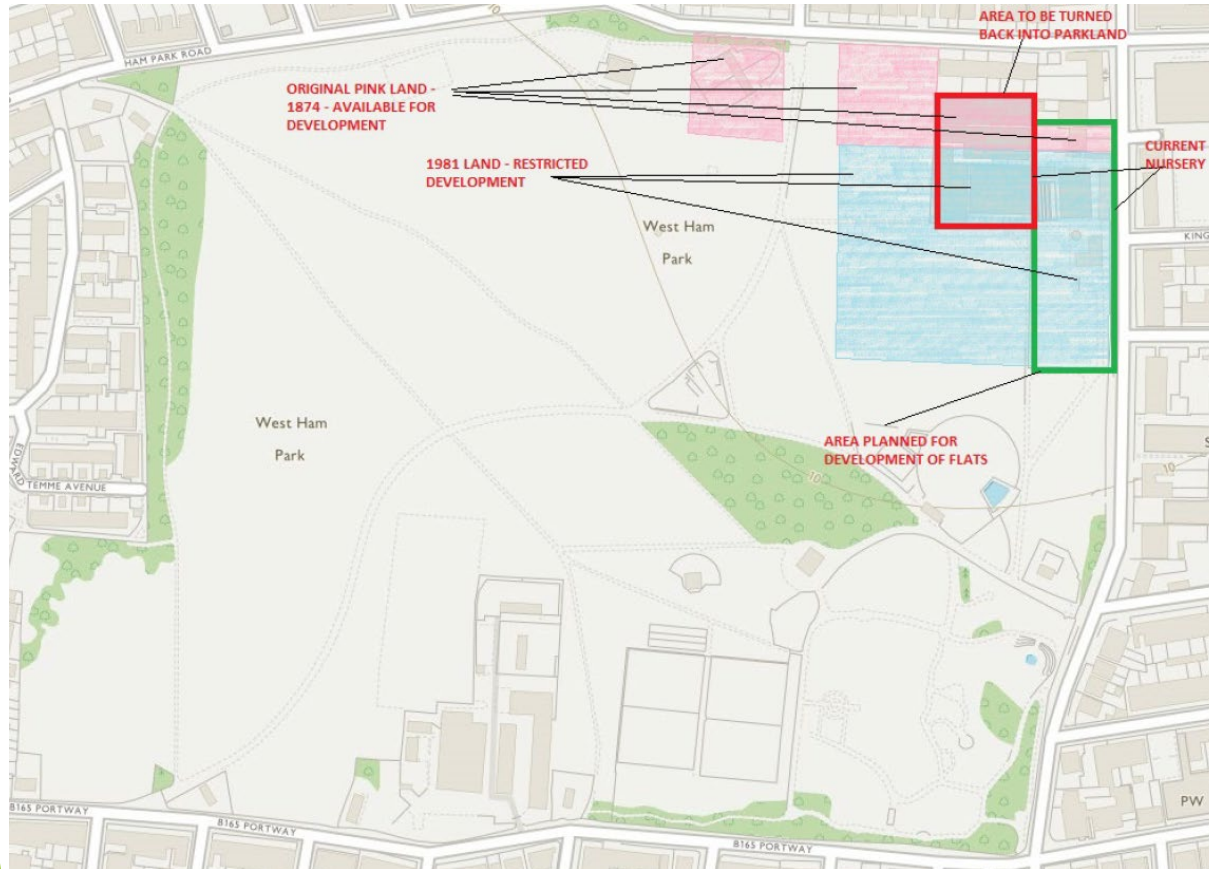


“Medium” density



**Selected option as presented by Corporation of London in 2019. Exact development plan, as indicated by area proposed for sale, likely to have been amended since.**

# Charity Commission Governance



- ▶ West Ham Park Charity governed by two primary documents.
  - ▶ 1874 Indenture – original charity document
  - ▶ 1981 Scheme – amendment of original charity document
- ▶ Pink areas defined in 1874 Indenture potentially allows development of buildings. Some areas previously pink in the North-East were developed in c.1880's.
- ▶ Blue areas defined in 1981 Scheme to regularize the incorrect use of parkland as a non-public nursery site.
- ▶ Blue areas "...used as land whereon the Trustee of the Charity may effect developments, as in its discretion it considers would **enhance the enjoyment of the Park...by the beneficiaries...such as nurseries and glasshouse**"
- ▶ Through correspondence with the Charity Commission, it appears it has accepted the Corporation of London view, allowing the development to progress to the next stage as:
  - ▶ "...enhance the enjoyment..." can mean via an indirect manner by generating income that then can be used to provide enhancement.
  - ▶ Appears to have been accepted without any commitment to maintain current funding. Giving the opportunity to over time to reduce funding from the Corporation of London.
  - ▶ Definition that "...nurseries and greenhouses..." can be also be extended to residential housing.
  - ▶ These decisions by the Charity Commission may have inadvertently opened large additional areas of parkland to development.
- ▶ We have and will continue to object to the Charity Commission's incomprehensible interpretation of the documents.



# February 2024 Committee – Consultation Timeline



## Appendix 1 – Timeline for community engagement activities

Engagement Stage	Summary of task
Stage 1: February 2024 Setting up engagement	Plan and prepare stakeholder mapping and engagement strategy. Update communications plan: agree activities, update visual identity for visual and physical activities, update website; prepare for on ground engagement.
	<b>Work Item</b>
	Update and refresh stakeholder mapping
	Prepare engagement plan, communications plan and write key messages
	Update artwork and graphics for digital engagement and key messaging
	Finalise artwork and graphics for in-person engagement (including pop-up set up)
	Agree email contact and conversation framework (questions and points of clarification); liaise with communications team
<b>Engagement Stage</b>	<b>Summary of task</b>
Stage 2: March -July 2024	Deliver pop-ups and tag-ons and engagement to reach a wide audience; monitor and address any gaps in reach; run digital promotion and idea collection; regular analysis and write up of findings; initial activities to reach 'hidden' groups.
	<b>Work Item</b>
	Write to specific stakeholders and introduce project and approach
	One to ones with stakeholder groups and plan tag on activities
	Deliver 5 pop ups
	Deliver 5 tag on activities (focus on harder to reach groups identified through stakeholder mapping)
	Explore feasibility of a Young Designers Programme/activity to engage young people.
	Launch and promote digital engagement
	Analyse and write feedback summary
	Weekly meeting between consultant and officers to share findings and effective reach of the engagement.
	Prepare interim report (7 June 2024)
<b>Engagement Stage</b>	<b>Summary of task</b>
Stage 3: July - September 2024	Prepare and deliver open access sharing exhibition; ensure broad reach; write up and submit final report.
	<b>Work Item</b>
	Finalise content for July drop-ins
	Produce materials for July drop-ins
	Arrange wrap-around activities and partner activities for July exhibitions
	Open exhibitions and wrap-around activities
	Produce initial summary report following July activities
	Complete final report (13 September 2024)