

Planning Statement – 77 Kennelwood Avenue

Purpose of the Building – Community Information Hub

The proposed venue will be used as a **community-led information hub** designed to connect residents of **Northwood** with local services, support, and opportunities. The hub will serve as a **welcoming and inclusive space** where individuals and families can access relevant information, receive advice, and engage with a range of support networks.

Day-to-day activities at the hub will include a structured programme of access to key local agencies and services. This will encompass:

- **Peer support sessions** for families and individuals, including those related to **Special Educational Needs (SEN)**.
- **Welfare advice clinics**, delivered in partnership with specialist providers.
- **Health-focused drop-ins**, supported by organisations such as **Mersey Care, Knowsley Public Health team** and the **Cancer Alliance**.
- Access to the area's **Social Prescribing offer**, helping people find community-based solutions to health and wellbeing needs.
- Opportunities to engage with the **Family Connector** service, offering tailored local family support.

The hub will also provide **practical assistance** through partnerships with organisations such as **Centre 63, Northwood Together, Northwood Chapel**, and the **TANGO charity shop**.

Support will include access to **school uniform provision, food support**, and wider community resources.

The overall aim is to create a **central point of connection** for the Northwood community — improving access to services, enhancing community cohesion, and fostering a sense of support and belonging. This is supportive of the aims of the Council Plan in that it supports residents to take control of their own health and wellbeing, increasing accountability and supporting each other. By using a vacant council building an opportunity is given to utilise an asset to reduce health inequalities in the borough's most deprived ward.

The Local Authority, in partnership with the community and the place-based change organisation Right to Succeed, will take the lead in the initial delivery and coordination of the Community Information Hub offer.

This collaborative approach ensures that the hub is shaped by both professional expertise and local insight from the outset.

As part of a long-term sustainability plan, a community-led organisation is currently being developed and supported through a commissioned coaching and capacity-building programme. It is anticipated that this organisation will take on full operational responsibility for the venue from Year 2 onwards, ensuring the space continues to be community-owned, community-driven, and responsive to local needs.

Management Plan

The hub will be staffed by local residents co-ordinating and managing the above described activities as well as an informal drop in. This offer is complimentary to other units on this parade – primarily the TANGO community charity shop which is also run by local residents. The expectation is that these 2 units will support and signpost to each other. The neighbouring Post Office attracts regular customers meaning that the footfall from local residents will be reasonably high. The opening of the hub is also expected to boost customer numbers for the other units on the parade.

This hub is a pilot and as yet the exact opening hours are unknown. The Your Northwood community group who will lead this project have been allowed the space and time to develop and grow the hub in accordance with the local need and demand. However, once at full capacity it is expected that the unit will be open within the hours of 9am – 5pm, at least 5 days a week (including hours at the weekends to increase accessibility). There will be at least one volunteer on site during all opening times as well as staff from other organisations when appropriate (ie during specific drop in clinics – Citizens Advice, health services, Family Connectors). Within the Your Northwood group there will be an identified key holder and a caretaker role. Two members of the group live on Kennelwood Avenue (next to the shopping parade) and will be able to check on the building when closed.

The number of visitors is currently not known as this is a pilot but it is not expected to hugely increase the regular footfall attracted by this parade.

Access, Transport, and Parking Considerations

The Community Information Hub is intended primarily for use by **local residents** from the Northwood area and will also be staffed by local residents. Given the **significant levels of social and economic deprivation** within the target population, it is anticipated that many users will have **limited or no access to private vehicles**.

As such, the project is intentionally designed to **prioritise active and sustainable travel**, including **walking, wheeling (wheelchair use), and public transport**. The venue's central location and proximity to local bus routes support this approach, and as a result, we **do not anticipate a significant increase in vehicle traffic or demand for on-site parking**.

There is a small-covered area at the front of the shop behind railings which can be used for prams, wheelchairs and/ or mobility scooters if necessary. There is also a private courtyard

at the back which can be used for cycle storage if needed, therefore not blocking the main pedestrian area to the front of the shops.

Where necessary staff members visiting the hub can use the parking space to the rear of the shops accessed via the gated entrance. (key will be held within the hub)