

Report of Jill Wildman, Chief Officer, Housing Leeds

Report to the Director of Environment and Housing

Date: 20 January 2016

Subject: Rehousing of tenants from Bennett Court and Union Court, Otley

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Otley and Yeadon and Adel and Wharfedale	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. At a meeting between the Director of Environment and Housing, the Executive Member and local ward members in November 2014 a commitment was made to carry out investment in remodelling Bennett Court and Union Court Sheltered Schemes in Otley, which currently have a number of units with shared bathing facilities and a large number of properties are not of 'decency' standard.
2. Due to the intrusive nature and scale of the works approved, tenants will be unable to remain in their own home.
3. This report seeks approval for the temporary suspension of lettings to Bennett Court and Union Court Sheltered Schemes, Otley until works are completed at both schemes and the temporary suspension of lettings at Myers Croft, Lea Croft, Whiteley Croft, Weston Drive, Adams Croft and Linfoot Court, all in Otley, to assist with the decanting of tenants during the major works.
4. The report also presents the opportunity to utilise fully refurbished properties at Farrar Lane, Cookridge and Wharfedale Court Annex, Pool in Wharfedale by also suspending lettings at these properties.
5. Ward Member and Tenant consultation has shown support for the refurbishment works and a plan has been put in place to fully support tenants during the process.

Recommendations

6. To approve the temporary suspension of lettings at both Bennett Court and Union Court Sheltered Schemes, Otley until works are completed at both schemes.
7. To approve the temporary rehousing of tenants from both schemes who will be directly affected by refurbishment and remodelling works.
8. To approve the temporary suspension of lettings at Myers Croft, Lea Croft, Whiteley Croft, Weston Drive, Adams Croft and Linfoot Court, all in Otley, Wharfedale Court Annex in Pool in Wharfedale and Farrar Lane in Cookridge to assist with the decanting of tenants during the major works. With provision for any urgent/priority sheltered housing applications for the Otley area, for applicants not from Bennett Court, to be managed through a Direct Let.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The reports sets out proposals to extensively remodel and refurbish Bennett Court and Union Court Sheltered Schemes in Otley, which currently have a number of units with shared bathing facilities and a large number of properties are not of 'decency' standard.
- 1.2 The report seeks approval to suspend lettings to these and a number of other sheltered properties within Otley to allow for temporary decanting of tenants. The report also presents the opportunity to utilise fully refurbished properties at Farrar Lane, Cookridge and Wharfedale Court, Pool in Wharfedale.

2 Background information

- 2.1 Following the transfer of the housing service back into the Council in 2013 there was a need to consolidate the strategic thinking, and investment strategy, for delivering an older peoples housing service across the City. The strategy sought to identify a consistent approach to ensure that our ongoing investment strategy was based on need rather than geography.
- 2.2 An Older Persons Project Board has been established within Housing Leeds to ensure that a holistic strategy within that is linked to the city wide strategy that is being developed within Adult Social Care, and links into the Older Peoples Housing Prospectus. The Older People's Housing Prospectus, identifies the need to ensure that older persons housing is the right type and in the right location to allow individuals and families to live independently for longer. The principles of this prospectus will be replicated in the provision of social housing across the City.
- 2.3 In 2014 a strategic option appraisal of older people's Council housing provision was commissioned to look at long term sustainability and investment requirements. This work identified that a more detailed analysis needed to be undertaken for schemes that had shared bathing facilities, or bedsit accommodation.
- 2.4 Housing Leeds Business Plan sets out a commitment to improve the sheltered stock across the city as it is recognised that the standard that has been offered to both current and new tenants is below modern standards and undermines longer term sustainability by becoming unattractive and not fit for purpose. The first priority has been to eradicate the use of shared bathing facilities.
- 2.5 Housing Leeds has set aside a budget of £11.1m to spend on sheltered remodelling up to 2021. While proposals have been developed and work planned for some schemes, it is important that remodelling is prioritised in areas where there is clear evidence of demand for sheltered housing provision.
- 2.6 Plans have therefore been developed for Bennett Court, Otley and are being developed for Union Court, Otley which will create facilities that are modern, fit for purpose, allow tenants dignity and will increase sustainability of the stock.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 Scheme Details

3.1.1 **Bennett Court** is a sheltered housing complex, made up of 18 flats and 23 bedsits with shared bathing facilities. The Scheme also includes two stand-alone annexes comprising of 14 self-contained units, 2 of which are bedsits. Lettings have been suspended on the bedsits for a number of years and only 11 of the bedsits in the main building are currently occupied. The scheme also does not have lift access to the upper floors (both in the main building and annexes) and is in need of other major refurbishment, e.g. electrics, heating, fire precautionary measures, decency works. There is also a 3 bedroom 'Ex Warden's' property with its only access directly into the scheme. This is let as a 'general needs' property. Works to this property have been included within the scope of proposed work including amending access so it is not directly from the scheme.

3.1.2 **Union Court** is a 3 storey sheltered complex in Otley. It is made up of 16 flats and 24 bedsits with shared bathing facilities. Lettings have been suspended on the bedsits for a number of years and only 12 of the bedsits are currently occupied. The scheme also does not have lift access to the upper floors and requires some fire safety precaution work, electrics and decency works. There is also a 3 bedroom 'Ex Warden's' property with its only access directly into the scheme. This is currently used as an Office by the local Sheltered Support Officers. There is potential for access to be altered to the outside of the scheme, and for the property to be re-let, however the property would not convert into two self-contained flats with access to the scheme.

3.2 Option Appraisal / Proposal

At a meeting between the Director of Environment and Housing, the Executive Member and local ward members in November 2014 a commitment was made to carry out investment in remodelling Bennett Court and Union Court.

3.2.1 Bennett Court - Plans have therefore been developed, to include the following:

- Full refurbishment of the existing main buildings to omit all bedsits and form a level access corridor at 1st floor level including demolitions, new partitions, external walls, floors and roof to extensions, wall, floor and ceiling decorations, kitchens, wet rooms, rewires, heating upgrades and two new platform lifts. This will result in a total of 28 x 1 bed and 2 x 2 bed properties within the main building.
- New individual utility meters to flats.
- Full decency work to remaining existing flats, both within the main block and the annexes, including kitchens, bathrooms, rewires and heating upgrades.
- Refurbishment of all communal works including reconfiguration of the existing communal lounge area.
- New heating and ventilation plant.
- Isolated repairs to the existing roof and external walls
- Formation of a scooter store.
- Enhancements to main entrance
- The two bedsits in the annex cannot be reconfigured as there is one on each floor. These both have self-contained bathing facilities.

3.2.2 Union Court – Plans have not yet been developed for Union Court but it is likely that similar works will be required as for Bennett Court. It is possible to carry out remodelling of the bedsits, as most bedsits are adjacent to each other and could

be knocked through to create self-contained flats. Early indications suggest that the remodelling will result in the 24 existing bedsits being replaced with 4 x 2 bedroom flats and 12 x 1 bedroom flats achieved by also utilising obsolete communal space, plus the 16 existing 1 bedroom flats.

3.3 Phasing and Timescales

For Bennett Court, it is intended to undertake works to the right hand side of the building in Phase 1 followed by the left hand side of the building in Phase 2. To facilitate this, isolation valves would need to be installed to allow adaptations to the hot water and heating system whilst maintaining supply to the occupied wing of the building.

3.3.1 Works are proposed to commence at Bennett Court in April 2016.

3.3.2 Both Phases 1 and 2 are expected take 6 months each.

3.3.3 Completion is therefore anticipated at Bennett Court in spring 2017.

3.3.4 Work is anticipated to start at Union Court in spring 2017, again the work is likely to be phased.

3.3.5 Mears have been appointed to undertake the works at Bennett Court.

3.4 Decanting/rehousing of tenants during major works

Initial checks suggest that due to the intrusive nature and scale of the works proposed that 26 decant properties would be required during Phase 1 improvements at Bennett Court and a further 16 during Phase 2 works (although there will be 5 vacant refurbished flats following Phase 1 works), as tenants will be unable to remain in their own home.

3.4.1 Potential decants have not yet been determined for Union Court but as the works will be similar to Bennett Court tenants will not be able to remain in their properties during the works.

3.4.2 Over the past 12 months there have only been 20 vacant sheltered properties in Otley. 7 of these have been at Bennett Court and 3 at Union Court.

3.4.3 An open consultation event for tenants and their families/carers, individual meetings took place at Bennett Court on 14 January 2016, with 26 tenants in attendance. Another tenant was seen in her flat immediately after the meeting and a further 3 have been in contact and advised of the proposals by phone. This is now being followed with individual meetings to each tenant to determine any medical needs and other requirements which may be required as part of the rehousing such as space for a mobility scooter.

3.4.4 Existing vacant properties have been identified as follows:

- 8 x 1 bedroom flats at Farrar Lane, Cookridge – a newly refurbished sheltered scheme with excellent communal facilities, including a mobility scooter park, and all flats with wet floor shower rooms. Tenant activity is strong with regular lunches, gardening and the support of an Older People's Action in the Locality

Group based on the doorstep. The scheme is situated 7.1 miles from Bennett Court.

- Wharfedale Court annex, Pool in Wharfedale – work will be completed in May 2016 on the refurbishment of 4 x 1 bedroom flats within the grounds of Wharfedale Court sheltered scheme. The two upper floor flats will not have lift access. Tenants would have full access to all facilities within Wharfedale Court, including a communal lounge and laundry. There is a very active community network with many social activities and an inspirational gardening club. The Scheme is situated 4 miles from Bennett Court.

- 3.4.5 Where tenants from either Bennett Court or Union Court do not wish to return to the scheme from their decant property then Housing Leeds will work with them to facilitate the request.
- 3.4.6 In addition to Farrar Lane and Wharfedale Court there are also 4 vacant bedsits at Bennett Court and 12 vacant bedsits at Union Court. With minimal works to these, they would be deemed appropriate for decanting tenants currently at Bennett Court.
- 3.4.7 Consultation took place with tenants at Union Court on 19 January 2016 to advise them of the plans to use the empty bedsits at Union Court for decant properties and to advise that major improvement works will commence at Union Court in late spring/early summer 2017. Both the use of the empty bedsits for temporary accommodation for tenants from Bennett Court and the refurbishment work was welcomed.
- 3.4.8 In view of the number of decant properties that will be required approval is also sought to suspend lettings at Myers Croft, Lea Croft, Whiteley Croft, Weston Drive, Adams Croft and Linfoot Court, all Sheltered housing in Otley.
- 3.4.9 Through the above options listed in 3.4.4 to 3.4.8 it is anticipated that all tenants in Phase 1 could be rehoused by late April 2016.
- 3.4.10 All tenants would be provided with full support during their move both to the decant property and on return from the decant property. This support will include removal costs, assisting with packing and decorating, if necessary. Budget provision of £100k has been included within the Capital programme to cover this cost at Bennett Court and a further £100k for Union Court.
- 3.4.11 Tenants have been provided with a named Officer who will maintain very close contact with them (and where appropriate families and carers) through each stage of the process. A monthly coffee morning has also been established where Officers can answer queries.
- 3.4.12 All tenants will return to Bennett Court or Union Court following they works they, therefore, will not be entitled to a Statutory Homeless payment.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.2 At a meeting between the Director of Environment and Housing, the Executive Member and local ward members in November 2014 a commitment was made to carry out investment in remodelling Bennett Court and Union Court.
- 4.1.3 Consultation has taken place with Cllr Coupar, Executive Member for Communities, and with local Ward Members in December 2016. All were fully supportive of the proposals and for the considerable improvement the works will make to tenants standard of living.
- 4.1.4 A briefing note has been provided to Greg Mulholland, MP.
- 4.1.5 Consultation with residents, plus families/carers, took place at Bennett Court on 14 January 2016. 26 tenants were in attendance. Whilst tenants very much welcomed the works a small number were understandably concerned about the temporary move. We spoke to these tenants after the meeting to reassure of them of the support we would provide and are now arranging individual meetings with all tenants at Bennett Court to discuss their requirements for a temporary move and the detail of the work to their current property, with families/carers invited to these meetings.
- 4.1.6 The consultation with residents at Union Court took place on 19 January 2016, primarily to explain that tenants will be temporarily moving to Union Court to facilitate the works at Bennett Court but also to advise that major refurbishment will take place at Union Court in late spring/early summer 2017. Tenants both welcomed the refurbishment works and were very supportive of the unused bedsits being brought back into use to temporarily rehouse tenants from Bennett Court.
- 4.1.7 A second open consultation session has been arranged at Bennett Court on 28 January 2016.
- 4.1.8 This will be followed by a monthly coffee morning at Bennett Court to allow tenants the opportunity to ask questions and raise any concerns. Monthly coffee mornings will commence in autumn 2016 with tenants at Union Court.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 The proposed scheme will meet key Leeds City Council equalities priorities. Specifically these will be to:
- Increase a sense of belonging that builds cohesive and harmonious communities
 - Ensure that housing and regeneration investment meets the changing needs of individuals and communities
 - Improve housing conditions and energy efficiency
 - Support adults whose circumstances make them vulnerable to live safe and independent lives

4.3 Council policies and Best Council Plan

4.3.1 The proposals outlined within this report contribute towards the Best Council Plan 2015-20 priorities:

- Delivering the Better Lives programme
- Becoming a more efficient and enterprising council

4.3.2 The proposals also support one of the Council's key breakthrough projects of 'Making Leeds the best place to grow old'.

4.4 Resources and value for money

4.4.1 The estimated costs of refurbishment at Bennett Court are:

Full refurbishment, extensions, decency and annexes	£
Works to omit bedsits/form level corridor at 1st floor level	1,280,000
Decency works to existing flats	505,000
Decency works to annexes	280,000
Additional items to facilitate the works	210,000
TOTAL REFUBISHMENT WORKS	2,275,000

4.4.2 A Housing Advisory Panel bid is also being developed for works to the garden areas at Bennett Court.

4.4.3 While detailed costings are not available for Union Court, if similar assumptions are made to Bennett Court, the estimated cost of the work will be £2.2m.

4.4.4 Both schemes were included within the capital programme approvals for 2015/16, although without a specific budget allocation.

4.4.5 In addition to the costs at 4.4.1, £100k has been included within the Capital Programme to cover disturbance and associated costs at Bennett Court and a further £100k for Union Court.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 The proposals contained within this report are not eligible for call in.

4.5.2 Leeds City Council will be required to assist tenants with their temporary re-housing costs and support to move.

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 If the remodelling and refurbishment does not proceed, the site will continue to deteriorate, with lettings of bedsits continuing to decrease leading to risks relating to housing management issues and environmental conditions.

- 4.6.2 A Risk Register has been developed with the Architect, NPS, and delivery contractor, Mears, for Bennett Court. This is owned by Property and Contracts and discussed and updated at fortnightly meetings. A similar Register will be developed for Union Court.
- 4.6.3 Risks relating to the delivery of the scheme will be managed by Housing Leeds, supported by PPPU.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The Council manages over 4,300 sheltered properties across the City. It is recognised that the standard of accommodation currently being offered to meet the needs of older people in the social housing sector needs to be improved through an investment strategy.
- 5.2 Approximately £11.1m has been earmarked to respond to some significant investment requirements that have been identified following a strategic option appraisal of older peoples housing.
- 5.3 The existing buildings at Bennett Court and Union Court, Otley are not fit for purpose. Investment in both schemes will provide modernised, self-contained homes that will meet the needs of older people and fits with the Adult Social Care strategy and the Older People's Housing Prospectus principles.
- 5.4 Ward Members and tenants at both schemes are very supportive of the planned major refurbishment.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 To approve the temporary suspension of lettings at both Bennett Court and Union Court Sheltered Schemes, Otley until works are completed at both schemes.
- 6.2 To approve the temporary rehousing of tenants at both schemes who will be directly affected by refurbishment and remodelling works.
- 6.3 To approve the temporary suspension of lettings at Myers Croft, Lea Croft, Whiteley Croft, Weston Drive, Adams Croft and Linfoot Court, all in Otley, Wharfedale Court Annex in Pool in Wharfedale and Farrar Lane in Cookridge to assist with the decanting of tenants during the major works. With provision for any urgent/priority sheltered housing applications for the Otley area, for applicants not from Bennett Court, to be managed through a Direct Let.

7 Background documents¹

- 7.1 Sheltered Housing Investment Strategy, Executive Board Report, December 2015

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.