

EXEMPT / CONFIDENTIAL UNDER STANDING ORDER 49 (3)

ITEM FOR: INFORMATION

DISCUSSION

DECISION

REPORT TO: EAST NORTH EAST HOMES LEEDS BOARD

REPORT FROM: TONY BUTLER TECHNICAL SERVICES

SUBJECT: SUSPENSION OF LETTINGS AT STRATFORD COURT

PRESENTED BY: TONY BUTLER

DATE: 24 MAY 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to inform the Board of East North East Homes Leeds (ENEHL) requirement to suspend future lettings at Stratford Court until a decision is made on the future of the sheltered complex.

RECOMMENDATION

That the East North East Homes Board approves the following:

To support the decision to suspend lettings pending a further option appraisal on the future of Stratford Court.

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Board of East North East Homes Leeds (ENEHL) requirement to suspend future lettings at Stratford Court until a decision is made on the future of the sheltered complex

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Stratford Court was built in 1965 and is of traditional brick construction, consisting of 12 cat 2 sheltered units in total (5 one bedroom flats and 7 bedsits). At present there is one void property in this complex. Category 1 sheltered housing is purpose designed for older people; it has an alarm but may have very little other support facilities. Category 2 usually means warden support, a lounge and possible additional facilities but a smaller flat or bungalow than in Category 1.
- 2.2 10 of the 12 units have shared bathing facilities and this has resulted in difficulties in letting these properties when they become void. The refusal rates on these properties are high with the main reason for refusal being the shared bathing facilities.
- 2.3 The demand for this area in general is high, but demand for this type of sheltered housing is low and there is a greater demand for similar sheltered properties at St Augustine's Court (Harehills) and Moorhaven Court (Moortown).
- 2.4 Stratford Court benefits from a Scheme Support Officer and this officer makes daily visits Monday to Friday, to each resident at chosen times throughout the day, this can be anything from 1 to 4 visits in a day. There is a charge of £12.74 per week for the Scheme Support Officer and this charge is covered by housing benefits or by the Housing Revenue Account, if the tenant does not receive housing benefit.

3.0 INFORMATION

- 3.1 There are currently three options for this complex:
- 3.2 Option 1 - Do Nothing

This is not really a viable option for the future of this sheltered complex. The shared bathing facilities are the main issue here; this is the main reason for refusal when offered to prospective tenants. Also the current residents, some of which are wheelchair users, encounter difficulty with shared bathing. Residents are unable to personalise the space and are also not able to store items and therefore have to carry items to and from the bathroom. Residents using the shared bathing need to dress before leaving the bathroom and carrying clothes, bathroom products can cause fatigue and additional mobility issues. This has also been found to hinder independence in some residents. The seven bedsits are too small to have individual shower/ bathing facilities incorporated in to them.

- 3.3 Option 2 - Decant and Refurbish

Decanting residents from sheltered accommodation may take longer than a standard decant, as the residents have medical and care needs. Often with this

type of decant the residents prefer to remain in the decant property and do not want the upheaval of moving back into their property when the works are completed.

The bedsits would need to be remodelled to include bathing facilities and this would mean the loss of three units.

Proposed modernisation from ENEHL are as follows:

- Asbestos Removal
- Refurbishment of internal communal walls and shared areas
- Energy efficiency improvement works
- Installation of private bathing facilities
- Fire prevention works
- Remodelling individual flats by means of moving internal walls

The anticipated cost of the above works is in excess of £500,000

The cost of decanting the tenants is approximately £4000 and this may increase if storage is required by some residents.

3.4 Option 3 - Demolition and New build

Home Loss – there are currently 11 residents at Stratford Court and statutory Home Loss is currently set at £4700 per council property. The total cost for Home Loss therefore is £51,700; this is based on the present number of occupants.

Removals – the costs of removals per property is usually an average of £350, however the costs may be slightly less as the average cost is for a 2/3 bed house. The total cost for removals is approximately £3,850.

Disturbance – again based on an average cost of £500 per property (this is usually significantly less) total cost approximately would be £5,500.

Disturbance costs are the reasonable costs incurred in moving from one property to another, this is refundable subject to the approval from the Council. This includes uplift and refitting of existing carpets, curtains, blinds etc. The cost of removing and refixing a gas or electric cooker, or fire (a qualified GasSafe registered plumber must do this). The cost of disconnection and reinstatement of a telephone. The cost of disconnection and reconnection of a plumbed in washing machine, dishwasher, bathroom shower unit, where these currently exist in the property. The cost of an outside, or loft television aerial and satellite dish where these exist in the current property. Redirection of mail by The Post Office for one month.

Once a property becomes empty they will be fitted with an alarm and the approximate cost of this for all of the units is £11,520 per annum; including the communal areas.

The estimated costs for demolition and associated works is approximately £124,000

At present Unity Homes and Enterprise have expressed a keen interest in developing this land and options are being considered for sheltered, extra care or mix tenure properties. This work will be carried out using Homes and Communities Agency funding. ENEHL will receive 100% nomination rights in the first phase of allocation of the properties when the development has completed.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Capital funding of £500,000 has been incorporated into Capital spend for 2012/13 this scheme will be financed through Leeds City Councils' Sheltered Improvement Fund.

4.2 Cost of proposals – Refurbishment costs are in excess of £500,000

Home Loss, Disturbance and demolition costs are approximately £187,000

4.3 Do nothing – this is not a viable option and funding has been awarded as part of the Leeds City Councils' sheltered improvement fund.

5.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

5.1 ENEHL will see a decrease in the Management Fee (this however will be nominal)

5.2 If refurbishment takes place there will be a loss in revenue from the rent accounts. The scheme support officer would not be required whilst the refurbishment takes place and would need to be offered an alternative site to work from during this time.

5.3 As properties become empty through decanting residents, they may become a target for vandalism and public perception may be affected during this period of decanting residents. Alarms and net curtains will be fitted to all void properties as a preventative measure.

5.4 There would be an impact on business performance – the number of long term void properties would increase. As there is no timescale at present for a further decision to be made then the properties cannot be taken out of charge without a further report. Leeds City Council are currently undertaking a full Option Appraisal on the future of Stratford Court, and this will be made available to ENEHL Board.

5.5 If demolition and development of the site occurs through Unity or another developer then the risk would transfer to them. They would also be responsible for future repairs and maintenance long term.

6.0 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

6.1 There are no implications with regards to equality, diversity and human rights

7.0 HEALTH AND SAFETY

7.1 There are no implications with regards to health and safety.

8.0 VALUE FOR MONEY

8.1 To make use of the funding available through Leeds City Councils' Sheltered Housing Fund for 2012/13.

9.0 ACCESS AND CUSTOMER CARE

9.1 Refurbishment or redevelopment would increase customer satisfaction these properties would no longer be difficult to let.

10.0 RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT

10.1 There is no formal group representing Stratford Court, however, the sheltered scheme holds monthly coffee mornings as an informal medium. These take place the first Tuesday of each month starting at 10.30am.

10.2 As the information contained in this report is confidential at present then no public consultation has been performed at this stage. Therefore at this time the Inner North East Area Panel are not currently aware of any proposals at this stage.

11.0 RECOMMENDATION

11.1 That the East North East Homes Board approves the following:

To support the decision to suspend lettings pending a further option appraisal on the future of Stratford Court.