

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Cabinet **DATE:** 22nd January 2018

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WARD(S): Central

PORTFOLIO: Cabinet Member for Corporate Finance & Housing, Cllr Nazir

PART I KEY DECISION

UPDATE ON TOWER & ASHBOURNE HOUSES

1 Purpose of Report

To provide Cabinet with an update in respect of Tower House & Ashbourne House regarding:

- The rehousing of tenants
- Buybacks of leasehold properties
- Progression to Planning Application stage

2 Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

The Cabinet is requested to resolve:

- (a) That Tower House and Ashbourne Houses be demolished;
- (b) That the allocation of funds of £1.57m in the 2018/19 HRA capital programme to this project be approved in addition to the underspend (estimated £2.68m) to be carried forward from 2017/18 to complete the emptying of the blocks, including the potential requirement to take CPO action;
- (c) That the allocation of funds of £1.57m in the 2018/19 HRA capital programme be recommended to full Council;
- (d) That officers proceed with submitting a planning application for a new scheme; and
- (e) That the Director for Finance & Resources, Neighbourhood Services Lead and Cabinet Member for Corporate Finance & Housing, in conjunction with the recommendations of the Housing Option Appraisal, determine the funding for the remodelling of the site.

3. The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan

3a. Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities

The provision and maintenance of good quality and affordable family housing can reduce housing need for local households and contribute to the identified priorities of

the JSNA by increasing the availability of good quality accommodation. This initiative will provide an opportunity re remodel and improve the safety, health and well being of families in the Town Centre.

3b Five Year Plan Outcomes

It is well established that having a stable, attractive home has a significant impact on a person's health and well-being. Demolition of the two tower blocks and remodelling of the site to provide 195 units of housing close to the town centre will contribute to the following 5 Year Plan outcomes: :

- Our children and young people will have the best start in life and opportunities to give them positive lives.
- Our people will become healthier and will manage their own health, care and support needs.
- Slough will be an attractive place where people choose to live, work and visit.
- Our residents will have access to good quality homes.

4 Other Implications

(a) Financial

Capital Strategy Board has awarded the project a capital budget of £6,915,000 dedicated to approved RBFRS requested FRA works pending decanting the blocks, the cost of home loss payments, buying back leaseholder properties, security for the site and demolition.

As at the 24th November the total spend to date amounted to £4.2m and an additional capital budget of £1.57m is required for the completion of the project

Tower & Ashbourne	Original Budget Approved £m	Total Spend to November 2017 £m	Revised Budget (2018/19) to prepare site for remodelling £m
Total	6.91	4.23	4.25
Home Loss	4.09	0.68	0.68
Buy Backs		2.44	1.10
Security		0.53	0.12
Project costs		0.13	
RBFRS Repairs	1.12	0.45	
Demolition	1.7	-	1.5
Fees Design & Planning Application	0.00		0.85
Estimated c/f to 2018/19		2.68	0
Additional Capital Budget required in 2018/19			1.57

(b) Risk Management

Risk	Mitigating action	Opportunities
<u>Legal</u>		
2 remaining lease-holders disagree with SBC valuations to 'buy back'	Engagement with Legal services to explore options regarding issuing CPOs etc	
Human Rights	See 4(c) below	
<u>Health and Safety</u>		
Fire risk, vandalism, squatting and general degradation as blocks are emptied.	24 / 7 security patrol Daily bin collections 'zero tolerance' on accumulations and fly tipping.	
Employment Issues	None identified	
Equalities Issues	None identified at this stage	
Community Support	None identified	
Communications	None identified	
<u>Community Safety</u>		
Once decanting of blocks begins – risk of squatting	24/7 security patrols Door bars on vacant flats Services in vacant flats disconnected	
Financial		
Timetable for delivery		
Project Capacity		
Other		

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

By virtue of Section 17(1) of the Housing Act 1985 the Council as the local housing authority may acquire land as a site for the erection of houses or for the purposes of providing facilities in connection with the provision of housing accommodation. Under Section 17(3) of that Act the Council may acquire such land by agreement or they may be authorised by the Secretary of State to acquire it compulsorily.

For these purposes, "land" includes any interest in land by virtue of Section 5 and Schedule 1 of the Interpretation Act 1978

Accordingly the Council have the power to acquire any leaseholders' interests in Tower and Ashbourne Houses either by agreement or under a compulsory purchase order authorised by the Secretary of State.

Every natural or legal person is entitled to the peaceful enjoyment of his possessions under Article 1 of the First Protocol to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms which is given effect to in the UK by the Human Rights Act 1998. This entitlement does not however impair the right of any state to enforce such laws as it deems necessary to control the use of property in accordance with the general interest. In the circumstances it is not considered that any leaseholders in Tower and Ashbourne Houses will be entitled to prevent the compulsory acquisition of their interests provided the proper statutory procedures are followed and compensation is paid in accordance with the relevant statutory provisions.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

There are none at this stage

(f) Property

The Housing Revenue Account currently carries the burden for loss of accommodation that due to its condition is not available for social housing. This is a loss of rental revenue and a burden upon other rent payers as security and utility cost are on going. The report presents measures to demolish, remodel and rejuvenate the site by taking design and financial options that enable not only replacement but additional social housing on the site.

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 As a result of increasing obsolescence, the lack of DDA and other compliance, and a high rate of anti-social behaviour at these two tower blocks, Commissioners and Directors on June 30th 2015 agreed the following:
- a) officers be empowered to explore and evaluate more detailed options for redeveloping the site;
 - b) further allocations to void units within the two blocks are suspended forthwith and that officers further develop plans to organise the planned decanting of the existing tenants into other council and housing association properties.
- 5.2 An Initial Demolition Notice (IDN) was served on all secure tenants 13th July 2015 and the 15 leaseholders were written to separately at the same time. Drop in sessions were arranged to explain what was happening and also to assist and advise tenants regarding the completion of housing application forms. It had been confirmed by the Assistant Director, Housing & Environmental Services that tenants would be permanently rehoused, rather than temporarily decanted. All the tenants of Tower House and Ashbourne House, were finally rehoused by the end of 2016.
- 5.3 Savills were commissioned by the Leasehold Manager and Assistant Director, Housing & Environmental Services to undertake the property valuations and negotiations with the leaseholders. All but two leaseholders have accepted officers and moved out. Confirmation of the council's intention to demolish the two blocks and remodel the site, will assist further negotiations and the possible need to apply for Compulsory Purchase Orders, should negotiations break down.
- 5.4 At the request of the HRA Board, a presentation of a development appraisal option for affordable housing on the Tower and Ashbourne site, was made to members of Cabinet, officers and members of the Housing Options Appraisal Commissioners

Consultative Group, was made on September 13th 2017. The proposal is for a scheme of 195 units, of which 104 would be to replace the existing number of social housing units, with funding options being considered as part of the Housing Options Appraisal project. Further work is required to take the proposals forward to planning application stage.

6 **Comments of Other Committees**

None

7 **Conclusion**

The report presents measures and seeks authority to demolish, remodel and rejuvenate the site by taking current design and financial options developed with members and the residents board during the options appraisal that enable not only replacement but significant additional social housing on the site.

8 **Background Papers**

None