

Report of: Head of Oxford City Homes
To: Executive Board
Date: 21 April 2008 **Item No:**
Title of Report: Lambourn Road Bungalows - Update

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To update the Executive Board on the current situation with the non-traditional bungalows in Lambourn Road, Rose Hill.

Ward(s) affected: Rose Hill.

Key decision: No

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Patrick Murray.

Scrutiny Responsibility: Housing Scrutiny Committee

Report Approved by:-

Portfolio holder: Councillor Patrick Murray
Director: Tim Sadler
Legal: Jeremy King
Finance: David Higgins

Policy Framework: More housing, better housing for all.

Recommendation(s): That the Executive Board notes the current situation with regard to the decanting of tenants in the defective Lambourn Road bungalows and approves the proposals set out in the report.

Background –

1. A strategy to ensure that the non-traditional housing stock meets the decent homes target of 31 December 2010 was presented to the Housing Scrutiny Committee on 17 January 2008 and approved by the Executive Board on 8 February 2008.

2. The problems associated with the Council's stock of non-traditional bungalows in Lambourn Road, Rose Hill were included in that report but not in any detail. This report specifically looks at these properties in the light of a recent structural report that was not available at the time of writing the January report.
3. There were originally 24 units on the site. Three have been demolished when they became void due to their poor structural condition and there are two that have been sold. The concrete slab has cracked and wall panels are subject to excessive movement. The remaining properties are being regularly monitored.

Current position –

4. Following the latest of the regular structural monitoring inspections on 26 March, the Council's consultants reported that of the 19 Council owned bungalows still standing on the site:-
 - four are void, boarded-up and awaiting demolition, the tenants having been decanted to suitable alternatives.
 - Of the 15 still occupied, three are classed as requiring urgent action, one particularly so. One tenant is due to be moved in April and the other two have properties allocated to them. However, the new homes allocated are in the Phase One Rose Hill development which are currently being built and at the time of writing this report the roofs are on and it is anticipated that completion will be in June/July.
 - Of the rest (12, all tenanted and occupied):-
 - 1 needs to be demolished in 3 months
 - 5 demolished in 6 months
 - 1 demolished in 9 months
 - 1 needs to be inspected in 3 months
 - 4 re-inspect in one year
 - All properties are still being regularly monitored and where necessary the tenants will be decanted as soon as suitable alternative accommodation that they approve of has been identified.

Options

5. Because of the poor structural condition of these properties the only option, already agreed by members, is to demolish and re-develop the site with mixed accommodation.

Financial Implications

6. The demolition costs per property are £6,000. Decanting costs are likely to be a maximum Homeloss payment of £4,400 and disturbance payment (actual costs only) in the region of £1,500. Resulting in an estimated decant/demolition cost of £11,900 per property.
7. A sum of £500,000 has been approved in the 2008/09 budget for this scheme.
8. The annual loss of revenue following the decanting of tenants would be £78,800. Any reduction in subsidy payments would not occur until 2010/11. However, it is hoped that more units will be built on the site in the near future and that they will be Council owned and managed.

Legal Implications

9. A cause for concern are the two tenants who wish to wait for a property on the phase One Development. The Council's consultants have confirmed that unfortunately it appears that there is not a cost effective way of making these units safe for the next four months.
10. Tenants can only be required to vacate the properties by means of a Court Order. The legal section has advised that it may be sensible to serve a notice seeking possession (or a Demolition Notice) at this stage. We are working with the tenants to find a mutually acceptable solution and will be as flexible as possible so long as the safety of the tenant is not put at risk.
11. A further report will be presented to Members later in this financial year detailing options for the site and potential funding streams. Further legal advice will be obtained at that time and will include the implications for the sold properties.

Proposals

12. To continue discussions with affected tenants to find suitable accommodation in the short term. On-going discussions are being held with the two tenants with unsafe homes waiting for permanent accommodation on the Phase One development and Members will be updated verbally at the meeting.

Consultation

13. Consultation is on-going with the tenants in homes affected by these structural defects and the issues have also been discussed with tenants via the Housing Advisory Panel and the Repairs and Improvements Topic Panel.
14. Following feasibility studies, more in depth consultation will be undertaken with tenant/residents groups and individuals affected by the development of the area. Reports will then be presented to Area Committees, Housing Scrutiny and Executive Board.

Recommendations

15. That the Executive Board notes the current situation with regard to the decanting of tenants in the defective Lambourn Road bungalows and approves the proposals set out in the report.

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Background papers: Consultant's Structural Report

