

## HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD

11 January 2023

### Report of the Director of Housing and Wellbeing

#### ITEM 5 REVIEW OF SHELTERED ACCOMMODATION - ST MICHAEL'S COURT

##### Purpose of the report

To seek endorsement of the proposed direction of travel in respect of the redevelopment of St Michael's Court in Thurmaston.

##### Action requested

The Board is asked to comment on the report and endorse the proposed direction of travel, which in summary is as follows:

To construct eight new bungalows at the location to develop a high-quality accommodation scheme in the Borough which meets housing need, performs well financially, is considered an attractive layout with convenient parking for residents with mobility issues, is likely to be acceptable from a planning perspective bearing in mind the adjacent listed church, and provides accommodation that current tenants of St Michael's Court can move back in to.

##### Background

The Council owns thirteen low rise sheltered accommodation schemes for occupation by people aged over 60.

Several improvements to sheltered accommodation have been delivered over the years, including:

- Grays Court, Barrow upon Soar: conversion of bedsits into flats, and bungalows built in the grounds.
- Riversdale Court, Birstall: conversion of bedsits into flats, a full refurbishment, extension, and construction of high-quality communal areas.
- Aingarth, Loughborough, and Dudley Court, Sileby: conversion of some bedsits to flats.

Some of the schemes, including St Michael's Court, were developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Many dwellings are not self-contained, have shared bathing facilities, and contain steps and long corridors which are difficult for people with reduced levels of mobility to navigate. Consequently, some properties do not meet the current aspirations of older people (residents have been consulted in this respect) and are very hard to let. There are therefore a high number of voids in sheltered accommodation.

St Michael's Court in Thurmaston comprises 23 units, of which 2 are flats. The rest are bedsits, none of which have a self-contained bathroom. Compared to other schemes, St Michaels Court has the most bedsits. It has therefore been prioritised for redevelopment and existing residents have been made aware of this.

A Project Team and Project Board has been formed. Ark Consultancy has been appointed as Project Manager. Pelham has been procured to provide architectural services.

### Assessment of Housing Need

Data from the Council's housing register shows that:

- Demand for sheltered accommodation in the area is low.
- There is a need for smaller property types (1 and 2 bed).
- There are around 1200 people on the entire housing register, of which 250 have expressed they want to live in the area.
- 50 people have the area as their first area of preference.

Of the 250 who have expressed they want to live in the area:

- 31 need ground floor accommodation with a level access entrance.
- 8 need full wheelchair access.
- 14 need a Level Access Shower.

Between the areas of Thurmaston and Syston lies the approved Strategic Urban Extension of Thorpebury Park. This site has planning permission for up to 4,500 homes, of which over 1,100 will be affordable homes to rent and buy. Within the second phase of this development, secured within the legal agreement, is a 60+ bedroomed affordable rented Extra-Care Scheme to meet the needs of the areas older and disabled citizens. Understanding this pipeline delivery is key so as not to oversaturate a particular locality with too many homes of the same type, and an important consideration for the redevelopment options at St. Michaels Court.

### Options for St Michael's Court

A replacement sheltered scheme has been considered, however the housing need data does not show there is a high demand in the area for sheltered accommodation. Furthermore, the size and location of the site would not accommodate a scheme which would meet the aspirations of older people and be good value. The scheme is adjacent to a listed church. This is an important heritage feature, which is currently visible over the top of St Michael's Court and is a factor which limits the scale and mass of any development at St Michael's Court. A flagship development such as that completed at Riversdale Court could not likely be achieved on an economic basis.

The existing scheme cannot economically be internally remodelled to deliver a fit for purpose, sustainable homes. Consideration has been given to sale of the land; however this would negatively impact on the Council's ability to use the site for Council accommodation to meet housing need.

Several other options have therefore been considered. These are detailed at Appendix 1 - Options A through to D.

Appendix 2 - Scheme Comparison shows the capital and revenue cost of running each scheme over a lifetime 40-year period, allowing financial comparison across schemes on a like for like basis. The net present value of each scheme varies as each has a different size /makeup. On a purely financial comparator basis, the result, is as follows:

- The best financially performing options are the Bungalow schemes: Option A Version 1 and Option A Version 2.
- Houses are more expensive to build than bungalows. Option C, which is houses with a bungalow present, performs better financially as it is cheaper to build and the rent for a bungalow is similar to a house.
- Flats (Option D) sit, from a financial performance perspective, between the bungalow and house schemes.
- Any grant received would change the financial evaluation outcome. Homes England has been engaged in a dialogue around the potential for grant funding.

The housing need data shows there is demand for smaller ground floor, level access accommodation. A bungalow scheme would meet this need. It would also provide the prospect for current residents of St Michael's Court to move into a new bungalow when the scheme is completed.

Of the two bungalow options (A) Version 2 presents an attractive layout which places car parking spaces in relatively close proximity to front doors. Version 1 has parking which is a comparatively long way away from each front door, which would likely present a challenge to residents with limited mobility.

### Recommended Scheme

Bungalow Version 2 is the recommended scheme. It meets housing need, performs well financially, is considered an attractive layout with convenient parking for residents with mobility issues, is likely to be acceptable from a planning perspective bearing in mind the adjacent listed church, and provides accommodation that current tenants of St Michael's Court can move back in to.

### Support for Current Tenants at St Michael's Court

There are very few tenants remaining at St Michael's Court. Each tenant has been visited individually to identify aspirations around future accommodation, and to set out the package of support that is in place to help with moving. Relative and carer involvement has also been sought. This package of support, includes, amongst other things: removals, decorations, curtains, and carpets at the new home, and re-direction mail.

## Consultation

Residents have been consulted on a sheltered housing standard against which all sheltered accommodation schemes have been assessed. St Michael's Court does not and cannot economically meet that standard.

Current and former residents of the scheme, and residents living in the immediate vicinity will be invited to a consultation event in the Spring of 2023.

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