

**WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL****Report by the Chief Officer, Housing and Employability****Housing and Communities Committee: 28 February 2024**

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**Subject: Willox Park Sheltered Housing Complex Options Appraisal****1. Purpose**

- 1.1** This purpose of this report is to provide the Housing and Communities Committee an update on the recent options appraisal consultation exercise at Willox Park.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1** It is recommended that the Housing and Communities Committee:

- (i) Note the content of the report and the actions that have been taken to consult with the Willox Park Sheltered Housing Complex tenants.
- (ii) Approve Option 3 – Redevelopment which would see the existing homes replaced with new modern energy efficient homes through a master planning approach agreed in full consultation with existing tenants;
- (iii) Agree to designate all 36 properties within the Willox Park Sheltered Housing Complex as surplus to requirements.
- (iv) Authorise the Chief Officer, Housing & Employability to commence all associated procurement activity to achieve the delivery of Option 3 – Redevelopment.
- (v) Invite the Chief Officer, Housing & Employability to take the next steps with all remaining tenants
  - a) To ensure that all tenants have a personalised housing plan prepared;
  - b) To ensure that all tenants have the necessary priority identification through the Council's Allocation Policy;
  - c) To develop a lettings plan for the new homes being delivered at the adjacent former care homes site to ensure priority is given to the existing tenants of the Willox Park Sheltered Housing complex as either a temporary or permanent housing solution; and
  - d) To authorise Home Loss and Disturbance Payments with all tenants throughout the master planning delivery process

- (vi) Invite the Chief Officer, Housing and Employability to provide the Housing and Communities Committee with regular update reports.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1** Willox Park Sheltered Housing Complex comprises 36 terraced bungalows offering sheltered housing in Dumbarton. It was built in the 1960s and is typical of the building and space standards of that time. Whilst the tenants like having their own front door and a little outside space, the internal layout is not conducive to healthy living for those with limited mobility.
- 3.2** The existing homes have received replacement roof and external wall insulation over the last twenty years alongside investment in kitchens, bathrooms, and windows. However, tenants have complained of dampness and draughts and some of the homes are affected by mould.
- 3.3** Damp surveys found several causes of the dampness, but some homes are more affected than others, indeed some have no evidence of dampness. Consequently, we have moved all but one of the most affected tenants out and we intend to prioritise the installation of environmental sensors in all other homes so we can keep a close eye on the remaining occupied properties.
- 3.4** The Housing Revenue Account previously acquired the adjacent site to the Sheltered Housing Complex which formerly sited a Council Care Home, it has been reported previously to the Housing and Communities Committee that this site will be developed to 17 new homes (15 one-bedroom homes and two two-bedroom homes). These homes offer modern accessibility standards and are designated.

### **4. Main Issues**

- 4.1** The extent of the problems with the homes at Willox Park necessitated an options appraisal to review the future of the homes. Consequently, we have consulted with tenants on four options;
- do nothing;
  - refurbishment;
  - redevelopment, and
  - hybrid.

More details on each of these are below alongside the consultation outcomes.

The consultation received 14 votes which constitutes 56% percent of tenants. Details of the consultative exercise; can be found in the appendix, but it involved several drop-in sessions alongside phone calls to make sure everyone had a chance to ask questions in terms of the consultation.

#### **4.2 Option 1: Do nothing**

This option represented maintaining the status quo; repairs will continue to be carried out for occupied homes and empty homes will not be relet. This

represents the least disruption to sitting tenants but would see the complex become less vibrant and run down as more homes become vacant.

Of those who voted: 7% of tenants voted for this option (one vote).

The tenants who voted for this told us they did so because they don't want to move and they like their current home.

#### **4.3 Option 2: Refurbishment**

This option would maintain the current properties by refurbishing them. The refurbishment would involve stripping the properties back to brick internally and externally, removing cavity wall insulation, applying a damp-proof membrane to the floors, structural works to improve the fire compliance of the homes, and replacing doors, windows, kitchens, bathrooms etc.

We anticipate the works would be completed on a block-by-block basis and would take around 12 months. Tenants would be unable to live in their homes whilst work was carried out. Work would not start until the new homes were complete on the care site so that tenants could be relocated to these which would keep the community together and minimise disruption to care. The Council committed to tenants having the option to return to their cottages and refurbish the common room.

This option would be expensive due to the amount of work needed, and we would not be able to access grant funding to reduce the cost to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). There are also several risks including damp proofing solutions only offer a maximum 20-year guarantee and whilst we might be able to do some structural work to improve the layouts to make them more accessible, we will be constrained by the unusual property footprints.

Of those who voted: 21% of tenants voted for this option (three votes)

The tenants who voted for this told us they did so because they like their homes and having their front door and garden. Those who picked this option suggested that the layout of the houses could be improved by removing walls/cupboards, creating wet rooms, and improving windows and roof maintenance. They would like to return to their home after works are completed and would like to be involved in choosing the décor.

#### **4.4 Option 3: Redevelopment**

This option would see the existing cottages demolished and a master planning approach developed to deliver new homes on the site. As with option 2 above, demolition and redevelopment would not start until the new homes on the care home site were completed to allow tenants to move into the new homes and keep the community together. This will likely require phased demolition and redevelopment to achieve this.

The types of homes and master planning approach would be developed in collaboration with the tenants. We expect it would be like the care home site

and designed with accessibility and design features to suit older households to help us plan for housing our growing elderly population.

The masterplan will also include a new, modern common room which will be able to provide better meeting and gathering space for the community. The homes will be very energy efficient which should reduce running costs for tenants. We can also access Scottish Government grant funding through the Affordable Housing Supply Programme to reduce the cost to the HRA.

Of those who voted: 57% of tenants voted for this option (eight votes)

The tenants who voted for this told us they did so because whilst they like their home, they could see from their own experiences the new homes could offer a lot of benefits in terms of energy efficiency and layout. They did however note keenness to be involved in the development of the masterplan and would like to see some replacement bungalows, where possible, because some were hesitant about living in a flat.

#### **4.5 Option 4: Hybrid**

This option offered tenants a bit of both redevelopment and refurbishment and as with both options work would not start until the homes at the care home site were completed so that tenants could move into these, we would minimise disruption and the community would stay together.

It is unclear at present which parts of the site would keep their homes and which parts would be redeveloped but this option brings both the risks and opportunities of both the above options.

Of those who voted: 14% of tenants voted for this option (two votes)

The tenants who voted for this didn't expand upon their thought process, but the rationale is likely to be like those expressed for the refurbishment and redevelopment options.

- 4.6** Based upon the consultation exercise completed with the tenants at Willox Park the recommendation would be to take forward option 3: Redevelopment and work with the tenants to develop a masterplan to deliver modern older people's housing to meet current and future demand from this demographic group.

### **5. People Implications**

- 5.1** If the redevelopment option is approved it will require a staffing resource to ensure a full collaborative approach with the existing tenants in delivering the master planning approach. It is proposed that a temporary Housing Development Officer post within the existing structure is made permanent to support this delivery.

## **6. Financial and Procurement Implications**

### Financial

- 6.1** As outlined within the options appraisal exercise there are financial implications with all the options. Declaring the properties surplus to requirement, rehoming tenants and the delivery of the chosen option will be funded from the Housing Revenue Account Capital Investment Programme. If the recommend option of Redevelopment is chosen, this will be funded from the Affordable Housing Supply Programme future new build element of the Housing Capital Investment Programme. As with all Capital works developing new homes will require prudential borrowing for the HRA but the redevelopment option will allow the Council to access Scottish Government grant funding which will support the delivery and reduce the overall cost to the HRA. The new homes will have a long income-earning life as an income generating asset for a minimum of 100 years.

### Procurement

- 6.3** The next phase of Willox Park will require several procurement exercises these will include various consultants to support the development of the master plan and design including engineers alongside contractors including demolition and building contractors. This report seeks permission to procure and appoint the appropriate consultants and contractors using existing Council policies and procedures.

## **7. Risk Analysis**

- 7.1** We maintain risk registers for each project which highlights the risk within and out-with the project team's control. These are maintained and adjusted on an on-going basis.

## **8 Environmental Sustainability**

- 8.1** The delivery of new homes will be consistent with our wider More Homes zero carbon approach. Our current and future approach to strategic housing asset management will continue to prioritise a 'zero carbon' approach to decision making and deliverability and this will be further reflected in the master planning approach adopted consistent with the aims of the Housing Asset Management Strategy and the Council's Climate Change Strategy.

## **9. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)**

- 9.1** The proposal does not alter any existing policy or pattern of service delivery and so is not considered to require an equalities impact assessment.

## **10. Consultation**

- 10.1** We have consulted with the tenants at Willox Park throughout this process. We have kept them up-to-date best we can with the findings of the surveys and then consequently the consultation into the future of the homes. They have also been involved the new development of the care home site into new homes and they are looking forward to seeing that come forward and moving into it.
- 10.2** We have utilised newsletters, letters, drop-in events in the common room, phoning the tenants who we hadn't heard from, and the housing officer has continued to offer support and answer questions at her weekly surgeries. The Registered Tenants Organisation at Willox Park has also been actively encouraging participation in the consultation process too and officers have attended their meetings.
- 10.3** All existing tenants and their families will be impacted by the decision taken by the Housing and Communities Committee. We will contact tenants and other stakeholders and let them know the outcome of Housing and Communities Committee. This communication will reinforce a continued collaborative approach to deliver the agreed outcomes.

## **11. Strategic Assessment**

- 11.1** The Local Housing Strategy is the overarching document setting out the strategic direction for housing across all tenures and informs the future investment in housing and related services across West Dunbartonshire. Having considered all the Council's strategic priorities, this report and the provision of high-quality social housing for rent contributes greatly to all strategic priorities.

**Peter Barry**  
**Chief Officer, Housing and Employability**  
**Date: 13<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

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**Appendices:**

1. Willox Park Options Appraisal Document
2. Willox Park Consultation Summary

**Background Papers:** Report to Housing and Communities Committee, August 2023

**Wards Affected:** 3