

Item

REPORT ON BUILDING SAFETY AT STANTON HOUSE AND FUTURE USE OF THE BUILDING.

To:

Councillor Gerri Bird, Executive Councillor for Housing

Housing Scrutiny Committee 18/06/2024

Report by:

Samantha Shimmon, Assistant Director: Housing and Homelessness, Communities

Email: Samantha.Shimmon@cambridge.gov.uk

Sean Cleary, Strategic Delivery Manager, City Services

Email: Sean.Cleary@cambridge.gov.uk

Wards affected:

Market

Key Decision

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 Over the last year, the Council has been working on investment options for Stanton House. This was mainly based on the condition of the building and the significant investment required to bring it up to modern standards for sheltered accommodation. A key element is the small size of the flats which are significantly below current space standards and are difficult to let.
- 1.2 An options appraisal was undertaken by Rock Townsend Architects LLP. This confirmed that all refurbishment options would result in a substantial reduction in the number of dwellings or a significant expansion in the building footprint. In either case, tenants would need to move out of the building on a temporary basis or decant permanently.
- 1.3 On 23rd December 2023 an annual Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) was completed on Stanton House and the risk on the building and residents if there were to be a fire was deemed Substantial.
- 1.4 On 13th December 2023 Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service issued a Notice of Deficiency (NOD) on the building detailing 11 deficiencies, many of which were small and have been rectified, but 2 remain, notably not rectifying all significant findings on the FRA and not completing compartmentation works

required in the building to reduce the risk of fire spread. The key finding from the FRA is to ensure the building has sufficient compartmentation, so these 2 deficiencies are effectively the same issue.

- 1.5 Following both the FRA and the NOD the evacuation strategy for the building has been changed to simultaneous evacuation, from the previous policy of stay put.
- 1.6 A 24/7 cover has been implemented at Stanton House, staffed during normal office hours by our Independent Living Team and out of hours, by a security firm at a cost of £2,025 per week. The purpose of this cover is to provide a 'waking watch' to assist with evacuation in the event of a fire. This mitigates the risk to residents in the event of a fire.
- 1.7 To complete these essential compartmentation works will cost an estimated £635,000.
- 1.8 Essential considerations are the costs of the fire safety works and the viability of Stanton House as a sheltered housing scheme.

2 Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the cost of essential Compliance related works required to Stanton House at £635,000.
- 2.2 Note the options appraisal for Stanton House carried out by Rock Townsend Architects LLP and agree in principle that it is no longer viable to retain the building in its current form.
- 2.3 Approve removing Stanton House from the Councils operational Housing portfolio, which will include the planned decanting of all existing residents in line with our Regeneration Policy which includes information on statutory home loss and disturbance payments.
- 2.4 To approve a capital budget of £333,000 to cover the decanting payments to residents of Statutory Home loss and Disturbance payments. This budget will be drawn down from the existing budget approved for investment in the delivery of new homes.
- 2.5 Agree that there will be further consideration of the redevelopment options for the Stanton House site that will be brought back to this committee in September 2024 for decision.

3 Background

- 3.1 Stanton House is a sheltered housing scheme built in 1960. There are 32 one-bedroom flats on two floors with a single circulation core. There is a two-bedroom, two-storey house adjoined to the building (formerly the warden's house) that is now let as a general need's tenancy.
- 3.2 There is no resident warden, as this has been the case for many years, and residents are supported through the Independent Living Service operated by the City Council and part-funded by the County Council.
- 3.3 Given its location, the flats have proved to be suitable 'move-on' accommodation for older adults with a history of homelessness. A third of residents have come from Jimmy's, which is a charity that support people out of homelessness in Cambridge.
- 3.4 The community at Stanton House is well-established, with a significant level of mutual support. Just over half of the tenants have lived there under five years but some have lived there much longer, with around 16% living at Stanton House for over ten years.
- 3.5 In June 2022, the Council's Asset Management Team requested that the Housing Development Agency carry out a detailed options appraisal of the site so that a decision on the future of the scheme could be agreed. This was due to the condition of the building, in which significant investment was required, and the difficulty in letting flats which were below Nationally Described Space Standards ("NDSS").
- 3.6 Current NDSS are listed below in comparison to the flat sizes at Stanton House. These show that 24 flats are substantially below 1B1P space standards, 5 flats are nearer to 1B1P space standards, and 3 larger flats are sized between 1B1P and 1B2P space standards.

Nationally Described Space Standards		Stanton House	
1B1P	37 (m2)	26.5-28.7 (m2)	24 flats
		35.2-37.6	5 flats
		40.3-46.5	3 flats
1B2P	50 (m2)		

- 3.7 Rock Townsend Architects LLP were appointed in April 2023. The options appraisal confirmed that all refurbishment options assessed would necessitate tenants moving out of the building for a substantial period or permanently. In addition, compliance with NDSS would require a substantial reduction in the number of dwellings or require a significant expansion in the building footprint. The report from Rock Townsend LLP is at Appendix 1.
- 3.8 In addition, the development team were exploring options on the council's vacant East Rd site and consulted with Stanton House residents on the potential

of moving into a new sheltered accommodation scheme at East Road. Redevelopment options for The Stanton House site, once vacated, were also being considered. Residents were consulted on their views to input into options being considered.

- 3.9 Building Safety concerns that require an urgent response are detailed in section 4 below. This has superseded a traditional regeneration approach for Stanton House which not only recommends decanting a site but what will happen to the site afterwards.
- 3.10 It is proposed to bring a report to Housing Scrutiny Committee in September 2024 which will identify the redevelopment options for both Stanton House and East Road and make a recommendation. Redevelopment options for both sites will include reviewing mixed tenure options through Cambridge Investment Partnership (CIP), Homes England grant funding opportunities and a portfolio approach to development balancing financial viability and the need for council homes.

4 **Building Safety**

- 4.1 The Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) completed on 23rd December 2023, assessed the risk as Substantial. This means considerable resources might have to be allocated to reduce the risk. If the premises are unoccupied, it should not be occupied until the risk has been reduced. If the premises are occupied, urgent action should be taken. The FRA is included at Appendix 3.
- 4.2 The substantial risk assessed in the FRA related to a lack of compartmentation at Stanton House. This is essential to prevent the spread of fire from flat to flat and throughout the building.
- 4.3 Following the FRA the evacuation strategy for Stanton House was amended to full simultaneous evacuation in the event of a fire, from the previous strategy of Stay Put. Fire Drills have been implemented to ensure residents know the fire strategy and can practise their response to a fire alarm.
- 4.4 Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Services (CFRS) visited the building in early December 2023 to audit the fire safety arrangements and issued a Notice of Deficiency (NOD) requiring 11 deficiencies to be remedied. The NOD can be found in Appendix 4.

Return visits on 18th January 2024 and 5th March 2024 were undertaken by CFRS.

- 9 out of the 11 deficiencies were remedied by the return visit 18th January 2024
- The remaining 2 related to the lack of compartmentation between the flats meaning Stanton House remains as a substantial risk.

- 4.5 The works required to complete the compartmentation of Stanton House will cost £635,000 and are detailed below in section 6.
- 4.6 The Notice of Deficiency remains in place and could see legal action brought against Cambridge City Council by Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Services.
- 4.7 To mitigate the risk to residents in Stanton House, we have implemented a 24/7 coverage of the building to provide evacuation assistance in the event of a fire. This is provided by our Independent Living Team during office hours and by a security firm out of hours at a cost of £2,025 per week. This would need to remain in place whilst the risk from the FRA remains at substantial.
- 4.8 The building as a sheltered housing scheme poses additional risk in the event of a fire as there are more residents with vulnerabilities such as restricted mobility, sight or hearing loss that would make it more difficult to evacuate in the event of a fire.

5 Resident Engagement

5.1 There has been an engagement process with residents in place since July 2023. Informal meetings were initially held with residents to gain their views on living at Stanton House. This was followed by an in-person consultation event in February 2024, attended by residents and family members, alongside a survey that could be completed at the event or discussed with the Independent Living Service. The surveys closed with a notable response rate (22 responses out of 32) indicating an active level of engagement and insight from residents.

5.2

Key points from the survey results are as follows: -

- A significant majority (77.3%) expressed interest in the possibility of relocating
- Access to the same GP surgery was recognised as the highest priority for residents while support from the Independent Living Service was the second most important factor
- The cost associated with moving was the most important concern for residents considering a move
- Brandon Court and Ditchburn Place (also City Council sheltered housing schemes) were suggested as alternative options for moving, alongside suggestions for facilities that could be included in a new sheltered accommodation scheme.

The survey report is at Appendix 2.

- 5.3 Letters are being hand delivered to all residents advising them of this report and inviting them to a residents meeting.
- 5.4 A resident meeting is due to be held on Monday 10th June 2024 to discuss this report and the recommendations being made for Stanton House.
- 5.5 We will meet residents again following Housing Scrutiny Committee on 18th June to discuss the decision made by the Executive Cllr for Housing.

6 Cost

6.1 The compartmentation works required to Stanton House have been costed as:

- Loft compartmentation works £285,763.20
- Replacement of flat entrance doors £82,247.00
- Replacement of cross corridor doors £55,749.70
- Replacement of riser cupboard doors £56,960.00
- Contingency of 10% £48,071.99
- VAT of 20% £105,758.38
- **Total** **£634,550.27**

6.2 The cost to decant the residents at Stanton House would be:

- Statutory Home loss Payments £243,000
- Disturbance Payments £60,000
- Contingency of 10% £30,000
- **Total** **£333,000**

6.3 Ongoing cost of 24/7 cover for Stanton House

- Weekly cost £2025
- Monthly cost £8,775
- **Annual cost** **£105,300**

6.4 Cost comparison:

Costs	Option 1 – Decant Scheme now	Option 2 – Following original regeneration approach decanting into future East Road site.
Compliance Work	X	£634,550.27
Decant Costs	£333,000	£333,000
24/7 cover	£105,300	£105,300
Total	£438,300	£1,072,850.27

7 Decant

- 7.1 A permanent decant is necessary where it is planned to dispose of, demolish and or redevelop the site. Tenants will need to move and will be given urgent priority through HomeLink emergency bands to facilitate this as soon as is practically possible.
- 7.2 Meetings will be held with all residents (alongside the Independent Living Service and family members/support network) to assess housing need. Moving options will be discussed which will include other sheltered housing schemes, general needs and extra-care housing. Each residents will be assisted to find an alternative home based on their needs.
- 7.3 The liaison with residents about moving will be led by our Independent Living Team who already have strong relationships with residents at Stanton House and provide wellbeing support. They will be assisted by officers in City Homes, Housing Options as well as our Regeneration Team.
- 7.4 All tenants will be eligible for a statutory Home-loss payment of £8,100 following their move and disturbance payments to cover moving costs. A significant level of practical support will be provided in terms of arranging and overseeing each move.

8 Sustainability

- 8.1 This report does not cover options for the future use of this site. A further paper will be brought to Housing Scrutiny Committee which will detail options, and this will include sustainability for the recommended future use of the site.

9 Finance

- 9.1 Approval is sought to identify a capital budget of £333,000 to cover the decanting costs to the Council. This includes statutory home loss payments and disturbance payments which will be due to the tenants.
- 9.2 The budget will be drawn down from the existing budget approved for the facilitation and delivery of new homes as part of the 10 Year New Homes Programme.

10 Implications

- (a) Staffing Implications

The Council will deliver its role in the decanting of residents through the Independent Living Service, supported by City Homes, Housing Options and Housing Development Agency.

(b) Equality and Poverty Implications

An EQIA has been completed and is attached in Appendix 5.

(c) Environmental Implications

There are no direct environmental implications at present, this will be detailed in the future report of options for future use of the site.

(d) Procurement Implications

There are no direct procurement implications at present, this will be detailed in the future report of options for future use of the site.

(e) Community Safety Implications

There are no direct community safety implications, the risk of having a building with a significant proportion of empty flats that exists will be mitigated by the 24/7 cover of the site by Council staff and the security firm.

(f) Consultation and communication considerations

This has been detailed in section 5 of this report.

11 Risks

Detailed below are the current and immediate risk factors which have been identified and informed the work to date. The purpose of this report is to mitigate against these immediate risks and enable the Council to progress with a proactive course of work to minimise future risk.

The current and immediate risks driving this report are as follows:

- Current and future CFRS notices and potential prohibition action, which would require an emergency decant.
- Abortive costs for compartmentation works, if a future decision on the building is made to dispose of, demolish or regenerate the scheme.
- Resident anxiety over the future of the site, they want to know what is happening.

12 Background papers

13 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Rock Townsend LLP Options Appraisal

Appendix 2 – Resident survey report

Appendix 3 – Fire Risk Assessment from 23rd December 2023

Appendix 4 – Notice of Deficiency from CFRS dated 13th December 2023

Appendix 5 - EQIA

14 Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact Samantha.Shimmon@cambridge.gov.uk