

BRITANNIA COURT OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Report of the Director of Derby Homes

SUMMARY OF REPORT

1. The attached report has been written by staff of the Council's Policy Directorate, at the request of the Director of Derby Homes, whilst still Acting Director of Housing. It explains the problems experienced by Derby Homes in managing this block of flats and bedsits, and identifies four options, and recommends two for further consideration. This report recommends that the block be retained for letting, and that management and structural alteration work is carried out to improve the popularity of the block.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. To recommend to the Board that Britannia Court continues to be managed and let as outlined in paragraph 3.5 of the report.

MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 The attached report has been prepared by staff from the Council's Policy directorate. It explains the many problems experienced by tenants who live in the block which were identified by a questionnaire issued to all residents. It identifies the problems experienced by Derby Homes in managing this block of 10 flats and 54 bedsits (16% flats and 84% bedsits).
- 3.2 The report identifies 8 options for the future of the block
 - 1 - Refurbish all the flats and improve the management of the block by employing a full-time caretaker
 - 1a - As 1 plus it recognises that the bock will tend to attract temporary tenants that will need additional support
 - 2 - As 1 plus the conversion of all bedsits into flats to make them more attractive sustainable flats
 - 3 - Transfer to a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) Housing association to manage
 - 4a - disposal to a RSL for redevelopment for rent

4b - disposal to a RSL for redevelopment as mixed tenure, rented and ownership

4c - disposal to a RSL for ownership

5 - outright sale.

The report raises doubts or dismisses the options 1, 3, 4a, 4c and 5, and recommends either option 1a, 2 or 4b.

3.3 This report has been discussed between staff of Derby Homes and the Policy Directorate. A site visit was made, attended by the Chair of Derby Homes, in December 2002. It is hoped that Board members will visit the blocks as part of the away day on 25 January.

3.4 I am of the view that option 1a is the preferred route forward, combined with a limited number of conversions of bedsits into flats. The advantage of this option is that it

- continues to provide small, cheap to run accommodation in an excellent city centre location for single people
- meets a large need for accommodation from single people
- is the preferred option of existing residents to retain the block for letting
- meets the request from existing residents to improve the management of the block
- builds on the success that has already been achieved by local staff who have improved the popularity of the block through the installation of CCTV, the development of a new small furniture pack for tenants, environmental improvements, through discretionary allocations, and through more intensive management.

3.5 This proposal will be

- the employment of a dedicated full time caretaker for the block
- the creation of suitable caretaker office space in the block
- the continuation of furnished lettings
- the continuation of discretionary allocations to ensure the block maintains a level of quality of life that enables it to be lettable
- the involvement of Tenancy Support Team and other supporting people agencies in helping new vulnerable tenants make their tenancies a success
- the conversion of 10 bedsits into 5 flats with the aim of reducing the ration of bedsits to flats.

CONSULTATION IMPLICATIONS

4. The proposed way forward will be the subject of further consultation with tenants in the scheme.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5. Option 1b is the most expensive option, and will result in the expenditure of £514000 in repairs, and conversion costs of £6,000. It is proposed to create 5 new flats from 10 bedsits. There is sufficient funds available in the Derby Homes Pride programme to cover these costs. In addition there will be revenue costs in the creation of a full-time caretaker post. However the creation of this post would release a proportion of the duties of an existing resident caretaker and the costs would be recovered from a service charge to all tenants. In addition it would be expected that a large part of the supported tenancy teams time would be dedicated to the tenants in this block.

LEGAL AND CONFIDENTIALITY IMPLICATIONS

6. The Housing Acts require us to consult with tenants on any major change to the housing management service.

PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

7. The proposals will be subject to consultation with staff and trade unions.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

8. The physical improvement of this block would enhance the appearance of a riverside frontage area of the City.

EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9. The improvements to the block will encourage more single women and BME applicants to consider an offer of accommodation in this block.

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