

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to the Executive for Decision 16 December 2019

Portfolio:	Housing
Subject:	Assheton Court, Portchester
Report of:	The Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Corporate Priorities:	Providing Housing Choices

Purpose:

To seek approval in principle to proceed with the redevelopment of Assheton Court in Portchester in order to provide a new larger sheltered housing scheme using the existing site and a small area of the adjacent long stay car park.

To also advise Members of (a) the principles of a decant policy (relevant for those residents affected by any future redevelopment works); (b) the approach to any flats becoming vacant at Assheton Court; and (c) how a future report will be brought back to the Executive relating to the funding of the redevelopment and the future contractor appointment process.

Executive summary:

Assheton Court was built in 1971 and comprises 33 flats, 13 of which are bedsit accommodation. The Council's recently adopted Affordable Housing Strategy set out an ambition to provide additional affordable housing for those in need and to improve existing Council owned stock, with Assheton Court being identified as one of the early schemes to address.

The attached report outlines the benefits of redeveloping the Assheton Court sheltered housing scheme in Portchester, to include a small area of the adjacent public car park, with the intention to provide a new larger sheltered housing scheme in what is an excellent location for older person accommodation.

It also explains how officers have considered the impact that redevelopment will have to existing residents at Assheton Court and have developed an outline of the decant principles to help alleviate many of the concerns that residents may have.

Recommendation/Recommended Option:

It is recommended that the Executive agrees:

- (a) the principle of seeking a redevelopment of the Assheton Court sheltered housing scheme;
- (b) the inclusion of a small area of the adjacent Long Stay East car park within any redeveloped design on the basis that no net loss in overall public car parking spaces will occur in the Council car parks at Portchester village centre;
- (c) that officers shall progress a Developed Design and planning application for a new Sheltered Housing Scheme; and
- (d) that £100,000 be allocated from the HRA Capital Development Fund, to progress the feasibility and design stage of the Assheton Court proposal.

Reason:

To provide additional older person affordable housing for those in need and to improve and update existing Council owned stock.

Cost of proposals:

At this stage Executive approval is sought for the principle of redevelopment.

£100,000, funded from the HRA Capital Development Fund will be required to progress the feasibility and early design stage. A further report will be provided to the Executive when a developed design has been produced. This later report will detail (a) the estimated costs of the project and funding arrangements (currently expected to be met through Homes England Grant funding (subject to approval) and Council borrowing); and (b) the process toward the appointment of an appropriate contractor.

Appendices: **A:** Location plan (indicating area of public car park to be included in development site)
 B: Principles of an Assheton Court decant policy

Background papers: Affordable Housing Strategy

Reference papers: Vision for Portchester

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Executive Briefing Paper

Date:	16 December 2019
Subject:	Assheton Court, Portchester
Briefing by:	The Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Portfolio:	Housing

INTRODUCTION

1. The Council's new Affordable Housing Strategy was adopted in October 2019. The Objectives and Actions from this strategy include seeking to provide additional affordable housing for those in need and to improve and update existing Council owned stock. Page 24 of the strategy specifically mentions Assheton Court in Portchester as one of the early projects to be addressed.
2. There is a need for additional sheltered housing accommodation in the Borough, including in Portchester, and the Assheton Court site is an ideal location for sheltered housing. If retained the current building will require notable works over the medium to long term in order to keep it structurally sound and address issues with the cavity wall insulation. Such works would still not overcome some of the buildings other shortcomings.
3. A redevelopment of the site is considered the most appropriate approach as it will allow a greater number of flats to be provided in what is an excellent sheltered housing location, whilst ensure the property meets modern standards and expectations. To further increase the number of flats a small area of the adjacent Long Stay East car park is proposed to be included as part of the Assheton site (see Appendix A). Associated works to the car park layout will ensure there would be no loss in the overall number of car parking spaces for shoppers/visitors to the centre.

BACKGROUND

The Building

4. The existing Assheton Court property was built in 1971. It currently contains 33 flats, 13 of which are less favourable bedsit accommodation. The main building does include lift access to the first floor but the annexe building currently has no lift access to the four upper floor flats.
5. The current Assheton building is two-storey in height and there are some issues attributable to the age and original design of the building. The structure of the building is relatively sound but would require costly works over the medium/long term to address

issues with the roof cladding and cavity wall insulation. The design of the building includes some narrow corridors and rarely used communal bathrooms (noting that all flats have their own bath/shower room). Any conversions of bedsits to 1-bed flats is likely to decrease the number of flats at the site and provide 1-bed flats with poor layout and potentially restricted corridor space. In general, the building is dated and fails to best utilise the land/site available.

Sheltered Need

6. There are approximately 170 customers currently on the Housing Register who are looking for, or needing, a sheltered housing property. Over 30 are specifically interested in sheltered accommodation in the Portchester area and, in addition to this, there are a further 10-20 households awaiting affordable housing in the Portchester area who are of an appropriate age to consider sheltered accommodation. The ageing profile of the borough means it is likely the need for older person accommodation will only increase over time. There is also a need for older person Shared Ownership properties (a different type of affordable housing). Households who would be interested in older person Shared Ownership will be in addition to the sheltered need identified from the Council's Housing Register.

REDEVELOPMENT OF ASSHETON COURT

7. The Assheton site is and remains an excellent location for sheltered accommodation due to its proximity to shops, services and public transport. Although refurbishment could achieve some improvements a redevelopment of the site could additionally provide: -
 - A far larger number of sheltered flats to help meet need (approximately 60 flats, or 70 flats if utilising a small area of the adjacent car park)
 - A high-quality scheme meeting modern standards and expectations
 - Wheelchair accessible flats and all flats capable of being accommodated by those with limited mobility (including increased mobility scooter storage)
 - A significantly improved energy efficiency rating and the incorporation of greener technologies; benefitting the wider environment and improving the energy costs/comfort for residents.
8. The current building is two-storey in height. A revised building could comfortably be three-storey in most parts and the elements of the building closer to the public car park could potentially be four-storey to provide a stronger presence and design feature facing toward the public car park. This would all involve careful consideration of the potential impact to neighbours, avoiding any significant detrimental impact to neighbours' light, outlook or privacy. All these matters will be carefully considered as part of developing a design for the site and the Council's Development Management team will be consulted as appropriate.
9. Car parking will be provided at a level appropriate for the use of the building and likely levels of car ownership for affordable older person housing. An appropriate balance will be achieved that seeks to provide enough parking whilst not artificially reducing the number of sheltered flats provided through the overprovision of parking space at the Assheton site.

EXTENDING THE OPPORTUNITY – PART OF PUBLIC CAR PARK

10. The excellent opportunity the site provides for sheltered accommodation can be further enhanced through the use of a small area of the adjacent Long Stay East car park. Incorporating a small area, equivalent to approximately 21 car parking spaces (as shown on Appendix A), will increase the potential number of flats at the site from approximately 60 to 70. It is important to note that this area of the public car park could be used following other changes to the layout of the wider Council owned car parks at Portchester village centre to ensure there is no net loss in the overall amount of public car parking spaces.
11. This site is in an ideal location for sheltered housing so maximising the opportunity to deliver more sheltered homes in a way that does not compromise the public car parking provision at Portchester village centre is a positive opportunity. It will allow the Council to further meet the needs of those Customers on the Council's Housing Register and wider older person affordable housing need.
12. In the event that wider opportunities to extend the site beyond Council owned land were to arise then these will be considered on their individual merits. The redevelopment of Assheton Court is not reliant on any land in private ownership, however the building design will consider any medium/long term potential expansion to the site/building. This will ensure that any wider opportunities to deliver more homes and regenerate nearby land can potentially be utilised in the future should the Council wish to do so.

PRINCIPLE & WIDER BENEFITS

13. At this stage the principle to progress a potential redevelopment of the site is sought, utilising a small area of the adjacent public car park. An additional Executive Report has been provided on this agenda which addresses the proposed public car park alterations more specifically (Portchester Village Centre Regeneration report). This demonstrates how the small area of public car park can be incorporated as part of the Assheton Court redevelopment site and, through layout amendments to the other Council owned car parks, still ensure there will be no net loss to the overall amount of car parking spaces. Indeed, a small marginal gain in the number of public car parking spaces is considered possible.
14. Whilst the Vision for Portchester did identify Council owned land to the south of the Coop (currently parking) for potential residential development there is no commitment to develop that site and the extension of the Assheton Court site, which has a similar land take to the site south of the Coop, would provide a deliverable and achievable alternative or addition that will positively contribute to the Assheton Court redevelopment opportunity.
15. There are other wider benefits that could also arise from the redevelopment of Assheton Court in addition to helping address older person housing need in an excellent location. These include (a) increased residential presence in the village centre and associated potential increased footfall and customer spend in the centre; and (b) a positive design presence through a redeveloped Assheton Court. This will be further complimented by potential enhancement works to the pedestrian links between the car parks and the precinct which are further explained in the Portchester Village Centre Regeneration report.

THE DECANT OF ASSHETON COURT RESIDENTS

16. A redevelopment of Assheton Court will require any remaining residents to be moved to alternative accommodation before any works take place. This is a sensitive and emotive matter and Officers in the Housing team will carefully consider the needs and wishes of those affected on an individual basis through face to face meetings. Residents will be assisted at every stage of the process and any reasonable moving costs will be provided in addition to a Home Loss Payment, which will be applicable in most instances. In 2019 the applicable amount is £6,400 per household. Any residents who are moved (decanted) would have the option to return to the redeveloped Assheton Court once it is complete.
17. To assist affected residents a series of Q&As has been made available. This will be regularly updated as more information relating to the project becomes available over time. A full Decant Policy will also be developed as the project progresses and the principles of the decant policy (to give an indication of the considerations and matters involved) is included in Appendix B for information.

APPROACH TO FUTURE VACANCIES/VOIDS AT ASSHETON COURT

18. There are currently 6 empty properties at Assheton Court (leaving 27 occupied). This can change sporadically as people move or sadly pass away. If the principle to redevelop Assheton Court is agreed then in most circumstances it is not intended that empty flats at Assheton Court (current and future) will be re-let.
19. Many of the flats require significant work (with associated cost) to bring them to a lettable standard and it is preferable to minimise the number of residents that must be decanted at a future date. It will be at the discretion of the Head of Housing and Benefits as to whether a re-let of an Assheton Court flat is appropriate. Any decision to re-let will consider matters such as the urgency of need, availability of alternative properties, quality/suitability of Assheton Court flat(s) available and the suitability of a potential resident for the property. As an example, this might include a customer whose hospital discharge is being held up because the individual, currently residing in a Council general purpose home, now needs a ground floor sheltered flat and there are no other appropriate flats available.

TIMELINE

20. The nearby sheltered housing project at Station Road will offer an ideal decant option for the Assheton Court residents in addition to any availability at other existing sheltered accommodation in the area or wider borough. This leads to a logical alignment of the timeframes between the Station Road and potential Assheton Court project. The intention being that the redevelopment of Assheton Court will follow on from Station Road being completed.
21. It is currently estimated that the Station Road sheltered site will be finished in the latter part of 2021 or early 2022. It is anticipated that the Assheton Court property could then be emptied and available for redevelopment at this point. Works to redevelop Assheton Court may take approximately 18-22 months thereafter meaning a redeveloped Assheton Court is likely to be available for occupation in 2023.
22. At this stage all timeframes are approximate and will become clearer as projects progress.

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Robyn Lyons (Ext 4305)