

Appendix B

Fort Fareham



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Fort Fareham

Address: Fort Fareham Road, Wallington Court, Southwick Court, Widley Court, Nelson Court and Redoubt Court
Housing Area: Fareham Southwest and Town Centre
Ward: Fareham South
Site Size: 2.87ha

X: 456980 **Y:** 104903

Current Use: Mix of tenures. Of the 106 properties on site, the Council owns: 19No. flats (2-storey), 13No. houses, 8No. garages, parking areas, drying areas and grassed areas.

The Site

Please Note: Indicative area only, private properties will not be included. Council properties denoted with a pink (houses) and brown (flats) coloured outline.



Current Stock Condition

Houses and Flats Externals

A total of 106 Council owned flats and houses were built in the subject area of Fort Fareham in 1968 (see site plan). Further properties extend to the north of the site but are of a different build type/age. Currently (2022), the Council owns 19 flats (including the freehold), 13 houses and 8 garages in this part of the estate. The flats are split between blocks of 4 units, all of these being one bedroom. All but one of the houses is 3 bedrooms, the exception being 2 bedrooms.

The construction of the flats and houses is known as 'Thomas Selleck Crosswall' a non-standard construction type. This means that the end gables of the properties are built out of traditional cast-concrete inner-leaf with an outer skin of brick. The front and back elevations are a dry-lined, pre-cast concrete panel. The infill between this is PVC-u panels and windows.

The construction type means that these homes do not meet current expectations on thermal efficiency. Although many of the properties are EPC C, many tenants still find their homes cold in the winter and more costly to heat as much of the warmth is lost through the front and rear PVC-u screen walls.



Left to right: Example of 3 bed house, gable end of flats detailing the construction feature, frontage of flats.

The windows and doors in some of the properties are due for replacement in the coming years. The existing window design is 'tilt and turn'. The hinges they sit on are unusually small in relation to the large opening size. This means that there is extra pressure on the hinges, and they can break easily. Furthermore, due to their unconventional design, they are difficult and expensive to replace.



Window within Nelson Court

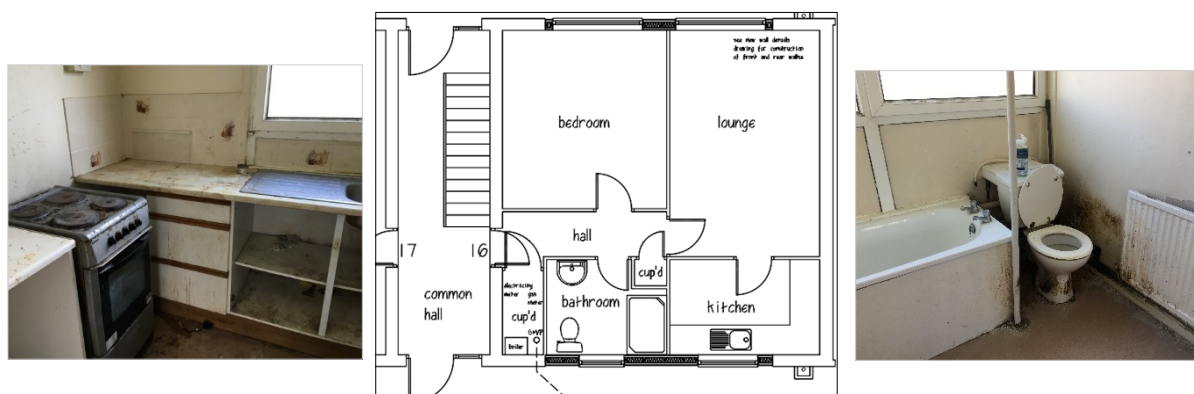
Houses

The design of the kitchen and the bathroom can be problematic. The fittings and fixtures are attached to the PVC-u panels. This can cause issues when replacing fixtures because of the non-standard nature of the walls. In some instances, the interiors need some amendment to allow for the tenants to fully utilise the space. For example, it has already been identified that a downstairs cloakroom would be of benefit to larger households.

Two of the properties are currently empty. This is because of an investigation into potential structural issues in one and the general condition of the other. The investigation is nearly complete, and no serious material works need to be undertaken. However, further examination of the sewers will confirm this.

Flats

The internal layout of the flats is cramped and does not maximise the available space. The kitchen and living area are all separated by partition walls. This has resulted in the properties being less accessible for those with mobility issues and having limited natural light, especially for north facing homes. The kitchen and bathroom fittings are also attached to the PVC-u panels here; the fixtures and fittings will need to be replaced if the panels are upgraded. The existing arrangement causes movement separation where fittings are fixed to flexible PVC-u substates.



Left to right: Kitchen, floor plan and bathroom within one of the flats.



The communal areas in the flats are also in need of redecoration. The areas are tired and would benefit from painting, new flooring and more energy efficient lighting. There is also an unused drying area on the first floor that serves no purpose now and also presents fire risk implications to the escape staircase for the upper flats.

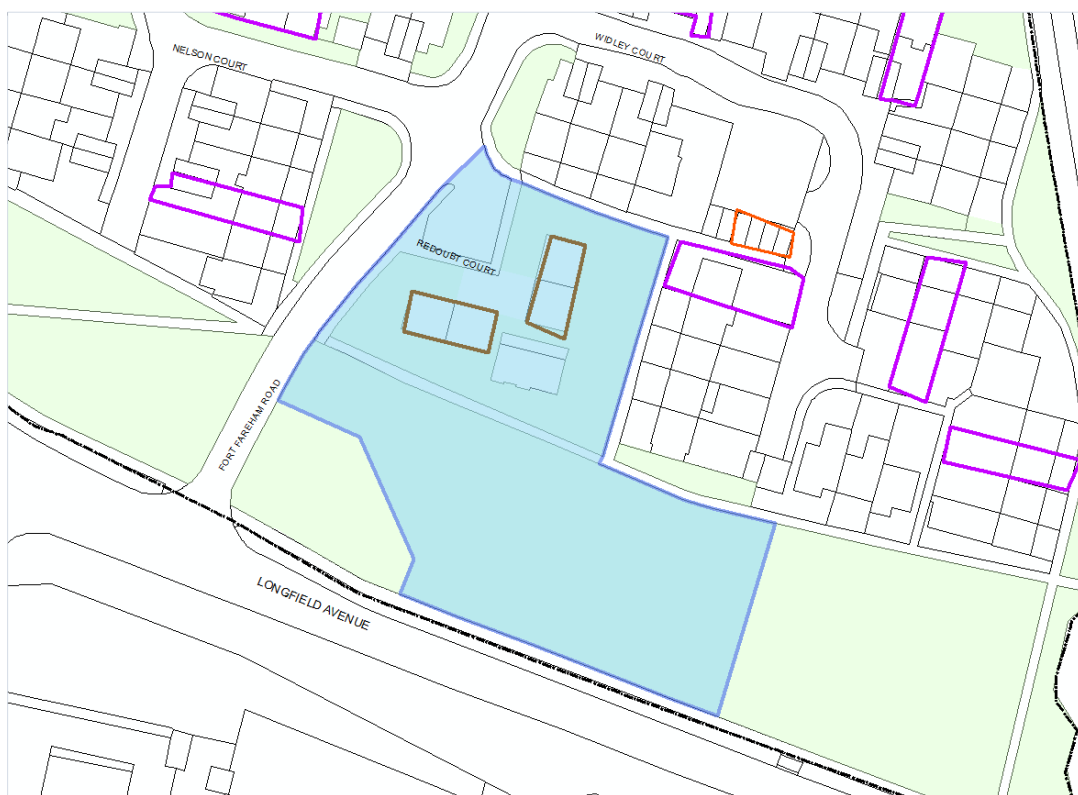
The flats have a communal entrance to the front and rear. Depending on which way the doors are facing, tenants will often use the rear door as the entrance as it provides more direct access to the parking areas.

Redoubt Court

Redoubt Court is situated at the southern end of the site. The flats here have aged badly and several of them require works to the extent that they cannot be let. One block has been boarded up and the boilers there have been decommissioned. Improvements have been placed on hold until the future of these units has been determined.

The two blocks are adjacent to a rarely used drying area and open space fronting onto Longfield Avenue. This area has been identified in the draft Local Plan 2037 as having potential for further affordable housing.

Newer homes tend to be far more energy efficient and can have greener measures incorporated within the design from the outset. The redevelopment/reconfiguration of this site will facilitate providing a larger number of affordable homes.



Draft Local Plan area (blue)

Wider Regeneration Opportunities

Fort Fareham benefits from large amounts of open areas. These include the open space to the south (extending outside of the Redoubt Court site, identified above), the grassed sections and the drying areas.

Drying Areas

The drying areas are for the tenants of the flats, as the houses have their own private gardens. The layout consists of several washing lines crossing the enclosed space with small sheds lining the boundary. The washing lines present a potential hazard for those accessing the space. However, some tenants do still use these areas for drying laundry.



Left to right: sheds, informal bin area, drying area.

The sheds in this location were originally used as bin stores, however, modern wheeled bins do not fit. It is also inconvenient for tenants to move to the collection point each week. Although some of the sheds are still used, many are left empty, damaged, or full of rubbish. There are occasional reports of fly tipping in these areas too. As these spaces are still used, they need improving, or alternative drying provision provided.

Grassed Areas

The areas around the Fort Fareham flats are well loved by the residents. However, recent feedback suggests that improvements could be made. Some areas suffer from low lighting, lack of seating, no storage (bikes etc), oddly fenced areas and inconsiderate parking on the pavements.

The grassed areas also have little in the way of a purpose. There is little variation in the planting, meaning there's scope for improving the biodiversity. There's no seating, which tenants have told us they'd like as they often sit and converse with their neighbours. Open spaces shape the character of an area; at present the space would benefit from enrichment. Some of the space *could* be considered to facilitate private garden areas (including washing line provision) for the ground floor flats, whilst still providing open publicly accessible space.



From right to left: Grass area between Wallington Court and Nelson Court, rear access to flats now fenced off ('lost area')

Land Factors

- 106 properties in total

Council Owned:

- 19No. flats
- 13No. houses
- 8No. garages
- Drying areas
- Grassed areas and open space

The remaining 88No. houses, 1No. flat and garages are all privately owned.

Other

Most of the private homes in Fort Fareham have a garage, however 8 Council owned garages remain. No works are proposed at the garages.

The nature of the original build type at Fort Fareham means that the existing houses and flats are not energy efficient and offer poor thermal comfort for Council tenants. The nature of the panel system can also generate issues due to the existing windows (size and hinges) and the fitting of bathrooms/kitchens. The flats also have additional issues. The internal layout is cramped and ill-suited for those with mobility issues. The drying areas and original bin sheds are out of date and prone to misuse.

Many of these issues need to be addressed and are already identified through the planned capital works programme. A more aspirational regeneration approach would look for wider improvements to enhance the housing offer and built environment at Fort Fareham. Officers will look for funding opportunities to seek to deliver some of the more aspirational/desired improvements that could further benefit Fort Fareham.

Although a large number of the properties at Fort Fareham are no longer in the Council's ownership, there remains a significant amount of homes and land in Council ownership here. The Fareham South area is a high need area for affordable housing.

The land at, and to the south of, Redoubt Court has been identified in the draft Local Plan as having housing potential. The remaining open space to the south-east of Redoubt Court would be retained. Subject to the adoption of the Local Plan 2037, the Redoubt Court site will provide the opportunity to improve or replace the Redoubt flat blocks, alongside creating further new affordable homes.

Existing Perception

Current residents of Fort Fareham and the wider community will likely have different perceptions and opinions on the area. However, most of the tenants within Fort Fareham have lived there for some time; it is rare for properties to become available for letting, which can be construed as a positive.

From a Council Housing perspective, the properties are known to perform poorly and can be more expensive to heat than other homes in the area. The surrounding grassed settings could also be improved to provide a more cohesive community feel, improved biodiversity and practical spaces.

Opportunity

Affordable Need

Fort Fareham is situated within a high need area for affordable housing. All sizes and types of properties are required, particularly family homes. Due to the mix of private and Council owned properties on the site, there is little opportunity for new development. However, redeveloping Redoubt Court could increase the number of affordable homes in the area.

Regeneration Potential – Houses

The properties scattered around Fort Fareham would benefit from enhanced energy efficiency measures. Within the Council owned properties, an improvement programme has been identified for the houses ensuring minimal disruption to tenants and a cost-effective programme.

The planned works are as follows:

- Provide deeper foundations to enable the replacement of the existing PVC-u panels with insulated and eternally cladded wall panels
- Replace windows
- Replace the kitchen & bathrooms
- Redecoration to areas affected by the works – painting, carpets etc.
- New heating where required

These programmes may take several years to complete for various reasons; the availability of decant properties for families, spreading costs and resolving supply chain issues, as but a few. The Council's Tenancy Services Team will be heavily involved to provide support, advice and assistance to the residents. Conversations have already been undertaken with the residents to understand how the programme may be rolled out.

Advice has been sought from the Council's Planning Team and no planning permissions are required for the works to the houses. They will however require sign-off from Building Control, post completion.

Regeneration Potential –Flats

An energy efficiency pilot was undertaken in 2021 at Nelson Court within one of the four flats in the block. This property had just become vacant and was the perfect opportunity to start improvements in the area. The same works were undertaken to the flat as identified for the houses above. The results of a post occupancy survey and energy usage comparison will be used to inform the regeneration plans for the remaining flats on the site.

The works to the flats will require planning permission. At the appropriate time, a Chartered Building Surveyor will be appointed to undertake the structural design and progress the project through planning and build. Any opportunities to learn and improve from the pilot flat will be considered.



Left to right: Pilot project – PVC-u panel prior to works, wall and window following works, frontage following works (bottom)

Aspirational Improvements

Subject to costs, various improvements could be considered to the flat blocks and their surrounding areas. Some of these are needed, and some would be more aspirational improvements should funding allow. This range between required improvement works and those improvements that would be nice (but not essential) to achieve, is articulated below:

Required

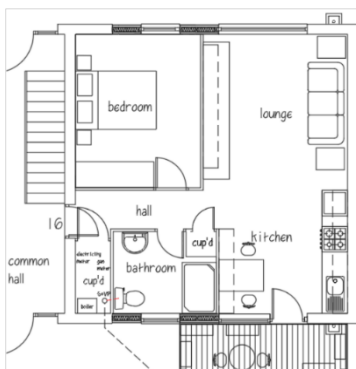


- Replacement of front/rear panel system to improve energy efficiency
- Replacement of fittings and fixtures in kitchen/bathrooms
- Ground floor flats made accessible for occupants with physical disabilities or limited mobility
- Update and decoration improvements to communal corridor/stairwell areas, including removing internal communal drying room space
- Internal layout improvements
- Greener measures (subject to structural constraints) such as solar panels
- Improve legibility (create one obvious front entrance with appropriate key entry at each block, rather than the current two)
- Improve lighting and seating in areas around the blocks
- Provide small private gardens to ground floor flats (low level boundary treatment)
- Replacement of communal drying areas with hardstanding or landscaping (appropriate bin storage/collection points and alternative drying and storage provision)

Desired /

Non-essential

- Improve biodiversity of open areas
- Balconies to first floor flats



Artist's impression of aspirational improvements, from left to right: community orchard, flat layout (incl. balcony), storage option

Redevelopment Potential – Redoubt Court

There is little scope within Fort Fareham to redevelop the site in its entirety. The Council owned homes are pepper-potted throughout, and so it would not be feasible to undertake a comprehensive approach to improvements/redevelopment. The trees on the western boundary are also protected by Tree Preservation Order (TPOs) so additional care must be taken when considering a development approach.

However, the immediate area at Redoubt Court could be used to provide further affordable homes. Should the Local Plan be adopted and include this site, the final number of new properties will depend on many factors. This includes the design approach and any restrictions around utilities such as sewers or pipes. At the appropriate time, an architect will be appointed to improve the existing buildings and seek to add new dwellings, or to design a more comprehensive full redevelopment of Redoubt Court.



Redoubt Court (courtesy of Google Street View)

The large, mature trees on the open space are highly valuable assets. They provide many benefits: shading, nesting for birds, a visible enhancement to the area and carbon sequestration, amongst other amenity gains. These trees are not part of the land identified in the draft Local Plan and even so, their benefits are innumerable. Therefore, they are not part of any potential development.

The site is also adjacent to Fort Fareham, a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Due to the sensitivities of this classification and the importance of the trees, an open space buffer will be retained to provide a clear boundary. This will help protect these indispensable assets. The key objective is to provide more affordable homes, reflect the local housing need and be sympathetic to character of the area.

Costs

The potential costs to deliver the energy efficiency works to the Council owned properties at Fort Fareham estate have been considered in conjunction with the Council's Finance Team.

Regeneration Potential – Houses

The improvements to the houses will be met by existing budgets. This work will be undertaken incrementally as and when decant properties become available. Due to availability and individual tenant circumstances, this may take several years to complete. This does however mean that the budget can be spread across financial years accordingly.

Regeneration Potential – Flats and Aspirational Improvements

The costs of many of the essential/required works can be met through existing budgets. However, officers will also consider future funding opportunities for the 'greener' elements such as the solar panels; maximising any suitable grant opportunities should they arise. The aspirational aspects of this project will require further consideration. Rising costs in the supply chain and improvements to other Council stock all need to be factored into the feasibility of the additional works.

The costs to address issues with the flats may also have implications for a current leaseholder who would need to contribute towards many of the remedial and improvement works.

Redevelopment Potential – Redoubt Court

No costs have been calculated for Redoubt Court as the site has yet to be confirmed for inclusion within the Local Plan. If/when this site is included, a full report will subsequently be brought to the Executive for approval.

Private Properties

There are 88No. houses in the area, the Council owns 13No. of them. With 15% ownership in the area this limits the potential for wider redevelopment. However, if there were opportunities which arose that provided land assembly for additional affordable housing, the Council will undertake further investigations.

It is appropriate that the Council focuses on improvement to its own properties. A number of private homeowners have already undertaken some sort of thermal upgrade to their homes. A few have also installed solar panels. Nevertheless, if private homeowners did approach the Council for advice on improvements, we will offer guidance and assist where possible.

Conclusion

A significant amount of money would need to be spent at Fort Fareham over the next 30 years. Replacement windows and updating the bathrooms and kitchens are only a small part of the cyclical works that would be required.

Like for like replacements will notably fail to improve the energy efficiency of the homes and the thermal comfort/costs for occupiers. It would also miss an opportunity to improve the appearance and longevity of Council homes, which could result in higher maintenance costs and more difficulty letting the homes in the future.

Alongside the essential improvements that have been budgeted for, officers will seek to progress some of the more aspirational improvements that will further enhance the housing offer and produce wider regeneration benefits for Fort Fareham. This is particularly relevant for the Council owned flats at Fort Fareham, but also in terms of future investment at the Redoubt Court site.