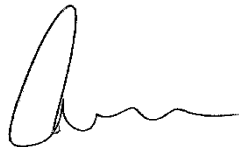


EXECUTIVE DECISION NOTICE

Date of Decision	5 February 2021
Decision Taker(s) Portfolio holder	Cllr Graham Carr-Jones
Designation	Portfolio Holder for Housing
Subject Matter	Purchase of a long-term empty property to provide affordable housing
Decision	The Portfolio Holder for Housing delegates to the Corporate Director for Housing to take all necessary steps to purchase and renovate the property known as West View, 8, The Plocks, Blandford Forum, Dorset, DT11 7AA using the unapproved capital pot 2020/21 and 2021/22
Reason for the Decision	To bring a long-term empty property back into use and create 5 units of temporary accommodation with on-site support.
Alternative Options considered and rejected	<p>Take no action – without Council intervention it is very likely that the property will remain empty for the foreseeable future. The Council has a high demand for temporary accommodation in this area.</p> <p>Purchase the property and ‘back to back’ private sale - The Council has a high demand for temporary accommodation and ‘West View’ represents an ideal opportunity to meet such demand.</p> <p>Compulsory Purchase – the current owner has agreed to sell the property to the Council and therefore acquiring the property using Compulsory Purchase powers is not appropriate.</p> <p>Empty Dwelling Management Order – this would require the Council to renovate the property, allocate tenants and manage the building for 7 years and then ‘hand it back’ to the current owner. As such this option does not offer long term value for money for the Council.</p>
Consultees	Assets and Property Housing Services Spatial and Community Policy Service Homes England Sovereign Housing

	Home Group
Budget Implications	<p>It is estimated that the buildings 'Existing Use Value – Social Housing' is in the region of £250,000.</p> <p>It is proposed that the unapproved capital pot 2020/21 'to bring a long-term empty property back into use' is used to purchase the property, with renovation costs being funded from the 2021/22 unapproved capital pot, should no other funding sources be available at that time.</p> <p>Renovation and improvement costs to make the property decent and safe are estimated to be in the region of £50-60,000 subject to detailed inspection.</p>
Legal Implications	None
Any Conflict of Interest?	None
Reference Documents	<p>Background information attached</p> <p>Appendix 1 – picture of site</p> <p>Appendix 2 – location map</p>



Signed:

Date: 5 February 2021

Designation: Portfolio Holder for Housing.

1. Background

'West View' is a substantial 5/6 bed property based in the centre of Blandford Forum and is currently owned by the Home Group (an RP based in Newcastle Upon Tyne). It's thought the property was acquired from Stoneham Housing Association through various stock acquisitions (see Appendix 1 for site picture)

The property has been empty for almost 6 years as the current owner has been unable to find an appropriate use and they have no other stock in the area. It's currently subject to 200% Premium Council Tax payments and is on the Councils 'Long Term Empty Property List'.

The property occupies a prominent position in the town (see location map in Appendix 2) and its status as a long-term empty property means it's been subject to complaint from residents and local Councillors.

The property has in the past been used to accommodate younger adults with onsite support. Each room is sizable with high ceilings and as a result feels 'spacious' and includes basic kitchenette, sink and food preparation and storage facilities. There is space for an office on site. Washing facilities are via 2 shared bathrooms/shower rooms.

Considering its lack of recent use, the property is generally in a fair condition; its wind and weatherproof but will require some renovation, improvement, fire detection and other safety works prior to occupation.

2. Proposed use

The property would lend itself to 5 bed-sitting rooms with each unit having its own kitchen facilities, sharing 2 bath/shower rooms. Some rooms maybe suitable as double units. There is space for an office for on-site support and informal discussions have already occurred with a local RP who have expressed an interest.

Although individual kitchen units reduce the amount of communal sharing, it can also increase the fire risk. As such specific attention will need to be paid to the provision of suitable fire precautions, detection, sprinkler system, means of escape and ongoing due diligence and property management.

3. Housing Need

There is a high housing need for temporary accommodation in the Blandford Forum area. The Service Manager for Housing Solutions reports that *'historically it has been extremely difficult to secure temporary accommodation whether that is through private landlords or bed and breakfast establishments.*

It is understood that the Housing Services Team currently has access to only one shared property in the Blandford Forum area that can be used for single homeless households. When this property is full, all further homeless households are offered accommodation in other areas such as Weymouth or Swanage.

There are currently 36 single households with an accepted homeless duty on the housing register, who would prefer and have support or links to the Blandford Forum area. Of these, 24 have an accepted accommodation duty and show a preference for the Blandford Forum area (data correct as of 18th January 2021).

4. Budget implications

The Home Group have indicated that the open market value of the property is in the region of £290,000.

Home Group and Dorset Council have obtained quotes and are now in the process of appointing surveyors for a valuation of the property for its 'Existing Use Value – Social Housing' which will be lower than the open market to reflect its current and likely future use, which is expected to be in the region of £250,000.

It is proposed that the unapproved capital pot 2020/21 to bring a long-term empty property back into use is used to purchase the property, with renovation costs being funded from the 2021/22 unapproved capital pot, should no other funding sources be available.

Renovation and improvement costs to make the property decent and safe are estimated to be in the region of £50-60,000 subject to detailed inspection.

The aim is to complete on the purchase by the end of March 2021, although it is appreciated that this is an ambitious target given the current circumstances.

Appendix 1



Front view of Westview, The Plocks, Blandford Forum

Appendix 2

Location of 'West View', 8 The Plocks, Blandford Forum

