

# Report

13

Report to:	<b>Housing and Technical Resources Committee</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>16 September 2009</b>
Report by:	<b>Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources)</b>

Subject:	<b>Regeneration and Improvement of Properties at Midfield Road, Coalburn</b>
----------	--

## 1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ provide an update on the outcome of recent consultation with local residents on proposals to demolish properties in the Midfield Road/Beechmount Avenue area of Coalburn
- ◆ request approval for the recommended action to address over supply of housing including the demolition of up to 28 houses at 2 to 28 Midfield Road, and 1 to 27 Midfield Road, Coalburn and investment in the remaining stock

## 2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the 28 houses at 2 to 28 Midfield Road and 1 to 27 Midfield Road, are demolished and the cleared site landscaped for inclusion in the current open space contract maintenance programme for Coalburn. The estimated costs are set out in section 7 of this report.
- (2) that further consultation is undertaken with tenants and residents affected by the demolition proposals to establish their rehousing preferences.
- (3) that existing tenants are offered alternative housing and compensated in accordance with the statutory Homeloss and Disturbance Scheme.
- (4) that the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources), in consultation with the Head of Legal Services, be authorised to exercise powers under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 to obtain vacant possession of the tenanted properties approved for demolition within Midfield Road where reasonable offers of suitable alternative accommodation under the terms of this Act have been refused.
- (5) that the Executive Director (Enterprise Resources), in consultation with the Head of Legal Services as required, be authorised to negotiate the voluntary purchase by the Council of the 2 owner occupied properties affected by the demolition proposals.
- (6) that current and future void Council housing at 2 to 28 and 1 to 27 Midfield Road is designated as 'initiative voids' and the Council's Allocation Policy is suspended.
- (7) that core Council rented stock which remains within Coalburn is improved through the Home Happening programme and associated works. The estimated costs for improving the former Scottish Homes stock in Midfield area are in section 7.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1. Previous reports to Committee over the last few years have highlighted issues in a number of rural villages with regard to levels of demand for rented housing. A number of actions have already been taken to demolish and consolidate the housing stock in Forth, Carstairs Junction, Glespin, Rigside and Douglas Water to better reflect the need and demand for housing and help to ensure future sustainability. This report focuses on proposals for the housing stock in the Midfield area of Coalburn which was transferred from Scottish Homes to the Council in 2004.
- 3.2. The Council has a 231 rented homes in Coalburn, split over two letting areas including 154 units within the Coalburn Road letting area and 77 in the Midfield letting area, shown as highlighted in bold in Appendix 1. At 61%, the overall proportion of Council housing stock in the village is high. The Council's Local Housing Strategy Assessment for Coalburn confirms that there remains a persistent problem of low demand and housing oversupply of rented housing within the village.
- 3.3. The 102 homes within the Midfield letting area were all formerly owned and managed by Scottish Homes. In 2004, following a positive ballot conducted by Communities Scotland and endorsed by the Housing and Technical Resources Committee, the rented houses were transferred to South Lanarkshire Council. Of the 102 properties 25 are now sold. (A further 23 Scottish Homes properties, also transferred to the Council from Scottish Homes, are located within the Coalburn Road letting area).
- 3.4. Within the 77 Council rented homes at Midfield, 14 properties all located at Midfield Road, are currently void (18%). As can be seen from the attached plan, there are 3 streets that define this letting area, Midfield Road, Beechmount Avenue and Bellfield Road. There are no flats and 47% of the current rented stock consists of 4 and 5 apartment houses for which there is no waiting list.
- 3.5. Annual turnover rates on the estate have increased significantly during the past 3 years, from a situation in 2006/07 when the rate was already 4.3% above the South Lanarkshire average, at 12.5% to 22.1% in 2007/08. The impact of increasing tenancy change, the high failure rate of new tenancies and the absence of demand from the waiting list means that it is no longer a viable long term option for the Council to retain all of the current rented housing stock within this estate.
- 3.6. To meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard, the properties require extensive upgrading including new roofs, gutters and downpipes, rough casting as well as internal upgrading to solid fuel heating systems, fitments, stud walling, wiring, insulation systems etc. Design Services have estimated that the refurbishment costs are likely to be in the region of £50K per property or approximately £3.8M to improve all of the 77 Council owned properties.
- 3.7. In the context of sound asset management, given the rising level of low demand, increasing void problems and high cost of improvement, the Council undertook consultation with local residents on the future of the estate to help inform a strategy to address oversupply and consolidate investment in retained stock in the area to ensure future sustainability of the community.
- 3.8. The following paragraphs set out the outcome of this consultation and survey which was completed by affected residents. The report then makes recommendations for a strategy to improve the future sustainability of the housing stock through partial demolition and investment in retained stock.

#### **4. Consultation – June 2009**

- 4.1. Following the issue of a letter to all residents within the Midfield Road letting area, a detailed consultation and information exercise was undertaken with local residents over the period from 13 July to 4 August 2009. This took the form of home visits by housing staff to tenants and owners in the Midfield Road and Beechmount Avenue area. Local residents were invited to give their views on a number of issues including the effects of increasing problems of low demand, rising turnover and the overall investment requirements, as well as the Council's options for selective or full demolition of housing stock in the Midfield Road area. 49 households (78% of the occupied stock) (35 tenants and 14 owners), took part in this exercise. As noted above 14 properties are currently empty.
- 4.2. The survey results showed that the majority of the 49 respondents want to remain living in the Midfield Road area. Of the 35 tenants, 12 supported the demolition proposals, and 23 preferred to stay in their current homes of which 8 expressed this view very strongly. It was clear from both the survey of tenants and owners that a sizable majority wish to stay in the Coalburn area where they have long established family connections.
- 4.3. Of 14 owners only 4 were unqualified in their support for relocation and of the 4 households, 2 expressed concerns about the affordability of buying a house elsewhere. The majority of owners wanted to stay in their current homes, typically because they had strong family connections in the area. Some expressed strong reservations that a Council voluntary buy back scheme would not provide sufficient compensation for the cost of improvement work undertaken to their homes.
- 4.4. It was clear from the exercise that tenants and owners do want the Council to arrive at clear decisions concerning the future of the Midfield Road area. There was a clear consensus around the need to invest in the area through house improvements and that more priority should be given to addressing incidents of unacceptable behaviour on the estate.

#### **5. Conclusions/Recommendations**

- 5.1. Based on the findings of the survey, and the strong desire for a number of residents to remain in the area, the proposed strategy is for partial demolition of some of the housing stock in Midfield Road. This will involve demolition of 28 units and rehousing 16 tenants and 2 owners. The rehousing needs of displaced tenants will be met from housing in the Coalburn area or outwith for tenants seeking a move elsewhere. There are currently 10 empty properties in this Road. The remaining stock in the area will be upgraded to improve its quality and future long term sustainability of the estate.
- 5.2. The proposals are set out in the plan at Appendix 1. Area 1 in the Plan highlights the 28 properties recommended for demolition, comprising numbers 2 to 28 and 1 to 27 Midfield Road. There is a concentration of void properties in this part of the street with 10 of the 28 properties already empty. The proposed demolitions will reduce the number of larger house types in the area by half, reflecting current demand levels for smaller houses. Area 2 in the plan highlights 36 properties from 30 to 64 Midfield Road, 29 to 59 Midfield Road, and 11 and 12 Beechmount Avenue which it is proposed to retain. Within this area there are 24 Council owned properties and 12 owner occupiers.

- 5.3. The remaining stock in the area will be upgraded to improve its quality and future long term sustainability of the estate beginning in 2010/11. It is proposed that the 24 tenanted properties along with similar properties in the rest of the estate will be improved as part of the Council's Home Happening investment programme for the Midfield estate and advice and assistance will be offered to the 12 existing owners seeking to improve their own properties through the Scheme of Assistance. The wider objective of this investment will be to achieve the Scottish Housing Quality Standard for all Council rented housing in Coalburn by 2015.
- 5.4. The demolition of the 28 properties will be undertaken as part of the Term Contract on a phased basis as the rehousing progresses and blocks become empty. It should be noted that the timescale for rehousing and demolition will be subject to the identification of suitable alternative housing to meet the needs of individual families being rehoused. The Council will ensure that estate management and security measures for void housing are given a high priority in the lead up to demolition.

## **6. Employee Implications**

- 6.1. None.

## **7. Financial Implications**

- 7.1. The costs associated with the demolition proposals for the 28 houses at Midfield Road are as follows:-

Demolition of 28 houses at £4k per house	£112,000
Owners buy back, 2 houses at £55k per house	£110,000
Statutory Homeloss and Disturbance, 16 tenants and 2 owners at £2,250 per household	£40,500
Security costs for void housing prior to demolition	£20,000
Landscaping and boundary treatments of cleared site	£40,000
<b>Total estimated costs</b>	<b>£322,500</b>

- 7.2. In the short term there will continue to be costs incurred in void security, maintenance, estate management and day to day repairs which will be met from existing budgets.
- 7.3. The anticipated investment in the remaining 51 rented properties in the Midfield area is expected to be £2.55m over the next 5 years.

## **8. Other Implications**

- 8.1. None.

## **9. Equalities Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements**

- 9.1. Consultation with residents, local elected members, representatives of the Clydesdale South Tenants and Residents Forum and local agencies will continue to inform the detailed implementation plan and the rehousing options.
- 9.2. The impact assessment of the proposals in this report will be in relation to rehousing outcomes for residents, which will be monitored within the overall framework of the Council's housing allocation policy. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy and therefore no separate impact assessment is required.

**Jim Hayton**  
**Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources)**

20 August 2009

**Link(s) to Council Objectives and Values**

- Improve the quality, access and availability of housing
- Improve the quality of the physical environment

**Previous References**

- Housing and Technical Resources Committee report October 2007 'Update on housing regeneration action in key neighbourhood management areas'

**List of Background Papers**

None

**Contact for Further Information**

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

Stewart Gibb, Area Services Manager (Clydesdale)

Ext: 810 3525 (Tel: 01555 673525)

E-mail: [stewart.gibb@southlanarkshire.gov.uk](mailto:stewart.gibb@southlanarkshire.gov.uk)

## Housing and Technical Resource Committee – Coalburn Report - Appendix 1

