



Contains Confidential or Exempt Information	No
Title	Brentford Towers: Ensuring the towers long-term future
Member Reporting	Councillor Steve Curran, Leader of the Council steve.curran@hounslow.gov.uk
Contact Details	Sonny McCann, Senior Housing Development sonny.mccann@hounslow.gov.uk
For Consideration By	Affordable Housing Committee
Date to be Considered	5 August 2015
Implementation Date if Not Called In	N/A
Affected Wards	Brentford
Keywords/Index	Affordable housing, HRA, Brentford, Towers, Green Dragon Estate, External Cladding

1. Details of Recommendations

The Affordable Housing Committee is asked to note that:

1. The towers require major investment works for health and safety reasons as the existing cladding is affected by concrete deterioration. The preferred investment option is to over clad the towers with a rain screen cladding system.
2. A full report on the major investment works for over cladding the existing towers will be presented to the Affordable Housing Committee for approval, with indicative costs to be included within the update to the HRA Business Plan due to be reported to Cabinet in October 2015.
3. The results of a development capacity study for the estate support the long term retention of the towers, indicating that housing outputs would be maximised through in-fill development on currently vacant areas of land and making use of vacant spaces within the tower buildings. The site capacity study indicates the potential to add 126 - 188 units of new affordable housing subject to further detailed studies.

If the recommendations are adopted, how will residents benefit?	
Benefits to residents and reasons why they will benefit, link to Values	Dates by which they can expect to notice a difference
Safe and thermally efficient homes	2016-18
Aesthetic improvements to the tower blocks	2016/18
Provision of new affordable homes.	2020-2025

2. Report Summary

1. This report seeks to update the Committee on the favoured options both in terms of major investment works and future infill development opportunities.
2. This report recommends after being informed by investigations and studies a long-term investment approach and retention of Brentford Towers.
3. These recommendations are being made in order to ensure the long-term future of Brentford Towers and enable the Council to maximise the housing potential of the Brentford Towers estate.
4. If adopted, the key financial implications for the Council are the cost to the HRA to fund the projects and build costs, as well as the future revenue costs and income to the HRA of any newly completed homes. The capital programme may need to be re-profiled to accommodate the resources for the major investment works and this will be done as part of the review of the HRA Business Plan due to be reported to Cabinet in October 2015.
5. An additional point to note is that for health and safety reasons make-safe surveys are currently undertaken on a six-monthly basis. Abseiling techniques are used to inspect externally clad surfaces to remove loose material from the concrete panels considered to be at risk of falling.

3. Reason for Decision and Options Considered

FUTURE OF THE EXISTING BRENTFORD TOWERS

- 3.1 The Brentford Towers Estate consists of 6 towers built between 1968 and 1972 and is located off Green Dragon Lane (Brentford) as shown in Appendix A. The tower blocks are 23 storeys high and each tower consists of 88 flats 528 in total with 34 leaseholders at present.
- 3.2 Major works are required to address current health and safety issues relating to the exterior of the building and ensure the long-term future of the Towers. The existing external wall panels cladding the towers are progressively deteriorating resulting in several areas of exposed reinforcement where concrete from the cladding panels has fallen off. Unless treated the deterioration process is likely to produce more loose concrete debris falling from height. With the associated risks this poses fenced exclusion zones and scaffold crash decks have been installed at the base of the elevations as a health and safety precaution.
- 3.3 There has been a history of repairs to halt the concrete deterioration over the years. Inspection and investigation works had been carried out in 1993. These

works comprised an external safety survey and testing to all elevations. In 1994 concrete repairs were carried out and an anti-carbonation coating was applied to all surfaces. Further survey works were undertaken in December 2012, and following this make-safe surveys were undertaken on a six-monthly basis using abseiling techniques, with loose material removed.

- 3.4 A detailed investigation involving a condition assessment and structural inspection were completed by professional advisors in August 2014. The resultant report concluded further deterioration to the concrete cladding panels will inevitably occur unless some remedial action is taken.
- 3.5 The six remedial options considered with in the professional advisors report are shown in Table 1. Two of these options: 5 – External Wall Insulation (EWI) and 6 – Rain Screen propose over cladding which provide a long-term solution to deal with the concrete deterioration. The remaining options are of a more short-term nature with option 2 the make safe option being the current status quo.

Table 1: Remedial options for major works investment

Option	Comments
1.Do nothing	Clearly this is not an option for the Council or our residents given the health and safety implications.
2. Make Safe	This is the current course of action and is a short-term remedy pending a longer term solution with ongoing health and safety considerations.
3.Conventional patch repair	A medium term solution with a 5-10 year life expectancy and ongoing maintenance considerations.
4.Conventional patch repair with augmentation for corrosion resistance	Again a medium term solution with a longer life expectancy of 10 – 15 years and ongoing maintenance considerations.
5.Overcladding following make safe repairs:EWI	External Wall Insulation: is a longer-term over cladding solution with a life expectancy in excess of 20 years. It has a lower capital cost than option 6 but still requires maintenance making it a more expensive option than rain screen in lifecycle cost terms. As with options 3 and 4 this solution is not fully guaranteed.
6.Overcladding following make safe repairs: Rain Screen	Rain Screen: has a higher capital cost but significantly increases life expectancy of the building. The maintenance requirements for this option are low as this system involves factory grade components with manufacturer warranties.

- 3.6 The over cladding options entail a completely new skin being applied to the whole of the external walls to upgrade performance and appearance of the original building. This includes improving the thermal performance of the buildings in line with the Council’s sustainability aspirations. After careful consideration the rain screen cladding system is the favoured long-term option for renovating Brentford Towers in preference to EWI. The scheme can be

progressed using existing appointed consultants and drawing upon allocated funding already approved for professional services.

- 3.7 However, recent measures announced as part of the July 2015 budget will result in a loss of revenue to the HRA, both in the immediate and longer term. As the Council is already committed to a large programme of capital investment during Phase 1 of the HRA Business Plan, it may no longer be possible to accommodate the costs of the full rain screen cladding option during the Phase 1 period. This will be evaluated as part of the update to the Business Plan in October 2015. If the rain screen cladding costs cannot be accommodated within Phase 1, it may be necessary to adopt Option 3 or 4 as a temporary measure to ensure safety, with a future plan to implement Option 6 in Phase 2 of the Business Plan when funding becomes available.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITES

- 3.8 In considering the investment options to address the concrete deterioration part of the assessment criteria was based on the longevity of the solution and future development potential of the site. A draft capacity analysis of the estate was undertaken in order to understand what the long term future options for the estate may be.
- 3.9 The regeneration of Brentford is a key priority of Hounslow’s emerging Local Plan. Furthermore, the plan includes a spatial strategy for Brentford that specifically promotes targeted social, economic and environmental improvements to the Brentford Towers. As such, the Local Plan will support development that improves the estate environment.
- 3.10 The draft site capacity study considers the five options shown in table 2. The outcome of the study reveal option 1 or 1a are the most feasible given the number of occupied homes on the estate – both tenanted and leasehold – and constraints relating to increasing the density and heights of buildings. The study found demolition of the existing towers would not produce enough additional homes to justify the cost and implications for existing residents.
- 3.11 If the Committee wishes to pursue infill development opportunities then it is recommended that these options form the basis of a further detailed study and subsequent planning application as part of the Phase 2 investment programme for the HRA Business Plan.

Table 2: Draft Study – infill development options

Option	Comments	Variance on existing 528 units
1. Retain existing towers	Considers the introduction of 3 additional 10 storey blocks to create approx. 126 additional units with existing car parking retained.	Uplift of 126
1a. Retain existing towers and create	Same as option 1 with the introduction of low-rise terraced housing fronting Green Dragon Lane to create approx. 188 additional units with majority existing car parking retained.	Uplift of 188

streetscape		
1b. Retain existing towers and develop adjacent land parcel	Same as option 1 which considers the development potential of adjacent land parcel currently containing a play area to create approx.143 additional units with existing car parking retained.	Uplift of 143
2. Demolition of 3 tower blocks	This option explores the opportunities arising from re-providing three towers and retaining the remainder. This option results in a reduction of units and fails to deliver a comparable number of units to that already existing.	Reduction of 92
3. Demolition of 6 tower blocks	This option offers the opportunity to consider a site wide masterplan approach. Replacing all six existing towers with a reconfigured site and introducing a range of tenures. As with option 2 this option results in a reduction of units and fails to deliver a comparable number of units to that already existing.	Reduction of 288

3.12 The Council has also been approached by a private developer with an interest in purchasing land from the Council in order to demolish two tower blocks and provide a mix of private and affordable replacement homes. However, as our own capacity study indicates that partial demolition would not maximise the housing potential of the estate, these proposals are unlikely to be favoured. As details of the proposals emerge they will be assessed and a further report presented to Affordable Housing Committee if there should be any change from this position.

3.13 In addition to the in-fill opportunities, there exists potential opportunities to create a further two units utilising vacant areas in each of the tower blocks. At mezzanine level there are open areas that wrap around the entrance and core areas that could accommodate 12 flats in total. These represent opportunities to deliver additional new affordable units whilst completing the favoured over cladding investment option. The infill development opportunities as shown in option 1 and 1a would be a separate scheme delivered as part of Phase 2 subject to each scheme's cost and viability.

A considerable amount of work will be required to turn the favoured Options 1 or 1a into an acceptable development proposal and further discussions will be needed with all the agencies concerned including local residents in the normal way as part of design development prior to submitting a planning application for the development.

3.14 Therefore, if the Committee wishes to pursue both the favoured investment and infill development options, Affordable Housing and Supply Services would propose to commission initial design work for the in-fill development as funds become available during Phase 1. However, it should be noted that, due to the revenue reduction referred to in paragraph 3.7, it is unlikely that it will be possible to commence any development until Phase 2 of the Business Plan. A full report on the favoured investment option for over cladding the existing towers will be presented to Affordable Housing Committee by the Asset Management Service in due course.

4. Key Implications

- 4.1 The key implications are that concrete deterioration will continue if left untreated. Until such time that the major investment works commence there remains a need to continue undertaking the make-safe surveys and review the frequency on which these are conducted.

5. Financial Details

a) Financial Impact On The Budget (Mandatory)

This report does not directly change the resource allocations set out in the HRA Business Plan. Re-profiling of capital requirements to deliver the recommendations of this report will be carried out as part of the update to the HRA Business Plan in October 2015.

b) Financial Background (optional)

c) Comments of the Assistant Director Strategic Finance

This report is updating the committee on the different options available for both the major investment works and future development opportunities for Brentford Towers. The Government has announced a reduction in rents charged by Local authorities which will result in significantly less funding available for the delivery of the various priorities within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), for example the core HRA capital programme and the programme of delivery of new build council housing. Initial estimates suggest the loss of income in the first four years from what was originally projected, is in the region of £12m.

The HRA business plan is currently being updated to reflect updated reserve balances, and the updated rental income projections. This report does not provide estimated costs for the different options for the major investment works. As part of the update of the plan, indicative costs will need to be taken into account in order to determine if resources are available to fund the major investment works. The updated plan will be presented to Cabinet in October 2015.

6. Legal

Procurement will be in accordance with the Council's Corporate Procurement Plan. Legal advice will be available in respect of the contractual terms to be agreed.

The AHC may delegate decisions to an officer, in this case the Assistant Director for Housing by virtue of Section 9E of the Local Government Act 2000 as amended.

Comments of the Head of Corporate Governance

There are no legal implications that arise from this information only report.

7. Value For Money

The major investment works are essential to ensure the long-term future of the towers.

The works will be procured competitively where cost and quality will be evaluated to ensure value for money is achieved most likely using an OJEU compliant framework. Grant funding opportunities will be considered during the design process to establish whether the works can attract external funding.

8. Sustainability Impact Appraisal

The over cladding proposal has been sustainably appraised and a summary is provided below:

Environmental Sustainability:

- Fully utilising and recycling the embodied energy in the existing structure
- Substantially reduced carbon emissions and maintenance of embedded carbon
- Avoids the increased environmental impact of demolition and replacement or new build
- Utilisation of predominantly recycled materials in the over cladding system which are reusable at the end of the useful life
- Contribute towards the combat of climate change through reduction in carbon emissions

Social Sustainability

- Over cladding with new envelope transforms the external and internal appearance creating an aesthetically attractive building fit for 2015 and beyond
- Potential to create 12 new units as part of the over cladding major works
- Achievable without decanting occupants and maintaining full building use
- Proven performance with examples of 20-year-old projects in Hounslow that have
- Reduce domestic fuel bills
- Reduce the adverse effects of cold damp homes on health

Economic Sustainability

- Reduced heating costs to local residents due to improved thermal efficiency of the building
- Extend the serviceable life of the building
- Substantially reduce outgoing maintenance costs
- Contribute to reducing health costs to the National Health Service caused by poor housing

Any new homes will be designed to achieve the relevant carbon reduction standards at the time of development, and will meet all London Plan and Local Planning Authority requirements relating to sustainability.

9. Risk Management

Risks	Uncontrolled Risk	Controls	Controlled Risk
The major investment works is not undertaken and concrete deterioration continues	Continued risk due to the potential of falling concrete	Current precautions and make-safe regime remain ongoing.	Favoured over cladding solution is financially viable and deliverable after obtaining firm prices for completing the works.
Public opposition to proposals.	Negative coverage in local press and online media	Extensive public engagement and consultation	Some opposition but also support for proposals
Schemes do not achieve planning consent or become unviable due to design and planning process.	Local objections or from statutory consultees	Early engagement with those affected	Achieving planning permission with minimal representations in opposition to the scheme

10. Links to Council Priorities

Secure a further 3,000 affordable homes, of which 400 will be new Council Homes.

11. Equalities, Human Rights and Community Cohesion

The Council has to give due regard to its Equalities Duties, in particular with respect to general duties arising pursuant to the Equality Act 2010, section 149. Having due regard to the need to advance equality involves, in particular, the need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.

In considering the relevance of the proposals to the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998 it does not appear that the equalities duties and the human rights Articles are engaged by this proposal. As the report does not have any significant bearing on the substantive equality duty it is not considered necessary to undertake an Equality Analysis.

12. Staffing/Workforce and Accommodation implications:

The Committee are not being asked to make any decisions with implications in relation to staffing/workforce and accommodation in this report.

13. Property and Assets

14. Any Other Implications

None

15. Consultation

Consultation will be carried out with neighbouring residents for each scheme by the project team, and also through the planning process. This to include informal resident's consultation, engagement with statutory consultees and internal stakeholders.

16. Timetable for Implementation

N/A

17. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Plan 1 showing site location.

18. Background Information

None

REPORT ENDS