



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL



Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

21 September 2023

Councillor Phil Dilks
Cabinet member for Housing and
Planning

Earlesfield Project Overview September 2023

Report Author

Julie Martin, Head of Technical Services

 Julie.martin@southkesteven.gov.uk

Purpose of the Report

To update the committee on the progress of the Earlesfield Project, providing an overview of the project position, completed works and projected timescales.

Recommendations

That Committee:

1. Note the contents of the report and the progress being made to deliver on the Earlesfield Project to resolve long standing issues within our housing stock.

Decision Information	
Is this a Key Decision?	No
Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	Housing that meets the needs of all residents
Which wards are impacted?	All

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 The budget required to complete the works associated with the Earlesfield Project is included in the approved 2023/24 Revenue and Capital budgets.

Completed by: Alison Hall-Wright, Assistant Director of Finance and Deputy S151 Officer

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 There are no significant legal and governance implications associated with this report which is to note progress made on the project.

Completed by: Graham Watts, Assistant Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 The Council has a clear commitment in its Corporate Plan 2020-2023 to provide "Housing that meets the needs of all residents" and the timely delivery of improvements to its social housing stock, which includes a significant number of properties on the Earlesfield Estate in Grantham, is a key element to this.
- 2.2 The Earlesfield Estate contains 1014 Council-owned properties, of which 152 are "Wimpey No Fines" design, a post-war non-standard construction archetype. In 2021, the Council identified as part of its landlord responsibilities that these property types contained asbestos containing material (ACM). Although not presenting an immediate risk of harm to residents, it is best practice to remove

ACM. It is confirmed that there are no other properties in the Council's housing stock of this archetype.

- 2.3 In May 2022 it was agreed for the project to be completed by a contractor, United Living. As part of this delivery there are monthly contract monitoring meetings and quarterly meetings with our contractors that are attended by the Council's Chief Executive. There is also an on-site dedicated office where our operational staff linked to the project are based.
- 2.4 There have been site visits undertaken to completed properties by the Leader, Cabinet Member and the ward members. Appendix 1 – pictures after completion of works.
- 2.5 Each property has a bespoke specification setting out the major elements of works required. The works will include where needed, replacement of major components such as the kitchen, bathroom, heating system, electrics and windows. Appendix 2 – Programme of properties completed and scheduled to include the scope of works undertaken is indicative of the works undertaken as of the 8th of September 2023.
- 2.6 To date we have completed 19 property refurbishments. This represents a slower than anticipated project delivery resulting in the need for us to extend the contract to enable the completion of all properties.
- 2.7 There have been several factors which have introduced unforeseen delays into the contract and the most significant of these is the process to identify and safely remove the asbestos containing material. Whilst surveys and planning were undertaken prior to the project, discussions held with the HSE (Health & Safety Executive) in terms of the planning of this project at delivery stage, identified that testing of some of the material in the property could only be done once the tenants had been decanted. The impact of this is delays of up to 3 weeks per property to survey and submit the paperwork to the HSE.
- 2.8 The original scope of works did not include replacement of the windows, however the emerging strategy to improve energy efficiency in the Council's property stock prompted a revisit of this decision and the scope was widened to include windows so that full property refurbishment was achieved.
- 2.9 To mitigate the delays, we are extending the number of properties available as decant properties and working with tenants to consider their needs and offer alternative properties as a direct let where this meets the provisions of the Allocations Policy. This is enabling us to make best use of our housing stock and enable several downsizing opportunities to existing tenants releasing much needed family accommodation.

- 2.10 The flexibility now operating within the project has improved property turnaround and achieved better outcomes for tenants and we have identified further voids on the Earlesfield Estate and are increasing the number of decant properties available to United Living from 10 to 18.
- 2.11 United Living will be carrying out the void works and bringing these into the overall programme to enable the number of properties achieving completion to be increased. The overall effect of the delays despite the mitigations, means that the programme will look to complete by the end of April 2025.
- 2.12 The Council is currently in the process of formalising the changes to contract with United Living and the cost of additional works not included in the original scope of work have been allocated from the Windows and Doors Capital budget.

3. Key Considerations and Other Options Considered

- 3.1 Careful consideration was given as to the inclusion of the windows, however it was agreed that the tenants will go through significant upheaval on this project to accommodate the work and inclusion of the new windows would minimise further disruption in the future. It is anticipated that the Council will achieve greater tenant satisfaction in the finished project and meet its strategic objectives through the inclusion as part of the project scope.
- 3.2 There were originally 10 decant properties allocated to the project and with the delays in survey and asbestos remediation, to continue with the same number of decant properties would result in a programme extending well beyond April 2025.

4. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 4.1 Report is for information and noting.

5. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Pictures after completion of works

Appendix 2 – Programme of properties completed and scheduled