
REPORT TO:	HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 13
DATE OF MEETING:	30th AUGUST 2007	CATEGORY: RECOMMENDED
REPORT FROM:	MARK ALFLAT – DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	BOB LEDGER	DOC:
SUBJECT:	Willoughby House / Granville Court	REF:
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	Swadlincote	TERMS OF REFERENCE: HCSO1

1. Recommendations and Purpose

- 1.1 That officers progress options for the improvement/redevelopment of the Willoughby House and Granville Court sheltered housing properties.

2. Background

- 2.1 Willoughby House and Granville Court are two sheltered housing schemes across the road from one another in Hall Farm Road, Swadlincote. Until last year, when it was demolished, the County Council's Oaklands property, centred on dementia sufferers, was also adjacent. These three sites are also surrounded by elderly persons' bungalows in Hall Farm Road, Hall Farm Close and Wideshaft.
- 2.2 The area is very much an elderly person's community.
- 2.3 In sheltered housing inspections by the audit commission in 2001 and 2002 the Council was criticised for having out dated accommodation and for not having a vision of the kind of sheltered housing service it wished to deliver. Since then we have sold two large sheltered housing properties that did not meet modern standards, Bass's Crescent and Smallthorne Place, and established a vision and standards that we are in the process of implementing.
- 2.4 As part of continuing with our programme of improvements and compliance with the vision agreed by Committee we need now to look at the provision of accommodation offered by Willoughby House and Granville Court in a modern context.
- 2.5 Willoughby House was completed in 1973. It has 20 bedsit flats. These are not popular with applicants and if any property in South Derbyshire can be described as 'difficult to let' it is these properties purely on the grounds of size of accommodation. The area is popular as evidenced by the heavy demand for the nearby bungalows.
- 2.5.1 The problems with letting bedsit accommodation are not new. There are records on housing files referring to such problems at Willoughby from at least the early 1990s. Six or so years ago the Council looked to improve the situation at Willoughby by installing individual shower units into the properties. This certainly helped but was

only delaying the inevitable. The property needs wholesale refurbishment or complete change to make it meet modern standards.

- 2.5.2 There are two houses attached to the Willoughby development originally for staff accommodation and one is still occupied by a member of the Housing Services team.
- 2.6 Granville Court dates from 1963. It was originally built as 20 small flats, warden's flat, guest room, communal lounge, etc. Again it appears over the years that there have been problems with popularity and lettings due to the nature of the accommodation on offer. There have been issues with the use of the building since at least 1986 according to Housing files. In 1988 large scale work was done to reconfigure the arrangement of the flats which reduced the number of self contained flats to 6, created 4 bedsit respite units, consolidated the position of the Careline team in the building, increased the size of the lounge and improved access throughout the building. The respite units were created in conjunction with County Council colleagues although usage for this purpose has been very limited.
 - 2.6.1 Granville Court does not make good use of the land it occupies with only six residents.
- 2.7 The demolition of the County Council Oaklands unit, which sits between the Granville and Willoughby sites, makes it an opportune time to look meaningfully at providing more modern accommodation on the combined site that meets the requirements of the current and likely future residents.

3. Proposal

- 3.1 The proposal at this stage is to develop options for the future refurbishment and/or development of the units involved.
- 3.2 The County Council have proposals to replace their Oaklands unit with a modern dementia unit. However without delaying their plans they have expressed a wish to explore partnership options with the District if that makes sense to all parties. The basic fact that the Oaklands site currently divides the District sites makes sense for us to review our two schemes at this time.
- 3.3 To date some work has been done on refurbishment costs of the existing Willoughby and Granville schemes as well as a joint project with the County Council that would encompass all three sites in one modern high prestige project.
- 3.4 Residents have seen architects wandering around the schemes taking measurements to facilitate the feasibility process. The Head of Housing therefore wrote to all local residents recently to let them know that we were looking at options but that no decision had yet been made. The letter also committed us to a public meeting as soon as a preferred project is available to be consulted upon. Retaining the confidence and support of current and other nearby residents is a clear priority.

4. Corporate implications

- 4.1 A vision and standards programme has been agreed by Committee. The two properties do not make good use of the land available and for the most part the accommodation offered is outdated and of low standard.

- 4.2 There may be opportunity to work in partnership to create modern accommodation that better meets the requirement of current and future residents.

5. Community implications

- 5.1 As described above keeping current residents informed of our proposals as they develop is a key concern. This process has already commenced and a commitment given to the next step in the process.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 There are no additional financial implications at this stage. Work on refurbishment costs of the two properties is being done in-house and work on the partnership option is being done 'at risk' by a housing association partner.