

Report to: Portfolio Holder for Housing

Decision Date: 20 February 2024

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Lee Brazier

Director Lead: Suzanne Shead, Director for Housing, Health and Wellbeing

Lead Officer: Julie Davidson, Business Manager Housing Services

<b>Report Summary</b>	
<b>Type of Report</b>	Open, Non-Key Decision
<b>Report Title</b>	The conversion of 19 and 20 Ferndale Close, Boughton
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To seek approval to convert two semi-detached houses (1 x 3 bedroom and 1 x 4 bedroom) into a seven-bedroom house and a one-bedroom ground floor flat.
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p>This report proposes the following recommendations to the Portfolio Holder for Housing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To approve the conversion of these properties and that £150,000 (£100,000 2023/24 and £50,000 2024/25) be included in the current HRA Investment Programme, financed from the MRR.</li> <li>• To note the rent remodelling associated with the conversion.</li> <li>• To note the direct offer of the seven-bedroom property to a family of nine to alleviate current overcrowding.</li> </ul>
<b>Alternative Options Considered</b>	<p>A move to alternative accommodation was considered but the Council has a limited stock of larger family accommodation, and none that would be suitable for a family of this size on the Sherwood side of the district.</p> <p>We have previously carried out conversions of this nature in Newark; both properties are fully tenanted.</p>
<b>Reason for Recommendation</b>	The recommendations enable the Council, as a responsible landlord to alleviate the acute overcrowding of this family, whilst also adding a large unit of accommodation to our stock.

<b>Decision Taken</b>	As per recommendation.
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## 1.0 **Background**

- 1.1. The family currently living at 20 Ferndale Close, Boughton have outgrown their current four-bedroom, 6.5 person home. Their household make-up is:

	<b>Age</b>	<b>Bedroom Allocation</b>
Mr & Mrs		1
Daughter	17	1
Sons	14, 12 & 11	1
Sons	9, 8, 6 & 1	1

The tenant is currently expecting a daughter.

Their Policy aligned bedroom allocation is:

	<b>Age</b>	<b>Bedroom Allocation</b>	<b>Additional Information</b>
Mr & Mrs		1	
Daughter	17	1	
Son	14	1	Child has ADHD
Son	12	1	Child has ADHD & Autism
Sons	11 & 9	1	
Sons	8 & 6	1	
Son & unborn daughter	2 & 0	1	

- 1.2 The tenancy at 20 Ferndale Close, Boughton has been managed well with a clear rent account and no tenancy breaches on record. The strain on the family is beginning to show with negative effects on the mental health of the tenant. For the two boys with ADHD and Autism, the living conditions impact on their schooling is noted due to their sleeping challenges. The family have lived there since August 2014.
- 1.3 The tenants are actively bidding but based on current stock types, any move is unlikely to prove sustainable long term as our largest accommodation on the Sherwood side of the district is a five bedroomed home. As noted earlier, there are two houses in Newark which would offer a solution, but both these already fully occupied with large families.
- 1.4 The property at 19 Ferndale Close, Boughton became empty in October 2023, so a decision was made to explore the possibility of knocking the two houses together to create a larger unit of accommodation for the tenants of no.20 whilst this opportunity was available.
- 1.5 If approved, and on completion this property will be let to the family in line with the following section of the current Allocations Scheme:

### **9. EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT OF TENANCIES AND HOUSING STOCK**

*This section of the Allocation Scheme enables priority transfers for existing tenants or applicants who find themselves in exceptional circumstances, which means remaining in their current accommodation is no longer deemed appropriate or safe and/or to enable*

*NSDC to make best use of its limited available housing stock, prevent homelessness and create sustainable communities.*

*In such cases, a review of individual circumstances will be carried out by two senior officers within the Housing, Health and Wellbeing Directorate (not originally involved in the case) to make a final decision based on the evidence available.*

- 1.6 The development manager has advised that works can be commenced around the family by closing off parts of the build as it progresses; the Council will of course work closely with the household to ensure they are safe and happy with this approach.
- 1.7 The one bed flat will be allocated according to the Allocations Policy: with consideration being given to the proximity of the dwellings on allocation. The average bids received for one-bedroom flats in this area is 46, so medium demand.
- 1.8 As with the larger dwelling additional sound proofing will be explored to minimise any issues of noise transference.

## **2.0 The project costs**

- 2.1 The development manager was asked to look at this project, and the professional advice was to create a seven-bedroom house and a one-bedroom ground floor flat by knocking the two units together. This maintains two properties and therefore no loss of stock to the Council. This also maintains the current utility arrangements so no major works are required which would be the case if converting to a single dwelling. Additional sound proofing will be explored to minimise any issues of noise as the bedrooms will be above a separate tenancy. See appendix A for initial, rough plans of the conversion.
- 2.2 The costs and build times are detailed below alongside a comparison if the project was taken forward as a new build development, the costs obviously reflecting that the structure is already in place and therefore substantially reduces build costs:

<b>Conversion</b>		<b>New Build</b>	
Costs	£150,000	Costs	£450,000
Planning	N/A	Planning	6 months
Works	3 months	Works	12/18 months

- 2.3 Rental Costs

<b>Current</b>	<b>Week</b>	<b>Annual</b>	<b>Once Converted</b>	<b>Week</b>	<b>Annual</b>
19 Ferndale Close	96.62	4,637.76	19 Ferndale Close	94.36	4,529.28
20 Ferndale Close	105.33	5,055.84	20 Ferndale Close	134.74	6,467.52
<b>Totals</b>	<b>201.95</b>	<b>9,693.60</b>	<b>Totals</b>	<b>229.10</b>	<b>10,996.80</b>

## **3.0 Alternative Considerations**

The Council has a limited stock of larger family accommodation, and none that would be suitable for a family of this size on the Sherwood side of the district. The Council have previously carried out conversions of this nature in Newark; both properties are fully tenanted.

3.1 The Council could consider a conversion to one house – this would result in a loss of a unit for the Council and require planning permission as well as permission from DLUHC.

#### **4.0 Implications**

4.1 In writing this report and in putting forward the recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection, Digital and Cyber Security, Equality and Diversity, Financial, Human Resources, Human Rights, Legal, Safeguarding and Sustainability, and where appropriate they have referred to these implications and added suitable expert comment.

#### **4.2 Financial Implications (FIN23-24/8100)**

4.2.1 In order to convert the properties, a budget of £150,000 would need to be created in the HRA investment Programme, financed from the Major Repairs Reserve, as the build is expected to take 3 months, £100,000 will need to be available in 2023/24 and £50,000 in 2024/25.

4.2.2 The cost of conversion is significantly cheaper and will take less time than a new build and reduces the need to find and possibly acquire land when the need is immediate for the larger property.

4.2.3 There will not be an adverse impact on the number of HRA stock or the rent receivable, as per paragraph 2.1 and the table at 2.3 the income will increase from £9,693.60 to £10,996.80 per annum.

#### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.