

Report to: Portfolio Holder for Housing

Decision Date: 5 November 2024

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Lee Brazier

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

Lead Officer: Julie Davidson, Business Manager Housing Services

Report Summary	
Type of Report	Open, Non-Key Decision
Report Title	The conversion of two properties in Southwell
Purpose of Report	To seek approval to convert two semi-detached houses (2 x 3 bedroom) into a six-bedroom house with an additional one-bedroom flat.
Recommendations	<p>This report proposes the following recommendations to the Portfolio Holder for Housing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To approve the conversion of these properties and that £140,000 be included in the current HRA Investment Programme in 2025/26, financed from the MRR. • To note the rent remodelling associated with the conversion. • To note the direct offer of the six-bedroom property to a family of nine to alleviate current overcrowding.
Alternative Options Considered	<p>A move to alternative accommodation was not considered as 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, and we are currently in the process of doing a similar conversion at Boughton for another family of nine.</p>
Reason for Recommendation	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.

Decision Taken	As per the recommendation
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1.0 Background

- 1.1. The family currently living at in Southwell, have outgrown their current three-bedroom, seven person home. Their household make-up is:

	Age	Bedroom Allocation
Mr & Mrs + 2 sons	[REDACTED]	1
Daughter	[REDACTED]	1
Sons	[REDACTED]	1
Daughter	[REDACTED]	Sleeping in lounge

Their Policy aligned bedroom allocation is:

	Age	Bedroom Allocation	Additional Information
Mr & Mrs		1	
Daughter	21	1	[REDACTED]
Daughter	19	1	[REDACTED]
Daughter	13	1	[REDACTED]
Sons	17 & 12	1	[REDACTED]
Sons	6 & 1	1	[REDACTED]

- 1.2 The tenancy 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 and other members of the family who have various medical issues, and the lack of space is having a detrimental effect on their eldest daughter who is unable to use the stairs. The bathing facilities are upstairs.
- 1.3 The tenants are not registered for a transfer as 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 adjacent became empty in July 2024, so a decision was made to explore the possibility of knocking the two houses together to create a larger unit of accommodation.
- 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.

2.0 The project costs

- 2.1 The development manager was asked to look at this project, and the professional advice was that there are two options that could be considered.
- i. To create a six-bedroom house with three bedrooms on the ground floor with an additional shower room and toilet and a one-bedroom first 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 below a separate tenancy.
 - ii. To create a larger property by knocking the two properties together to create one property. This would mean a loss of one property from the stock of the council. Work would be required to the utility arrangements if converting to one dwelling. 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:

	Conversion	Conversion	New Build
Composition	6 bed plus a 1 bed flat	6 bed no flat	6 bed house
Cost of the Works	140,000	120,000	340,000
Planning Permission required	No	Yes	Yes
Timescale	4 months	9 months	12/18 months

2.3 Rental Costs

Current	Week	Annual	Once Converted	Week	Annual
	116.41	5,587.68	6 bed house	139.56	6,698.64
	113.80	5462.40	1 bed flat	102.43	4,916.64
Totals	230.21	11,050.08	Totals	241.99	11,615.28

3.0 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.

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 FIN24-25/1981

- 4.2.1 It is recommended by officers that the option to convert the properties is taken forward. Therefore, a budget of £140,000 would need to be created in the HRA investment Programme, financed from the Major Repairs Reserve.
- 4.2.2 Should the recommendation to convert the properties be approved, in line with the contract procedure rules, the procurement process can commence. It is expected that the works will start in 2025/26.
- 4.2.3 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.
- 4.2.4 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 £11,050.08 to £11,615.28 per annum and the housing stock number will not be affected.

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.