



Exeter House

SUMMARY

- 1.1 Regarding Exeter House, on 17 March 2009 Council Cabinet decided to revoke the Initial Demolition Notice dated 20 September 2007 and to authorise a programme of refurbishment of the building. The report was referred to the Community Commission with any comments to be reported back to Council Cabinet at this meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That Council Cabinet do not proceed with the refurbishment.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The proposed refurbishment is not supported because:
- a) the size and style of the units is unlikely to be considered fit-for-purpose in the longer term.
 - b) the allocations policy means it is only likely to be sought by and offered to a narrow range of applicants in terms of socio-economic background and thus not promote social cohesion.
 - c) the flood risk is now known to be higher than thought a year ago and it does not make good sense to increase the population in the affected area.
- and d) in light of points a) to c) it is not the best use of £350,000.

These points are expanded below.

3.1 The refurbishment proposals

The report to Council Cabinet described refurbishment proposals that would enable all the 16 vacant units to be brought back into use and other general improvements throughout the scheme to be undertaken. Paragraph 4.11 shows this would involve the following works:

- The refurbishment of all previously vacated flats
- The installation of new kitchens to all of the Council flats to ensure that the continue to meet the decent homes standard
- General redecorating to communal areas
- The installation of flood defence barriers to the Car Park
- The installation of Individual slot barriers to the ground floor flat entrances.

The proposals would also provide the block with a *basic* (emphasis added) level of defence against flooding.

3.2 The Commission's Concerns

a) The size and style of the units is unlikely to be considered fit-for-purpose in the longer term

The pressure for social housing means that the flats would almost certainly be let at least in the short term. However, the size and style of the units mean they are unlikely to be considered fit-for-purpose in the longer term. A comparison can be drawn with the decreasing popularity of the stock of older persons' sheltered housing.

3.3 b) The allocations policy means it is only likely to be sought by and offered to a narrow range of applicants in terms of socio-economic background and thus not promote social cohesion

The very pressure for social housing could mean the allocations policy may bring the unintended consequence of giving the tenancies to only a narrow range of applicants in terms of socio-economic background. If so, this would not promote social cohesion; moreover, it could also bring management problems.

3.4 c) The flood risk is now known to be higher than thought a year ago and it does not make good sense to increase the population in the affected area.

Engagement with the Environment Agency means the flood risk is now known to be higher than thought a year ago. Exeter House lies within Flood Zone 3, which the Government considers to be at high risk of flooding. The precise boundaries of the proposed Blue Corridor have not yet been defined but it is likely that Exeter House will be included within it. As the Cabinet report says: 'Land within the Blue Corridor will mostly become part of the functional flood plain of the river'.

The Commission fully appreciate that many residents will continue to live in Derby Homes and other properties within the finalised Blue Corridor. However, while the short supply of housing stock means it would not *practical* to re-locate everyone affected (the Commission did not consider whether it would be *desirable* to do so) it cannot make good sense to actually increase the population of the affected area.

3.5 d) Value for Money

One of the Council's priorities is 'giving you excellent services and *value for money*' (emphasis added). In light of the forgoing points, a) to c), the proposal does not seem the best use of £350,000 of Housing Revenue Account funds.

For more information contact:	Name	01332 255596	e-mail	rob.davison@derby.gov.uk
Background papers:	None			
List of appendices:	None			

Please note: the Implications are as set out in the main report considered by Council Cabinet on 17 March 2009