



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Subject Heading:

NEW PLYMOUTH & NAPIER HOUSES
REFURBISHMENT SCHEME

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Policy context:

Housing Strategy, Decent Homes
Programme and Rainham Compass

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Clean, safe and green borough	[√]
Excellence in education and learning	[]
Opportunities for all through economic, social and cultural activity in thriving towns and villages	[√]
Value and enhance the life of every individual	[√]
High customer satisfaction and a stable council tax	[]

SUMMARY

The aspiration for the refurbishment works to New Plymouth & Napier Houses is to install winter gardens to both tower blocks, carry out full stock condition improvements beyond the minimum Decent Homes requirements, upgrade the communal areas and lifts, and carry out any additional external refurbishments required.

Sufficient capital resources have been identified and allocated within the HRA capital programme up to and including 2014/15 for the purposes for tower block refurbishment such that expenditure on New Plymouth and Napier Houses would

not divert any funding away from the Council's aspiration to complete the Decent Homes programme by March 2015.

This report details the works undertaken thus far exploring the feasibility of the winter garden approach and proposals for the refurbishment of New Plymouth & Napier Houses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. To note that the following approach to the external refurbishment – that the installation of winter gardens remains the preferred option and will only be changed if technical and / or financial considerations render it unviable in which case enclosed balconies or refurbished balconies with double – glazed access doors will be installed subject to further consultation with the Lead Member for Housing and residents.
- B. That the programme of kitchen, bathroom and communal areas upgrades in 2013 /14 is noted.
- C. That the proposed twelve – week employment and training focused community engagement programme is noted.

REPORT DETAIL

1. Context

At the meeting between Cllr Lesley Kelly, Jonathan Geall, Kevin Hazlewood and Peter Doherty held on 12 July 2013, the cost of various options for significantly refurbishing New Plymouth and Napier Houses were reviewed.

It was recognised that:

- the aspiration to (a) install winter gardens to both tower blocks, (b) carry out full stock condition improvements beyond the minimum Decent Homes requirements, (c) upgrade the communal areas and lifts, and (d) carry out any additional external refurbishment required would have a net cost of £5.153m to the 30 year HRA Business Plan using July 2013 pre-tender estimates
- the cost was below the net **cost** of disposal to the 30 year HRA Business Plan, estimated at £5.584m when decanting, leaseholder buy-out costs and residual HRA costs were calculated, offset to some extent by a realistic estimate of the disposal receipt
- sufficient capital resources have been identified and allocated within the HRA capital programme up to and including 2014/15 for the purposes for tower block

refurbishment such that expenditure on New Plymouth and Napier Houses would not divert any funding away from the Council's aspiration to complete the Decent Homes programme by March 2015.

At the same meeting, it was raised however, that the novel nature of adding winter gardens to existing blocks carries inherent risks and that an acceptable alternative approach is required should winter gardens ultimately prove technically and/or financially unviable following detailed feasibility work.

2. Potential issues associated with implementing a winter garden programme

Preliminary discussions with Planning and Building Control colleagues, albeit held in advance of specialist design and surveying work, have indicated that the scheme as proposed should be feasible.

That said the exact design will require certain specific technical issues to be resolved during the design and approval process. In particular Building Control colleagues have identified three key areas which *may* adversely impact on the technical and/or financial viability of the scheme as it progresses. These are:

- the winter gardens need to be designed in such a way that they do not denigrate the structural integrity of the blocks themselves, that is, they should not be unsustainable vertical or horizontal loads on the blocks
- in light of the Lakanal House inquest, there may be fire protection requirements that were unforeseen at the outset of this project – for example, the need for higher standards of glass and/or compartmentalisation between the winter gardens to retard the spread of fire from balcony-to-balcony. Compliance with new higher standards could place too great a financial burden on the scheme
- ever-rising thermal standards may impose unforeseen costs.

Homes and Housing officers, consultants and designers will, of course, work closely with Building Control on the design of the proposed winter gardens; however, there is a substantial risk that the winter gardens as originally envisaged may not be feasible. At the meeting between the Lead Member and officers in July, the need for an alternative in this eventuality was discussed and officers were charged with exploring the idea of enclosed balconies.

3. 'Fall-back options' should winter gardens not prove viable

a. Enclosed balconies

Under this option, the existing glazed balcony of each flat would be removed and replaced with a metal framed full storey height glazed balcony enclosure with opening or sliding windows.

Such an approach has been successfully undertaken in a number of locations across the country and this option would in all likelihood obviate any major structural issues associated with securing a new structure to the side of the tower blocks. Meeting of fire protection and thermal comfort standards may also be more straightforward.

With careful design, coupled with imaginative external works, this approach could still achieve the desired 'landmark' effect.

Furthermore, this option is very likely to be less expensive than the installation of winter gardens and so could be afforded within the HRA capital programme.

The downside, of course, would be that far less, if any, additional space would be created for residents and as such it is likely that this option would be far less attractive to them.

b. Refurbishment to existing balconies with double-glazed access doors

An option of last resort could be to simply refurbish the existing balconies without any attempt to add to / enclose them, with the replacement of the access doors with double-glazed units. This is clearly the most straightforward and least expensive option.

While not achieving a total transformation of the external appearance of the blocks, thoughtful design and the use of imaginative, high quality materials could achieve a significant upgrading to these towers.

4. Proposed approach to external refurbishment

Installation of winter gardens remains the preferred option and while this paper highlights realistic risks it should not be inferred that winter gardens are likely to prove unviable. Hence, the following approach to the external refurbishment is proposed:

	Action	Progress at 13 November 2013
1	Appoint expert consultant to carry out detailed feasibility work and produce a winter garden brief <i>(unless immediately apparent this option is not viable)</i>	<p>Following a competitive fee tender exercise specialist surveying and design consultancy Hunters were appointed in October and were introduced to Napier & New Plymouth residents on Thursday 17th October.</p> <p>Hunters' site inspection and technical investigations of Napier and New Plymouth Houses are now underway. These investigations will form part of Havering's 'employer's requirements' for the refurbishment of the two tower blocks.</p> <p>Hunters have met with Havering's building control and planning teams and held technical meetings with various leading</p>

		<p>'winter garden' and 'rainscreen' specialist manufacturers and suppliers.</p> <p>Hunters have also held preliminary discussions with the London Fire Brigade's 'fire engineering' technical advisers on Havering's proposals for extended balconies and 'winter gardens' design.</p>
2	Residents involvement and community engagement	<p>Following consultation Napier and New Plymouth residents formed their own 'New Vision' project group in June to represent residents and to work with officers and help direct the planning and outcome of the refurbishment to their homes.</p> <p>The 'New Vision' group were involved in interviewing and the selection of the specialist consultant Hunters.</p> <p>Napier and New Plymouth residents also now have their own 'New Vision' newsletter prepared by officers. Officers have also already worked with a small number of residents on a 1:1 basis to help them write their CV and give advice on health issues.</p> <p>Future events currently being planned for December include:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A project update meeting on 4th December. • A visit from Father Christmas and carol signing on 8th December. • A 'Work Programme' taster day on 16th December.
3	Design feasibility appraisal for winter gardens produced by consultant (<i>unless apparent this option is not viable</i>)	<p>Although Hunters' design and 'winter gardens' feasibility investigations continue, preliminary discussions with LFB fire engineer's and others are encouraging for the prospect of extended balcony 'winter gardens'.</p> <p>However further ongoing evaluations meetings with building control officers, site investigations; testing, ground conditions and cost appraisals etc., will be required before a firm view can be given.</p>
4	Confirmation of winter gardens or alternative approach	Anticipated November/December 2013
5	Tender documents for contract	'Invitation to Tender' due March 2014.

	published	Proceeded by the statutory EU procurement rules OJEU contract notice issue and prequalification processes in early 2014.
5	Contract awarded for winter gardens / alternative option	Due July 2014 following an EU procurement exercise

5. Internal works

Regardless of the ultimate option taken forward for the external refurbishment, work is progressing on the internal works.

While the bulk of the Decent Homes work is expected to be undertaken alongside the external refurbishment, where practicable works within the towers will start ahead of this so as to demonstrate the Council's commitment to regenerating these blocks. The planned works for 2013/14 are as follows:

	Works	Timetable
1	Repainting of all communal areas including entrances, stair wells and landings	Ongoing redecoration of the communal landings and stair wells with flame resistant 'class O' coatings will be finish during November.
2	Renewal of all bathrooms in rented flats to include, subject to consultation with individual tenants, space-efficient and/or repositioned toilets, showers over baths	Individual property surveys are currently underway to all tenants' homes prior to the fitting of new 'Decent Homes' kitchen and bathrooms under Havering's recently mini tendered contracts using the London Housing Consortium's (LHC) 'whole house refurbishment' framework agreement. The successful contractor Keepmoat will commence the Bathrooms renewals to upwards of 88 tenanted flats in the New Year. In the meantime standard internal asbestos identification surveys and materials testing in advance of the new kitchen and bathroom programme also started in November.
3	Renewal of all kitchens in rented flats	The successful contractor Keepmoat will commence the Kitchen renewals tenanted flats in the New Year.
4	Fire Investigation	Following a fire to a one bedroom on the 7 th floor flat at New Plymouth House in October, the BRE (Building Research Establishment) were appointed to carryout a fire investigation survey on 4 th November to help establish the impact of the fire on the existing building's structure, the effectiveness of the flat's

		<p>compartmentation and fire prevention design.</p> <p>The BRE's findings report will inform future design considerations including any necessary refurbishment upgrades as part of the main 'Design and Build' contract for the two tower blocks, and proposed new 'winter gardens' and over cladding designs.</p>
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6. Hidden homes conversions

Work to provide a total of three additional flats in the disused pram sheds at the base of the towers is due to start in July 2014.

The development will be funded through the HRA and Mayors funding. The Council successfully bid for Mayor's funding through the "Building the Pipeline Fund" and obtained £90,000 towards the development of these three units.

It is proposed to replace this disused area in one of the blocks with two individual single storey flats. Whilst in the other block only one flat will be provided alongside a communal room for the residents.

Each flat will contain a Living / Dining Room/ Kitchen, Bathroom, Storage Area and 1 double and 1 single bedroom as well as external area.

The scheme has been designed to maximise density whilst conforming to planning guidelines and includes the following:

- Lifetime homes standards.
- Meets the Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4.
- Meets the London Housing Design Guide

7. Resident involvement – update and new programme

A residents group for the towers has been formed, called the New Vision Residents Group. This group meets regularly with officers and has been actively involved in the tender interviews for the technical consultant.

Twelve Residents Days have been held in the grounds at New Plymouth and Napier between June and September 2013. During the programme 68 households made direct enquiries, these were equally split between tenancy issues and repairs; on all occasions residents were given a current update on the proposed development. In addition, 150 residents attended the Residents Service Day in August.

It is proposed that a Christmas Party will be held in December to maintain the New Vision momentum.

Lead Member approval of a new twelve-week community engagement programme is agreed which will focus specifically on Improving Employment and Life Chances. This programme would build on work carried so far this year which has seen 13 New Plymouth and Napier residents taking up training and/or employment as a result of the Homes and Housing Service's involvement.

This programme would include one-to-one work facilitated by the Homes and Housing Service's profiling of residents' current socio-economic circumstances with the express aim of supporting them access jobs through Job Centre Plus and training programmes available. There is capacity within the Resident Involvement / Community Engagement team to design and carry out this programme. In addition to this we are also looking at health options for residents with barriers to work.

In the work programme, we aim to engage with residents and offer services such as CV writing, online applications and presentation skills for an interview. They will also be signposted to such schemes as the Lightbulb project and HAVCO work club.

A detailed database has also been compiled to assist in targeting certain residents on issues such as child care, employment, adult care and links with troubled families.

The aim is to have a fully engaged community as the build progresses with resident involvement throughout. Once the community space is built we will look at self employment and enterprise opportunities that residents could obtain and use within this space.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

With any major investment, it is good practise to consider what options are available, and the costs relative to the remainder of the programme, and relative to wider need.

Legal implications and risks:

On the Legal implications, there are none for the report itself. Presumably there may be issues around gaining access to some flats, but that is no different than for any other element of the Decent Homes building works

Human Resources implications and risks:

There are none

Equalities implications and risks:

The residents living in these blocks will benefit from the additional living space provided by the Winter Gardens and other works beyond Decent Homes undertaken to these blocks.

The community engagement programme will provide residents with the opportunity to access skills training courses to ultimately gain employment.

The additional flats will provide accommodation to those on the Council's waiting list.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are none