

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

To: Housing Committee		Subject: <i>Rochsoles Regeneration Proposals</i>
From: Director of Housing and Property Services		
Date: 20 May 1999	Ref: GSW/MW/7	

**1. Introduction**

1.1 In January 1999, the Housing Committee considered a report concerning major problems experienced at blocks of deck access maisonette flats at Rochsoles Drive and to a lesser degree at Couther Quadrant, Airdrie. The report outlined proposals for security improvements, partial demolition and rehousing of tenants. Committee requested further investigation of the potential to link redevelopment of this area with new housing provision on adjacent sites. This report advises the findings of the investigations and proposes options including demolition of two blocks with potential for new housing development on the cleared site.

**2. Background**

2.1 The properties are located in three blocks at Rochsoles Drive and Couther Quadrant, Airdrie and comprise 22 ground floor maisonettes, 26 upper floor maisonettes and 4 mid floor flats, a total of 52 properties. Whilst the ground floor maisonettes have their own main door access, the upper floor flats and maisonettes are accessed via external stairs and deck access to the rear of the blocks.

2.2 These blocks have suffered from vandalism and insecurity over a period of years, with the two blocks at Rochsoles Drive most severely affected. Overall, the blocks also suffer from poor design, inadequate refuse chutes and bin stores, and poor rear court environment. Similar blocks of this type were demolished by the former Monklands District Council.

2.3 There is low demand and a high refusal rate for these properties, with 16 out of 52 properties currently void. The problems of vandalism and low demand have been most evident at the two largest blocks, located at Rochsoles Drive, whilst Couther Quadrant has experienced less problems and has only one void property.

**3. Option Appraisal**

3.1 The blocks have been examined by the Councils Design Services section and several options have been costed to permit consideration. The first four options below were originally considered, and included in the report to the January 1999 meeting of the Housing Committee. The fifth option has been investigated in the interim.

#### **Option 1:**

Demolish all three blocks at an estimated cost of £120,000 (£2,300 per house) plus professional fees, disturbance and home loss payments, giving a total estimated cost of **£210,000** (£4,000 per house). However the location, condition and problems at each block are not the same, and demolishing all three blocks would impact on waiting lists.

#### **Option 2:**

Remove the top two storeys from each block, leaving two storey houses with back and front doors. Estimated cost of between £1.19m and £1.27m (£46,000 to £49,000 per house) dependent upon the type of external render used, but excluding professional fees and home loss payments which would result in a total cost estimated at between £1.35m and **£1.44m** (£55,500 per house).

#### **Option 3:**

Retain all existing blocks and upgrade internally and externally at an estimated cost of £1,196,000 or £23,000 per house, excluding fees. However there is low demand for upper floor flats of this size in the area, therefore improvement of all three blocks may not resolve the difficulty in letting the upper flats, or may simply reduce demand for flats elsewhere in Rochsoles.

#### **Option 4:**

A combination of the above options, resulting in demolition of the worst blocks and retention and improvement to the remaining block. The cleared site could be considered for development of housing to meet local needs.

#### **Option 5:**

Link to wider regeneration or new build project in local area. The potential to link the regeneration at Rochsoles Drive to a wider partnership project has been investigated. A partnership project is ongoing at Holehills. There is potential for some transfer allocations to be made in relation to this development. The potential to extend this project was investigated. A report on ground conditions concerning adjacent ground at three locations was instructed. However all three sites suffer from significant ground problems, one being an infilled quarry (former Thrashbush Quarry) and the other two being extensively undermined. From the information currently available concerning the risks and costs associated with these ground conditions it is concluded that it would not be feasible to develop on these sites, with the exception of a small area at the corner of Dykehead Road and Thrushbush Road, Holehills. Further discussions concerning development of this small area are being pursued.

## **4. Conclusion.**

- 4.1 From previous consultation, as reported to the Housing Committee in January 1999, it is known that the tenants preferred option concerning these 52 properties, supported by 23 tenants of those tenants expressing a view, is for Option 2 at a total cost of approx. £55,000 per house. However, it would be very difficult to justify expenditure of this level on properties which are already over 30 years old, and would not be considered to represent 'Best Value' or prudent financial management. Indeed, given the level of rental income from these properties, it would take over 30 years just to recover the costs of these works without allowing for normal repair and management costs over that period.

As the tenants also have the right to buy, there is a real prospect of tenants being able to buy at a discounted price below the cost incurred (the right to buy revised 'cost floor' rules effective from 1/4/99 protect the sale price for 10 years following major investment).

For these reasons Option 2 is not recommended.

- 4.2 After careful consideration, demolition of the two worst blocks, comprising 40 properties, located at 29-49 and 40-56 Rochsoles Drive is considered appropriate. It is therefore proposed to cease letting properties at these blocks and give rehousing priority to the remaining tenants. The rehousing of the 26 remaining tenants may take between 18 months and 36 months following the award of 'Committee decision status' to transfer applicants within these blocks. Therefore some interim improvements in security and lighting are proposed to prevent further deterioration in living conditions as the blocks are emptied. Committee decision status for rehousing of tenants from these blocks is requested, with first priority being given to the tenants of the upper flats where insecurity is greatest.
- 4.3 The third block at 4-16 Couther Quadrant, comprising 12 properties, has not suffered the same degree of problems as the two larger blocks at Rochsoles Drive. It is proposed to undertake improvements to this block including redesign of the entrance to this block to improve security and lighting. It is also proposed to install new central heating to this block as an extension to an existing heating contract nearing completion within the area.

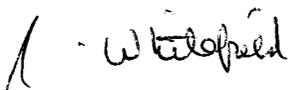
## 5. Recommendations

5.1 Committee is asked to approve the following action:

- 5.1.1 The award of 'Committee Decision' rehousing status to tenants within the two blocks at 29-49 and 40-56 Rochsoles Drive, Airdrie, with first priority being given to the tenants of the top floor flats.
- 5.1.2 Demolition of these two blocks at Rochsoles Drive at an estimated cost of £80,000 plus home loss payments. Interim improvements to security and lighting to these two blocks, at a total cost not exceeding £20,000; giving a total cost of approximately £150,000 excluding professional fees
- 5.1.3 To proceed with redesign of the entrance to the block at 4-16 Couther Quadrant and finalise proposals for security improvements to the building and report to a future housing committee.
- 5.1.4 To proceed with arrangements to install central heating to the 12 properties at 4-16 Couther Quadrant, via a negotiated extension to an existing contract within the Rochsoles area.
- 5.1.5 To consider options for development of the cleared sites at Rochsoles Drive and report to a future housing committee.

## 6. Background Information

6.1 Background information is available from the Housing and Property Services Department.



Gavin Whitefield

Director of Housing and Property Services