

## Estate Plan

### The Cloisters, Ulceby

**This plan covers the following areas:** The Cloisters

#### Estate Description

The Cloister has 29 properties, which are made up as follows:

First Floor Bedsits	1
Ground Floor Bedsits	5
1 Bedroom Ground Floor Flat	22
Wardens Dwelling	1

The Cloisters is a group dwelling scheme located in a rural setting amongst aged person's bungalows. Traditionally, where there are bungalows available in the same area as group dwellings, the flats tend to be less popular.

The scheme is very much in need of refurbishment and modernisation. Windows and doors are in a very poor state and communal areas are in need of updating. Due to the lie of the land and a new development built nearby a few years ago, the communal areas have flooded 2/3 times previously. For a long while, properties have been low demand due to their size, design and the lack of a lift to the first floor. Due to marketing through the Kwik key scheme however, there are now only a few empty homes in the complex. The road leading up to the Cloisters gets very congested at school drop off and pick up times due to the school entrance to the back. This can make access and parking very tight and at times impossible.

Ulceby has some local facilities, such as a Post office, village hall and Co -op and there are bus and train services to Barton, Grimsby and Cleethorpes. The station is on the outskirts of the village, a few miles from the Cloisters and the bus service is available from the main road, a short 5-minute walk away. However, residents have difficulty getting on buses and there is no 'hopper' service to the village. There is a health centre nearby but this is due to close.

Crime within the Ferry ward as a whole is fairly low with an average 57 reported crimes per month during 2004. There is primary school provision however for secondary education, children go to Immingham.

A recent Needs survey for the Ulceby parish area indicated that over 50% have lived in the parish for 20+ years (average 24 years) and that 2 bedroom bungalows are the most popular type of dwelling wanted.

## **Performance Indicators**

The Council has an Asset Management Plan that looks at various indicators. These tell us whether the area is a place where people want to live and remain, whether it is worth investing in the stock and how much it will cost to maintain the properties and bring them up to the Decent Homes Standard which the Government has set. Indicators for this area are as follows: (Figures are for the year to 30/6/05)

### **Red:**

Empty properties at 30/6/05	17.24%
Relets in year as % of total	20.69%
Tenancies under 2 years in length	54.17%

### **Amber:**

Tenancies of 2 – 5 years in length	29.17%
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### **Green:**

Transfer requests outwards	4.17%
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### **Other indicators:**

Tenancies of 5 years and over in length	16.67%
Potential income after empty homes loss	£47879.22
Average yearly repairs costs to 2010	£52738.57
Tenants in receipt of housing benefit	72.00%

## **Comments on Performance Indicators**

The above indicators are concerning as the cost of repairs to the scheme is greater than the income being generated; this has been the case for a considerable time. The number of empty properties has decreased however from 20.69% in September 2004 to the current 17.24%. Indications are that these figures should start to improve now that over 50% of the properties have been relet and there should follow a period of stability.

Although the scheme is quite isolated and has been low demand, a recent Housing Needs survey showed that accommodation is needed for the elderly in the area. Unfortunately, The Cloisters does not currently provide the type of accommodation that people want and it will therefore be necessary to consider options for the future of the scheme.

## **North Lincs Decent Homes Standard**

The Government has instructed Local authorities that all their housing stock must reach the Decent Homes Standard by 2010. However, the North Lincolnshire Standard has been devised by local tenants who want more than the minimum level of improvements to their homes.

The standard includes:

- Heating boilers renewed every 15 years
- Heating systems (radiators) renewed every 30 years
- Properties rewired where the wiring is over 30 years old – and to ensure that there are adequate power points
- Windows and doors renewed if they are 20 years old
- Properties insulated to maximise energy efficiency
- Bathrooms renewed every 30 years
- Kitchens renewed every 20 years and to have adequate space for storage and the preparation of food
- Renewal of roofing if it is over 50 years old
- Replacement of gutters and fascias that are over 20 years old
- Homes to be free from structural defects that affect the soundness and stability of a home
- Homes to be free from damp and water penetration
- Adequate lighting in communal areas
- Closure of some footpaths to reduce crime
- Controlled entry systems for communal entrances
- Improved access to communal entrances to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act
- Fencing to create secure spaces
- Modern alarm call systems for the elderly
- Improved car parking provision
- Improvements to the environment / landscape

### **Housing Management**

Although there has been difficulty letting these flats and bedsits over the last few years, vigorous marketing has meant that a number have been let and the empty properties are currently quite low. However, due to the age profile of the tenants, there will always be a steady trickle of properties becoming empty. Indications are that even though there will always be a need for accommodation for the elderly who want to remain in the area, the accommodation offered by the Cloisters is not the right type.

Extensive work has been done in recent months to prevent further flooding of the scheme and internal decoration is now complete. New drains have been installed, rain gullies cleared and extra drainage provided.

The Housing Officer visits the area twice a week. There has been some nuisance caused by kids congregating at the clinic nearby but this has affected residents of the bungalows more than those living in The Cloisters. There are still issues for residents regarding the need to modernise the building; various proposals are therefore put forward within this plan.

### **Actions**

In order to plan for the future we need to look at the sustainability of the area. This will depend not only on the properties continuing to be homes that our tenants want to live in but also the area being a safe and secure environment

where people want to stay for years to come. We have already done the following:

- Looked at the 'make up' of residents in the area
- Gathered crime figures to check types and level of crime
- Checked reports of ASB and nuisance
- Gathered information from staff, stock surveys and other departments
- Worked together with tenant representatives to make decisions on standard fittings in empty homes and selection of contractors (ongoing)
- Negotiated a new agreement with Neighbourhood services for the upkeep of our estates, which clearly indicates standards and regularity of maintenance to the environment.
- In response to views put forward in the Crime and Community survey, proposals have been put forward for an enviro –crime hit squad. The squad will work with existing staff and the police to prevent and deter crime and tackle anti – social behaviour.

We also need to:

- Ensure Introductory tenancy visits are carried out as a priority
- Provide a regular caretaking presence on our estates
- Work with Rent Recovery to help prevent people losing their homes
- Provide debt advice / referral when necessary
- Support vulnerable tenants in order to sustain their tenancies
- Consider local letting policies where there is shown to be a need
- Enforce tenancy conditions to ensure clean, tidy and secure environments
- Continue to work with other agencies i.e Police and Community Safety Partnerships to combat crime and anti – social behaviour
- Work proactively with Health and Adult Services to ensure that older peoples needs are catered for so they can remain in their homes with the correct level of support

### **Consultation**

To give us more detailed information on tenant's aspirations and what it is like to live in The Cloisters area, we sent a questionnaire to each tenant

- The response rate was unusually poor with only 7% responding.
- %'s below refer to the number of replies received to each question. Some people chose not to answer or ticked 'No comment'.

This is what you told us:

- All those who replied are happy with their homes
- 50% are happy with the location
- 50% consider there is a good community spirit
- 50% would welcome a regular bus service
- 50% would like a planned painting programme

- 50% would like better security

### **Proposed Improvements**

The stock condition survey has identified investment works needed to our properties. Each year, resources are targeted to ensure money is spent effectively. In the 2005/6 financial year for example, the following works have been programmed:

	<b>£000's</b>
Boiler renewals	1,200
Communal door entry systems	75
Whole house refurbishments	200
Kitchens	847
Bathrooms	100
Window and doors	700
Insulation	75

These are just some of the works planned for this year. In total, **£6,947,000 will be invested in our stock during 2005/6.**

The stock condition survey told us that in order for all our homes to meet the North Lincs Decent Homes Standard around £164 million needs to be spent over the next 10 years on repairs and improvements. The Council only has around £70 million - this is a shortfall of at least £94 million. The proposed stock transfer will mean that, if tenants vote for the transfer to proceed, then the new organisation would have the money to meet the North Lincs Decent Homes Standard. In order to meet the North Lincs standard the following work needs to be carried out:

- **We need to replace over half of the kitchens in the properties we own (5134 in total).**
- **Over 43% of tenant's homes (4443 in total) need to have their windows and doors replaced with double-glazed ones.**
- **Just under a third of all the homes need to be re-wired (3003 in total).**
- **5081 bathrooms (just over half our stock) need to be replaced.**

Also, in order to ensure that boilers are replaced every 15 years we need to:

- **Install approximately 700 new ones every year.**

In view of the indicators for this scheme which show that it is running at a loss, various options need to be considered for the future. Options being considered are as follows:

### 1. Redesign and refurbish:

There is evidence of continuing need for accommodation for the elderly in the area and the community is considered to be stable, as those who live in the area appear to want to remain. Properties could be redesigned to offer more spacious 1 or 2-bedroom accommodation, as size is the main reason for prospective tenants turning down accommodation. The communal areas would need refurbishing as part of this with new fixtures and fittings.

### 2. Demolish and redevelop

This may be the preferred option as any development could incorporate the type of properties that are most in demand (i.e. 1 or 2 bed bungalows). Elderly in the area who own their own home at the current time would have little chance of buying a property of this type due to the high cost. The Parish Needs survey indicated that 77% are in favour of a Housing Association development. Elderly often want to retain ownership so they have property / finance to pass on to their relatives. A shared ownership development could make this accessible to them whilst also giving access to the type of property they need. However, If this option is followed, the following will need to be taken into account and planned for:

- Movement of residents – where would they go whilst demolition and development takes place?
- When would the letting of properties stop?
- Elderly tenants needs/ fears and worries about moving would need to be addressed as moving can be stressful and could have a severe impact on health and wellbeing.
- Any new development – whilst being built - will have a severe effect on the elderly in the bungalows around the scheme. There are already traffic problems on a daily basis at drop off and pick up times for the school nearby with the road being jammed solid on many occasions. This issue would need careful planning due to the inevitable increase in works traffic.

### 3. Redesignation of use:

A review of the Warden service is currently being undertaken. One of the options being discussed is the development of the warden role and the group dwellings to provide 'extra care' facilities. If this were done, finance under Supporting People could be available towards redesign and refurbishment

The group dwelling could alternatively be used for young people with mental health or physical disabilities who need a supportive environment but also independence. If this option is considered the properties may not need much alteration if acting as a 'first home'. However, the effect on other elderly residents in neighbouring properties would need careful consideration if this option were pursued. This option is less favourable due to the rural location and lack of facilities for those with special needs. This would also create a further need for the elderly to be housed elsewhere.

Other works identified specifically for The Cloisters are as follows:

- Removal of grass and provision of hardstanding patio area with benches adjacent to front communal door
- Soft landscaping to rear garden to provide all year round interest
- Enlargement of car parking areas to front of complex
- Provision of lift

All the above works and options have been identified as needing to be done but will be subject to funding becoming available to carry them out. Once these works have been carried out all homes in the area will be maintained to the North Lincs Decent Homes Standard and will provide substantial homes for years to come.

### **In Conclusion**

This plan will continue to be reviewed and updated. Whilst environmental improvements may well be the priority for residents, initial spending will have to focus on works to improve tenant's homes to ensure that the North Lincs Decent Homes Standard is met. However, it is also important that people feel safe and secure in their homes, and want to live and remain in them for many years to come – which is why estate improvements and environmental works have been identified. The Council wants to meet the aspirations of tenants and although it does not have the resources to carry out all of the works that are needed it is important to identify the priorities for each estate.