



Doncaster Council

Report

Date: 17/09/21

To Cabinet Member for Housing and Business

Park Homes Sites

Relevant Member(s)	Cabinet	Wards Affected	Key Decision
Cllr Glyn Jones		Armthorpe, Tickhill & Wadworth and Thorne & Moorends	No

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report provides an update on work undertaken to implement the recommendation by Executive Board in August 2019 to address issues identified via the Fire Risk Assessments on the council's three Residential / Park Homes sites.
2. Analysis of the sites layouts, location and sizes of mobile homes has shown that of the 80 pitches across the three sites, only 12 pitches could achieve the required 6m separation distances, therefore removal of extensions would have limited and in most cases no impact on achieving a safe separation distance. To address the risk to property from the spread of fire the only real option is the construction of a fire barrier.
3. One pitch, Plot 3 Cow House Lane was identified at been at high risk due to the lay out of the site and the plot effectively been enclosed with very limited access / egress in an emergency. It was agreed that this pitch should be removed on the grounds of safety. Discussions have taken place with the resident of this plot and he has been rehoused into a council dwelling and the plot returned to council ownership.
4. Following the August 19 report to Executive Board, discussions have taken place with the elected Mayor, the Cabinet Member for Housing and council colleagues regarding the costs of the works and who should pay for them. As a result of these discussions it was agreed that the cost of the works would be borne by the council and not recharged to the residents.
5. An options appraisal was commissioned from Faithfull and Gould to determine the most appropriate solution for construction of the fire barriers. Five options were considered:

- Option 1 – Rendered blockwork
 - Option 2 – NoiStop Acoustic Wall
 - Option 3 – Flametek Fence System
 - Option 4 – Oak sleepers & steel posts
 - Option 5 – Concrete post and panel fencing
6. Each options was assessed taking into account the fire resistance of the materials, if it was demountable, the aesthetics of the finished product and any design life/maintenance issues. Following discussions with our Fire Risk Assessor from Savills, two options emerged as potential solutions, options 1 & 5. Unfortunately option 1 is not easily demountable (walls would have to be knocked down and rebuilt), it was therefore agreed that option 5 was the best solution.
7. Option 5 is not formally fire tested, however the specification of the concrete fencing system has been reviewed by the Fire Risk Assessor who has confirmed that *“I think this is a reasonable attempt to introduce that [the fire walls] and limit the chance of fire spreading through radiation”* He goes on to say *“Provided that the walls are located properly and are sufficiently high, I would accept this as a reasonable form of fire separation in the fire risk assessment”*

EXEMPT REPORT

8. This report is not exempt.

RECOMMENDATIONS

9. Cabinet Member for Housing and Business is asked to:
- Agree to install fire barriers;
 - Note the design of the fire barriers;
 - Note the anticipated cost (final cost will be determined by tender);
 - Confirm that the cost of the works will not be recharged to the residents;
 - Agree to the submission of a planning applications and subsequent tender of the works.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

10. Addressing the highlighted fire safety issues in a coordinated way will ensure that the council complies with its legal responsibilities as a landlord whilst at the same time taking a risk based approach, taking on board residents views.

BACKGROUND

11. The council currently owns three residential (Park Homes) sites: Orange Croft at Tickhill, Cow House Lane at Armthorpe and Mount Pleasant at Moorends, all of which have been managed by St Leger Homes since 2014.
12. Across the three sites there are a total of 80 plots:
- Orange Croft – 34 plots
 - Cow House Lane – 20 plots
 - Mount Pleasant – 26 plots

13. Following the increased focus on fire safety following the of the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower, St Leger Homes were asked to review the fire safety issues associated with historic spacing issues between mobile homes on the councils residential sites.
14. Proposed actions to bring the 'risks to life' issues to a tolerable level were set out in the report presented to Executive Board in April 19. The risk to life issues have been addressed.
15. Four options to address the safety issues associated with the 'risk to property' as a result of spread of fire between mobile homes were also presented. Executive Board approved the option of giving residents choice of removing their extensions to re-establish the separation distances and if residents refuse, to install a fire barrier along the boundaries between mobile homes.
16. Unfortunately, consultation with residents have, in the main, not been productive in so far as the majority do not want to remove extensions. It should be noted though that in all but 12 cases, given the original layouts and constraints of the sites, removal of extensions would still not deliver the required 6m separation distance and therefore some form of fire barrier would still be needed. It was therefore decided not to pursue the removal of extensions, but to design and install appropriate fire barriers to mitigate the risk of to property as a result of fire spreading through radiation.
17. Consideration has previously been given to the 'Do Nothing Option', which may be the preference of the majority of residents on the sites, however it would leave the council in a position where it had fire risk assessments that identify a clear risk that we would not be able to mitigate to a tolerable level. Adopting the Do Nothing Option would leave the council open to significant legal challenge and liability should it take this option and a fire happen in the future and there be significant damage to property, injury to persons or a fatality. It is therefore continues not the recommended way forward.
18. Discussions with the Director of Economy & Environment in his role as Accountable Person under the Building Safety Bill have taken place and he is supportive of the recommended approach.

WORKS UNDERTAKEN SINCE LAST REPORT/OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Risk to property issues

19. The agreed approach to address the risk to property arising from the spread of fire was to give residents the choice to either remove any extensions that have encroached into the safe separation distance or as an alternative to install fire barriers where a safe 6m separation distance cannot be achieved.
20. The fire risk assessors have confirmed that should the recommended actions be undertaken, in their view the risk of fire spread, would be significantly reduced. Whilst this would still not achieve code compliance (6m separation distance) – this is a risk proportionate approach.
21. Group consultation meetings and individual engagement has taken place for each site. Unsurprisingly residents have continued to voice their concerns that the proposals are, in their opinion disproportionate to the level of risk. However, they have been clearly informed that whilst they as individuals may be happy to accept

the level of risk, neighbours may not be, and it is the council that are responsible for the sites and just because an individual may accept the risk themselves, that does not absolve the council of its responsibility.

22. Faithfull & Gould were commissioned to identify suitable solutions / materials from which any fire barrier could be constructed and five potential options were identified (Appendix 1):
 - Option 1 – Rendered blockwork
 - Option 2 – NoiStop Acoustic Wall
 - Option 3 – Flametek Fence System
 - Option 4 – Oak sleepers & steel posts
 - Option 5 – Concrete post and panel fencing
23. Each options was assessed taking into account the fire resistance of the materials, if it was demountable, the aesthetics of the finished product and any design life/maintenance issues. Following discussions with our Fire Risk Assessor from Savills, two options emerged as potential solutions, options 1 & 5. Unfortunately option 1 is not easily demountable (walls would have to be knocked down and rebuilt), it was therefore agreed that option 5 was the best solution. A visual example of the concrete post and panel fencing can be found at Appendix 2.
24. When considering the options it is important to place these within the context that the 'risk to life' issues have been addressed and the aim of any fire barrier is to reduce the 'risk to property' as a result of the spread of fire from one mobile home to another through radiation. In essence you are wanting to create the equivalent of a 30 minute fire barrier to allow the emergency services to attend and bring any fire under control.
25. Discussions have taken place with the Fire Risk Assessor regarding the options and whilst option 5 is not formally fire tested, concrete panels will provide the level of fire resistance needed. The Fire Risk Assessor has confirmed that *"I think this is a reasonable attempt to introduce that [the fire walls] and limit the chance of fire spreading through radiation"* He goes on to say *"Provided that the walls [concrete panel fencing] are located properly and are sufficiently high, I would accept this as a reasonable form of fire separation in the fire risk assessment"*
26. When considering the potential cost of the proposed solution, Faithful & Gould have estimated [Oct 2020] that the cost of installing a concrete post and panel solution to create fire barriers between mobile homes was £336k + VAT. It is expected that this price will have increased since then, and the final costs will obviously be based on the tender price.

NEXT STEPS

27. Given the height of the proposed fire barriers (to at least eaves height – approx.. 3m) planning permission will be required. It is proposed to confirm to submit a planning application to move forward with the works and confirm to residents that the planning application has been submitted. Further consultation will then take place with residents as part of the planning process.
28. Subject to receiving planning approval, a tender exercise will then take place to appoint a contractor to undertake the works. Whilst it is possible to undertake a tender exercise concurrent to planning, this is not recommended as not knowing the

final design (planning could request changes) could impact on contractors submitting tenders, or inflate the tender price.

29. Given the timescale for Planning (12 weeks) followed by a tender exercise, it is likely that start on site will be March / April 2022.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

30. To ensure that the sites are safe and the risks to properly associated with the spread of fire from mobile home to mobile home are mitigated.

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY OUTCOMES

	Outcomes	Implications
	<p>Doncaster Working: Our vision is for more people to be able to pursue their ambitions through work that gives them and Doncaster a brighter and prosperous future;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better access to good fulfilling work • Doncaster businesses are supported to flourish • Inward Investment 	
	<p>Doncaster Living: Our vision is for Doncaster's people to live in a borough that is vibrant and full of opportunity, where people enjoy spending time;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The town centres are the beating heart of Doncaster • More people can live in a good quality, affordable home • Healthy and Vibrant Communities through Physical Activity and Sport • Everyone takes responsibility for keeping Doncaster Clean • Building on our cultural, artistic and sporting heritage 	Ensuring appropriate steps are taken to address any fire safety issues on residential sites ensure individuals can live safely in their homes.
	<p>Doncaster Learning: Our vision is for learning that prepares all children, young people and adults for a life that is fulfilling;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every child has life-changing learning experiences within and beyond school • Many more great teachers work in Doncaster Schools that are good or better • Learning in Doncaster prepares young people for the world of work 	

	<p>Doncaster Caring: Our vision is for a borough that cares together for its most vulnerable residents;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children have the best start in life • Vulnerable families and individuals have support from someone they trust • Older people can live well and independently in their own homes 	
	<p>Connected Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A modern, efficient and flexible workforce • Modern, accessible customer interactions • Operating within our resources and delivering value for money • A co-ordinated, whole person, whole life focus on the needs and aspirations of residents • Building community resilience and self-reliance by connecting community assets and strengths • Working with our partners and residents to provide effective leadership and governance 	

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

31. There are a number of risks associated with the options, the main ones being financial & reputational should we end up in a protracted legal argument.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials...NJD... .. Date 29/06/21]

32. Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 provides the Council with a general power of competence, allowing the Council to do anything that individuals generally may do. Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 gives the Council the power to purchase goods and services.
33. The results of the Councils fire risk assessment at the site identified the need for some form of fire protection to be put in place. This report has set out the five options considered and has recommended the fire barrier option.
34. The works related to the construction of the fire barrier must be carried out in accordance with the Councils contract procedure rules.
35. A planning application will need to be submitted to and determined by the Local Planning Authority for the proposed works in advance of any tender exercise

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials JCr Date 26.06.21]

36. The cost associated with the proposed construction of the fire barriers is estimated to be in the region of £0.34m. The estimate was provided by Faithful & Gould consultants in Oct 2020 and is included as an estimate for the purposes of this report. Following approval, a full tender exercise will be undertaken in line with contract procedure rules.
37. The Council approved a four year capital budget on 1st March 2021. Included in this was funding earmarked for costs associated with both private residential and gypsy and traveller sites. The total funding across the four year period (2021/22-2024/25) is £2.84m. The cost of the fire barriers will be funded from this budget.

Approved Funding	Investment £m
2021/22	0.64
2022/23	0.40
2023/24	1.40
2024/25	0.40
Total	2.84

38. The 2021/22 revenue budget for residential caravan sites totals £58k, with further provision of £50k for repairs and maintenance which is used for both private residential and gypsy and traveller sites. There are currently 80 plots which generate annual rental income of £124k
39. Since St Leger Homes took over the management of the three residential sites in 2014, investment has taken place improving the facilities and infrastructure across all three sites. The value of capital spend on the sites in the last 5 years totalled £632k, comprising of works on improving the amenity blocks and site improvement works.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials CB.... Date ...29/06/21.]

40. There are no human resource implications arising from this report.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials...PW... Date...29/06/21..]

41. There are no technology implications in relation to this report.

HEALTH IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials...CTDate 29/06/21...

42. Public Health supports the construction of a fire barrier which will help slow the spread of any fire and also provide time for residents to evacuate safely. Public Health will be supportive of the Planning Application required so long as it reflects the requirements laid out above which have been reviewed by the Fire Risk

Assessor as detailed in Point 23.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials.....SW... Date.....28/06/21..]

43. There are no equality implications.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 – Option Appraisal Summary
- Appendix 2 – Visual of Option 5 – Concrete Panel & Post fencing.

REPORT AUTHOR & CONTRIBUTORS

Chris Margrave

Director of Property Services
St Leger Homes of Doncaster.

01302 862709

Chris.margrave@stlegerhomes.co.uk