

EWELL COURT HOUSE FLAT 1 REFURBISHMENT AND USE FOR TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

Head of Service:	Mark Shephard, Head of Property and Regeneration
Wards affected:	(All Wards);
Urgent Decision?(yes/no)	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	
Appendices (attached):	Appendix 1: Floor Plan Appendix 2: Confidential Business Case (Exempt from publication under paragraph 3 of Schedule 12 (A) of the Local Government Act 1972)

Summary

This report proposes that Flat 1 Ewell Court House be refurbished to provide temporary accommodation for homeless households.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Agree to use Flat 1 Ewell Court House for temporary homeless accommodation.**
- (2) Agree to fund the refurbishment budget of up to £125,000 from S106 developer funds.**
- (3) Note that the Head of Property & Regeneration, Head of Housing & Community in consultation with the Head of Finance will progress the refurbishment to completion.**

1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 To enable delivery of additional temporary accommodation to help address the rising need for homelessness prevention accommodation.

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- 1.2 The occupation of Flat 1 would help improve the overnight security of Ewell Court House and diminish the likelihood of anti-social behaviour in the immediate vicinity.

2 Background

- 2.1 Ewell Court House is a Grade II listed building owned by the Council and dating back to the late 1870s. It is set in the historic grounds of Ewell Court Park and forms part of the Council's commercial property portfolio.
- 2.2 Commercial tenants include a wedding and corporate events operator, a children's nursery and a café (pending refurbishment by a new operator).
- 2.3 Ewell Court House contains two self-contained 1st floor flats (accessed via their own separate external staircases):
 - Flat 1 – comprising 3 bedrooms, lounge, kitchen and currently vacant following expiry of the previous commercial lease of the Tea Rooms.
 - Flat 2 – comprising 4 bedrooms, lounge, kitchen and forming part of the current commercial lease of the childcare nursery.
- 2.4 Flat 1 ("the Flat") was originally intended to form part of the new commercial letting of the Tea Rooms but is no longer required by the new tenant for this purpose.
- 2.5 The Flat offers relatively spacious 3 bedroom accommodation as shown in the floor plan attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.6 It was previously redecorated in 2007 and now requires extensive refurbishment to bring it up to modern standards. This will likely include electrical rewiring and replastering alongside replacement bathroom, kitchen, boiler, carpets and full redecoration throughout.
- 2.7 The Council's Housing Team has inspected the Flat and post refurbishment, consider it would provide ideal temporary housing. It would also assist in alleviating the extremely high demand they experience for larger properties i.e. 3 or more bedrooms.

3 Temporary housing accommodation

- 3.1 Under the homeless legislation, the Council is required to provide applicants with emergency accommodation while their application is being investigated and, if their application is accepted, until they are housed in settled accommodation.
- 3.2 The duty is fulfilled through placing applicants in accommodation owned by the Council, a Housing Association, or by exception, expensive nightly paid (B&B) accommodation.

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- 3.3 Demand for temporary accommodation is acute and the Council has responded by pursuing initiatives to increase its supply of temporary accommodation.

4 Proposal

- 4.1 It is proposed to refurbish the Flat and use it to provide much needed temporary accommodation.
- 4.2 To support the proposal, a Business Case (including Best Value comparison) is attached at Appendix 2.
- 4.3 As a Grade II listed building, we are investigating if the internal refurbishment will require listed building consent. The Council has experience of refurbishing listed residential buildings (Nonsuch Mansion) and those located in conservation areas (24 South Street, Epsom).
- 4.4 It is recommended a budget of up to £125,000 be allocated from S106 affordable housing developer funds. This will safeguard the Council against the inflated tender prices being experienced in the current economic environment.
- 4.5 The proposed scheme is considered eligible to be funded by S106 affordable housing sums, because it meets the following two criteria, which were agreed by Social Committee in January 2012:
- 4.5.1 Where a financial analysis of the s106 investment required can be demonstrated to represent good value for money, either by reference to the number of homes delivered for the investment (e.g. by comparing the level of investment to the average level of grant that might be paid by the Homes & Communities Agency for a home of a similar size and quality) or where the s106 capital investment can be demonstrated to help the Council to achieve revenue savings elsewhere, such as reducing the cost of temporary accommodation.
- 4.5.2 Where housing schemes will help the Council to prevent homelessness e.g. through the delivery of larger family sized accommodation.

5 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

- 5.1 Equality Impact Assessment
- 5.1.1 The Flat is located at 1st floor level via a dedicated external staircase leading to its own entrance. There is no lift available and the Flat would therefore not be suitable for all residents.
- 5.2 Crime & Disorder

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5.2.1 The occupation of the Flat would help improve the overnight security of Ewell Court House.

5.3 Safeguarding

5.3.1 Bambini's Children's Nursery is separately located and operated at Ewell Court House. Any proposed occupants of the Flat will be suitably vetted by the Council's Housing Team.

5.4 Dependencies

5.4.1 Investigations are underway to establish if the internal refurbishment will require listed building consent.

5.5 Other

5.5.1 The Asset Management Plan's key property strategies will ensure value for money, maximise asset performance and minimise the Council's exposure to avoidable loss of income.

6 Financial Implications

6.1 Financial implications are set-out in the attached confidential Appendix 2.

6.2 Investing £125,000 of S106 affordable housing sums to bring the Flat into use as temporary accommodation would reduce the uncommitted S106 balances available for investment in other future schemes from c.£1.1m to £1.0m.

6.3 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** The Council would expect to generate net revenue savings of c£32,700 per annum by using the Flat as temporary accommodation, as set-out in Appendix 2, meaning the expected payback period on the £125,000 investment would be around four years.

7 Legal Implications

7.1 The refurbishment specification will be agreed in consultation with the Council's Head of Housing & Community and Strategic Housing Manager to ensure it offers appropriate, fit for purpose temporary homeless accommodation.

7.2 **Legal Officer's comments:** None arising from the contents of this report.

8 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

8.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged: Opportunity and Prosperity, Effective Council.

8.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

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8.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** The Flat's energy efficiency will be an important part of the refurbishment and upgraded where possible. For example, the replacement of the existing boiler with a modern condensing type.

8.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** Insulation will be upgraded where possible and lighting replaced with modern LED equivalents.

8.5 **Partnerships:** None

9 Background papers

9.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

Previous reports:

Other papers:

- Strategic Asset Management Plan to S&R Committee 28 July 2020

<https://democracy.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=132&MId=770>