

Briefing on Ladywell Pop-up Village: Using Modern Methods of Construction to tackle temporary accommodation- Requested at Housing Committee on 27 June 2016

The council currently has an overspend on expensive temporary accommodation for homeless households. In order to try and reduce the council's spend in this area I ask the committee to look at LB Lewisham's Ladywell Pop-up Village project that utilises a vacant site earmarked for regeneration for temporary accommodation for 96 people for up to 4 years. The project uses fastbuild modular architecture with off-site construction delivering 24 homes and 8 units for commercial and civic use. The units are de-mountable and can be re-used on other sites in different configurations as needed. LB Lewisham believe the project will deliver a reduction in their spend on temporary accommodation.

I ask that the committee receive a briefing on this project in order to assess whether LB Barnet could do something similar.



Fig 1 – Ladywell Pop-up Village

1.0 Background

1.1 Ladywell Place on Lewisham High Street is the UK's first pop-up village which was commissioned by Lewisham Council and built within 2 years, opening in August 2016. It is located on the large former Ladywell Leisure Centre site with the front facing onto Lewisham High Street.

3.0 Why did Lewisham Council develop the scheme?

3.1 Lewisham has 1,700 homeless families in temporary accommodation, almost 9000 on their waiting list and 600 in emergency temporary accommodation.

The development helps to meet the shortfall in both high quality and 2-bed temporary accommodation whilst new build and regeneration programs take place.

4.0 The properties

- 4.1 The site consists of 24 two bed, four person units. The properties are heated with electric infra-red panel heaters and are highly energy efficient. At approximately 75 square meters per unit, the properties are spacious (exceeding current standard space requirements) and have generous storage capacity. The walls are finished with painted (MDF type) boarding which looks smart and damage is easily repaired.
- 4.2 The units are well sound proofed, once inside you are isolated from the noisy high street. Each unit is sound proofed, effectively providing two layers of sound proofing between flats.

5.0 The construction

- 5.1 The pop-up village was designed by Architects Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners, with construction taking place in Derbyshire. Lewisham have planning permission for 4 years and have a backup site as a contingency.
- 5.2 The method of construction means that the development can be built faster and cheaper than traditional methods. The finished structure can be fully dismantled and reassembled on another site and used over a number of years and different locations. The modules are guaranteed for 60 years and 5 moves. From the street the pop-up village has an air of permanence and does not look temporary.
- 5.3 The build time was 11 months with the site preparation faster than a normal development as these modules are lighter and they do not require such deep foundations. This also brings the advantage of realising income for sites at an earlier stage. Staircases have been developed which are modular and can be moved, in addition a lift has been installed. The modules used on the Ladywell site can go up to 6 stories; however units can be constructed to go to 10 or 20 units high.

6.0 Costs

- 6.1 Lewisham made a £4m capital investment including right-to-buy receipts. Without this investment the project would have been delivered at a significant net revenue cost. The cost per unit is £156,000, and the financial viability is further enhanced by being located in an inner London location. With a weekly Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate of £265.29 they can expect an annual

gross income of £13,795.08 per unit. Without the capital investment, it would take a minimum of 11 years to recover costs (excluding operating costs).

7.0 Construction lessons learned

7.1 In the delivery of the Ladywell site there were a number of useful lessons learned:

- The utility services were not prepared for the pace of the development. Delays were caused by waiting for all utilities to be installed. The recommendation to overcome this is that addresses are registered at planning stage and ensure services are notified at the earliest possible moment.
- Wooden balconies were built on-site; it would have been easier to construct these off-site and to install them.
- Windows were full length running from ceiling to floor, which required the provision of curtains (which could be costly to households on low income) in order to preserve the external aesthetic.

8.0 Conclusion

8.1 The site at Ladywell demonstrates that modular housing is a viable option for utilising land in the short to medium term to help meet housing demand.

8.2 The Ladywell units are of a high quality and larger than the minimum standard and if Barnet were to introduce a similar scheme the units would represent a highly lettable form of temporary accommodation. However more detailed analysis is required on the financial viability of the scheme, and Barnet may decide not to exceed space standards to a similar extent to help deliver the most efficient use of sites.

8.3 In Barnet the gross annual income per unit would likely be lower, due to lower LHA rates in outer London. Costs would therefore be recovered over a much longer period. It may be beneficial to consider leasing alongside outright purchase models.

9.0 Next Steps

9.1 Barnet Homes are examining the feasibility of developing modular housing in Barnet with a view to bringing forward proposals for the Council to consider later this year.