



HOUSING COMMITTEE MEMBER / OFFICER REPORT

NAME OF ORGANISATION/BODY	Stroud District Council
DATE OF LAST MEETING ATTENDED	N/A

BRIEF REPORT: Swedish Timber Properties

1 INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Council owns 21 Swedish Timber properties, located in Uley, Stinchcombe, Wotton-under-Edge, Bisley, Miserden, North Nibley and Painswick. Swedish Timber style properties are a non-traditional type of construction. Any property that is not built out of brick or stone with a slate or tiled roof is considered a “non-traditional” build.
- 1.2 These properties were acquired as part of the support package to address the housing crisis after the Second World War. The homes were bought by the Government from Sweden and are of prefabricated construction. They had a design life of 60 years so have exceeded their expected life span, and as a result, they now require major investment to bring them up to modern energy efficiency and quality standards.
- 1.3 The dwellings comprise semi-detached chalet bungalows and two-storey houses. The external walls are clad in vertical timber boarding throughout, and the dwellings have steep pitch gable roofs covered with concrete tiles, slates or timber shingles. The chalet bungalows and some houses have single-storey gable roof extensions.
- 1.4 Curtins Consultancy Ltd was commissioned by the council to undertake a non-traditional homes property review in 2017/18 to feed into the council’s strategy to address the future maintenance and repair of these properties. A recommended approach to bringing the Swedish Timber properties up to the appropriate standard was included within the report and approved by Housing Committee in 2018. This recommended an approach over the next 10 years to address the maintenance and repair of the remaining stock and a focus on the need to improve thermal efficiency and comfort in line with the Energy Strategy and action plan.
- 1.5 Delivery of this strategy was subject to adequate financial resources and estimated that costs per property type including external wall insulation (EWI) were typically less than £30k per property (i.e. below the council’s obsolescence threshold trigger for review) .
- 1.6 **Current position**
- 1.7 The majority of these properties have a number of issues which will require significant investment to bring them up to the appropriate housing standard and to an EPC ‘C’ rating. Since the report undertaken by Curtins the cost of addressing each property has



STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council Offices • Ebley Mill • Ebley Wharf • Stroud • GL5 4UB

Telephone 01453 766321 • Facsimile 01453 750932

www.stroud.gov.uk

HOUSING COMMITTEE MEMBER / OFFICER REPORT

increased considerably and this triggered the need for a review of the voids in line with the obsolescence procedure. Across the Swedish Timber stock there are currently 5 voids. The COVID pandemic meant that meaningful consultation wasn't possible with tenants and the opportunity has now been taken to extend this review across all of the properties.

- 1.8 The potential options being explored are set out in the table at Appendix A. Initial contact has been made with all the tenants affected, private owners, Ward Councillors and Town and Parish Councils so that their views can be considered as part of the review.

2 MAIN POINTS

- 2.1 Officers are considering different solutions depending on the condition, repair and improvement costs, location, and ownership on each site. However, it is worth highlighting that considerable increases in labour and materials costs means refurbishment is costing more and may not be financially viable. We have current information of costs, delivery challenge and impact on tenants from the works that have started at Parkfield Cottages, Painswick.
- 2.2 It is also the case that increases in costs are impacting adversely on the viability of redevelopment for new build affordable homes where redevelopment is a possibility.
- 2.3 Due to the age and design of Swedish Timber Houses, the council has to make decisions on the best option for each site and take action to ensure its tenants have sustainable and energy-efficient homes to live in that are fit for the future.

3 CONCLUSION

- 3.1 This report is an update on the position with these non-traditional houses and it is proposed that further work is undertaken to work up the cost/benefits of each of the options being considered, that consultation continues and a report is brought back to Committee in February 2024 with the recommended option for each location.

REPORT SUBMITTED BY

Alison Fisk, Head of Property Services

DATE

22nd November 2023