

# Brighton & Hove City Council

## Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee

## Agenda Item 10

**Subject:** Large Panel Systems Programme - Options appraisal and recommendations

**Date of meeting:** 1<sup>st</sup> July 2025

**Report of:** Chair of Place Overview & Scrutiny

**Contact Officer:** Name: Darren Levy, Interim Director of Housing Regeneration

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**Ward(s) affected:** Hollingdean & Fiveways; Kemptown; Whitehawk & Marina;

**Key Decision:** No

**For general release**

**Note:** Urgency

By reason of the special circumstances below, and in accordance with section 100B(4)(b) of the 1972 Act, the Chair of the meeting has been consulted and is of the opinion that this item should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

**Note:** Reasons for urgency

The special circumstances for non-compliance with Council Procedure Rule 3, Access to Information Procedure Rule 5 and Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), (items not considered unless the agenda is open to inspection at least five days in advance of the meeting) was to ensure that there was enough time to engage with and notify all affected residents about the situation before the paper is released into the public domain.

### **1. Purpose of the report and policy context**

- 1.1 This report presents the Place Overview & Scrutiny committee with the forthcoming (July 2025) Cabinet report on options for the large panel system (LPS) blocks. The views and comments of Place O&S Committee members will be used to inform Cabinet's decision-making.
- 1.2 The Cabinet report exploring the best long-term solution for the buildings can be found in Appendix 1. Architect capacity studies can be found in Appendix 2 in relation to St James, Appendix 3 in relation to Dudeney Lodge and Nettleton Court and Appendix 4 in relation to North Whitehawk LPS blocks. Appendix 5 contains the council's structural surveyor's report.

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 That Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee notes the appraisal options report on LPS Blocks (Appendices 1 to 5) and makes comments or recommendations on these proposals to Cabinet if it so chooses.

## **3. Context and background information**

- 3.1 Part of the council's housing stock consists of 8 large panel system (LPS) blocks originally constructed in the 1960s. Ridge, the structural surveyors employed by the council, have identified that these blocks will require significant investment to ensure their future safety.
- 3.2 The 8 council blocks are split across 3 distinct sites:
- Dudeney Lodge and Nettleton Court in Hollingdean
  - Falcon Court, Heron Court, Kestrel Court, Kingfisher Court and Swallow Court in North Whitehawk ("North Whitehawk")
  - St James House in Kemptown
- 3.3 The structural surveys identified that in addition to maintenance issues, the 8 Large Panel System (LPS) blocks do not meet the current safety standards, in relation to their ability to resist a disproportionate collapse in the event of an explosion or large fire. Significant work and investment would be needed to bring them up to an appropriate standard for residents.
- 3.4 As detailed in the 'Large Panel System Blocks Programme Update' report presented to Cabinet on 27th March 2025, the council has implemented a range of safety measures to ensure the continued safety of residents in all 8 LPS blocks. These include a ban on all e-bikes and scooters in the buildings, the temporary closure of high risk areas and daily floor walks. Significant progress has been made on fire risk assessment actions, and the council continues to engage with key regulatory bodies, reviewing safety strategies regularly.
- 3.5 In March 2025 Cabinet agreed to the continued buyback of leasehold properties formerly purchased under right to buy across all 8 LPS blocks as buyers and existing leaseholders can no longer secure mortgages. There are now 43 leaseholders across the 8 blocks, of whom 25 have either enquired about a buyback, are in the process of evaluations or have moved through to conveyancing.
- 3.6 An options appraisal was initiated to explore the best long-term solution for the buildings. This was to assess three key options:

- Option 1: Strengthening – meaning works to address the structural integrity of the building
  - Option 2: Strengthening and refurbishment – meaning works to address the structural integrity of the building and address core elements of other work required to the building should strengthening work be undertaken
  - Option 3 Regeneration - involving the redevelopment of the site and including the demolition of existing buildings
- 3.7 A small external project team was procured to provide expert third party support with the options appraisal. Their detailed assessments of the potential of the three sites for each of the options are included in the appendices to this report.
- 3.8 The report to Cabinet recommends that Cabinet develops and consults on plans to regenerate each site (option 3) with tenants, leaseholders and other relevant stakeholders. It recommends that feasibility and design work is progressed together with the exploration of options for delivery that will create new homes on each site in keeping with the housing needs of the city.
- 3.9 It also recommends a wider masterplanning and visioning programme to be implemented across the wider Whitehawk estate, working with trusted partners, stakeholders and residents in the area to co-produce a long-term vision and masterplan for the estate.
- 3.10 The scale of the overarching programme of work across all the LPS sites and wider placemaking opportunities, should Cabinet approve in principle the preferred option to regenerate, will be substantial and likely to cost well excess of £500m overall.

#### **4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options**

- 4.1 Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee can make specific recommendations or comments to Cabinet if they wish and the draft minutes of the scrutiny meeting will be shared with Cabinet members in advance of Cabinet's consideration of the proposed options.

#### **5. Community engagement and consultation**

- 5.1 Following the home visits carried out in late 2024 to every household, the council has continued to engage and communicate with residents through 'drop in' events and regular newsletters. This has focused on raising awareness of the options appraisal process, gathering resident feedback, and understanding their concerns to inform ongoing support and engagement. Site-specific details of community engagement are outlined in the report.

## **6. Financial implications**

- 6.1 The financial implications are included in the Cabinet report in appendix 1.

Name of finance officer consulted: Sophie Warburton Date consulted (dd/mm/yy): 24/06/2025

## **7. Legal implications**

- 7.1 The legal implications in respect of the proposed recommendations to be made at Cabinet are included in the Cabinet report at appendix 1.

Name of lawyer consulted: Siobhan Fry Date consulted (24/06/25):

## **8. Equalities implications**

- 8.1 Equality Impact Assessments have been carried out to help determine the impact that relocating Secure Tenants from the LPS blocks will have. 99% of residents living within LPS blocks have been visited, and the information on individual resident needs has been used to inform the assessment and the support that will be provided to residents.
- 8.2 Relocating social housing tenants from the blocks will increase the number of households on the council's housing register, which in turn may increase 'waiting times' for those already on the waiting list. Further equalities implications are included in the Cabinet report at Appendix 1.
- 8.3 Redevelopment also presents an opportunity to transform these areas into safer, more sustainable neighbourhoods with improved services, transport links, green spaces, and community cohesion.
- 8.4 Detailed equalities implications are included in the Cabinet report at Appendix 1.

## **9. Sustainability implications**

- 9.1 There are environmental implications to consider when redeveloping the sites including the construction and demolition of old buildings and the building of new, sustainable homes. Demolishing buildings can release harmful materials and generate waste, while building new homes requires resources and contributes to emissions.
- 9.2 New buildings offer the opportunity to incorporate sustainable design, using eco-friendly materials, energy-efficient construction, and green infrastructure to reduce environmental impact. This can include features like water-saving systems, solar panels, green spaces, and rooftop gardens that support air quality and biodiversity. Prioritising energy-efficient homes reduces energy consumption, lowering carbon emissions and operational costs.

- 9.3 Detailed sustainability implications are included in the Cabinet report at Appendix 1.

## **10. Health and Wellbeing Implications:**

- 10.1 The Council must ensure its ongoing support, assistance and engagement with people living in the buildings for whom this will be an unsettling period of time and whose homes will be directly implicated by any recommendations that are taken forward. Living in a building deemed unsafe can significantly impact residents' health and wellbeing, often increasing stress and anxiety. Relocating tenants to safer accommodation can mitigate these risks, offering peace of mind and enhancing mental wellbeing.
- 10.2 Leaseholders may face financial hardship from managing mortgage obligations, council buyback negotiations, legal fees, moving costs, and potential income loss—leading to stress and instability. Rising housing costs and limited availability may make it difficult to find a new home nearby. For those who viewed the property as their long-term home, the sudden disruption can significantly impact health and wellbeing.
- 10.3 However, relocation can also bring negative consequences. It may lead to a loss of control, causing feelings of instability and worry, especially when leaving long-term homes. The disruption of established social networks and trusted services can contribute to social isolation and emotional distress, particularly for vulnerable residents. Uncertainty about the new neighbourhood, such as differences in cost of living, cultural environment, or commute times, can increase stress. Financial concerns related to moving may also arise, although these impacts can be eased with practical and financial support, especially for those in need of extra assistance.
- 10.4 Detailed Health & Wellbeing implications are included in the Cabinet report at Appendix 1.

## **11. Conclusion**

- 11.1 Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the options appraisal and recommendations for the Large Panel Systems Programme and to make any recommendations or comments it chooses to Cabinet.

## **Supporting Documentation**

### **1. Appendices**

1. Business Case
2. St James House New Build document
3. Nettleton Court and Dudeney Lodge New Build Document
4. Whitehawk New Build Document

5. Ridge Summary Report – Strengthening, Strengthening and Refurbishment and New Build
6. B&M New Build Cost Estimate
7. B&M Strengthening and Refurbishment Cost Estimate
8. East Brighton Neighbourhood Action Plan