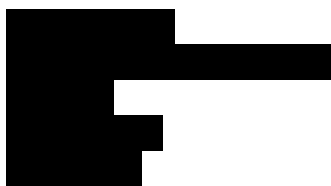


Annex 2b



Date: 11 December 2009

Our ref: AC/MS

Your ref:

Dear Mr Moore

QUESTION TO EAST AREA COMMITTEE SUBMITTED 30.11.09 - LONG STREET ACTION GROUP

With reference to your question/comments to the East Area Committee please find below my response that I trust addresses the question and other comments you have raised.

In answer to your question regarding the powers Sunderland City Council use in relation to empty properties, I can confirm that a range of powers are available to tackle the issues that present when dealing with an empty property. Issues which present and are to be considered when tackling an empty property include the condition, ownership, situation and history of the property. The powers available to the Council in tackling empty properties are wide and varied and include but are not restricted to; the enforced sale, compulsory purchase, empty dwelling management orders and planning legislation also. I am aware that several officers have detailed these powers to you previously.

We have found that almost every empty property has unique circumstances as to why it remains empty and when dealing with an empty property owners are always contacted initially to discuss their intentions. Owners are advised of options available to them and are also encouraged to work with the Council to bring the property back into occupation or to place it on the market for sale so that a prospective purchaser can do so. On many occasions the empty property officer includes in their role an introduction service between those owners who approach the Council wishing to sell and prospective purchasers. Once an initial approach has been made owners in the main respond positively and work towards following one of the above routes.

For those owners of premises who are not encouraged by the above approach, the Council does use the threat of invoking legal action and this in itself results in action on the owners part to remedy the situation.

Enforcement tools are seen as a last resort with an unco-operative owner and have been used successfully on many occasions by the Council.

In dealing with requests for assistance in respect to empty dwellings I can assure you that the suite of powers available to the Council are borne in mind when

officers assess the most appropriate course of action which is likely to bring success in returning the house to occupation.

The first actions taken in dealing with an empty property is to confirm that it is secure against unauthorised access and if need be we immediately instigate legal or emergency measures to secure the premises. Following this, the actions above will be followed.

For your information Council records show that from April 2006 there have been 272 properties that were empty and brought back into use across the Hendon area and within this figure 81 properties were located within the 'Long Street's' area.

In respect to the premises specifically mentioned and photographed in the attachment to your email I can confirm we are working with the current owners and I can inform you as far as I am able of the following:-

- No. 67 St Leonard Street – legal procedures are being followed and it is hoped that very soon the owner will be in a position to follow their intentions and place the property on the market for sale
- No. 76 St Leonard Street – the current owners intend to place the property on the market for sale and we are already aware of a party that has expressed an interest in its purchase
- No. 78 St Leonard Street – the sale of this property has recently been confirmed and new owners intend its refurbishment as soon as possible.

With regard to the latter property I am aware that you have previously been advised that the Council cannot force owners to have rear yard gates or doors or walls installed and it that is up to the owners themselves to decide should they wish to undertake this work.

I can confirm that empty properties are regularly monitored and regular contact with the owners is maintained.

I trust the above answers your questions.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Caddick', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

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