

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 14 March 2012	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee
<b>Report title:</b>		Hawkstone (Lessons Learnt)	
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The lessons learned from the Hawkstone Low Rise option appraisal.

## Introduction

1. The option appraisal exercise Hawkstone Estate in the latter half of 2011 was undertaken as a result of the Cabinet decision on 31 May 2011. The resolution designated the Hawkstone one of 6 High Investment Need Estates and one of three where an appraisal was to be undertaken. The study was to focus on the low rise blocks.

## General

2. Hawkstone estate has a convoluted history of discussion about investment and potential regeneration; a further exercise of some description was necessary to evaluate disparate information in a coordinated way and to agree a way forward. This should of course be undertaken in consultation with residents; in doing so, it should be accepted that the appraisal team would have to manage annoyance among residents who think it is going over old ground. It should not be assumed that the exercise can be ring-fenced from what residents' perceive as previous consideration of the same issues i.e. the 2 year programme commitment and the work done with residents around that. The team accepted that there is a long history, and indeed recognised the value of it, but needed to seek to ensure that residents were aware that this was a new and different process, leading to a firm and deliverable conclusion.
3. It should be anticipated that any option appraisal exercise will throw up complexities; the reason there is a 'history' at Hawkstone is that the investment decisions over time have not been straightforward. There are a number of lessons to be learned.
4. The first is that in conducting such exercise, a timetable should be set and it should be adhered to as far as possible, unless there is a clear advantage in extending it, for example in terms of the quality of decision making. It is acknowledged that a relatively fast track process as the Hawkstone option appraisal was will lead to complications, but that the speed in itself can provide a valuable focus. Some stages that would normally be sequential were overlapped at Hawkstone and in project terms it was quite an intense process. The exercise was too slow for some residents, and stages appeared rushed to others, but on balance the pace adopted for Hawkstone seemed about right.
5. It is necessary to set a clear scope for the exercise, partly because it can be managed more efficiently to timetable and partly because it assists in clarity

for residents. In the Hawkstone context, concentrating on just the housing blocks where investment was not already completed or was planned, was the right approach, but it still led to difficulties when looking at the land capacity issues, particularly the potential impact of infill development on the blocks not being considered.

### **Inception and Methodology**

6. The exercise must set a balance between not having a pre-conceived outcome and not wasting time on possibilities that could not reasonably be delivered; both are wasteful and likely to damage the credibility of the exercise and test the patience of residents. The draft options should be agreed with a reasonable set of assumptions in the knowledge that even a preferred option adopted as a result of the exercise is likely to evolve during planning and delivery.
7. In terms of the expertise brought in for the option appraisal, there are two main points of learning. Firstly, the involvement of resident's representatives in the appointment process for the technical advisors added value to the process, in terms of trust and relationship building. Secondly, there was a mid tender briefing and clarifications session for technical advisors who had entered the process. This gave an opportunity to emphasise the council's requirements and reinforce the timetable. This greatly assisted in a prompt start, once the appointments had been made.
8. Even though the working processes in collecting and presenting information should be transparent from residents' point of view, care and discretion is needed in the use of, for example, cost information and its implications for leaseholders.
9. Even when the housing blocks being considered are fairly uniform, as was the case with Hawkstone, it should be expected that the technical issues and residents' experience will highlight differences in terms of unit type, location, aspect, adjacency to roads etc. There is a need to be mindful of this during the exercise and also when making decisions and delivering the outcomes. For example, care is needed in making assumptions about some blocks being more popular with residents than others. In developing the specification for works at Hawkstone, it will be necessary for example to consider the requirements of parts of blocks particularly prone to condensation through cold bridging, and noise and fumes from traffic.
10. It was very useful that there is an actual option appraisal methodology, particularly when there were multiple exercises going on, but it should be recognised that it is only a tool and not every consideration can be pre-set.

### **Resident Involvement**

11. It is useful to establish a separate steering group with residents for an option appraisal, purely because of the focus required and the time limited nature of the exercise. It should be made clear that the steering group is a consultative arrangement and whilst every effort should be made to achieve a consensus, it is not a decision making body.

12. The group should be small enough to be manageable, and whilst it need not have a formal representative structure, it should be inclusive in terms of all blocks having a member and there being a mix of tenants and leaseholders. Where there is an existing TRA, the steering group should be set up through the TRA, and as a sub-group of it. In the case of Hawkstone, the group was established through the TRA but not as a sub-group. This led to unnecessary tensions among residents because the option appraisal was for part only of the estate represented by the TRA.
13. The group should adopt terms of reference and accepted working practices. The degree of formality should reflect the nature of the exercise and its duration.
14. The officer and advisor project team should be prepared to conduct business at a pace that the steering group is comfortable with, and with a clarity that is suitable for all members. For some residents, the process can at times appear repetitive and wasteful; others may wish to work at a very detailed level. Room should be made for a range of preferences.
15. Having employed the services of an independent resident advisor at Hawkstone, it is recommended that this approach should be used for any future option appraisal exercises.