

BOUNDARY WALL IMPROVEMENT SCHEME – NORMAN STREET, BIRKENHEAD

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval to undertake a scheme for improvements to boundary walls, railings and gates of properties numbered 21 to 123 on Norman Street, Birkenhead, as an extension to an existing contract for Group Repair Works in the area in line with paragraph 5.1.2 of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Norman Street is situated in North Birkenhead close to Birkenhead Park. The properties numbered 21 to 123 are adjacent to the Triangles Area where a HMRI Group Repair Scheme has been undertaken which covers four phases and involves improvements to over 450 houses. Odd numbered properties in Norman Street were not included in the Triangles Group Repair scheme as they are outside the HMRI boundary which runs down the middle of the road.

2.2 However, in order to build upon the works in the Triangles Area and maximise the impressive impact on the Streetscene, 49 properties numbered 21 to 123 in Norman Street are considered worthy of small scale investment through improvements to front boundary walls, railings and gates to help improve the appearance and create confidence in the area. Through improving the quality of the living environment, the scheme will assist in making residents feel more positive about the future of their neighbourhood.

2.3 The Green Streets Merseyside programme, in conjunction with the HMR programme, has recently implemented a scheme to plant 50 trees on Norman Street and Mallaby Street in conjunction with The Mersey Forest. This scheme further supports the HMRI activity that is taking place in the area.

3.0 IMPROVING THE BOUNDARY WALLS

3.1 The Group Repair Scheme in the Triangles area can be seen to have had a positive impact in that house prices have increased, investor confidence is growing, vacancy rates are reducing and owner-occupation rates are rising. A resident's survey of the properties in Norman Street provides a solid evidence base to propose an improvement scheme to boundary walls, railings and gates and an indication of a good likely take-up with positive responses received to date from 42 of the 49 owners, tenants and landlords of properties consulted.

3.2 The boundary walls of the properties in Norman Street are currently varied in type. Most of the property boundaries are brick built, with a number having hedgerows and also wooden fencing with the boundaries being in various differing states of repair. A number of residents have improved the condition of the boundary wall of their property; the intention of this scheme is to deliver a consistent improvement programme which will support long term sustainability and mirror the improvements to boundary walls and railings that has taken place in the Triangles area.

3.3 The HMRI Programme for 2008/09 offers the opportunity to deliver a scheme for replacement / repair of front boundary walls, railings and gates for 49 properties numbered 21 to 123 in Norman Street to build upon the HMRI activities taking place within the North Birkenhead area and improve the general aesthetics of the properties. The works involve:

- Demolish existing wall and cart away from site
- Remove existing hedge and cart away from site
- Rebuild wall off existing footings
- Supply and lay new copings
- Paint existing concrete pillars
- Supply and fix new railings
- Supply and fix new gate and metal gate posts

3.4 An outline for the proposed scheme has been prepared by Ainsley Gommon Architects.

3.5 The best option for ensuring value for money and completing the scheme within the required financial timescales is for the proposed scheme to be undertaken as additional works to the current phase of the Triangles Group Repair Scheme. As EJ Horrocks Ltd is currently on-site in Mallaby Street it is practical for them to undertake the scheme at rates already tendered for in the Group Repair phase 3 works and Horrocks have also agreed to include new gates and metal gateposts for properties within their quoted price and confirmed that they are prepared to carry out the scheme. Wirral Methodist Housing Association and Ainsley Gommon Architects have both also confirmed that they are willing to act as scheme project managers at prices already agreed with the Council for Phase 3. This adjustment to the Phase 3 contract is treated as a Variation Order/Extra Works Order in line with paragraph 5.1.2 of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and this course of action is supported by the Council's Procurement Unit.

3.6 Continuation of works would ensure uniformity between the improvements proposed for Norman Street and those already undertaken to boundary walls as part of the Triangles Group Repair Scheme.

3.7 The additional works must commence in January 2009 and be completed by March 2009 to utilise Environmental Improvement funds allocated in the 2008/09 HMRI Programme. The Contractor has confirmed that this can be achieved if Cabinet approves the extra works.

3.8 Of the three owners declining improvements two of the properties, numbered 121 and 123, currently have ornamental boundary walls which complement the design of their properties and are of newer build than those directly opposite the Triangles area.

4.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The full scheme costs are being finalised and they will amount to a maximum of £68,200, dependant on the level of resident take up. Including the works as a variation to the Group Repair Phase 3 contract means that the council can reclaim the VAT element of the scheme.

4.2 The proposed costs will be fully funded from the HMRI programme 2008/09 from monies allocated to Environmental Improvements through the Living through Change Programme.

5.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no staffing implications arising from this report.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no equal opportunities implications arising from this report

6.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The scheme includes measures which will enhance safety and security in the area.

7.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Improvements to boundary walls will enhance the appearance of properties and will supplement the tree planting activities undertaken in the area.

8.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no planning implications arising from this report.

9.0 ANTI POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The scheme will be funded from the 2008/09 HMR Programme to assist property owners and encourage their participation in the scheme.

10.0 SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The scheme will support the improvement programme taking place within the Triangles Area and reduce the potential negative impacts to residents in properties adjacent to the area.

11.0 LOCAL MEMBERS IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The Norman Street area is located in the Bidston & St James Ward.

12.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

13.1 None

14.0 RECOMMENDATION

That the contract with EJ Horrocks for Phase 3 of the Triangles Group Repair Scheme be varied to include the improvement of boundary walls, gates and railings at 21 to 123 Norman Street, Birkenhead at a maximum cost of £68,200 as an extension to an existing contract in line with paragraph 5.1.2 of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

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