

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE

6 DECEMBER 2021

1. **VACANT RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES UPDATE**

Joint report of the Chief Fire Officer and Treasurer.

RECOMMENDED

THAT the report and Appendix are noted.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 2.1 To provide the Committee with an update on the current position relating to vacant residential properties

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The position regarding vacant residential properties was last presented to the Audit and Risk Committee on 11th November 2019. The Appendix to this report provides an update and latest position on the four station sites where there are vacant residential properties.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

In preparing this report, an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out because the matters contained in this report do not relate to a policy change.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The course of action recommended in this report does not raise issues which should be drawn to the attention of the Authority's Monitoring Officer.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

These are contained in the attached Appendix.

7. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Vacant Residential Properties – Audit and Risk Committee 11th November 2019.

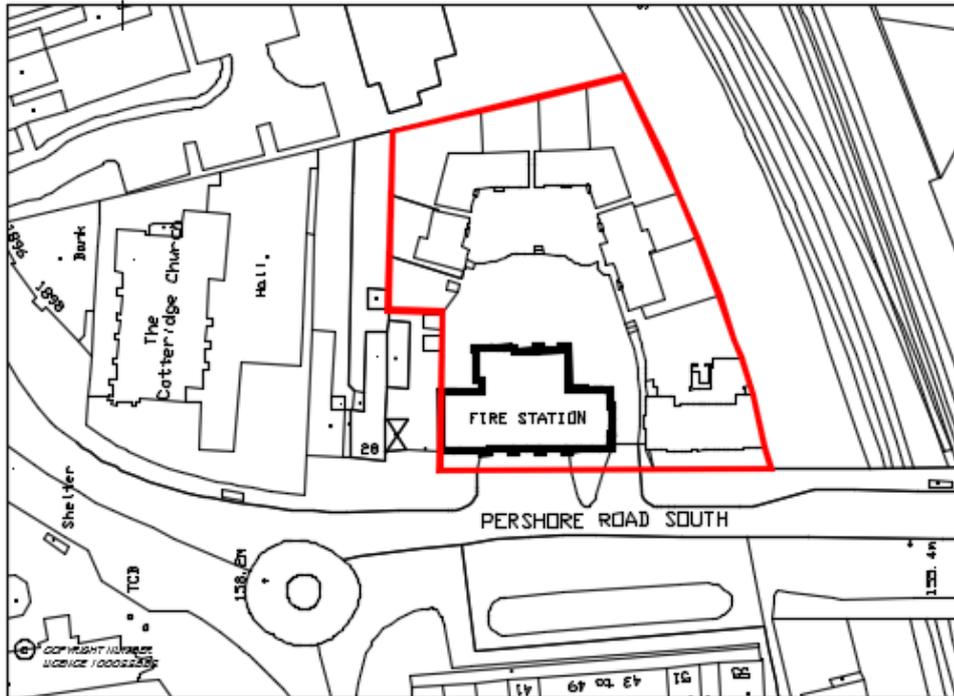
The contact name for this report is Treasurer, Mike Griffiths, Strategic Enabler – Finance and Resources, telephone number 0121 380 6919

MIKE GRIFFITHS
TREASURER

Sites reviewed:

- Kings Norton – 6 Flats, 4 Houses
- Perry Barr - 6 Houses
- Bloxwich – 2 First floor Apartments
- Erdington – 5 Flats

Kings Norton



Kings Norton is accessed via a single gated driveway to the right-hand side of the station (between the station and the apartment block).

Houses

To the rear on a lower ground level are 7 houses with three occupied by secure tenants under WMFS jurisdiction.

Use of properties is restricted, due to the shared driveway, Grade II listed status of the station, limited parking and stepped access (no level access) to the houses.

The Facilities Management (FM) Section are in discussions with a potential partner regarding a commercial lease on one of the remaining properties.

In addition, discussions have taken place with property agencies who have indicated that;

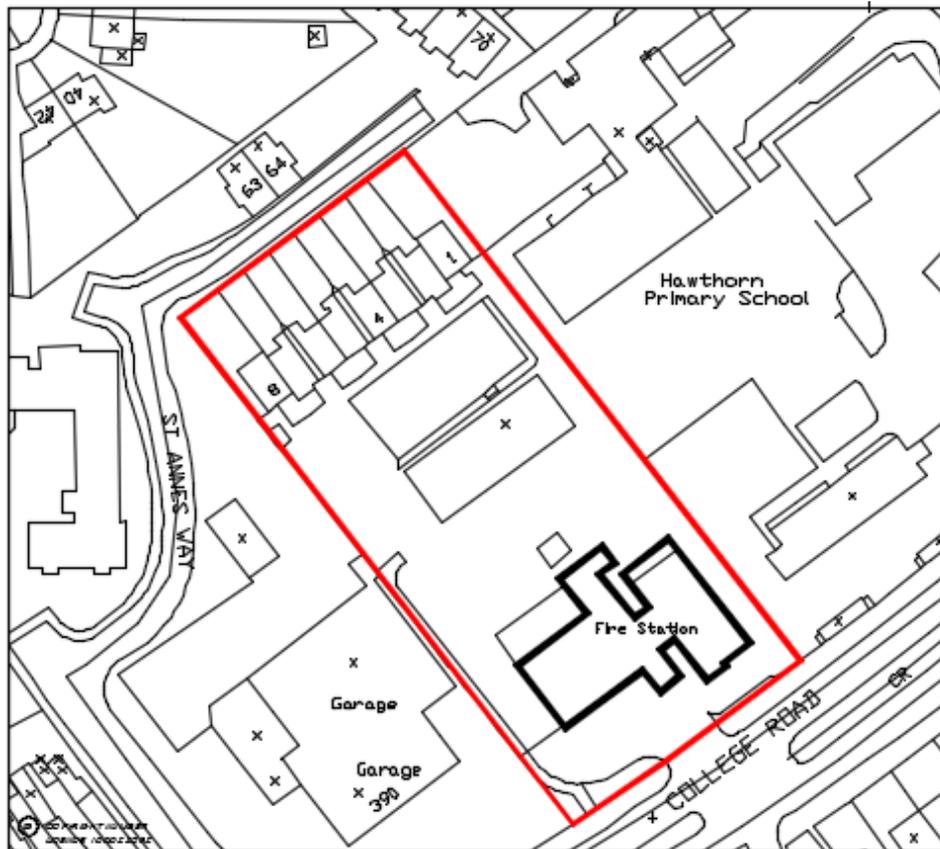
- Sale - not viable due to the site restrictions regarding access, parking, security of the site and also the impact on the site should the Service wish to dispose of it in the future.

- Residential letting - Could be commercially viable under a managed service, however, costs to refurbish 4 houses would be circa £120k plus ongoing professional fees and maintenance.

Flats

To the right-hand side of the station are six flats, currently in the process of being disposed of.

Perry Barr



Perry Barr is accessed by a central combined driveway/off ramp from College Road, this driveway directs traffic to the left-hand side of the appliance bay and around to the rear of the station.

Houses

To the rear of the site are eight houses contained within a stand-alone block, one house has a secure tenant, one is used for storage by Community Fire Safety and one used by Fire Service Cadets.

The main issue restricting alternative use is access via the shared driveway (the only access/entry to the houses).

FM were perusing disposal of the properties. Planning permission was obtained to separate the houses from the station site with a new access formed to the rear. However, the Housing Association at the rear of the Fire Station site refused consent for vehicular access.

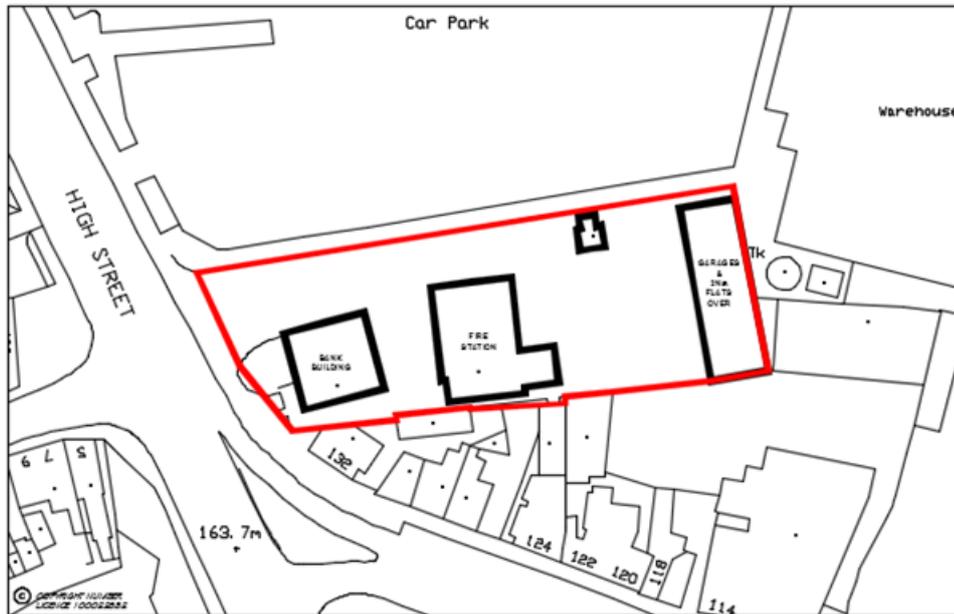
Discussions have taken place with property agencies who indicated that;

- Sale - not recommended due to the location of the dwellings. Having a freehold plot to the rear of the Fire Station would compromise utilisation of the site in the future and access being shared is not suitable for security of the station.
- Residential letting - Could be commercially viable under a managed service, however, costs to refurbish 7 houses would be circa £300k plus ongoing professional fees and maintenance.

In addition, discussions have taken place with staff at the station who suggested the following possible uses:

- Cold training venues (one could be furnished as a family home and black out the windows to make it a realistic house for searching).
- Meeting rooms.

Bloxwich



Bloxwich is accessed via a single driveway to the left-hand side of the appliance bay off High Street.

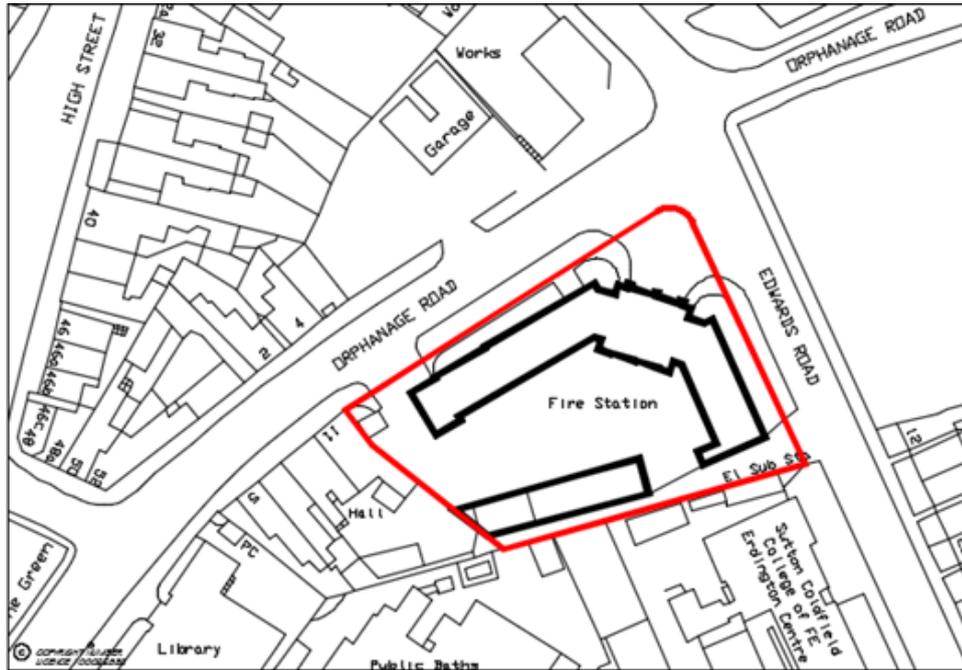
Located at the rear of the plot above the old workshop at first floor level are two apartments, both the workshop and apartments are accessed from one centre stairway leading up to a balcony.

Due to their location, a solution to provide dedicated access to these properties is problematic.

Currently one property is used on an ad-hoc basis by the station as a scenario/rope training facility.

Discussions have taken place with property agencies who indicated that selling with a flying freehold is not a viable option, and residential letting is not commercially viable due to access, no parking and lack of security that would compromise the station.

Erdington



Erdington is accessed via a single gated driveway off Orphanage Road.

9 Flats above the station are integral to the station building on the first and second floor, of which 5 are currently vacant.

The only access to flats is via two stairwells located internally either end of the rear yard.

Planning restrictions prohibit forming any new separate access off Edward Road as any structure would be very large due to differences in ground levels/height.

FM have had discussions with property agents who informed us that sale or residential letting is not considered feasible due to location, access to flats and lack of security that would compromise the station.