

Notes from Environment & Economy Select Committee site visit to look at recycling in various low rise flat blocks – 5pm Monday 21 July 2025

CSC Members Present:

Chair, Cllr Leanne Brady, Cllr Alistair Gordon, Cllr Forhad Chowdhury, Cllr Jim Brown and Cllr Peter Wilkins.

Officers Present:

Kris White, Stevenage Direct Services & Stephen Weaver, Scrutiny Officer.

Members attended a site visit to 4 low flat blocks at the following sites:

- 189-199 Vardon Road
- 11-77 Douglas Drive
- 64-70 Derby Way
- 71-77 Sefton Road

Members made the following observations:

Vardon Road

The proposed area suggested by SDS officers is in the car park close to the Vardon Road flats. It was suggested that the parking bay closest to the steps would be required to create a bin store area. It was noted that there is no lighting close to this area. There are a number of steps from the communal garden up to the proposed bin store area, which it was felt could cause difficulties for anyone with mobility issues. There could be a potential for complaints from neighbouring properties due to smells in the summer.

Douglas Drive

This area is very close to the Vardon Road flats. Other than in front of the Douglas Drive Day centre building, which has a large pedestrian paved area there are no obvious areas for a bin store for these flats. The pedestrian paved area would be problematic as the houses opposite would overlook a bin store so this would be a loss of visual amenity unless the whole area could be enhanced with a sympathetic bin store area created, screened by planting etc. These flats have a steep set of steps from the communal garden which houses the current bin store. Currently the Refuse and recycling operatives manually carry plastic sacks with all waste and no recycling from the communal bin store up the steps to the nearest.

Derby Way

The flats at Derby Way have a set of steps leading to a gated access/exit leading to a car parking area, the steps at this location are not as steep as those in Vardon Road and Derby Way sites. It is proposed that a bin store area could be created into the bank which would require the shrubs in the current location being removed and replaced with a purpose-built bin store area.

Sefton Road

The flats at Sefton Way have a ramp built in from the communal garden area up to the gate access/exit leading to a car parking area. There are currently 4 or 5 large wheely bins for communal recycling. There could be capacity for a few more bins if the current space is at capacity.

Bring Bank Site at the Oval Shops

There are issues with fly-tipping at these sites. The sites are placed to assist residents in flat blocks above the shops who have no capacity to recycle. The fly tipping is in part from commercial premises nearby who leave tubs of used cooking oil. Officers indicated that they are considering having two large sites in the town to complement the recycling offer at the County Council's recycling centre. The sites are cleared 3 times a week by SDS recycling operatives.

Members discussed the use of CCTV to monitor the fly tipping issues and whether this could be assisted by AI technology to target potential fly tipping abusers. It was noted that the deterrent of a £400 fine does not appear to be working.

Other issues raised by Members

Whatever offer officers consult on they will need to be simple and attractive to residents to encourage them to take part in any new recycling schemes. In time a recycling champion/lead resident at each block could be established to help encourage other residents to use the new scheme. In areas like Douglas Drive where there are currently no recycling bins, an option could be to provide large plastic bins that residents put their recycling into and then the refuse operatives could move up to the exit/ car park area to the freighters using light fabric sacks – they currently manually lift general waste plastic sacks. Some consideration would need to be given to a receptacles to collect recycling in individual flats in addition to the food waste caddies. Members recognised the difficulty of this task due to the nature of each block needing a personalised plan.