

CABINET (HOUSING) COMMITTEE

4 October 2017

Attendance:

Councillors:

Horrill (Chairman) (P)

Brook (P)

Miller (P)

Other invited Councillors:

Berry (P)

Scott (P)

Elks (P)

Tait (P)

TACT representatives:

Mrs M Gill

Mr M Fawcitt (P)

Mrs S Down (P) – Deputy

1. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 6 July 2017, be approved and adopted.

2. **THE VALLEY, STANMORE – APPROVAL OF OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE AND PROCUREMENT PROCESS**

(Report CAB2973(HSG) refers)

The Head of New Homes Delivery gave a brief presentation outlining the background to the scheme and displayed drawings of the proposed development which had received planning consent. The Committee noted the site was on a steep slope and the design had been developed to take account of this. All flats would have one dedicated parking space each (plus parking for visitors) and all houses would have at least two parking spaces allocated. The proposals also included improvements to surrounding open spaces and footpaths.

The Head of New Homes Delivery explained the reasons that a two stage approach was being recommended, as outlined in the Report, to seek to minimise risk. He emphasised that the Report sought approval for an interim

business case with a full, costed, case brought back to Committee once the final tender price was known. He drew Members' attention to the different viability scenarios contained in Appendices 1 and 2 to the Report and responded to detailed questions thereon. Discussions would continue with the Homes and Community Agency (HCA) regarding grants available towards the scheme.

In response to questions, the Head of New Homes Delivery advised that the proposals recommended using the Southern Construction Framework (SCF) which included eight nationally operating contractors who had been assessed as to their financial robustness.

During public participation, David Chafe spoke as a resident of Stanmore and generally welcomed the proposals. However, he expressed some concern that Phase 1B might prove too expensive to deliver and queried why this particular element was more costly?

The Head of New Homes Delivery explained that this was due to the topography of the site and that this section only included five houses. However, he also highlighted that the Net Present Value ['NPV'] predictions outlined in the Appendices were only one factor for the Council to take account of in deciding whether to proceed and the Committee noted the support for new houses in the Stanmore community.

During discussions, Members raised a number of comments and questions as summarised below:

- As only one block of flats included a lift it was therefore important that adequate storage space was provided at ground level (for example for heavy/large items such as pushchairs, which were difficult to carry up several flights of stairs).
- Consideration of the parking implications of the new development on the Upper Stanmore area (the Head of New Homes Delivery agreed to investigate further the current status of the consultation on parking in the area).
- Some concern that the proposed 5% design contingency budget would be sufficient on a build of this size and complexity. However, the Head of New Homes Delivery emphasised the lessons learned from previous projects and the steps being taken to minimise risk, as outlined in the Report.
- In response to a question regarding the likely timescale, the Head of New Homes Delivery advised that it was intended to submit the final scheme cost to Committee in January/February 2018 for approval. If approved, it was possible that work on site could commence June/July 2018 and was likely to last around 18 months.
- The Assistant Director (Chief Housing Officer) confirmed that the Committee could consider approving a local lettings policy for the development at a later date.
- In response to a suggestion, it was agreed that the design process could include consideration of including additional cycle paths through the development.

- One Member drew attention to previous discussions where it was suggested that it might be appropriate to sell one or two dwellings on the private market in order to bring the rental costs down across the rest of the development. The Assistant Director noted this comment but emphasised that this approach might impact on the potential grant available from the HCA.
- The Head of New Homes Delivery confirmed possible alternatives to a traditional “brick and block” build would be considered as part of the design process.

The Committee agreed to the following for the reasons set out above and outlined in the Report.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Assistant Director (Chief Housing Officer) be authorised to sign up to and use the Southern Construction Framework to seek Tenders for the construction of The Valley.
2. That the Assistant Director (Chief Housing Officer) be authorised to agree the price/quality split for the purposes of the mini competition to be carried out under the Southern Construction Framework.
3. That the Assistant Director (Chief Housing Officer) be authorised to submit a grant funding bid to the Homes and Community Agency (HCA).
4. That the Assistant Director (Chief Housing Officer) be authorised to enter into pre-construction contract for the design of the scheme following Stage 1 (selection of Tenderer) of the process.
5. That a further report is brought back to Cabinet (Housing) Committee when the final Tender price is known to seek authority to enter into a build contract with the successful Tenderer.
6. That the Disposal of the Open Space be approved.

3. **UPDATE ON NEW HOMES PROGRAMME**

The Head of New Homes Delivery gave a presentation updating the Committee on current progress on the new homes programme. He responded to a number of detailed questions, as summarised below:

- **Extra Care Scheme, Chesil Street** – Completion delayed from November 2017 and now estimated for February 2018. Delays caused initially by discovery of BT fibre-optic cable and then by internal partitions being incorrectly installed (the latter delay was due to a contractor mistake and consequently costs would be met by them). The Council were pursuing a claim against BT regarding the cost of the initial delay. The Assistant

Director (Chief Housing Officer) emphasised the good ongoing relationship between the contractor and the Council with regular ongoing meetings between the Chief Executives of both bodies. Offers had been received on all shared ownership and open market units and the predicted overall budget was as previously presented to Committee.

- **Victoria House** – expected completion of January 2018 and marketing of flats had commenced.
- **Hillier Way** – development progressing well with positive comments received regarding the design chosen. Completion expected late October/early November 2017. In response to questions, the Head of New Homes Delivery advised that the quality of finishing selected resulted from the planning process and also the benefits to the Council (as landlord) of long-lasting materials.
- **Mitford Road, Alresford** – Scheme house builds progressing well and due to be completed in January 2018. Some delays on progressing build of flats due to negotiations with the County Council regarding the roundabout, but due to commence on site soon.
- **Bailey Close** – building contractors had recently gone into administration but two other building firms had since indicated they would be willing to complete the build.

The Head of New Homes Delivery also provided a brief update on schemes expected to commence over the next few years. This included a proposal in Winnall for smaller dwellings, possibly with communal facilities, to appeal to younger people who wished to pay less rent to enable them also to save for future accommodation requirements. The Council was testing this idea through focus groups and using social media to gather views.

The Head of New Homes Delivery also provided a summary of possible emerging opportunities in future years. This included a significant opportunity at Moyles Lane, Knowle for the provision of 100 open market and 100 affordable dwellings in a joint project with the Parish Council and the Homes and Community Agency (HCA).

The Committee noted that if all the proposals in the overall programme were developed it would result in a total of 605 new units. The Chairman commented that this far exceeded the commitment in the Council Strategy for 300 new homes.

The Committee agreed to the following for the reasons set out above.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

4. **UPDATE ON LATEST FIRE SAFETY ADVICE AND FIRE PREVENTION WORKS TO COMMUNAL HOUSING**

The Assistant Director (Chief Housing Officer) gave a presentation providing Members with an update on fire safety measures for Council owned properties.

In summary, the current Fire Safety Policy was agreed by the Committee in November 2015 (Report CAB2742(HSG) refers). Since the June 2017 Grenfell Tower disaster, all risk assessments were reviewed and the guidance was re-issued to all tenants. The Council did not have any high rise flats within its stock: the Winnall Flats were mid-rise.

The Assistant Director emphasised that no new Government guidance had been issued as a result of the disaster. In addition, the Council had discussed its current policy with the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS). Consequently, it was not recommending any changes to the Policy as previously adopted.

Winnall Flats

A joint inspection of the flats had taken place by the Council with HFRS which had highlighted some concern regarding the refuse chute arrangements. As a consequence, the refuse chutes were immediately decommissioned and residents informed. Following ongoing dialogue with HFRS minor remedial work had been undertaken at the flats; additional fire detection measures had been commissioned for the bin stores and all residents had been consulted on the future use of the bin chutes. It was hoped that it would be possible to reopen the chutes shortly.

The Committee agreed to the following for the reasons set out above.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

The meeting commenced at 4.00pm and concluded at 6.40pm.

Chairman