

CABINET (HOUSING DELIVERY) COMMITTEE**18 September 2012**Attendance:

Councillors:

Tait (Chairman) (P)

Coates (P)

Weston (P)

Other invited Councillors:

J Berry (P)

Izard (P)

Scott (P)

TACT representative:

Mrs J Steventon-Baker (P)

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillor Hiscock

Others in attendance who did not address the meeting:

Councillors Humby and Pines

1. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chairman welcomed approximately 20 members of the public present to the first meeting of the new Cabinet (Housing Delivery) Committee. He introduced the Councillors and Officers in attendance and gave a brief outline of the Committee's remit.

2. PUBLIC PARTICPATION

Miss S Eames, Mr B Espiner, Mrs J Feltham and Mrs M Wilks spoke regarding Report CAB2392(HD) and their comments are summarised under the relevant agenda item below.

3. HOUSING DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND DESIGN SPECIFICATION
(Report CAB2393(HD) refers)

The Head of New Homes Delivery advised that final approval of the Strategy and Design Specification was a matter for Cabinet, following recommendation from this Committee.

In relation to establishing the viability of a development scheme, one Member queried the relationship with the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan which was over a 30 year period and, in particular, whether a longer period of, for example 40-45 years, would be more appropriate in assessing viability within the HRA Business Plan.

The Head of Housing Services advised that, although the HRA Business Plan was for a 30 year period, it did not preclude allowing a longer pay-back period for a new property if it was considered there were good reasons to make such an exception.

The Committee discussed the different possible rent levels, with some concern being expressed regarding any proposal to set rent at an 'affordable rent' level of 80% market rent, as opposed to the lower 'social rent' level. The Head of New Homes Delivery highlighted that, increasingly, housing associations were letting properties at an affordable rent level and this had not led to any drop in demand of these properties through the Choice Based Lettings system. In addition, the Government expected new homes to be funded from the 80% rent model. However, the Corporate Director (Operations) emphasised that the Strategy did not stipulate a particular rent level, but this was a decision that would have to be made in determining the viability of each particular scheme.

In response to questions, the Head of New Homes Delivery advised that the provision of three-bedroomed properties had been prioritised, as examination of the housing waiting list had indicated that these properties had the longest waiting time period (currently approximately five years for those on medium priority levels).

The Head of New Homes Delivery confirmed that the Strategy included provision for community lettings plans which could give priority to certain groups, including local people. These plans could be evidence led and driven by the needs of the local community.

In response to questions, the Head of Housing Services advised that a letter would shortly be sent to all relevant Council tenants, regarding the possibility of extending their living accommodation through loft conversions, as an alternative to seeking new, larger accommodation.

In discussion of Section 10 on 'Communication and Tenant Involvement', the Corporate Director (Operations) stated that the requirements and concerns of the wider local community could be examined as part of the planning process for a particular scheme. The Appendix to CAB2392(HD) set out in more detail the level and different stages of public consultation that would be expected.

Mrs J Steventon-Baker reported that TACT were in favour of building new Council homes and would seek to assist the Council wherever possible to achieve this. However, TACT did not wish the continued maintenance and upgrade of existing housing stock to be detrimentally affected by the new plans. In addition, TACT would like measures to ensure the ongoing future retention of new stock.

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

RECOMMENDED (TO CABINET):

That the Development Strategy and Design Specification be adopted as the framework for delivering the Council homes new build programme.

RESOLVED:

That the Head of New Homes Delivery be authorised to make non-material amendments to these documents from time to time, in consultation if appropriate with the Portfolio Holder for New Homes Delivery.

4. **ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**
(Report CAB2392 (HD) refers)

The Head of New Homes Delivery advised that, as this stage, there were no specific development plans in relation to sites at Abbots Barton or Stanmore. However, the proposal was to further evaluate potential development sites and add these areas to the three-year Housing Development Programme.

During the public participation period, Miss S Eames, Mr B Espiner, Mrs J Felks and Mrs M Wilks (all residents of Abbots Barton) spoke regarding this item and their comments are summarised below:

- Concern about potential loss of a popular and well-used play and open recreation area;
- The importance of the large open recreational space in Abbots Barton in terms of maintaining the overall desirability of the estate;
- Concern about impact on wildlife and possible loss of long-established trees;
- Concern about negative impact on availability of residents' parking spaces in the area. Some residents commented that existing on-street parking levels were causing difficulties and this was exacerbated by commuter parking in the area;
- Concern that removal of garages would increase those wishing to park on the roads in the area;
- Possibility of alternative plots of land in the area being utilised instead;
- Concern that more housing could lead to further problems in terms of availability of school places, as the local school was already over-subscribed;
- Concern that any new homes would not be offered to local people and whether the rent levels charged would make them genuinely affordable;
- Concern about potential loss of views from existing properties.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Hiscock (a Ward Member for St Bartholomew) addressed the Committee. He expressed concern that the level of consultation undertaken with residents of Abbots Barton to date had not

been adequate and that the Council should take steps to ensure that those potentially affected had proper opportunity to comment.

The Chairman stated that Ward Members had been contacted regarding the potential for development in their areas and the comments from those members of the public who had attended the meeting were welcomed.

The Corporate Director (Operations) emphasised that the Council had decided that it wished to build new homes and had tasked officers to find suitable sites. Therefore, the Committee was being asked to agree the potential for new development at both Abbotts Barton and Stanmore, in addition to those sites already included within the Programme. However, the decision as to whether a particular development was acceptable or not would be made by the Planning Development Control Committee, where matters such as parking and impact on the environment would be addressed. Local residents would therefore have the opportunity to raise concerns under the planning application process. In addition, the Communication and Approval Process set out in Appendix 1 to the Report included provision for public consultation at various stages of the process.

Councillor Weston (Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport) stated that the Council were already aware of issues relating to parking in Abbotts Barton and would shortly be undertaking a consultation with local residents on this matter.

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

RECOMMENDED (TO CABINET):

1. That the projects to evaluate potential development sites in Abbotts Barton and Stanmore areas be added to the three year Housing Development Programme and the Head of New Homes Delivery be authorised to commission the relevant professional and technical services to enable, where appropriate, planning applications to be prepared with the costs of these services being met from the budget of £100,000 approved by Cabinet on 13 June 2012.

2. That the Communication and Approval Process set out in Appendix 1 of the report be approved for the basis for the Council's new build programme.

5. **AUTHORISATION TO PROGRESS SCHEMES: BOURNE CLOSE, OTTERBOURNE AND STATION CLOSE, ITCHEN ABBAS**
(Report CAB2394(HD) refers)

The Head of New Homes Delivery advised that the Report sought approval to submit planning applications for the two sites listed and emphasised that the Appendices included indicative costs only at this stage. If approved, a further Report would be submitted to Committee for agreement once actual costs were available.

The Head of New Homes Delivery reported that 15 people had attended the public exhibition of draft plans in Otterbourne on 11 September 2012, of which five had submitted comments. Concerns raised related to potential over-development, flooding, increased traffic and loss of garages. In addition, further correspondence had been received by the Committee Chairman expressing some concerns about the detail of the proposed development at Bourne Close, including the build appearance and loss of light to existing properties. He emphasised that all these matters would be addressed as part of the planning process. He advised that the scheme at Bourne Close had been assessed as viable within the Council's affordability parameters.

The Head of New Homes Delivery added that 16 people had attended the public exhibition of draft plans in Itchen Abbas on 12 September 2012, of which three had submitted comments supporting the scheme. Concerns had also been raised regarding access to existing properties and other planning matters. He advised that the scheme at Station Close was not currently assessed as viable within the Council's affordability parameters, however it was believed the cost of the scheme could be reduced further.

During discussion of Station Close, Members noted that alterations to the design might be required, together with a decision to reduce the Code for Sustainable Homes Target Level to Code 3. There was general agreement that the scheme should be progressed, if possible, and a planning application should be submitted.

In general, Members requested that future Reports contain additional information regarding possible savings and means of reducing costs, where a scheme was not assessed as viable.

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

RESOLVED:

1. That the Head of New Homes Delivery be authorised to prepare and submit planning applications to develop Council Homes at:-

a) Bourne Close, Otterbourne

b) Station Close, Itchen Abbas

2. That the Head of New Homes Delivery be authorised to amend proposals, if necessary, to prepare the schemes for planning application submission.

3. That the Head of New Homes Delivery, in consultation with the Head of Legal Services, be authorised to take necessary actions to negotiate any legal issues that may arise to ensure new homes are developed.

4. That the Head of New Homes Delivery be authorised to take necessary actions to comply with any planning requirements.

5. That the Head of New Homes Delivery, in conjunction with the Heads of Legal Services and Estates, be authorised to proceed to tendering a build contract for the scheme.

6. That capital spending on professional fees of £25,000 at Bourne Close and £20,000 at Station Close be approved in accordance with Financial Procedure Rule 6.4 and a further report requesting approval for the total spending on each scheme, along with a full financial appraisal be brought back to Committee once tenders have been received.

7. That the following increases in the capital sums allocated within the HRA development programme be approved:

- a) Bourne Close £92,000 (making £482,000 in total)
- b) Station Close £491,000 (making £1,011,000 in total)

The meeting commenced at 1.30pm and concluded at 4.10pm

Chairman