

CABINET – 14 OCTOBER 2009

PRINCIPAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 19 OCTOBER 2009

DISPOSAL OF HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) PROPERTY: NO 15 FOLLYFIELD, BISHOPS WALTHAM, AND ADJACENT GARDEN LAND AT 14 FOLLYFIELD.

REPORT OF HEAD OF STRATEGIC HOUSING

Contact Officer: Mark Barnett/Brian Bottrill Tel No: 01962 848210 and 01962 848325

RECENT REFERENCES:

None.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report seeks approval for the disposal of the Council owned property, No. 15 Follyfield, Bishops Waltham, Nr Southampton, to Swaythling Housing Society, for the purpose of providing two newbuild affordable housing units and one refurbished affordable housing unit. It is also proposed that a section of garden attached to No 14 Follyfield is disposed of to Swaythling Housing Society to facilitate the development. The three affordable units would be for social rent with the Council having nomination rights to each.

There is an exempt Appendix which considers the financial issues arising from the disposal of these sites and includes proposals for compensating the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the lost income arising from this proposal. The report proposes that the capital receipt generated from this scheme be allocated to support the Supplementary Repairs Programme already approved, but that was subject to income from asset sales.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That, subject to the matter not being called in by the Principal Scrutiny Committee:

1. The disposal of No. 15 Follyfield, Bishops Waltham and garden land of No 14 Follyfield, as outlined on the attached plan in Appendix 1 to Swaythling Housing Society be approved, subject to:
 - (a) terms and conditions to be agreed by the Head of Estates
 - (b) taking account of the requirements of General Consent B Disposal of Dwelling-houses to Registered Social Landlords for Refurbishment 2005 under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 1988 (in respect of 15) and the General Consent for the Disposal of Part II Land 2005 (in respect of 14)
 - (c) a planning consent being granted for the erection of two affordable housing units.
 - (d) Nomination rights to each home being granted to the Council.
2. The Head of Strategic Housing, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, be authorised to agree any minor amendments to the project that may be required to ensure its viability.
3. That the Capital Receipt detailed in the exempt appendix be used to support the Supplementary Housing Repairs programme already approved (CAB1820 dated 18 March 2009 refers) and included in the Council's Capital Programme (CAB1775 dated 14 January 2009 refers), but which is subject to receipts generated from asset sales.

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DETAIL:

1 Background

- 1.1 In October 2008, No 15 Follyfield, Bishops Waltham, which is a Council owned three bedroom semi-detached house with a large garden, became void after an eviction. Following an inspection of the property, it was estimated by the Voids Officer that works to return the dwelling to a habitable condition were likely to cost circa £60,000 - £80,000.
- 1.2 A development option was considered and initially rejected, as vehicular access to the site was not possible due to the position of a large sycamore tree. However, a subsequent inspection of the site revealed that the tree was most likely causing subsidence to a single storey extension attached to No 15. The tree was of poor quality with a split trunk and its proximity to No 15 was likely to cause further structural problems in the future. The tree was removed in July 2009, which has opened up the option of a possible development.
- 1.3 There are currently 112 eligible households on the Hampshire Homechoice Register who would require a three bedroom house in Bishops Waltham.

2. Affordable Development Scheme

- 2.1 Swaythling Housing Society in conjunction with Mapledean Developments have conducted a feasibility study of the site. These partners were selected as they successfully worked with the Council on the development at Hoe Road, Bishops Waltham, which is on site and about halfway through the build.
- 2.2 A planning application has been submitted and is expected to be determined by the Planning Development Control Committee on 29 October 2009. Subject to approval by the Local Planning Authority, it is possible to keep No 15 standing as a three bedroom house and build a further two, three-bedroom houses in the garden. A small single storey extension attached to No 15 will need to be demolished to give access to the building plot in the rear garden. This single storey extension is showing signs of subsidence.
- 2.3 It will also be necessary to use some land attached to the garden of the Council property at 14 Follyfield. This property is occupied and the tenant has been notified of this possibility if the development proposal were to proceed. Further detail of this is contained within the Exempt Appendix 3 attached to this report.

A plan of No 14 Follyfield is attached to this report in Appendix 2, which highlights the area of garden land that would be required to facilitate the development.

- 2.2 The proposal includes the total refurbishment of Number 15 Follyfield so it may be returned to use as a three bedroom house. If Cabinet are minded to agree the recommendations, the land will be transferred to Swaythling Housing Society and the Council will retain 100% nomination rights to the two new houses and the existing property after refurbishment.
- 2.3 The new dwellings have been designed to meet the Lifetime Homes standard so that they may be adapted in the future to meet the needs of special client groups, if required.
- 2.4 If the recommendation to dispose of the site is agreed and planning consent is granted, it is expected that the contractor can be on site by December 2009, with the properties being completed by the middle of 2010.
- 3.0 Consultation
- 3.1 Local Members, Bishops Waltham Parish Council, the TACT Chairman have been briefed on the proposals.
- 3.2 The residents of Follyfield and those householders adjacent to the site from Eastways, Bishops Waltham were consulted at an exhibition at the village hall on 1 September 2009. Approximately fifteen people attended the consultation with the majority supporting the principle of providing affordable housing. Some residents expressed concern about the impact of the development on parking in Follyfield. The design provides for 6 off-road parking spaces and so the development will not adversely affect the existing parking situation.
- 3.3 Members of the public will be able to make written representation to the Council, as part of the planning process. To date 3 letters of representation have been received, which express concerns over parking in Follyfield.
- 4.0 TACT comment
- 4.1 TACT has not varied in their strong opposition to selling council properties or land (or giving its land away).
It will always remain a matter on which we can never agree, however we know the councils reasons for doing so.

It is for this reason then as a committee member of Defend Council Housing, and as my role as joint chair of TACT, when I attend Parliament next week along with Beryl White afternoon TACT Chair, for the launch of the House of Commons Council Housing Group Review of Council Housing Report, that the question of selling council homes and land is included on the agenda. Many other councils around the country and their tenants, including Winchester oppose it and want it stopped, I also included it in the concerns council tenants have, in my recent update to the European Court of Human Rights, regarding

my case against the Government regarding negative subsidy robbery from councils and their tenants.

It is only when the Government reveals the true figures regarding the Housing Revenue Account Review that it may be possible to stop selling off council properties and land, TACT like the Council await these figures with interest.

Alan Rickman TACT joint Chair/ Defend Council Housing Committee Member
Beryl White TACT joint Chair

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

5 CORPORATE STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO):

5.1 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND CORPORATE BUSINESS PLAN (RELEVANCE TO):

Safe and Strong Communities (Inclusive Society): To enable and improve access to affordable housing.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

6.1 Full details of the resource implications are set out in Exempt Appendix 3.

6.2 Whilst the Council's Capital Strategy endorses the approach of supporting Affordable Housing developments by providing land at no or less than market value, it should be noted that where proposals include existing income generating assets such as properties, this approach may also result in a direct loss of income to the Council. The proposals included in the Exempt Appendix 3 address this directly and recommend that any such loss of income must be accounted for when costing and assessing the viability of such schemes.

7 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

7.1 A risk assessment has been completed in accordance with the Council's Risk Management Methodology and the existing risk controls in place mean that no significant risks (Red or Amber) have been identified.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

APPENDICES:

1. Site plan of No. 14 and No. 15 Follyfield 1/1250 scale.
2. Plan of No. 14 Follyfield detailing the area of garden required for the development.
3. Financial Details (exempt)

Site of 14 and 15 Follyfield,
Bishops Waltham

APPENDIX 1



14 Follyfield, garden land required to facilitate development

APPENDIX 2



Playing Field

