

14 October 2015		ITEM: 10 01104415
Cabinet		
Housing Estate Regeneration Update		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key	
Report of: Councillor Lyn Worrall, Portfolio Holder for Housing		
Accountable Head of Service: Kathryn Adedeji, Head of Housing Investment and Development and Corporate Commercial Services		
Accountable Director: David Bull, Director of Planning and Transportation		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

Reports to Cabinet in December 2014, June and September 2015 updated Members on the progress that had been made on the housing estate regeneration programme, obtained approval for the vision and objectives for the programme, and approved the exploration of other potential residential development sites within the Council's emerging Grays Town Centre masterplan to facilitate the development of new, high quality housing to support the wider housing regeneration proposals for the Seabrooke Rise Estate in Grays.

This report provides a further update to Cabinet and, in particular, updates Cabinet on the results of the recent consultation regarding high rises in Grays and the progress that is being made on the Council's other key housing estates that is necessary to appropriately package a housing regeneration opportunity to the market later in the year following the publication of a Prior Information Notice (PIN) in late August 2015.

Recommendations

- 1.1 Cabinet not to award decant status to three Grays high rises – Butler, Davall and Greenwood House at this stage, but instead to note that continued consultation should take place with residents to include detailed design on alternative home provision to ensure residents are given a clear unambiguous set of choices.**

- 1.2 Cabinet to agree that officers consider feedback from this consultation as part of the development of the emerging master plan for Grays Town Centre.**
- 1.3 Cabinet to note that the Council's new build development on Seabrooke Rise will be allocated in accordance to the Council's existing Lettings Policy and existing residents of the Seabrooke Rise high rise towers will not benefit from enhanced priority status at the current time.**
- 1.4 Cabinet to note that the Council is currently reviewing the proposed Housing Development Plan and Estate Regeneration Programme in the light of the Government's imposed reductions in rent. The Council are assessing the implications and options available to ensure that the financial parameters of the HRA are met, whilst retaining an affordable and deliverable programme of housing investment and new build development.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Since 2013, Cabinet have approved key objectives and programmes designed to improve the quality homes within the borough and in June 2015, approved the vision and strategic objectives associated with a broader programme of regeneration on our key housing estates. Estates where the cost of meeting the Transforming Homes standards are very high, will not provide comparable benefits in terms of regeneration and on estates that were built to very low-density standards with under used and poor quality garage and open space provision.
- 2.2 Adopting a wider regeneration approach, the Council will be able to provide better quality housing for existing residents, better meet future housing needs of the borough by providing much needed additional housing within the footprint of the existing housing estates and adjacent opportunity sites and secure additional investment for the improvement in related infrastructure and local community facilities.
- 2.3 The Housing Department was successful in securing additional borrowing and HCA grant for a number of potential developments across the borough. Further feasibility, coupled with further discussions with planning and further exploration on the scope and phasing of any potential estate regeneration programme has required us to re-evaluate individual developments and make amendments to our programme.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 Our housing estate regeneration proposals are progressing well and we are working with our advisers to better establish the proposed scope and phases of any regeneration plans on each of the key estates to ensure they deliver the required mix and numbers of new housing that meets local need, are affordable to the Council and can be delivered by a suitably experienced regeneration partner.

- 3.2 The Government's recent announcement to impose a 1% reduction on rents over the next four years has a significant impact on the HRA Business Plan and as a consequence the housing development plan and regeneration programme needs to work within revised financial parameters. The Council is currently appraising the options to ensure the revised financial parameters of the HRA are met. This work is on-going and recommendations will be brought forward for Cabinet approval in due course.
- 3.2 As outlined within previous reports and reinforced by our agreed objectives for the Housing Estate Regeneration Programme, we will ensure that existing residents lead the debate on the future of their own estates and influence the proposals and recommendations brought forward by the Council. It is important to do this through local consultation structures on each estate as well as using community forums and hubs in the area.
- 3.3 The master planning and feasibility exercises for the Flowers Estate and the Garrison are well underway and it is important that a well-structured programme of resident and stakeholder consultation is commenced on both estates to inform the Council's housing regeneration proposals for these two key estates.

Flowers Estate, South Ockendon

- 3.4 The Flowers Estate in South Ockendon provides largely family housing on a large area in close proximity to Ockendon Station and good road connections to the M25, A13 and other key destinations within and outside of the borough. Ockendon is a popular housing area and a number of developers have been investing in and delivering housing schemes in Ockendon over recent years.
- 3.5 The Flowers estate provides low density and comparatively poor quality housing when compared to current quality standards for modern housing. There are real issues with damp and mould within these properties and the current levels of investment required to bring these properties up to appropriate standards under the Transforming Homes Programme is being reviewed further given the Government's imposition of the 1% reduction on rents over the next 4 years. There is, an opportunity to develop a phased programme of housing regeneration that will utilise existing and poorly utilised land and create a new community/village hub for South Ockendon that delivers improved local neighbourhood and community facilities that are better connected to other existing and popular local amenities.
- 3.6 The master plan and feasibility study for the Flowers Estate is well progressed and it is important that we now commence resident and stakeholder consultation so that the views and opinions of local people can influence and tailor the plans prior to taking the regeneration opportunity to market. It is also important that appropriate local consultation structures are well established in each area to support the procurement of a suitably experienced and capable regeneration partner for each estate.

Garrison Estate, Purfleet

- 3.8 The Garrison Estate in Purfleet is a Thames side site East of the Tank Hill Road and in close proximity to Purfleet Station and the proposed Purfleet Town Centre regeneration. There are also a number of buildings and monuments that are listed and are of historical significance and interest. Any proposed regeneration of the Garrison Estate will need to be sympathetic to such buildings and monuments and it will be the intention of the Council to lever in additional investment through the procurement of a suitably experienced and capable regeneration partner for these important features within the Garrison. .
- 3.9 Similar to Flowers, the current housing within the Garrison is of varying nature and quality. Current provision is of fairly low density housing and the estate layout means that it cannot be easily navigated, there are many cul-de-sacs and dead ends, is inward facing and does not fully utilise its proximity to and, therefore, does not benefit from the potential views of the Thames or Rainham Marshes. There are a number of homeowners and leaseholders on the estate so any proposed regeneration proposals will need to fully consider the implications of the current home ownership and leaseholder profile on the estate. There is also considerable on site parking and garage provision that needs to be further assessed and the findings of which, incorporated into the proposed regeneration plans.
- 3.10 Similar to the Flowers Estate above, the master planning and feasibility work is progressing well and it is important that we commence a programme of resident and stakeholder consultation and establish appropriate structures for on-going resident and stakeholder consultation throughout the development of the housing regeneration plans and the procurement of an appropriate regeneration partner.

Seabrooke Rise Estate, Grays

- 3.11 As Cabinet are aware, the consultation and engagement process for Seabrooke Rise regeneration has followed a number of stages and used a variety of mechanisms to engage residents. This includes:
- Housing surgeries: weekly surgeries at 168 Seabrooke Rise;
 - Resident Steering Group: established for the regeneration process, meets monthly, with regular attendance from leaseholders & tenants from the high rise blocks. The establishment of a dedicated steering group focused on the regeneration of the area means there is a focused forum for residents to engage in the process and raise and questions or concerns;
 - This group is supported by the Independent Resident Advisor in reviewing Council plans;
 - Seabrooke Rise Regeneration Booklet: issued in order to update residents on the consultation so far, and respond to questions raised during the consultation. The booklet described space standards for new build, availability of properties; rent levels, recommended decant principles, and advertised opportunities for further consultation through workshops.

- Consultation Survey 2014: broad based survey for all Seabrooke Rise residents, covering experience of living on the estate & aspirations for the future;
- Consultation Survey 2015: broad based survey targeted at residents of high rise blocks, covering a range of questions on the potential regeneration of the blocks and the area;
- Ongoing Resident meetings: a number of meetings provided the opportunity for residents to provide a more detailed feedback on regeneration;
- Consultation on proposed recommendations July- September 2015: Letters to tenant and leaseholders, setting out offer of appointment with a housing officer, as well as Council statutory obligations; and invitation to Workshops & Independent Consultation Sessions: undertaken in August and September 2015, providing residents a means of engaging with specific details of regeneration, and the options and process of this.

3.12 This extensive process has resulted in significant engagement with an overall response rate with over two thirds of residents and half of all leaseholders participating. This broad based yet detailed process established a clear evidence base for decision-making. A summary of the key themes provided through the consultation are set out below. Full analysis of the feedback from the consultation can be found in Appendix 1. Summary of the key themes are:

- **Desire for regeneration:** there is a clear demand and interest from a substantial number of residents for regeneration and new build housing, and options for different tenure and ownership.
- **Options for high rise blocks:** there is a clear desire on the part of a substantial proportion of high rise block residents for options for new build housing or moving to other housing. However this must be balanced with the wishes of the substantial minority of the population – typically older, longer term or retired residents – to retain the blocks.
- **Contrasting views across high block groupings:** at different stages of consultation, it is apparent that resident views differ by blocks – typically across two groups of blocks. Residents of Butler, Davall and Greenwood Houses typically less in favour of proposals than residents of the other three blocks – both in terms of general opinions on regeneration and the process for regeneration.
- **Housing options available for tenants & leaseholders:** there is demonstrable interest in the options to be made available in the process of regeneration.
- **Process for regeneration:** consultation, and particularly workshops and independent consultation sessions, reveals a need for the Council to appropriately articulate the offer to residents – in terms of what housing options will be made available, but also in terms of the process for regeneration.

3.13 In moving through the stages of consultation as noted above, the Council has intended that issues and concerns commonly raised in the consultation are taken up in subsequent stages – with consultation becoming more specific

and focused as it progressed. As detailed above, moving through the consultation stages, the Council has focused progressively on the high rise blocks, and subsequently the specifics of the potential regeneration of these – ensuring the Council understands the requirements of residents who may be affected. A consequence of this is that support for proposals at one stage may differ to support for more specific aspects of proposals in subsequent stages – an example being support for the broad principles and ideas of regeneration (new build, demolition) in the 2015 Consultation Survey, contrasted with support for the specifics of the practical- and process-focused aspects of regeneration (decant and housing options, purchase and disturbance compensation) in the subsequent workshops and consultation sessions. Further details can be found in Appendix 1.

- 3.14 While the consultation has highlighted considerable resident support for regeneration of the estate, the findings have established the need for the Council to better articulate the detailed offer to residents directly affected by any decant status and, in particular, to more clearly define the replacement homes that would be offered under the local decant plan. A strong theme which has emerged is a keen desire among residents to understand how the potential regeneration of the estate will fit within and support the Council's wider proposals for Grays Town Centre.
- 3.15 In July 2013 Cabinet approved a vision for Grays Town Centre which sought to broaden its appeal as a destination for people to live, work, learn shop and socialise whilst also reconnecting Grays to the riverfront. A series of projects have been, or are in the process of being, delivering against this vision including the opening of South Essex College's Thurrock Campus in 2014, the refurbishment of the Magistrates Court as business accommodation, the redevelopment of the Rail Station and introduction of a boulevard underpass and the recent announcement of the acquisition of the State Cinema by JD Wetherspoon. The potential regeneration of Seabrooke Rise could play a critical part in the continued delivery of the Council's vision.
- 3.16 The Council is currently developing a high level masterplan for Grays which is anticipated to ultimately form a dedicated part of the Borough's Local Plan. This masterplan draws heavily on the adopted vision for Grays and seeks to set out a series of short, medium and long term proposals which will, among other things, improve circulation around the town, increase the number of homes in and around the town, diversify the uses on the High Street, reconnect the town to the riverfront and encourage the further use of Kilverts Field and Grays Beach. The plan is still at an early stage of development and will need to be the subject of formal public consultation as well as consideration by Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet before it can be adopted.
- 3.17 Whilst the Seabrooke Rise consultation highlighted significant support for the potential regeneration of the estate, it also identified concerns over the location and nature of any replacement homes together with the wider impact on Grays as a whole. Both of these areas are anticipated to be covered within

the development of the wider Grays masterplan. On this basis, it is proposed that the consultation results be used to further inform the masterplanning work currently expected to be summer 2016. This approach will allow Members to consider a more coordinated and complimentary series of proposals within the context a full consulted master plan.

- 3.18 The current Housing Development pipeline is set to continue to deliver high quality new homes on Seabrooke Rise at The Echoes and has recently commenced detailed design of the former Tops Club site. The Echoes development is progressing well and the new homes will be ready to let in due course. It is important for Cabinet to note that these homes will be allocated in accordance with the Council's existing Lettings Policy. Due to there being no decant status assigned to the homes on the Seabrooke Rise Estate, existing residents of the Seabrooke Rise high rise towers will not benefit from enhanced priority status at the current time.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 Quality housing provision and choice in areas that people live are central to us achieving our vision for Thurrock. The Housing Estate Regeneration Programme aims to deliver new, high quality, mixed tenure housing provision across the borough to better meet local housing needs and to offer a genuine choice of tenure to local people.
- 4.2 Housing regeneration proposals that are informed by local stakeholders and residents are also important to ensure support for such schemes and to meet the aspirations and desires of local people.
- 4.3 Any Housing Estate Regeneration proposals need to be achieved within the financial and affordability parameters of the HRA Business Plan.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 Our programme of consultation with all relevant stakeholders associated with all proposed housing developments and regeneration proposals are on-going. Local support and influence is critically important for all housing development and regeneration.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 Achieving regeneration for the Council's housing stock is a key priority and part of the Council's overall growth targets and corporate objectives, helping to deliver improved health and wellbeing, build pride in our communities and their environment and promote skills development and job creation.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Mike Jones**
Management Accountant

7.1.1 The medium to long term financial implications of any project undertaken for housing development or estate regeneration will be, and are considered as, part of both the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the HRA business plan which evaluates both the financial viability and affordability of the schemes incorporating both Capital and Revenue implications with regards to funding and additional revenues generated.

7.1.2 Work is ongoing to ensure the viability of the estate regeneration proposals as they are developed within the HRA Business Plan and a further report on the financial implications and the HRA Business Plan will be made to Cabinet in November 2015, including the impact of the government's budget announcements on 8 July 2015.

7.1.3 Further reports to Members will be presented on the affordability position of the housing development and regeneration plans on conclusion of the feasibility and affordability studies outlined above. We will also seek approval from Cabinet on the proposed delivery mechanisms and any changes to the required HRA expenditure and business plan as a result of these programmes.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Assaf Chaudry**
Major Project Lawyer

7.2.1 There are no specific legal implications of the recommendations contained within this update report.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
**Community Development and Diversity
Manager**

7.2.1 Regeneration of the Council's housing estates will have positive impact on the availability of high quality affordable housing in Thurrock, including for vulnerable groups and will be developed through a process of consultation and engagement with all residents and the local community. Regeneration

objectives include not only high quality housing but also holistic objectives around health and wellbeing, improving education and job creation and improving economic prosperity. Contractors and developer partners will be required to have relevant policies on equal opportunities, be able to demonstrate commitment to equality and diversity and to supporting local labour initiatives that achieve additional social value.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

Not applicable.

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report**

None

9. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1 – Detailed Analysis of Consultation on Gray's High Rises

Report Author:

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Housing