

15 January 2020		ITEM: 12 Decision: 110521
Cabinet		
Housing Development Process		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key	
Report of: Councillor Barry Johnson, Portfolio Holder for Housing		
Accountable Assistant Director: David Moore, Interim Assistant Director of Place Delivery		
Accountable Director: Andy Millard, Director of Place		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

On 18 June 2019, Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorsed the delivery of a New Homes Delivery Programme. This report to Cabinet now sets out the criteria and process by which prospective sites in Council ownership will be identified for residential development by the Council itself (through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA)) or for development by the Council's wholly owned company, Thurrock Regeneration Limited (TRL). This report is not concerned with any site disposals or development, merely about agreeing the process and criteria for such decision-making.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 Cabinet approve the proposed process and criteria by which Council owned sites are selected for redevelopment for residential purposes.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The Council has agreed ambitious targets for house building both within the HRA and by TRL which are to build:

- up to 500 affordable HRA homes between 2019 to 2029
- 1000 homes for sale and rent by TRL by 2023

2.2 This follows the publication of the South Essex Strategic Housing Market Assessment (May 2017) which objectively assessed the need for housing in Thurrock between 2014 and 2037 as being between 1,074-1,381 new

dwellings per annum, within which the affordable housing element is estimated at 472 dwellings per annum.

- 2.3 Accordingly, the emerging Local Plan acknowledges the need for up to 32,000 new homes in Thurrock during the next Local Plan period to 2038. The new homes developed by the Council and TRL will contribute to this total.
- 2.4 On 18 June 2019, Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorsed the delivery of a New Homes Delivery Programme through the Housing Revenue Account for the next 5 to 10 years and resolved to receive regular updates to assist in its successful delivery.
- 2.5 This report now sets out the robust criteria and transparent process by which prospective sites in Council ownership are identified for residential development by the Council itself for Housing Revenue Account (HRA) stock or for development by the Council's wholly owned company Thurrock Regeneration Limited (TRL). The process is geared to enable the sites to be delivered efficiently and at pace. Sites to be developed by TRL will also have to go to TRL's Board for approval once the site is seen as viable and has received a resolution to grant planning permission.
- 2.6 It should be noted that the sites will in effect be a "long list" of sites to be considered for development. Their inclusion on the list does not constitute any form of planning endorsement. Moreover, before any sites are progressed for redevelopment, there will be a clear need for early and meaningful engagement with communities and elected ward members.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

Proposed Process

- 3.1 The identification and filtering of potential development sites is a sensitive process that requires the careful consideration of a wide range of factors. By agreeing a range of criteria, this filtering process will be transparent and will also ensure that unsuitable sites, based on the agreed criteria, are not brought forward, thereby maximising the use of time and resource. Once the criteria and sites are agreed, then consideration can be focused on resident engagement regarding the sites, with an increased focus on pace and effectiveness of delivery supported by the views of the local community.
- 3.2 The following are proposed to be key criteria for sites deemed potentially suitable for development. Sites will often fall within more than one criterion. These criteria will be:
 - Sites will have been initially identified as suitable for development through the corporate asset review, known as the 3R's (Retain, Release, Reuse)
 - Sites can also be identified as surplus to requirements by the Council's multi-disciplinary Property Board

- If the site includes Open Space, it will only be brought forward for development if the open space is considered to be of poor quality and no longer required for that purpose (as defined in the 2016 Open Space Assessment or other similar reports)
- Council owned car parks could also be brought forward if a Council review has concluded that the car park is no longer required for its original or other strategic car parking purpose
- Sites that are HRA property can also be brought forward if the property is identified as being no longer required or fit for purpose – for example redundant garage sites identified through the HRA garage sites review - or where a more effective use of the asset has been identified and agreed
- Sites can also be brought forward if there is clear evidence that their development will contribute to the wider regeneration of an area.

3.3 Subject to a site falling within one or more of these criteria, each site will then be subjected to a rigorous analysis of available background information about the sites, followed in due course by appropriate on-site assessments once the list of potential sites has been agreed. Examples of the analysis work undertaken would typically include:

- Land ownership and legal constraints reports
- Flood and air quality assessments
- Utilities (gas, water, electric, cable) surveys
- Topographical and geotechnical studies to understand the layout and ground makeup
- Ecological and arboricultural surveys.

3.4 Each site will then have an architecturally-led study to explore the type and quantity of housing that could be developed on the site, ensuring that the study meet the Council's high quality standards for housing. Various options are then assessed, together with their respective cost plans. The expected costs and receipts are then put into a financial viability analysis model to inform decisions as to whether a site is suitable and financially viable to develop. The study is an exercise to determine how many houses could go onto a site and the study is not expected to be the final design that will be submitted for planning approval.

3.5 If the site appears suitable and financially viable to develop, then it will be included on the "Long List" of potential sites for development.

3.6 It is important to stress that the inclusion of a site on the "Long List" does not constitute any planning endorsement.

3.7 The "Long List" of potential sites for Development will have input from Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee and then go for approval to Cabinet, with appropriate amendments.

3.8 The sites will then go forward for detailed consultation with local communities, in a process that will be supported by the Council's internal Community

Development and Equalities Team, with input from other agencies as required. This is to ensure that consultation processes meet the Council's standards and that Members and residents are fully engaged in the process. The views of the community and stakeholders will be reviewed to determine any amendments required and how the scheme should be taken forward.

- 3.9 Any significant changes to the sites on the agreed list (such as changes to the "redline" boundary if neighbouring sites are identified) would be made in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, with significant changes being reported back to Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.10 The process of identifying and agreeing the "Long List" of sites for development is intended to be an annual process, with a list of new sites being reviewed each year by Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee and approved by Cabinet. Local Ward Councillors will also be contacted about sites on the 'Long List' of identified site that are within their ward boundary. This annual review process should ensure that new sites are brought forward regularly, thereby sustaining an annual pipeline of new sites to ensure the Council's agreed Housing Delivery targets are achieved

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 To ensure that the Council can achieve its Housing Delivery targets in an open and transparent manner and in close liaison with local communities.

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

- 5.1 Housing Overview and Scrutiny considered this report on 29 October 2019 and supported the approach set out. It has also previously considered the New Homes Delivery Programme on 18 June 2019 and it will also consider the 'Long List' of sites at a future date.

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

- 6.1 The proposed process closely aligns with the Council's Vision and Priorities adopted in 2018. In particular it resonates with the "Place" theme which focuses on houses, places and environments that residents can take pride in.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Jonathan Wilson**
Assistant Director, Finance

Approval of the process will enable the Council and TRL to move forward with delivering a house programme which will contribute to the wider objectives of

the Council and support the Council's MTFS (where schemes are developed through TRL).

Costs associated with the initial feasibility assessment of schemes will need to be considered depending on the nature of the scheme and whether it is subsequently developed by the HRA or TRL.

The proposal is also likely to reduce the level of capital receipts available to the Council to fund other priorities.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Courage Emovon**
AG Strategic Lead / Deputy Head of Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer

This report sets out the process and criteria by which Council owned sites are identified and selected for residential development via the Housing Revenue Account or for development by Thurrock Regeneration Limited (a Council wholly owned company). Legal Services will provide all legal advice (if any) arising from this report, as and when required by the Council.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee**
Team Manager – Community Development and Equalities

The service has completed a Community Equality Impact Assessment (CEIA) in line with Equality Act 2010 requirements and to gather an understanding of the impact on protected groups through the implementation of the process set out in this report. The findings from the CEIA established that the implications for each protected group is currently considered neutral. Individual CEIAs will sit alongside development proposals with information gathered in consultation with communities determining potential impacts and mitigation where identified for individuals or groups with protected characteristics. This will ensure more detailed consideration of the impacts of particular developments than is possible within the scope of the overarching CEIA and process set out in this report.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder, and Impact on Looked After Children)

None

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None

9. Appendices to the report

- None

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