

9 November 2021		ITEM: 5
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Housing Development Programme Update		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A	
Report of: Keith Andrews, Strategic Lead – Housing Development		
Accountable Assistant Director: Keith Rumsey, Interim Assistant Director – Regeneration and Place Delivery		
Accountable Director: Sean Clark, Corporate Director of Resources and Place Delivery		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report seeks to update members on the revised approach to consider suitability of Council sites for development of new Council housing and to update on significant milestones on sites already under consideration.

1. Recommendation(s)

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to:

1.1 Comment on the revised approach to consider the suitability of Council owned sites for redevelopment of new Council housing involving engagement with Councillors, stakeholders and communities.

1.2 Note the project updates.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Reports are presented regularly to Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the progress of the Councils housing development programme and projects. This report updates Members on a revised approach to the assessment of sites suitable for housing development and gives an update on progress of a number of projects.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

Site Review Process.

- 3.1 Since February 2020 Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee have received update reports on sites identified as potentially being suitable for redevelopment and inclusion on a Site Options List. The purpose of this approach was to provide greater transparency in the identification of sites at a very early stage.
- 3.2 Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members have expressed a preference to review the operation of the sites option list. Concern was expressed that local residents were not fully consulted in advance of sites being placed on the options list and that Members wished to have earlier opportunity to comment.
- 3.3 It was agreed at June Housing Overview and Scrutiny that a review of the process be carried out and that any revised proposals be brought back to a future meeting of this committee.
- 3.4 A revised process is now proposed which replaces the sites option list with an early review of a housing development proposal by Councillors. In this way each new site being brought forward will be considered on a site by site basis by the Portfolio Holder for Housing, the Chair of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Ward Members for the location of the site proposed. This housing development project review group will receive details of project proposals to enable Councillors to inform and advise on issues arising.
- 3.5 If supported by the Portfolio Holder a professional team will then be appointed and a detailed development proposal is then prepared to a stage appropriate for resident consultation. This process will be undertaken for new sites once initial feasibility work has been completed in order to allow an informed view to be reached. It is not intended to be retrospective.
- 3.6 The process of resident consultation previously agreed at Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2020 has been broadly positive and will continue to ensure local residents and stakeholders are fully consulted on development proposals.

Project Updates

- 3.7 Planning permission was granted, subject to conditions, for the development of 173 new homes including 62 affordable homes on the site of the former **Culver Centre and Field** in South Ockendon at Planning Committee on 23rd September. Members will receive reports in due course seeking approval to dispose of the site to Thurrock Regeneration Limited for construction.
- 3.8 A revised planning application for 4 new Council homes at **Loewen Road, Chadwell St Mary** was due to be considered at Planning Committee on 28th October. This application was resubmitted with a reduced number of homes following refusal at Planning Committee earlier in the year. These new homes with associated parking are to be let in line with the Council's Housing Allocation policy. The scheme has been designed to a high quality and seeks

to make use of renewable and low carbon technologies by being a zero gas development and providing vehicle electric charging points.

- 3.9 Resident consultation events on development proposals have taken place at **Vigerons Way, Chadwell St Mary and Broxburn Drive, South Ockendon**. Residents were invited to comment on proposals through a range of media including on-site face to face events, a consultation website, by e-mail and Freephone. Information leaflets were also issued to local residents. Resident's feedback on proposals have been collated and are being used to inform and influence the next stage of design.
- 3.10 The 35 unit Council housing **Calcutta Road** project in Tilbury for older people has been designed to the HAPPI standard which provides generous internal space, plenty of natural light in the home and circulation spaces, avoids single aspect design apartments and promotes the use of balconies and provision of outdoor space for the residents. Progress towards completion has been significantly delayed by Covid related matters and the availability of materials, in particular, concrete, tiles and paving. Material availability will determine whether final handover and completion will be in late 2021 or January 2022.
- 3.11 New occupant surveys have been completed in respect of both the new build projects at **Alma Court** (Tops Club) in Grays and **Heathlyn Close** (Claudian Way) in Chadwell St Mary. The purpose of these surveys is to understand what the new tenants liked and what could be improved upon. The learning is then incorporated into the specification of future projects. Surveys are carried out 6 months after completion and repeated at 12 months when residents have had the opportunity to settle in fully. The survey is carried out by an independent organisation.
- 3.12 94% of the Alma Court residents were either very or fairly satisfied with their new home, with the general layout, heating, kitchens and bathrooms recording high levels of satisfaction overall. The area with the lowest rating was regarding satisfaction with the play area where concerns raised were regarding anti-social use rather than the provision or layout of the play equipment. Housing Services are aware that there were complaints received regarding anti social behaviour in the play area when it first opened, however no further complaints have been received within the last six months and the block is regularly visited by the Tenancy Management Team. The Seabrook Estate Residents Association will resume meetings in the near future and this will provide residents with another route to raise areas of concern. The building has also been shortlisted for an award in the national Inside Housing Development Awards for Best Affordable Housing Development in the less than £10m category. The awards were due to be announced early November.
- 3.13 For Heathlyn Close at the 6 month survey stage 79% of the new residents were very or fairly satisfied. The main areas where dissatisfaction was with contractor's maintenance of the landscaped areas which has been addressed with the contractors and is kept under review. The ease of use of the new home user guide which contains details on operating instructions for

equipment such as boilers and other information about the building was also an area of lower satisfaction although 82% of new occupants did find it helpful and easy to understand.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 A revised process for consultation on potential housing development sites has been brought forward in recognition of members concerns. The new approach enables Councillors to have an early opportunity to review proposals and retains the detailed resident and stakeholder consultation should sites progress.

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

- 5.1 This paper provides opportunity for Members of this Committee to review progress on the delivery of the Housing Development Programme.

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

- 6.1 The development of housing aligns closely 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 in which residents can take pride.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Mike Jones**
Strategic Lead – Corporate Finance

There are no financial implications directly arising from this update report. The financing of the schemes are considered as part of the HRA 30 year business plan.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Gina Clarke**
Corporate Governance Lawyer

There are no legal implications directly arising from this update report.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Smith**
Strategic Lead: Community Development and Equalities

There are no equalities implications to this update report.

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

- Cabinet, 15 January 2020, Housing Development Process
- Cabinet, 12th February 2020, Housing Development Options List.

9. **Appendices to the report**

None

Report Author:

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Housing Development Manager