

Subject:	Building New Council Homes & Housing Estate Master Planning		
Date of Meeting:	8 November 2010		
Report of:	Strategic Director, Place		
Contact Officer:	Name: Martin Reid	Tel: 29-3321	
	E-mail: martin.reid@brighton-hove.gov.uk		
Key Decision:	No		
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 At Housing Management Consultative Committee the Cabinet Member for Housing reported that the Council is committed to take forward opportunities to build new council homes on Housing Revenue Account sites. A commitment was given to make sure that tenants are fully consulted and engaged in plans from the start and that any development would be council led with the new homes delivered owned and managed by the Council.
- 1.2 This report provides details the Building New Council Homes Tenant Working Group and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Estates Master Plan work being undertaken to identify sites and properties across the City that have potential for development, refurbishment or regeneration.
- 1.3 This work has been commissioned against the key priorities of the Citywide Housing Strategy 2009-2014: to identify opportunities to improve and develop deprived neighbourhoods; increase the number of affordable homes; and, make best use of the city's assets by investing in and improving the stock.
- 1.4 This mapping of HRA land and master planning will enable Councillors and tenants to have an informed view of the whole range of opportunities for best use of HRA assets going forward and better inform priorities for action and future investment options. It will also enable the Council to clearly identify, support and deliver our development priorities and investment needs to meet strategic housing commissioning priorities.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee recommends that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Approves the development of a comprehensive estates masterplan in partnership with tenant representatives to inform best use of HRA assets and identify opportunities to build new Council homes.

2.2 Approves the development of procurement, design and delivery options for new Council housing on identified sites.

2.3 Delegates authority to Lead Commissioner for Housing in consultation with Cabinet Member for Housing to further develop options to enable delivery of estate masterplan objectives and building of new Council homes.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS

3.1 The citywide Housing Strategy 2009-2014 has 3 overall strategic priorities:

- Improving housing supply: to ensure that the city has the type of housing to meet the needs of residents. Our strategic goals under this priority include: Identifying opportunities to improve and develop deprived neighbourhoods.
- Improving housing quality: to make sure that residents are able to live in decent homes suitable for their needs.
- Improving housing support: to make sure that residents are supported to maintain and increase their independence. Our strategic goals under this priority include: Contributing to the wider city agendas of reducing worklessness, improving community cohesion, reducing anti social behaviour and reducing inequality.

3.2 At HMCC the Cabinet Member for Housing reported that the Council wished to take advantage of potential investment opportunities, including those offered through the Homes & Communities Agency National Affordable Housing Programme and the HRA 'self financing' review, to build new Council homes.

3.3 HMCC were advised that officers were in the process of mapping land. The Ainsworth House site was vacant and was being investigated as a potential development opportunity and that proposals are being developed in partnership with a Tenants Working Group on Building New Council Homes Chaired by Cabinet Member for Housing and consisting of representatives from the Repairs & Maintenance Monitoring Group and Asset Management Panel.

3.4 The aim of the Tenant Working Group is to 'To work together to provide quality new council homes that meet the needs of our residents'. The objectives are to:

- Identify suitable sites for development
- Advise on acceptable design and unit mix for sites
- Assist with the tender process to identify a suitable build contractor
- Assist with the design of a local apprenticeship programme
- Monitor the contracts to ensure the necessary standards are achieved
- Advise and assist with promotional activity for any new scheme
- Advise and assist with local lettings plans for new developments
- Help with the official opening and welcoming new tenants onto new schemes

3.5 In planning to build new Council homes officers are working with the Tenant Working Group to consider:

- Best use of existing Council housing, land & buildings

- Future use of and investment in Council housing, land and buildings
 - Any Council land with development potential
 - Any regeneration opportunities which will take account of poor stock condition
 - Any regeneration opportunities which take account of social factors that need addressing
 - Estates that would benefit from regeneration for other reasons
 - Mapping of Council land and priorities for action
- 3.6 In order to support the work of the Tenant Working Group officers have undertaken an initial high level review of the councils HRA properties and surrounding land to inform development of an estates masterplan. Working in partnership with the Tenant Working Group the estates masterplan will be developed and finalised to include mapping HRA land and consideration of:
- Any land with development potential
 - Current stock condition & future Capital cost of repairs to the Housing Revenue Account
 - Size suitability of housing, in particular the importance of family homes
 - Reducing Inequality Review, area's with particularly high levels of deprivation
 - Popularity of areas by Homemove bidding activity
 - Levels of RTB / home ownership in the area
 - Areas where stock is of non-traditional construction or is in a block with shared facilities

4. DEVELOPMENT OF THE MASTERPLAN

- 4.1 In order to support the Tenant Working Group officers have commissioned initial studies to identify areas and property within the following categories
- areas with development potential
 - estates that would benefit from regeneration
 - property that could be a basis for stock selection to the Local Delivery Vehicle (LDV)
- 4.2 As a result of the master planning exercise we have developed a robust base model that: can sort data; creates a selection of measurable factors that can be used to prioritise any development or estate regeneration opportunities through a scoring matrix and the ability to rank opportunities against set criteria; can identify case studies that may be subject to further exploration.
- 4.3 The model was developed to enable maximum flexibility and can be updated and modified to suit prevailing population and demand trends. It can also be adapted to reflect local preferences and expectations.
- 4.4 The model is not driven by increasing housing numbers. It measures: development potential (where appropriate / applicable); current stock condition by Net Present Value, capital cost of repairs to the HRA over 10 years and size suitability of the housing - giving additional weighting to the importance of family homes. The model also takes into account socio economic factors such as Reducing Inequalities Review information; popularity by Homemove bidding

activity; the level of Right to Buy / home ownership in the area and whether the stock is of non-traditional construction or is in a block with shared facilities.

- 4.5 The initial findings identified a number of small plots of land, disused garages sites and small areas of land suitable for infill development that could offer quick wins and pave the way for larger developments.
- 4.6 In all, development sites with potential for over 800 units were identified. Of this number:
 - 212 have been identified as being developed within 1-3 years
 - 315 have been identified as being developed within 3-7 years
 - 296 have been identified as being developed in 7+ years

Ainsworth House

- 4.7 Currently an older style sheltered housing scheme the Council has de-commissioned recognising that the standard of accommodation falls below today's standards and tenants' expectations. The scheme was fully decanted December 2009.
- 4.8 In the 2009 Budget the Government announced £200M funding available to local authorities to deliver new council housing, create jobs in construction and maximise opportunities for local labour schemes and creating apprenticeship. Ainsworth House was identified as the best site to develop with grant funding. A proposal to develop 15 new affordable homes for rent was submitted to the Homes and Communities Agency in October 2009. The scheme had support of Members & was a good fit with our local priorities and housing need. The scheme provided: 15 new affordable homes, including 3 x four Bedroom houses & 2 fully wheelchair accessible homes; Code for Sustainable Homes Level four.
- 4.9 The bid was not successful in what was a very competitive process. In the Chair's Communication at HMCC, the Chair informed the Consultative Committee that the Council would continue to explore development funding opportunities for the vacant Ainsworth House site. Subsequently Housing Strategy has investigated options in relation to the procurement of the proposed residential units and in light of the consultation on reform of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) which includes the possible offer of new-build funds.
- 4.10 It was been recommended via the 14th June HMCC meeting that the procurement options and tender process for building new council homes at Ainsworth House be a priority scheme to be developed with the Tenant Working Group made up of members of the Asset Management Panel and the Repairs & Maintenance Monitoring Group.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 At HMCC, the Chairman reported that the council was planning to build more council properties. Officers were in the process of mapping land. The Ainsworth House site was vacant and was being investigated and proposals would be developed with a Tenants Working Group to discuss the project.

- 5.2 This systematic review of all council housing estates, land and properties acts as a powerful tool for realising the city's housing strategy and supports existing work such as the Ainsworth House proposals.
- 5.3 We want to build on the work of the successful Asset Management Panel and the Repairs & Maintenance monitoring group and involve elected tenants from these groups in the procurement, design & delivery process and firmly establish resident involvement and engagement not just for the Ainsworth House proposals but a structure for any future working on the estates masterplan and building new Council homes.
- 5.4 It is envisaged that wider consultation with HMCC, Area Panels and the wider tenant body will occur along with consideration of this paper by Cabinet.
- 5.5 During the preparation of this background study Planning officers from across the Planning division were consulted at various stages. No 'in principle' issues have arisen as a result of the work undertaken to date and it is anticipated that any issues that do arise can be resolved on a site by site basis. Officers have welcomed the work that has been undertaken and hope to use the final report as a background document and incorporate the findings in emerging Planning policy. The delivery of housing and particularly affordable housing remains one of the highest priorities of the Planning division.

6. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications:

- 6.1 This report requests approval for the development of procurement, design and delivery options for new Council housing on identified sites. There are no existing budgets to cover any costs associated with this, so costs will therefore need to be managed within the 2010/11 Target Budget Management process. Future new build schemes will form part of the Council's Capital Programme and will therefore be reported to Cabinet at the appropriate time for project and funding approval.

Finance Officer Consulted: Sue Chapman *Date: 15/10/10*

Legal Implications:

- 6.2 There are no direct legal implications arising from the report's recommendations. However, further through the development process, legal advice may be needed to ensure that the contracts are let in accordance with the Council's Contracts Procedure Rules, and depending on value, EU and UK procurement law. The Council must take the Human Rights Act into account in respect of its actions but it is not considered that any individual's Human Rights Act rights would be adversely affected by the recommendations in this report.

Lawyer Consulted: Liz Woodley *Date: 18/10/10*

Equalities Implications:

- 6.3 Building New Council Homes & Housing Estate Master Planning relates to key priorities within the Citywide Housing Strategy. An equality impact assessment has been carried out on the Citywide Housing Strategy during its development with the strategy containing a summary of the assessment. Additional Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken as the strategy action plans are implemented over the next few years.

Sustainability Implications:

- 6.4 The proposals will help the long term sustainability of the City. Housing is one of the key objectives in the Council's sustainability strategy which aims 'to ensure that everyone has access to decent affordable housing that meets their needs'.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 6.5 Ensuring appropriate housing and support through commissioning against key priorities of the Citywide Housing Strategy is essential in helping to reduce antisocial behaviour and other crime and also to support the victims of crime.

Risk and Opportunity Management implications:

- 6.6 Policy development in this area is undertaken with due regard to appropriate risk assessment requirements.

Corporate/Citywide Implications:

- 6.7 This work has been commissioned against the key priorities of the Citywide Housing Strategy 2009-2014: to identify opportunities to improve and develop deprived neighbourhoods; increase the number of affordable homes; and, make best use of the city's assets by investing in and improving the stock.

7. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S)

- 7.1 The council could decide not to proceed with the development of a comprehensive estates masterplan. However this would mean that we would be less able to meet our strategic housing goals, as less affordable homes would be available to our residents to meet housing need in the City.

8. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 At Housing Management Consultative Committee the Cabinet Member for Housing has reported that the Council is committed to take forward opportunities to build new council homes on Housing Revenue Account sites. A commitment was given to make sure that tenants are fully consulted and engaged in plans from the start and that any development would be council led with the new homes delivered owned and managed by the Council. This report seeks approval for development of a comprehensive estates masterplan in partnership

with tenant representatives and development of procurement design and delivery options for new Council housing on identified sites.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices

None

Documents in Members Rooms

None

Background Documents

None

