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## **FORMER PLAY SPACE - TYLNEY AVENUE, ROCHFORD - HOUSING SCHEME PROPOSALS**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 To advise Members of the proposals received from two Housing Associations for the development of housing on the former play space at Tylney Avenue, Rochford, and to seek approval for the preferred scheme.

### **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Council sought outline proposals from three Housing Associations namely Estuary, Swan and Springboard for the development of the site. Springboard declined to submit a proposal. A site plan is appended.
- 2.2 The brief as requested by Members (Minute 527/02) was to provide proposals for a mixed development of general needs housing to include provision of housing for rent for key workers and for people with disabilities to include a mix of one and two bedroom bungalows and houses of an appropriate type.
- The Council's contribution to the development was to be free land and it was unlikely that any potential scheme would attract additional funding either from the Housing Corporation or this Council.
  - The Housing Associations were therefore asked to ensure that, after the contribution of the land, the scheme would be self-financing.
  - The costings associated with the proposals are contained in an exempt Appendix and outline plans have been displayed in the Members Lounge.

### **3 EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS**

- 3.1 The nature of the initial brief means that Swan Housing Association have suggested that their main proposal might be varied, if required, to provide a slightly different mix of tenures.
- 3.2 The rents quoted in both main proposals fall within Housing Benefit limits. However, it is difficult to make precise comparisons between the rents in the two submissions because of the different types of tenure suggested.
- 3.3 The Swan proposal benefits from:
- A higher number of units on the site, including four properties for sale outright.
  - A better mix of units, i.e. flats, bungalows and houses.

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- A better mix of tenures, i.e. social rented, outright sale and market rent.
  - The viability of the overall scheme depends on the sale of the four properties.
- 3.4 The Estuary proposal provides one more unit of affordable housing than the Swan proposal, but
- There is no social rented housing.
  - They have suggested some sub-market rented housing for the elderly, which is not in accordance with the Council's brief, and is an unusual form of tenure.
  - The viability of the overall scheme depends on the sale of five properties under shared ownership arrangements.

#### **4 DISCUSSION**

- 4.1 Both proposals provide a viable way forward for developing this unused former playspace, which will benefit the community.
- 4.2 Both schemes have their positive aspects and the final decision will depend on Members' preferred mix of tenures. On balance, officers are minded to recommend the Swan Housing Association (1) proposal, because of the mix of tenures and the inclusion of social rented housing.

#### **5 RISK MANAGEMENT**

##### **5.1 Strategic Risk**

It is important that the development meets the Council's strategic housing needs. The Council's Housing Needs Study identified a shortfall in properties suitable for people with physical disabilities and one and two bedroomed flats/terraced houses. The proposal meets these strategic priorities.

##### **5.2 Resource Risk**

The land to be transferred is a valuable Council asset and should be used to meet high priority needs.

##### **5.3 Operational Risk**

The site is enclosed and access is restricted. It will be important for the developer to give local residents adequate information about the scheme and the development timetable.

The scheme mix is designed to foster a balanced community once completed.

**5.4 Reputation Risk**

The site has been vacant for several years and the Council will be criticised unless the future use is agreed and implemented.

**5.5 Third Party Risks**

The selected partner Housing Association will carry the risks associated with development and management of the scheme.

**6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 The Council's contribution to the development will be free land. There will be no other financial contribution from the Council.

**7 PARISH IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 Tylney Avenue is situated within the Rochford Parish.

**8 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There have been some Community Safety issues experienced by residents adjoining the former playspace, such as vandalism.

8.2 Development of the site will assist in addressing these issues.

**9 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 The disposal of land to a registered social landlord to facilitate housing development has the benefit of general ministerial consent subject to prescribed stipulations. In addition the recently issued General Disposal Consent (England) 2003 provides more freedom to dispose of land for less than best consideration in furtherance of improving the economic social or environmental well-being of the area which will allow greater flexibility in the development scheme on this site.

**10 RECOMMENDATION**

10.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

- (1) That Proposal (1) by Swan Housing Association for the development of the former play area at Tylney Avenue, Rochford, be approved.
- (2) That the designated land be transferred to Swan Housing Association at nil cost subject to the necessary planning permission being obtained and such terms that the Head of Legal Services considers appropriate to secure the provision of the approved housing scheme. (CD(F&ES))

Graham Woolhouse

Head of Housing, Health & Community Care

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**Background papers:**

None

For further information please contact Alex Coulson on:

Tel:- 01702 546366, Ext. 3326  
E-Mail:- [alex.coulson@rochford.gov.uk](mailto:alex.coulson@rochford.gov.uk)

