
REPORT OF THE HOUSING BEST VALUE SUB-COMMITTEE - 18 FEBRUARY 2004

1 DEVELOPMENT OF COUNCIL OWNED LAND AT BARDFIELD WAY, RAYLEIGH AND TENDRING AVENUE, RAYLEIGH

1.1 This item of business has been referred by the Housing Best Value Sub-Committee on 18 February to Council with a number of recommendations relating to two proposed housing developments on Council owned land. A copy of the officer's report to the Sub-Committee is attached.

1.2 The Sub-Committee has given detailed consideration to each of the two sites set out in the report in turn:-

(1) Barfield Way, Rayleigh

1.3 A message taken away from the public consultation meeting held on the evening of 17 February was that there was some concern about possible future changes to the types of use currently proposed. Swan Housing Group has confirmed that any future proposals for change would have to be submitted to the District Council for consideration. Swan has also confirmed that they would be happy not to consider any future changes to accommodation use without consultation with local residents. The Sub-Committee has endorsed this approach.

1.4 An additional public concern relating to Bardfield Way was the protection of any slow worms on site. The Sub-Committee has recognised that consideration needs to be given to this aspect, particularly given the Council's work on animal welfare typified by the establishment of an Animal Welfare Charter. It has been confirmed that the Swan Housing Group would commission a specialist independent study of the slow worm issue. The Sub-Committee has endorsed this approach.

1.5 In terms of car parking concerns raised at the public meeting, Swan has advised that further consultation with the scheme architect had identified a capacity for increasing provision from four to five spaces. Swan is to consult planning officers on the inclusion of an additional space within the proposals. The Sub-Committee has endorsed this approach.

1.6 The Sub-Committee has noted that:-

- Evidence from the County Council's Learning Disabilities team points to a high and continuing demand for suitable accommodation within the District for this client group.
- If the land is transferred to Swan, they will be responsible for all decisions associated with facilitating the schemes including matters of access/egress.

(2) Tendring Avenue, Rayleigh

- 1.7 A concern raised at the public meeting had been around car parking, particularly that available when entering the site. Swan has further consulted the scheme architect and, subject to an element of repositioning, an additional parking space could be made available. Swan is to consult planning officers on the possible inclusion of an additional space within proposals. The Sub-Committee has endorsed this approach.
- 1.8 The public meeting also saw reference to the possibility that surface water drainage may be an issue. Swan has confirmed that it will request the developer to address any such issues. The Sub-Committee has endorsed this approach.
- 1.9 The Sub-Committee has noted that:-
- There is always demand for this type of accommodation and that inter-authority working is key to effective refuge arrangements.
 - Swan works with refuges across the County. At the current time Rochford and Castle Point are the only areas where there is no facility. Work with Women's Aid has established that the number of units identified for Tendring Avenue is the ideal.
 - In terms of build, the accommodation would blend in with neighbouring properties.
- 1.10 It can be recognised that the decision to undertake public consultation in advance of the submission of planning applications was associated with the Council's interest as landowner. The Sub-Committee has agreed that it would be of value to issue a press release immediately following any Council decision on these two sites. The Sub-Committee has also agreed that any recommendation should specify that the Council shall not be responsible for any future revenue costs.
- 1.11 It is proposed that Council **RESOLVES:-**
- (1) That, subject to additional provisos emanating from public consultation and set out below, development now proceed on the proposed housing schemes at Bardfield Way, Rayleigh and Tendring Avenue, Rayleigh:-

Scheme	Additional Proviso
Bardfield Way, Rayleigh	The commissioning of a specialist independent study concerning slow worms. Consideration being given to the introduction of an additional car parking space.

Scheme	Additional Proviso
Tendring Avenue, Rayleigh	Consideration being given to the introduction of an additional car parking space. The addressing of any surface water drainage issues.

- (2) That the land designated in respect of the two sites in (1) above be transferred to the Swan Housing Group at nil cost, subject to planning permission and on the conditions that:-
- This Council shall not be responsible for any future revenue costs.
 - The Group provides that it will not consider any future changes to accommodation use without consultation with local residents.

on such terms and conditions as the Head of Legal Services considers appropriate in accordance with the general consent and to secure the provision of the approved housing schemes.

- (3) That a press release be issued on 25 February 2004 setting out the Council's final decisions, including reference to any adjustments which have emanated from the public consultation process. (HHHCC/HLS)

Sarah Fowler

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Background Papers:

None

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APPENDIX

**DEVELOPMENT OF COUNCIL OWNED LAND AT
BARDFIELD WAY, RAYLEIGH AND TENDRING AVENUE,
RAYLEIGH****1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 To consider the outcome of the public consultation meeting about the proposed housing developments at Bardfield Way, Rayleigh and Tendring Avenue, Rayleigh.

2 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTS**Bardfield Way**

- 2.1 The proposal is to construct six units of accommodation on this Council-owned site for people with learning disabilities. There will be support provided on site, tailored to residents' needs.
- 2.2 A public consultation meeting has been arranged for 28 January 2004, and this Sub-Committee is being called to consider the results of that consultation.
- 2.3 A file containing letters received from local residents about the proposed development has been placed in the Members' Library.
- 2.4 The scheme requires ongoing revenue funding of £88,000 p.a. which, under the new arrangements, would normally be part of the Supporting People funding regime. As this is a new scheme (termed a "pipeline" scheme) a decision on whether it will receive funding has been delayed because of a Government review of the value for money being provided nationally by Supporting People funding. At the time of writing this report, an announcement of the outcome of this review is still awaited.
- 2.5 Because of the urgent need to provide supported housing locally for people with learning disabilities, Essex County Council has advised the Council's development partner, Swan Housing Group, that it will underwrite the revenue support service costs for three years if Supporting People funding is not forthcoming. Supporting People funding itself is only certain for three years as all schemes are subject to three yearly value for money reviews.
- 2.6 Capital funding of £246,000 for the building has been agreed in principle by the Housing Corporation, for the current financial year. This means that there must be a start on site before 31 March 2004 to secure the capital funding. Swan Housing Group has, therefore, had to submit a planning application in advance of the Council's decision as landowner whether to proceed or not.

Tendring Avenue

- 2.7 The proposal is to construct five, one bedroom (2 person) flats with some communal facilities for the residents who will be women and children who have previously fled domestic violence. The accommodation will be “second stage” as residents will have previously spent some time in a refuge. It is a cross-border scheme with Castle Point Borough Council.
- 2.8 The aims of the scheme are to provide temporary, safe and secure supported accommodation closer to residents’ own family, friends, schools etc, until suitable permanent housing can be secured in the district. Support will be provided from Basildon Women’s Refuge.
- 2.9 The scheme requires ongoing Supporting People funding of £69,000 p.a. A decision on this ‘pipeline’ scheme funding is also still awaited, but it is important that the Council’s policy on this proposal is determined. Housing Corporation capital funding of £310,000 has been secured for the current financial year.

3 THE WAY FORWARD

- 3.1 The Sub-Committee now needs to consider the developments and any proposals by Swan Housing Group to amend the schemes in response to public comment, in order that a final recommendation can be made to Full Council on 24 February 2004.

4 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The disposal of land to a registered social landlord to facilitate housing development has the benefit of general Ministerial consent subject to prescribed stipulations as to the nature of the accommodation, tenure, nomination rights and the monetary value of the assistance, which the scheme would be required to meet.

5 PARISH IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The sites are within the Rayleigh Town Council area.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 Strategic Risk

It is important that the developments meet the District’s strategic housing needs. The need for additional supported housing for people with learning disabilities and accommodation for women fleeing violence are identified in the current and draft future housing strategy.

6.2 Resource Risk

The land which will be transferred if the schemes go ahead is a valuable asset and will be used to help meet high priority needs. The future of the learning

disabilities scheme is not guaranteed beyond the three years currently underwritten by Essex County Council and will be subject to review.

6.3 Third party Risk

Swan Housing Group will carry the risks associated with the development and management of the schemes.

7 RECOMMENDATION

7.1 It is proposed that the Sub-Committee:-

- (1) Determines its view on these schemes, for recommendation to Full Council on 24 February 2004.
- (2) That if the Sub-Committee recommends that the schemes proceed, it also recommends that the designated land be transferred to Swan Housing Group at nil cost, subject to planning permission, on such terms and conditions as the Head of Legal Services considers appropriate in accordance with the general consent and to secure the provision of the approved housing schemes. (HHHCC /HLS)