

Housing Best Value Sub-Committee - 18 February 2004

Minutes of the meeting of the **Housing Best Value Sub-Committee** held on **18 February 2004** when there were present:-

Cllr P F A Webster (Chairman)

Cllr T Livings
Cllr P K Savill
Cllr Mrs M S Vince

OFFICERS PRESENT

G P Woolhouse - Head of Housing, Health and Community Care
J Bostock - Principal Committee Administrator

ALSO PRESENT

Trevor Burns and Lynne MacDonald of the Swan Housing Group

21 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2003 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising - Definitions of Affordable Housing and Key Workers

The Head of Housing, Health and Community Care reported on the resource/workload factors which had led to an element of delay in bringing forward a report on the definitions of affordable housing and key workers.

It was noted that both officers and the Chairman of the Sub-Committee had encountered difficulties when endeavouring to establish if there are any nationally agreed definitions.

The Sub-Committee endorsed the suggestion of the Head of Health, Housing and Community Care that he would write to the Regional Housing Board to ascertain its opinion. Local authorities appeared to be making individual decisions about definitions. In that context, Rochford did have a definition within its housing policy.

Mr Burns confirmed that, based on his recollection of information issued by the Housing Corporation, there had been an indication that a definitive list of key workers may be made available by February 2004. Mr Burns would advise Council officers of any information that Swan had on the likely source of any definitive lists.

22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs M S Vince declared a personal interest by virtue of involvement with the Domestic Violence Panel.

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

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care on the outcome of public consultation relating to the proposed housing developments at Bardfield Way, Rayleigh and Tendring Avenue, Rayleigh

Members gave detailed consideration to each of the two sites set out in the report in turn:-

(1) Bardfield Way, Rayleigh

Mr Burns confirmed the original proposals for this site, which would involve the construction of six units of accommodation for people with learning disabilities.

A message which Members had taken away from the previous evening's public consultation meeting was that there was some concern about possible future changes to the types of use currently proposed. In this regard, Mr Burns confirmed that any future proposals for change would have to be submitted to the District Council for consideration. He also confirmed that the Swan Housing Group would be happy not to consider any future changes to accommodation use without consultation with local residents. The Sub-Committee endorsed this approach.

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

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

Responding to questions, the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care advised that:-

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

(2) Tendring Avenue, Rayleigh

Mr Burns confirmed the original proposals for this site, which would involve the construction of five, one bedroom (2 person) flats with communal facilities as second stage accommodation for women and children who had previously fled domestic violence.

A concern raised at the public meeting had been around car parking, particularly that available when entering the site. Swan had now further consulted the scheme architect and, subject to an element of repositioning, an additional parking space could be made available. Swan was to consult planning officers on the possible inclusion of an additional space within proposals. The Sub-Committee endorsed this approach.

The public meeting had also seen reference to the possibility that surface water drainage may be an issue. Mr Burns confirmed that Swan would request the developer to address any such issues. The Sub-Committee endorsed this approach.

Members noted that there was always demand for this type of accommodation and that inter-authority working was key to effective refuge arrangements.

Responding to questions, Mr Burns advised that:-

- Swan worked with refuges across the County. At the current time Rochford and Castle Point were the only areas where there was no facility. Work with Women's Aid had established that the number of units identified for Tendring Avenue was the ideal.
- In terms of build, the accommodation would blend in with neighbouring properties.

During debate on process, it was 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. Members concurred with the view of the Chairman that it would be of value to issue a press release immediately following any Council decision on these two sites. Members also agreed that any recommendation from the Sub-Committee should specify that the Council shall not be responsible for any future revenue costs.

RECOMMENDED to Council:-

- (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.
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)

The meeting commenced at 10.30am and closed at 11.45am.

Chairman

Date