

## **DEVELOPMENT OF FORMER ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL DEPOT SITE IN RAYLEIGH ROAD, THUNDERSLEY**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 To appraise Members of the opportunities of entering into voluntary partnership arrangements with Castle Point Borough Council and New Essex Housing Association to develop the former Council depot site in Rayleigh Road, Thundersley. The proposed development includes supported housing and general needs accommodation.

### **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 New Essex Housing Association has recently re-submitted a bid for funding to the Housing Corporation to include a partnership between Castle Point Borough Council and one or more of the neighbouring local authorities with nomination opportunities provided to those other local authorities. New Essex Housing Association's preferred partner is Rochford District Council. Given the close proximity of the site to the district boundary and the existing working arrangements with the Association, Rochford is the obvious choice. The scheme will help to meet some of Rochford's housing needs.
- 2.2 New Essex Housing Association believe they have been given a strong indication from the Housing Corporation that their bid will be considered favourably if this approach is taken.
- 2.3 Members have previously expressed some concern about apparent compulsion by Government and the Housing Corporation to make local authorities work together on joint bids.
- 2.4 Both Members of Parliament have consulted on this issue and their responses have been circulated on the Members' Bulletin. Sir Teddy Taylor also wrote to the Government on the Council's behalf and the Minister's response has been circulated. The Minister has reiterated that housing markets do not recognise local authority boundaries and that all stakeholders should try and work together to see where benefits could accrue to them. Authorities are asked to associate themselves with appropriate housing "sub-regions" and work together to create housing strategies. The good work that Rochford has already undertaken in establishing a number of partnerships with neighbouring housing authorities is acknowledged in the Minister's letter.

- 2.5 The letter also comments that there has never been any requirement for cross boundary partnerships in order to obtain funding, and the emphasis is on identifying local needs and encouraging joint projects where these will deliver benefits.
- 2.6 The proposed Rayleigh Road scheme offers an opportunity for a further voluntary partnership arrangement which will help meet local housing needs.

### **3 SCHEME PROPOSALS AND NOMINATION ARRANGEMENTS**

- 3.1 The proposed scheme would include a supported housing scheme, for which funding has already been secured via the Essex Strategic Reserve Programme for 2003/04, comprising 8 x 1 Bed flats with communal and staff facilities for adults who have suffered a head injury.
- 3.2 The provision of general needs rented housing would comprise 1 x 2 bedroom bungalow; 5 x 2 bedroom houses, 5 x 3 bedroom houses and 2 x 3 bedroom houses at sub-market rents specifically for key workers.
- 3.3 Should the development proceed, shared nomination rights would be on the basis of a 60/40 split between Castle Point Borough Council and Rochford District Council respectively. This would mean that Rochford District Council would receive nomination rights to 5 properties, including one key worker dwelling.

### **4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The scheme will be funded by Housing Corporation Social Housing grant. No financial contribution is expected from Rochford District Council and Castle Point Borough Council will not be making any contribution from their own funds.

### **5 RECOMMENDATION**

It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

That Members agree to the proposed voluntary partnership arrangements with Castle Point Borough Council and New Essex Housing Association to develop the former Essex County Council Depot site in Rayleigh Road, Thundersley. (Head of Housing, Health and Community Care). (HHHCC)

Graham Woolhouse

Head of Housing, Health and Community Care

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**Background Papers:**

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For further information please contact Alex Coulson on:-

Tel:- Ext. 3103

E-Mail:- [alex.coulson@rochford.gov.uk](mailto:alex.coulson@rochford.gov.uk)