

COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9 December 2010
5.30 - 6.30 pm

Executive Councillors:

Cllr Smart, Executive Councillor for Housing

Scrutiny Committee Members: Councillors Kightley (Chair), Kerr (Vice-Chair), Al Bander, Blackhurst, Walker, Best and Haywood

Non-voting co-optees:

Diane Best and Brian Haywood (Tenant/Leaseholder Representatives)

Officers Present:

Liz Bisset (Director of Customer and Community Services)
Alan Carter (Head of Strategic Housing)
Sabrina Walston (Development Officer)
Glenn Burgess (Committee Manager)

Others Present:

Ian Mitchell (Kier)
Kim Hick (PRP Architects)

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

10/76/JDC Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Brown, Sanders, Shah and Todd-Jones and Tenant Representative Anna Vine-Lott.

10/77/JDC Declarations of Interest

None

10/78/JDC Public Questions (See information below)

None

10/79/JDC Seymour Court Scheme Approval

Matter for decision: The redevelopment of Seymour Court providing 21 Affordable Housing flats for people over the age of 55 that would be owned and managed by City Homes.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing:

- Approved the mix, design and layout of the scheme for the redevelopment of Seymour Court.
- Approved the Construction Cost of the scheme to the Council of £435,000.
- Delegated authority to the Director of Customer and Community Services, following consultation with the Director of Resources and the Head of Legal Services, to negotiate with the County Council the cost to the City Council of bringing the lease of Seymour House to an early end and with Cambridgeshire NHS a contribution to the relocation cost of staff.

Scrutiny Considerations:

The Committee received a presentation from representatives of the developer (Kier).

The presentation is available on request from the Development Officer.

In response to questions from members the Head of Strategic Housing and the Kier representatives confirmed the following:

- The flats above the parking spaces would be fully insulated to combat any potential noise issues.
- Outside drying facilities would be available on site.
- TV reception would be via communal aerials.
- The total area of the site would be 0.54 hectares.
- Using best practice, the percentages included in the report were based on numbers of units and not number of bed spaces or floor area.
- Meetings had been held with the Council's Urban Design Team to discuss height and massing. Different heights had been used to define entrances to the site and emphasise corner plots. The design also maximised available sunlight and limited shadowing and any adverse impact on neighbouring buildings.

- Service charge management issues also dictated layout e.g in terms of the number of flats served by lifts.
- The separating of the flat blocks would allow for greater long-term flexibility of the site should the demands from older people change.
- The development was likely to achieve a SILVER 'Build for Life' standard rating.
- Solar panels would be incorporated into the design but discussions were ongoing regarding the use of grey water.
- The building would achieve level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes and use low flow taps and small size baths.
- All flats would have shared garden space. In addition, each ground floor flat would have a private terrace, and most non- ground floor flats would have a balcony. One flat would also have access to a roof terrace above the cycle store.
- Every residence above two storeys would have lift access.

Councillor Al Bander asked a specific question regarding viability of the site for this type of scheme. In response the Head of Strategic Housing confirmed that a full competitive tender process had been undertaken by the Council in order to secure a preferred developer. Based on both cost and quality Kier had been selected as that developer. Discussions with the developer on the baseline scheme then led to a number of improvements, each of which had the support of the Councils Urban Design Team. Officers were therefore confident that the scheme had been fully tested through the tender process.

The Head of Strategic Housing agreed to forward Councillor Al Bander information on the footprint of the site, including specific percentages of the affordable and the market housing.

In response to further questions from members the Director of Customer and Community Services and the Head of Strategic Housing confirmed the following:

- Seymour Court should be empty by the end of January 2011.
- The planning process should start in January and approval anticipated by April or May 2011.
- Work should start on the site by the 1st July 2011.
- Project management of the scheme by Cyril Sweet would help ensure that the Council was getting value for money.

- On past projects the cost of refurbishment had been upwards of £100,000 per unit. The cost of achieving vacant possession of Seymour House would be around £400,000 in respect of early termination of the lease on Seymour House plus a contribution to relocation costs. On the latter a maximum of £220,000 is currently being quoted
- Using the worst-case scenario, the project would pay back the capital in 19 years. The normal benchmark for capital pay back was 30 years.
- The payment made to Kier would include all S106 contributions

The Scrutiny Committee considered and endorsed the recommendations in the report by 5 votes to 0 (unanimous).

The Executive Councillor for Housing approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of interest declared by the Executive Councillor (and any dispensations granted): None

The meeting ended at 6.30 pm

CHAIR