

Item

Housing Development - Options for Homeless People Proposal to Deliver POD Housing

To:

Councillor Richard Johnson, Executive Councillor for Housing

Report by: Claire Flowers, Head of Housing Development Agency

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Wards affected:

All

Key Decision

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides details of POD homes for single homeless people to be gifted from Hill Partnership. This project is proposed to be delivered as part of a wider compliment of Housing First provision.
- 1.2 The delivery of POD housing for the homeless present an opportunity to meet housing need and provide more housing in the City relatively quickly.

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended to:

- 2.1 Delegate authority to the Strategic Director in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Housing to approve use of Council land as sites for PODs on an individual basis based on the criteria set out in this report.
- 2.2 Approve the Budget of £140,000 to aid the delivery of PODs programme.
- 2.3 Delegate authority to the Strategic Director in consultation with the Executive Councillor to agree the final approach in which the PODS are let, owned and managed, which is expected to be through a third party charitable organisation.

3. Background

- 3.1 As part of their 20th anniversary Hill have committed to deliver 200 Pod homes to be gifted to their partners to help address housing need.
Further details are provided on the video link
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/qreweewpbf727/Hill%20Group%20Foundation%20Pledge%20Video.mp4?dl=0>
- 3.2 The Pods are small self -contained homes, they will come furnished and fully serviced. Hill have had input to the design from homeless people and charities to ensure they will meet the needs of the intended residents, and will be well insulated, warm and durable. They will be suitable for single people only.
- 3.3 Hill has approached the City Council as a key partner to see if we would like some of the Pod homes in Cambridge. To enable these to be delivered sites need to be identified. Sites could be on Council land, or on land owned by others. If suitable sites can be found Hill have indicated that Cambridge could have 20 of the Pod homes.
- 3.4 Hill have not delivered any of these homes as yet but have approached a number of local authority and housing association partners about

them. Hill have the supplier identified for the PODS and have a lead Director for this programme. The homes are built in a factory and are modular construction. A similar scheme led by Allia was recently approved planning for the Christ the Redeemer Church site in the City.

- 3.5 Hill will use these sites as part of their trainee programme (still under supervision) to give trainees experience of building sites in terms of arranging all the utility connections, planning, discharge of conditions, lifting onto site and construction logistics.
- 3.6 There are a number of the Council's key Corporate Objectives that these smaller pod development opportunity addresses:

Tackling the City's housing crisis.

3.6.1 Providing additional homes for people most affected by the cities housing crisis

3.6.2 Delivering sustainable prosperity for Cambridge and fair shares for all.

3.6.3 Protecting essential services and transforming council delivery.

3.6.4 Tackling climate change and making Cambridge cleaner and greener.

4. Who would be housed in these homes?

- 4.1 Decisions on allocations would sit with the Council, as part of our wider lettings policy. Homes would be used for single people who have experience of homelessness, for example, people who want to move on from hostel accommodation.
- 4.2 The details of the programme still need to be agreed, however it is likely that the homes will need to be gifted from a charity established by Hill to

a charitable organisation, for tax reasons. Officers are working closely with Hill and local organisations to establish the details of a programme, but this may include leasing land to a charitable housing association, for them to use for the purposes of owning and managing these homes.

- 4.3 The type of tenancy, allocations process, rent levels and partner involvement still need to be agreed. Support will be needed as part of a “Housing First” offer, and details of this will be agreed with the County Council before the homes are let.

5. Design and Quality

5.1 The homes:

- Are designed with a 60 year life
- Are single self- contained properties- the attached plan shows the layout of the home. (Appendix 1)
- Can be stacked up to 2 stories.
- Will be a minimum of 25 sq metres in size,(a 1 bedroom flat would normally be 50 sq metres in size.) This size is as per the Allia homes application mentioned earlier.
- Will be Building Regulations compliant- a meeting with 3C Building Control regarding the Pods is being arranged.
- Will be heated by Air Source Heat pumps. Connections to electricity and water will be provided.
- Will not be fully wheelchair accessible, however where possible ramps can be provided for level access to meet M4(2) access standard for ground floor, however internal dimensions and layouts will not which will need to be discussed with planners.
- Will require planning permission, the Allia application has a temporary use for 5 years. A meeting with the planning department is being arranged.
- Hill are refining the layout of the POD units getting feedback from Connection at St Martins in the Field in London (a registered homeless charity).

6. Site Details

- 6.1 A number of small Council owned sites have been identified by the Council team and initial capacity for PODs reviewed, early feedback from planning is now required.
- 6.2 To date these sites have been identified in the Council ownership in Abbey, Arbury and Kings Hedges ward. These are very small sites that have proved difficult to develop to date.
- 6.3 They are a mix of HRA and General fund. The Housing Development Agency is separately reviewing other small Council owned sites to develop new housing on.
- 6.4 Once a review has taken place with planners, ward Councillor Consultation on the possible sites will be arranged.
- 6.5 The pods are moveable so if in the future the Council wanted to develop housing on these sites, or use them for other purposes, they could.
- 6.6 There is potential to ask other agencies, individuals and businesses to identify sites in their ownership to increase the number of these homes delivered.
- 6.8 It is important to carefully consider which sites are suitable for Pods. The following criteria are proposed(that they must meet at least one of these)
 1. Evidence site cannot be developed in the next 5 years.
 2. The size of the site would prohibit a development of more than one home on the site
 3. The site is constrained for traditional development. This would need to be demonstrated have restricted uses that would allow Pod but not permanent homes

For a site to be considered there must be support from the Head of Housing in terms of location for this type of development.

It is proposed to delegate authority to the Strategic Director to approve a site for this programme.

7. Programme

HSC Decision: January 2020

Site Identification and working up first planning application: Q4 2019/20

First start on site target: Q1 2020/21.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 Budget / Funding

8.1.1 Hill will cover all the costs associated with the pod construction, site preparation and securing planning permission.

8.1.2 There will be some cost implications for the Council in fees and also officer time. There is a budget bid from the HRA to cover this.

8.1.3 Some of the small sites developed historically have revealed issues with access ways and acquired rights therefore early title and legal reviews will be required. The City Council will need to fund this.

8.1.4 Some project management will be needed by the Council to ensure the projects are successful for the Council, including site identification, legal set up, management and support arrangement's and handover.

8.1.5 A budget of **£140,000** is therefore proposed for 2020/21. Any initial work during 2019/20 could be funded through H DA budgets.

9. Implications

(a) Staffing Implications

A bid for £140,000 will include a project management resource for this project.

(b) Equality and Poverty Implications

A series of EQIAs have been undertaken for the Council House Programme, the Housing Development Service and for individual schemes. The EQIAs mainly highlight the benefits of the Council retaining direct control of new housing development itself to ensure a

focus on the delivery of housing that meets a diverse range of housing needs. Part of the assessment underlines the need for Affordable Housing to help those most likely to suffer poverty as well as ways in which new Affordable Housing will directly save money for tenants, such as energy saving measures and reducing the impact of fuel poverty. An Equalities Impact assessment has been carried out for this scheme including the impact of these proposals on the existing residents.

(c) Environmental Implications

The POD homes will meet modern standards and be well insulated. Developing modular homes in a factory is quicker and reduces the carbon impact during the development process.

(d) Procurement Implications

Legal advice will be obtained in relation to any procurement risks of this proposal.

(e) Community Safety Implications

Careful consideration will need to be made on the location of these homes to ensure they can be integrated into existing communities.

10. Consultation and communication considerations

10.1 The HDA will consider those affected in the area by the potential development of PODs and work with those officers in the Council who work in these communities to ensure the consultation is appropriate.

10.2 There will be consultation with Ward Councillors about any proposals to develop a site for PODs prior to a planning application being made. .

11. Risks

11.1 Below is a table setting out key risks associated with the project:

Description of risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Land assembly issues and consequential costs relating to this:	Low – The sites that are being considered do not pose any obvious significant issues with assembly however there is a risk of delay should this be the case.	Med – delay in starting on site and therefore completing these schemes	The Council will need to allow a contingency for land assembly and any consequential items that may arise as part of this. A budget of £140,000 is proposed to aid the assembly of land and consequential costs relating to this.
Unable to identify 3 rd party to work with to enable this	Low- there are a number of partner organisations across the City supporting and housing homeless so it is likely that a suitable organisation can be identified.	High- based on the current advice the project cannot proceed without a charity being involved.	There will be limited work before an approach agreed at suitable partner identified.
Costs: Budget of £140,000 proposed to assist with assembly of vacant sites	Low – Smaller low risk sites are being proposed	Med-. Delays to start on site	Small low risk vacant sites are being proposed with no initial obvious constraints. Will need to ensure this is recovered to the HRA through income.
Planning: The planning applications will be subject to the observations of consultees, the assessment of planning officers, and ultimately the decision of the Planning Committee.	Med- There is a need to balance planning policy and views of the local people and ward members.	Med- Potential change in proposals	Indicative schemes will be developed in response to the comments received from the pre-application discussions with the LPA prior to an application.

12. Background papers

None

13. Appendices

Appendix 1: layout of pod home/typical external view

13. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact Claire Flowers, Housing Development Agency, tel: 01223 457928, email: claire.flowers@cambridge.gov.uk