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Housing Scrutiny Committee

HSC/1

Tuesday, 19 September 2023

HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

19 September 2023

5.30 - 8.30 pm

Present: Councillors Pounds (Chair), Robertson (Vice-Chair), Griffin, Holloway, Lee, Martinelli, Wade, Bennett and Swift

Executive Councillor Bird

Tenant/Leaseholder Representatives: Diana Minns (Vice Chair), Christabella Amiteye (virtually), Diane Best (virtually) and Mandy Powell-Hardy

Officers present in person:

Assistant Director Development (Places Group): Ben Binns

Head of Housing, David Greening

Assistant Director Assets and Property: Dave Prinsep

Committee Manager: Sarah Steed

Meeting Producer: Boris Herzog

Officers present virtually:

Interim Director, Communities Group: Suzanne Hemingway

Group Manager, Sean Cleary

Housing Maintenance Improvement Manager, Victoria Stimpson

Property Compliance and Risk Manager: Renier Barnard

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

23/33/HSC Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Tong and Thittala Varkey, Councillors Bennett and Swift attended as alternates.

Tenant Representative Christabella Amiteye and Leaseholder Representative Diane Best attended the meeting virtually via Teams. This meant they could contribute to debate but could not vote on any of the agenda items.

23/34/HSC Declarations of Interest

Name	Item	Interest
Councillor Holloway	23/42/HSC	Personal: Knew people who had been leaseholders at Fanshawe Road.

23/35/HSC Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

23/36/HSC Petition - Protect the residents of Ekin Road estate

Three petitioner representatives spoke about the 'Protect the residents of Ekin Road' petition.

The Assistant Director Development (Places Group) said the following in response to the petition and Members' questions:

- i. A consultant's report (compiled by JLL) detailed various options for estate regeneration at Ekin Road. The report was published on 4 September at 5.30pm.
- ii. There were 11 critical success factors included within the JLL report which assessed each regeneration report option if taken forward. Some factors were standard (treasury book standard), and some related to the Council's corporate policies (for example the Sustainable Housing Design Guide, Housing Strategy). The report was designed to give a broad overview for options for Ekin Road. A similar approach had been taken for Hanover and Princess Court.
- iii. The impacts of each regeneration option would be assessed.
- iv. There had been 17 reports of condensation related mould at Ekin Road, this comprised 12 flats, 3 houses and 2 bungalows.
- v. 72% of households on the Ekin Road estate had engaged with the Council about the regeneration proposals. This was via home visits, email, and phone calls. 15 letters had been sent to estate residents over the last 6–12-month period. 60 tenancy audits had been carried out, mainly in the flats but some had been carried out in the houses and bungalows. There had been 2 drop-in events at local community centres and 4 liaison meetings with residents. Going forward visits were being arranged with residents on a one-to-one basis. There would be a further liaison meeting and survey towards the end of November. Officers were going to try and knock on every door so that each resident could be consulted.
- vi. Officers sought to provide residents with information regarding their options if regeneration went ahead and they also signposted residents to Council policies which were all publicly available.

The Executive Councillor for Housing and Homelessness responded:

- i. Was aware of concerns which had been raised by residents following the initial consultation event.
- ii. The flats at Ekin Road needed to be brought up to a decent standard. No decision had been made regarding regeneration / redevelopment of Ekin Road estate.
- iii. Appreciated the impact the regeneration / redevelopment proposals had on residents.
- iv. Officers would discuss the needs / requirements for each resident for any option which went ahead.

23/37/HSC Public Questions

Question 1

- i. The various options put forward for the redevelopment of the Ekin Road estate was causing a lot of anxiety and concern, especially given the amount of time it was taking to choose a direction.
- ii. Preferred an option to redevelop the flats and which also allowed people to keep their homes if they wanted to stay.
- iii. The Council and Housing Committee had to do what was best for the wider community and observe the will of the majority of residents on the estate as per the Council's own survey conducted which showed most supported at least partial redevelopment.
- iv. The state of the flats was only getting worse, with some residents living in difficult conditions and having to face at least one more winter without being able to afford adequate heating.
- v. Urged the Council and Housing Committee to prioritise the well-being of the majority of residents and move forward with the best option to make improvements happen, including partial or full redevelopment.

Question 2

- i. Expressed support for option 7 of the Officer's report on Ekin Road - full redevelopment.
- ii. Did not believe any of the other options, including option 6, which proposed the retention of the houses to the south and east, were viable as some of those houses were also in poor condition and would inevitably need replacing in the future.
- iii. Furthermore, this option would mean the residents in the remaining houses would be condemned to living in a major building site for years.
- iv. Ekin Road had a declining reputation and increased anti-social behaviour and required total redevelopment to bring a fresh start to the community.

- v. The loudest voices did not necessarily represent the majority and the Council needed to ensure that everyone was given the right to express their opinion privately.

Question 3

- i. Moved into Ekin Road with young family 12/1/91, so had been living within the estate for 33 years. Noted other people had lived in the estate for a longer period.
- ii. Worked in the homeless sector and their husband worked in Bury St Edmunds, their daughter and son-in-law lived with them. Daughter worked for the NHS and son-in-law worked from home.
- iii. Questioned why the council wanted to knock down perfectly good 3 bed houses at Ekin Road when there was a shortage of them.
- iv. Asked if redevelopment went ahead whether their family would get a 3-bed house or flat in Cambridge. If they were rehoused outside of Cambridge this would impact their job as they did not drive, and public transport was unreliable.

Assistant Director Development (Places Group) responded:

- i. If a redevelopment option was chosen, officers would discuss the needs of the tenant and try to find alternative accommodation to meet those needs.
- ii. The council had sought external advice from an independent company to ensure the council had a full overview of all the issues to consider.

Question 4

- i. Lived in Ekin Road in a council flat for 12 years.
- ii. When they were given their flat it was run down, and it took a lot of time and money to turn the house into a home.
- iii. The Council now wanted to take their flat and demolish it; this was heart breaking.
- iv. Wasn't sure they had the stamina to move out and then move back if redevelopment went ahead in 4-5years.
- v. Questioned what standard the new flat would be built to.
- vi. Had heard people previously living at Fanshawe Road had been moved to Ekin Road as part of the decanting process for redevelopment. This was worrisome.
- vii. Living in a new flat may be nice but was unsure whether they would be able to afford it, especially if the rent was increased.
- viii. Had found this process stressful.
- ix. If a replacement affordable property could not be guaranteed asked that improvements were made to individual properties.

The Executive Councillor responded:

- i. Understood that the member of the public had spent money on their flat and that it was their home.
- ii. If redevelopment went ahead, a new property would be available. This could be at Ekin Road or could be somewhere else in the city. Financial contributions would also be made towards moving and disruptions costs.
- iii. A number of the flats at Ekin Road were in a poor condition and something needed to be done with them.

Assistant Director Development (Places Group) responded:

- i. If a retrofit option went ahead this may still require residents to move out of their property whilst works were undertaken but this would depend on the scale of any works undertaken.
- ii. It was a balanced decision which option for Ekin Road was progressed.
- iii. Also clarified that they were not aware that any residents had been moved into Ekin Road from Fanshawe Road.

Question 5

- i. Lived in a council house on Ekin Road with their mum and brother. Their mum had grown up in the local area and their family and local connections were within the area. Had lived in their home for 38 years.
- ii. People looked out for each other on Ekin Road. There was a great community of neighbours. They did not want to lose their home. Their mum had spent 38 years making it their special place.
- iii. Had experienced traumas and was very concerned if they had to move and potentially change doctors.
- iv. Did not want their community to be destroyed.
- v. Acknowledged that work needed to be undertaken but did not want the community to be taken away. Felt the Council was working against residents.

The Executive Councillor responded:

- i. Acknowledged how the public speaker was feeling and said they did not want to disrupt their community.
- ii. Confirmed that no decision regarding Ekin Road had been taken.
- iii. Was happy to meet with the member of the public outside of the meeting.

Question 6

- i. Lived in their flat with their husband and children. Had lived in their flat for 10 years and had outgrown it and needed a 3-bedroom family home.

- Had strong links to the local area and needed local support network to survive.
- ii. Could not see how this project would benefit them. A 2-bed flat somewhere else away from their support network was not helpful.
 - iii. Noted that 3-bed properties on their street had been made available for temporary housing, which did not make sense.
 - iv. Did not understand the focus on providing flats; it was 3-bed houses which were needed.

Assistant Director Development (Places Group) responded:

- i. Needed to understand the member of the public's personal circumstances. Could take this away and discuss with a Housing Officer.
- ii. The redevelopment option would include houses but could not commit to numbers at this stage. Was aware that there was a need for 3 and 4 bed housing.
- iii. Each person's individual circumstances and needs would be listened to.

23/38/HSC Update on Options Appraisal work At Ekin Road Estate

This item was chaired by Councillor Pounds (Chair).

Matter for Decision

The report brought forward an update on the Options Appraisal work at Ekin Road estate.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing and Homelessness

- i. Noted the completion of Stage 1 of the options appraisal for Ekin Road.
- ii. Noted the proposals for further consultation with residents in the course of Stage 2.
- iii. Approved the progress to Stage 2 of the options appraisal on the basis of the criteria and the options set out in the Stage 1 report.
- iv. Approved that a revenue budget of £300,000 be identified to support this further Stage 2 options appraisal work.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Assistant Director of Development.

The Assistant Director Development (Places Group) said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. The retrofit option was not an easy option as it would depend what works were being carried out as to whether residents would need to move out of their property for a period of time.
- ii. A decision also needed to be taken regarding what standard of retrofit would be considered.
- iii. The budget set aside in recommendation 4 may or may not be spent. Sufficient budget needed to be set aside so that each option could be taken forward and funded.
- iv. It was possible that if a decision was taken to redevelop Ekin Road, residents may be able to be rehoused at East Barnwell, if that redevelopment went ahead on time. This was dependent on a number of factors including planning approval.
- v. Noted that the City wanted to achieve 'net zero' and a balance needed to be struck between operational carbon and embodied carbon.

The Committee resolved by 6 votes to 0 with 2 abstentions to endorse the recommendation.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

23/39/HSC Compliance Report

This item was chaired by Diana Minns (Vice-Chair Tenant Representative).

Matter for Decision

The report provided an update on the compliance related activities delivered within the Estates & Facilities Team, including a summary on gas servicing, electrical testing, and fire safety work.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing and Homelessness

- i. Noted the progress of the compliance related work detailed in the Officer's report.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Property Compliance and Risk Manager.

The Property Compliance and Risk Manager and Housing Maintenance Improvement Manager said the following in response to questions:

- i. Noted concerns regarding reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) which was topical in the news at the moment. A desktop review of the council's assets had been undertaken and was not aware that any of the council's properties had been constructed out of this concrete, but further enquiries were being made.
- ii. There were approximately 5000 asbestos surveys on record, removal would take place if the scope of any work being undertaken required it.
- iii. The Council had only started collecting data on damp condensation and mould (DCM) over the last year. Most reports of DCM tended to arise due to ventilation / overcrowding issues. A working group had been set up with the Environmental Health Team and other professionals who would go into properties to share / report any concerns regarding DCM to the DCM Team to investigate.
- iv. Leaseholders had contacted the council regarding DCM and the same information would be provided to them, which was provided to tenants. A survey of the building would be undertaken by the council, but remedial works would be the responsibility of the leaseholder. Noted this was an area where engagement with leaseholders could be improved. Planned to provide more information for example how to undertake a mould wash on the council's website.
- v. The Council has produced a leaflet to assist residents with measures to reduce DCM - [Reduce condensation and prevent mould in your home - Cambridge City Council](#).
- vi. Once remedial works had been undertaken by the Council for DCM, a follow up process had been added to check with the tenants if their issue had been sorted out and if not further works would be undertaken. Social media channels and a leaflet drop was planned to provide information to residents.
- vii. Planned to continue the current DCM programme into the winter months.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendation.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

23/40/HSC Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman Findings - Drop Kerb

This item was chaired by Diana Minns (Vice-Chair Tenant Representative).

Matter for Decision

The report referred to an Ombudsman's report where a finding of a fault in response to a housing related service had been made against the Council.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing and Homelessness

- i. Noted the information contained within the Officer's report.
- ii. Approved the remedial actions outlined and measures established to reduce or eliminate the risk of repeat mistakes in future cases.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Group Manager

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendation.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

23/41/HSC Update on New Build Council Housing Delivery

This item was chaired by Councillor Pounds (Chair).

Matter for Decision

This was a regular quarterly report detailing progress on the City Council's new housing development programme.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing and Homelessness

- i. Noted the continued progress on the delivery of the approved housing programme.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Assistant Director Development (Places Group). It was noted that a correction was required to section 11 of the report; the East Barnwell report would be brought to the November Housing Scrutiny Committee.

The Assistant Director Development (Places Group) said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Would check if the redevelopment at St Thomas Road comprised 7 or 8 houses and if the property on the corner was included within the redevelopment.
- ii. Reference was made to the risk register in section 10 of the officer's report and advised that since a final decision had not been approved for Ekin Road there was no scheme against which a risk rating for re-housing residents could be given. Other schemes had already had tenants re-housed elsewhere that was why the risk had been assessed as low.
- iii. Officers had written to residents and commercial tenants regarding the East Barnwell community centre. There had been a delay to ensure that due diligence regarding finances had been undertaken. It was hoped that a planning application would be submitted in November.
- iv. Officers hoped to be able to provide further information regarding the nursery in the East Barnwell report going which was due to go to the November Housing Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee resolved by 7 votes to 0 to endorse the recommendation.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

23/42/HSC Update Report on Development Scheme at Fanshawe Road

This item was chaired by Councillor Pounds (Chair).

Matter for Decision

The report sought approval to proceed with a mixed tenure scheme at 12-30b Fanshawe Road. This was known as Option B in a report which was taken to Housing Scrutiny Committee on 21 June 2022.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing and Homelessness

- i. Approved that a mixed tenure scheme be brought forward in line with the design proposals set out in the Officer's report.
- ii. Authorised the Assistant Director for Assets and Property in consultation with the Executive Councillor for housing to approve variations to the scheme including the number of units, tenure, mix of property types and sizes outlined in the Officer's report.
- iii. Authorised the Assistant Director for Assets and Property in consultation with the Executive Councillor to approve the transfer of the land known as 12-30b Fanshawe Road and shown edged red on the attached plan in Appendix 2, to Cambridge Investment Partnership (CIP) for redevelopment. This transfer will be at a value provided by a further independent valuation, which will also be approved by CIP Board as detailed in the financial appraisal set out in Appendix 1. The HRA land receipt will be incorporated at the minimum value suggested in the appraisal until final valuation has been received.
- iv. Authorised the Assistant Director for Assets and Property in consultation with the Executive Councillor to approve the Affordable Housing Agreement with CIP for the 45 affordable homes. This agreement would be at a value provided by an independent valuer, to be approved by CIP Board as detailed in the financial appraisal set out in Appendix 1. This would mean an amended and reduced budget of £13.0m from £28.5m including decant costs and other on costs. This budget to be brought forward in the forthcoming November 2023 Mid Term Financial Strategy.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Assistant Director Development (Places Group).

The Assistant Director Development (Places Group) said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. 9 x 3 bed-flats were proposed within the Fanshawe Road scheme.
- ii. Ward Councillors would be consulted before a planning application was submitted.
- iii. Future update reports for the housing delivery programme could report information based on the number of bedrooms a property had.

Councillor Martinelli proposed and Councillor Bennett seconded an amendment to recommendation ii of the Officer's report (additional text underlined,

- ii. Authorise the Assistant Director for Assets and Property in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Housing and Homelessness, opposition spokespersons and chair of Housing Scrutiny Committee to approve variations to the scheme including the number of units, tenure, mix of property types and sizes outlined in this report.

The amendment was lost by 3 votes in favour to 6 votes against.

The Committee resolved by 6 votes to 0 with 3 abstentions to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

23/43/HSC Report on Proposed Section 106 Housing Acquisition

Councillor Pounds left the meeting before the start of this item and Councillor Robertson as Vice-Chair (Councillor) chaired the rest of the meeting.

Matter for Decision

The report sought approval for a capital budget to purchase thirty-two affordable units at Eddeva Park, Worts' Causeway from This Land for rent as Council homes.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing and Homelessness

- i. Approved the purchase of 32 new Council homes at the Eddeva Park, Worts' Causeway and delegate Authority to the Assistant Director of Asset and Property to approve contract terms with This LandTM in respect of this transaction.
- ii. Delegated authority to the Assistant Director to vary rental tenures in line with Council Policy and planning consents for the Eddeva Park Affordable Housing.
- iii. Approved a total budget of £8,021,000.00 to enable the development of 32 homes at the Eddeva Park, Worts' Causeway, with this budget bid subject to approval in the forthcoming November 2023 Mid Term Financial Strategy.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Assistant Director Development (Places Group).

The Assistant Director Development (Places Group) said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Community provision which arose as a result of planning permission granted on the site did not form part of this report. The Newbury Farm purchase by the Cambridge Investment Partnership (CIP) included community provision within the section 106 agreement. This could be provided on-site or off-site.
- ii. Negotiations were underway to purchase the affordable housing units from This Land. Some issues had been raised regarding road access which needed to be resolved. There would also need to be a Deed of Variation to the s106 agreement to change the affordable units from shared ownership to affordable rent.
- iii. Parking design / ratios was something that officers were looking at. Felt the site was quite well served by public transport and cycling routes. The

amount of community provision and commercial provision would have been based on Planning requirements.

- iv. Noted concerns expressed by Councillors regarding community facility provision.

The Committee resolved by 5 votes in favour to 0 against and 3 abstentions to endorse the recommendation.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

23/44/HSC Rooftop Development With Associated Retrofit to High Efficiency Standards

This item was chaired by Councillor Robertson (Vice-Chair Councillor).

Matter for Decision

The report sought approval for a budget to support pilot feasibility work for rooftop development at Lichfield Road (243 - 313 Odds) and Walpole Road (1-12 Bracondale, 1-18 Fernwood, 1-18 Heatherfield).

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing and Homelessness

- i. Noted the selection of the sheltered housing schemes at Lichfield Road (243 - 313 Odds) and Walpole Road (1-12 Bracondale, 1-18 Fernwood, 1-18 Heatherfield) as approved candidates for pilot scheme consideration.
- ii. Approved the bringing forward of pilot feasibility studies through a specialist and OJEU complaint Procurement Framework.
- iii. Approved that a revenue budget of £190,000 be identified to support feasibility work, with this budget bid subject to approval in the forthcoming November 2023 Mid Term Financial Strategy.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Assistant Director Development (Places Group)

The Assistant Director Development (Places Group) said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Noted that some of the sheltered housing schemes had poor accessibility. One of the options being considered was that the rooftop development consisted of further sheltered housing, but this was one of the questions to be explored through the feasibility scheme - whether alternative housing could be provided.
- ii. The pilot only involved tenanted accommodation there was the potential that this could be expanded to mixed tenured blocks (i.e., to include leaseholders).
- iii. The pilot would include a carbon assessment, which would include how far the development could go towards 'net zero'.
- iv. Officers would need to engage with residents to understand their needs and circumstances. The Council had their own in-house Occupation Therapist who would assist Officers to consider residents' needs.
- v. A pilot scheme helps officers to understand what issues could arise with rooftop developments.
- vi. The Council's Independent Living Service could also assist with consultation and engagement with vulnerable residents.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendation.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

23/45/HSC To Note Decision Taken by the Executive Councillor for Housing and Homelessness

13a Local Authority Housing Fund Refugee Scheme Round 2 – Approval to deliver 2ND round humanitarian scheme accommodation through the 2022-32 new build housing programme, partly funded by Central Government
The decision was noted.

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm
CHAIR

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