

Committee: Cabinet

Agenda Item

Date: 25 June 2014

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Title: Development Site – Catons Lane, Saffron Walden

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Redfern

Key decision: **Yes**

Summary

1. This report was presented to Housing Board on the 24th April 2014. The report provides a detailed development appraisal for the site at Catons Lane, Saffron Walden. There are three options for this site which are detailed in this report.
2. This site has been identified as having potential for the development of Council owned homes, as part of our on-going development programme.
3. Housing Board made the following recommendations to be taken forward to Cabinet:
 - i) Development scheme Option 1 to be progressed as a preference
 - ii) The site to be progressed to the planning application stage, having regard to the estimated costs associated with the works.

Recommendations

4. That the Cabinet ratifies the decisions made by Housing Board on the 24th April 2014

Financial Implications

5. Financial provision for the development of new Council owned homes is included within the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.
6. The Indicative cost for each option has been calculated. These indicative costs will be updated as the proposals are developed towards the submission of a planning application. The final cost will be known following the tender process for the selection of a building contractor.

Background Papers

7. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

The Design Partnership Feasibility Report for the Garage Court Re-Development at Catons Lane, Saffron Walden – April 2014

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Communication/Consultation	Existing tenants, local residents, Town Council and external agencies
Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	N/A
Health and Safety	None
Human Rights/Legal Implications	Relocation of existing right of way
Sustainability	An opportunity to construct new thermally efficient homes for people in housing need
Ward-specific impacts	Saffron Walden
Workforce/Workplace	There are sufficient resources in the housing team to manage the project

Situation

9. The site is 0.19 hectares and is located behind the properties on Catons Lane and Little Walden Road in Saffron Walden. The land is currently used as a parking court comprising 38 garages which are constructed with concrete bases, concrete panel walls and a metal roof, however many are not in use.
10. The site has very narrow access to the side of No 14 Catons Lane, which is a home owned by Uttlesford District Council. The tenant has been approached and has agreed to give up part of her garden to acquire the required access width. The tenant has requested that her boundary is reinstated with a close board fence.
11. There are some large trees that are present along the boundary of the site, some on neighbouring land and others within the site. There is also a legal right of way from the rear of No.21 Little Walden Road to both The Green and Catons Lane and an informal public 'right of way' from these two points as well. The occupier of No 21 Little Walden Road has been approached about her "right of way" and negotiations are underway to vary this.
12. A gas main has been identified along the Northern boundary which encroaches into the site, however no other services are evident on the site. As this is a garage court however, there could very well be drainage, electricity and water mains running under the site.
13. Saunders Boston architects have been appointed to undertake sketch schemes for the site to provide homes which meet Housing Quality Indicators, Lifetime Homes, Building for Life and Code for Sustainable Homes level 3, and incorporate a fabric first approach. They have provided 3 options that are attached to this report.

14. Option 1 is a development of 6 homes comprising 4 x 2 bedroom 4 person houses, and 2 x 1 bedroom 2 person houses. The total construction cost (including all fees) is estimated to be £696,906.
15. Option 2 is a development of 7 homes comprising 3 x 2 bedroom 4 person houses, 2 x 1 bedroom 2 person houses and 2 x 1 bedroom 2 person flats. The total construction cost (including all fees) is estimated to be £755,696.
16. Option 3 is a development of 8 homes comprising 2 x 2 bedroom 4 person houses, 2 x 1 bedroom 2 person houses and 4 x 1 bedroom 2 person flats. The total construction cost (including all fees) is estimated to be £799,858.
17. The layout of the scheme has also retained all the existing trees with the exception of one adjacent to plot 1 in order to assist with creating a 'sense of place' and to create a mature feel to the development. The designers have also tried to limit overlooking by constructing gable walls to face neighbouring houses and where this is not possible they have obtain 20m distances, building to building.
18. The architects have contacted the planners prior to completing their sketches and have incorporated their requirements for; parking, rear garden sizes and bin collection provisions with in their proposals.
19. In order to submit a full planning application it will be necessary to appoint the designated architects to undertake the planning application, however an arbocultural survey will also be necessary as part of this process as well as obtaining a Site Investigation report and Flood Risk Assessment both of which can be undertaken by the engineers. It will also be necessary to conclude negotiations with the tenant at No 14 Catons Lane, and the occupier of No 21 Little Walden Road.
20. Prior to achieving planning permission for the scheme, it is intended to keep costs to a minimum. The essential costs can be summarised as follows:
 - Architectural Fees £9,341.46
 - Topographical Survey £430.00
 - Engineers £4,650.00
 - Arbocultural Report £661.50
 - VAT on above fees £3,016.59
 - Planning Fee £3,080.00
 - **Total costs** **£21,179.55**
21. The site condition, design proposals, costs and risks have all been investigated and show that the development is viable. The build costs are a little high due to the size and shape of the site, and the length of access required. Costs could increase further if underground services are found.
22. Taking all aspect of the schemes into account it may be prudent to proceed on the basis of option 1 for six houses as this is more likely to gain planning approval as the density is lower which should also attract fewer neighbourhood objections. This option provides the same number of bed spaces as the other schemes but for a lower cost per m². The downside of this option is that it will provide housing for fewer households.

Risk Analysis

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Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
No 14 not allowing their side garden to be used for access.	1 Tenant already been approached and is supportive	4 Unable to access site for development purposes	Negotiations with the tenant to be concluded
No 21 not agreeing to vary right of way	1 Occupant already been approached and is supportive	3 Alternative arrangements available	Negotiations with No 21 to be concluded.
Not achieving planning permission	1 Planners supportive	4 Development not possible	Pre-planning discussions with planners
Underground services identified	2 Investigations to be carried out	3 Diversions possible but cost implications	Investigations to be undertaken at the earliest stage

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.