

**HOLLOWAY CRESCENT TASK GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 2pm on 31 JANUARY 2011**

Present: Councillor J A Redfern – Chairman.
Councillors S Barker, E J Godwin and J E Hudson.

Also attending: E Rogers and S Sproul (Tenant Forum
Representatives).

Officers in attendance: J Burnham (Housing Enabling and Development
Officer), H Harvey (Senior Sheltered Housing and
Lifeline Officer), M Ling (Interim Housing Strategy
and Planning Policy Manager), R Millership
(Divisional Head: Housing and Environmental
Services), R Procter (Democratic Services Officer),
J Snares (Housing Options and Homelessness
Manager) and M Stocks (Surveyor).

HC7 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Chamberlain.

HC8 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2010 were received and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

HC9 PHASE 1 DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

The Surveyor reported on Phase 1 development, which he said was on budget and ahead of the contractor's programme by three weeks, despite recent bad weather.

Councillor Redfern said she had forwarded to Members an email she had received from Leaden Roding Parish Council regarding two issues: first, that some residents had experienced problems with parking; and secondly, alleging uncooperative behaviour and bad language on the part of the contractors. She asked whether other Members or officers had received reports of concerns or problems arising from the development.

Councillor Barker said she had on several occasions been to the site and spoken to those residents living nearby, and on those occasions no issues had been raised. She had not been contacted by anyone regarding the concerns referred to by the Parish Council.

Officers said during the Christmas period and evenings parking had been monitored, and no problems had been reported.

Councillor Barker referred to a Conservative Party questionnaire which had recently been distributed in the Leaden Roding area. She said she had been disappointed by the description of the development as a 'done deal' in some

responses to this survey, since the Council had retracted its original scheme in response to community consultation.

Mrs Millership said she was aware of a complaint from a resident to which Russell Goodey had responded.

Councillor Redfern said she would respond to the parish council's letter accordingly.

HC10

PHASE 2 DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

The Task Group considered the report of the Housing Enabling and Development Officer, setting out the findings of site appraisals for a new build scheme on the currently unoccupied site at Holloway Crescent. The report contained valuation figures which would necessitate the report falling within exemption from disclosure provisions at Committee, and was therefore not for publication as part of the Task Group agenda papers.

The report summarised the result of a Housing Needs assessment, which indicated a preferable site mix for this phase would contain some one bedroom flats and fewer two bedroom bungalows than shown on initial designs prepared by Flagship. The SHLAA had identified 9 – 15 units on phases 1 and 2 of this site, or a density of 30 to 50 homes per hectare. Housing Needs had put forward a desirable unit mix of 9/10 homes comprising four one-bedroom flats, one two-bedroom bungalow, two two-bedroom houses and two three-bedroom houses.

Members considered the report, which set out three options. The first option, a social rented scheme, could be either local authority led or registered social landlord (RSL) led. Two other options were suggested: a new affordable rent scheme which would be RSL led, or private market sale.

Members asked about potential unit cost using section 106 money for phase 2. It was noted the proposals had been considered in draft by the Assistant Chief Executive-Finance.

Members asked questions regarding difficulties in finding applicants for shared ownership. Officers explained that due to lack of applicants, properties for shared ownership often went to people coming from outside the district.

Councillor Barker suggested building a mix of private and social housing at the site. The Divisional Head: Housing and Environmental Services said such a proposal would be a decision for Members, but reminded the Task Group the intention in the corporate plan was to provide affordable housing. The Chairman said there was no reason not to build social housing if there was the demand and if this course of action reflected the views of the housing service.

Members discussed use of the Stansted Area Housing Partnership (SAHP) money. The suggestion was made that this option need not be used if funding could be found elsewhere, although concern was expressed about losing the opportunity to use the SAHP money.

The use of the units for shared ownership was considered in further detail. Councillors Barker and Godwin were against shared ownership where people were 'imported' from outside the district. The suggestion was made that there should be restrictions on the area from which shared ownership applicants were drawn, for example within 5 miles of the district boundary.

Mrs Millership said a new allocations scheme would permit sensitive lettings, and officers had considered options for restricting lettings to the local geographical area. Members were in favour of such an approach.

In discussing option 1b, a social rented scheme to be RSL led, Members expressed reluctance for options whereby the Council's land would be disposed of without the Council retaining control.

Members discussed option 3, private market sale. It was noted there was no reason why a developer could not make its own application for planning permission.

Regarding option 4, demolition of the existing building and retention of the site, the Surveyor outlined the costs of the work required, which including diversion of services, provision of new boiler rooms and new electrical supplies, mechanical works and provision of new boilers, as well as demolition itself, were estimated at a total of £88,000. The Divisional Head: Housing and Environmental Services said the boilers were reaching the end of their life and new central heating would need to be installed in the near future in any event.

Councillor Barker asked whether a small sum for disturbance compensation could be included in projected figures, for those residents whose services would be redirected whilst these services were disrupted. The Surveyor said any disruption to services such as electricity or water would not be for very long.

In reply to a question from Sam Sproul, the Divisional Head: Housing and Environmental Services explained the replacement heating system would be likely to be an oil-based system, as there was no supply of gas in the Leaden Roding area. A possible alternative would be electricity.

Further discussion took place on option 1a, regarding the question of mixed units. Councillor Barker suggested having a letting scheme which limited lettings to a 5 mile geographical area, or to the parish of Leaden Roding. The Housing Options and Homelessness Manager said such restrictions could have the effect of preventing housing those in most need from other areas within the district. Councillor Godwin agreed with Councillor Barker, as she was aware of cases where those placed at a distance from their families found it hard to settle in a community. The Housing Options and Homelessness Manager advised that people were able to choose their location.

The possibility of a restriction for 50/50 or 60/40 of lettings in favour of local people was discussed.

Sam Sproul asked which type of housing was most in demand. Officers replied two-bedroom houses were most in demand. It was noted the parish council had forwarded comments made from their meeting suggesting a demand for single accommodation flats.

Members considered public transport options in Leaden Roding for those without a car.

Effie Rogers expressed concern that housing associations would seek increased funds to undertake the development. She disagreed that lettings should be restricted to a figure from the local area.

Summing up the discussion, the Chairman said option 1a was preferred, subject to the imposing of letting restrictions, and that it was clear that Members found objections to the remaining options. She said the original intention of private market sale was to maximise the value of the land in order to fund other housing within the district. Councillor Barker said in her view options 1 and 3 were the best options. Effie Rogers said private sale would be a disappointing outcome for Leaden Roding residents.

Members agreed the option to demolish and retain the site would detract from phase one, as those living in the bungalows were keen to enhance the site.

The Interim Housing Strategy and Planning Policy Manager advised other partners in the SAHP would need to be consulted if section 106 monies were to be used, and gave an explanation of the way in which the scheme operated.

The Chairman said it was her view that the Council should build its own housing, to which Councillor Godwin agreed.

The Divisional Head: Housing and Environmental Services said consultation with residents, the Concern group and the parish council would need to take place prior to making a recommendation to Committee. In order to allow time for this to be arranged, the recommendation should be made to the March meeting of the Community and Housing Committee.

Councillor Barker referred to proposals from some residents that the existing block should be refurbished for flats for single people. Members noted consultation could include this option, although it was felt that new properties would be a preferable outcome.

RECOMMENDED to Community and Housing Committee

- 1 A local authority led social rented housing scheme of 9/10 units (option 1a as set out in the report to the Holloway Crescent Task Group) should be taken forward as the development scheme for the second phase of redevelopment at Holloway Crescent, Leaden Roding;
- 2 Possible restrictions on lettings be applied to the scheme/part scheme, taking into account the outcome of

consultation with the community, including the parish council and Concern group.

The Chairman thanked the Housing Enabling and Development Officer for the extensive work involved in preparing the report.

HC10

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

An event to mark the formal opening of the site would take place following handover of the site, currently planned to take place around 24 to 26 March. The Chairman asked that officers email all Community and Housing Committee Members once a date was known.

The meeting ended at 3.10pm.