

HOUSING INITIATIVE TASK GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN AT 10:00 am on 8 September 2008

Present: Councillor R H Chamberlain (Chairman).
Councillors E L Bellingham-Smith, E Hudson, D J Morson.

Tenant Forum Representative: Mrs E Rogers and Mr S Sproul.

Officers in attendance: Helen Joy, Roz Millership, Catharine Roberts and Sophie Walker.

Also present at the invitation of the Chairman of the Group: Trevor Burns (Swan Housing Association).

HTG11 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor E W Hicks and J E Menell, S Clarke, L Petrie and J Snares.

HTG12 MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2008 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

HTG13 BUSINESS ARISING

i) Minute HTG8 – Negative Housing Subsidy – Meeting with the Minister

It was understood that nothing further had been heard from the Minister. Roz Millership said that she had been invited to join a user group meeting facilitated by the Chartered Institute of Housing. It was apparent that there was a lack of understanding of the rural agenda. The Chairman of the Group said that he would wait developments from the meeting with interest.

HTG14 UPDATE ON HOLLOWAY CRESCENT

The Chairman of the Group informed the meeting that a local organisation entitled "The Holloway Crescent and Close Sheltered Housing Redevelopment Concern Group" had made its views known in a letter which was circulated at the meeting (attached as an appendix to these minutes).

The Chairman explained that the letter had been submitted on behalf of 53 residents of Holloway Crescent, Holloway Close and the village of Leaden Roding.

They had concerns about the proposed redevelopment of both the existing sheltered accommodation site and Holloway Close in Leaden Roding and their group represented a good cross section of the community and included

council and private tenants plus home owners both young and old. The group wished to work with the council on an appropriate solution for this community.

The Tenant Participation Officer, Helen Joy, expressed the view that all tenants in the sheltered accommodation would be very disappointed if the redevelopment did not happen.

The Chairman stressed that it was necessary to appreciate that there might be opposition to the development but that that fact did not change the fact that the site needed to be dealt with.

In answer to a question from the Chairman the Tenant Participation Officer detailed the consultation which had happened since the last meeting, informing the meeting that at least two visits or meetings with each of the tenants involved in the redevelopment had occurred since 16 July. The Tenant Participation Officer said that she had taken notes of the meetings with the tenants and there was also feedback recorded on the feedback forms.

At the request of the Chairman Trevor Burns, representing Swan Housing Association displayed the plan of the proposed works which had been displayed at a public drop-in session on 20 August 2008 from 2-7pm. There had been about 150 people at the session and the "Concern Group" had been in attendance. Five bungalows were being provided for the existing five tenants of the sheltered bungalows and these were purpose designed for the tenants' individual requirements.

There were concerns from the tenants of the maisonettes about communal heating. There were also broader concerns regarding: a junction; village life; whether extra cars could be accommodated. Trevor Burns agreed to pursue these issues with Planners and Highways. He said also that, were the project to proceed, the Housing Association would rely on funding from a new agency to be formed from the Housing Corporation and the English Partnerships. called the Housing and Communities Agency.

The Chairman of the Group asked that the Group propose approval of Phase I with Phase II subject to further consultation. It would involve between 15-30 (at a maximum) dwellings, the type to be subject to consultation with the local community.

Councillor E Bellingham-Smith asked that Trevor Burns speak to the Highways Department and pursue any issues raised from the consultation with all relevant agencies. She also suggested that he should attend the Community Committee at its next meeting.

The meeting noted that the requirements for planning applications and Highways consents would give further opportunities for further consultation to take place.

In answer to a question on timetabling Trevor Burns said that it would take about 3 months to get the planning application through and a year to complete

the first phase.

It was agreed that the following recommendation be made to the Community Committee

RECOMMENDED that the two phases of development at Holloway Crescent and Holloway Close at Leaden Roding be recommended to the Community Committee for approval and that the whole proceeds in two phases, the first as soon as possible and the second in due course but subject to the results of appropriate public consultations and discussions.

HTG15 **AFFORDABLE HOUSING DELIVERY PROGRAMME**

The meeting received a presentation on affordable housing and Schedule of Housing Delivery by Sophie Walker the Housing Enabling and Development Officer. She also described the potential effect being shown on housing completions due to the recession. Members found the report very helpful and asked that further such reports be provided to future meetings of the Task Group.

HTG16 **OTHER BUSINESS**

(i) Recycling collections

Mr S Sproul representing the Tenants Forum protested against recently publicised restrictions on collecting from cul de sacs. He agreed to write to Mrs Burridge about this so that she would have the opportunity of replying to the whole Tenants Forum.

(ii) Void lettings

It was agreed that a report on void lettings should be brought to a future meeting of the Group when Russell Goodey would be able to attend. The Head of Housing Management commented that work was now passed to the Depot not just to Roalco. It was agreed that this would form the main subject matter for the meeting to be held on 10 November.

(iii) Public Consultation meeting 20 August 2008-09-11

The Head of Housing Management reported that the staff who attended the open day had interacted calmly and constructively with the many public present enabling valuable discussion and interchange of views and information. The Chairman of the Group expressed appreciation of this on behalf of the Council.

The meeting ended at 11 45am

Holloway Crescent & Close Sheltered Housing Redevelopment Concern Group

We are writing this letter on behalf of, and with full support of, the newly formed above named group, who share concerns about the proposed redevelopment, of both the existing sheltered accommodation site, and Holloway Close in Leaden Roding.

Our group represents a good cross section of the community and includes council and private tenants plus home owners both young and old.

We would like to make ourselves available to work with you on an appropriate solution for our community and feel it is right for us to enter into a dialogue with you at the earliest possible opportunity.

We would like to take this opportunity to set out our concerns relating to the proposed redevelopment within the Village.

HOLLOWAY CLOSE

Redevelopment of the land currently occupied by Holloway Close - many of the current residents of the Close have no desire to be moved from their long term homes, regardless of the pressure or enticements on offer from a new landlord. They do not want the unnecessary emotional and physical stress a move may promote. Residents of the Close have been advised that the new development will not exclusively cater for the elder resident and have concerns that they may be housed in between three bedroom family homes.

SUSTAINABILITY OF DEVELOPMENT IN LEADEN RODING

We are concerned that development of areas other than the sheltered housing block will put undue stress and pressure on the following:-

There is no medical, post office, employment opportunities or banking services present in the village, there is also a very limited public transport service. An increased number of homes (social housing or private) may result in increased vehicle congestion both on the roads accessing the village and on parking areas. The village has a rural school that is well subscribed. This is a very successful school and concern over future expansion and the need for split classes covering the same age group is a real one. The school is locked on all sides by current housing, a main road and green belt land so we cannot anticipate where the room for expansion may come from.

The main drainage system may not be able to support a substantial number of extra houses without causing issues for current residents during or after building works.

Service and maintenance issues for the road within Holloway Crescent and the narrow access available from Dunmow Road are concerns.

The foreseeable parking congestion that new houses to Holloway Crescent will bring, the garage site regularly has up to ten cars parked there plus the Crescent is over parked by a number of cars that have to use the grass verge area and on occasion the green.

Due to the lack of facilities in the village it is likely that the majority of residents both existing and new will own cars. We anticipate that redevelopment of the Sheltered and Garage site may create an overspill of upwards of fifteen cars, where will they go? Perhaps on the green, or double parked along the new proposed access road.

The possibility that parking congestion may impede the access needed for emergency services is a real concern.

VILLAGE LIFE IN LEADEN RODING

We are concerned about the affect a significant development may have on our rural village atmosphere and quality of life for residents. We are concerned about the promotion of a "them and us culture" that an unwanted development may bring. We have already seen a significant number of new houses in the village and feel that the proposed development will not enhance village life but give us a larger village without the facilities.

OTHER CONNECTED BUILDINGS IN HOLLOWAY CRESCENT

Some residents of the flats & maisonettes that are currently adjoining the sheltered housing block are concerned about disruption to their heating system that is common to the three buildings, one of which is the sheltered housing block due for redevelopment. These residents would like some assurance that there would be no disruption or financial implications to them as a result of the redevelopment.

There is currently insufficient communal space available to the flats in the Crescent and residents would like any redevelopment to consider and provide for this.

THE GREEN HOLLOWAY CRESCENT

We currently have a good open space that is used by local residents and their children. There is a concern that this space may no longer be sustainable if we see an increased number of families moving to the village. We are concerned about potential conflict that may occur between people short of space in which to live in, play in and park their cars in.

As a group we understand the need to bring the block of flats into some form of use that would benefit existing village residents, and prospective newcomers alike. As a group we would like to put forward an alternative proposal for your consideration.

ALTERNATIVE PROPOSAL

At the inaugural meeting of our group, it was unanimously carried that we put forward our own proposal for the redevelopment of the current sheltered accommodation block in Holloway Crescent. We feel that a suitable and sustainable option for our community would be as follows:-

Redevelop the sheltered housing block on its current footprint. Allocate some of the former garage area for those residents who currently park there, and allocate part for new residents. Leave the existing Green, and Holloway Close intact.

We wish to be included in the planning process but thought it useful to enter in to a dialogue now. We are happy to make ourselves available to meet with you for consultation at the earliest possible opportunity and look forward to your comments.

On behalf of our members – 53 residents of Holloway Crescent, Close and the Village of Leaden Roding