

MEAD COURT TASK GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 2.00pm on 16 OCTOBER 2012

Present: Councillor J Redfern – Chairman
Councillors J Loughlin and V Ranger
Mr S Sproul (Tenant Forum).

Officers in attendance:

Rebecca Dobson (Democratic Services Officer),
A Liles (Housing Asset Manager), M Stocks (Surveyor),
S Robinson (Housing Enabling and Development Officer) and
J Snares (Housing Needs and Landlord Services Manager).

Also present: Tony Welland, Architect - The Design Partnership.

MC9 APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D Perry and from Mrs R Millership.

MC10 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 April 2014 were agreed as a correct record.

MC11 MEAD COURT UPDATE

The Housing Enabling and Development Officer went through a report updating the Task Group on progress in the initial work to take forward Mead Court as a local authority new build scheme.

The Housing Enabling and Development Officer said funds of £2.3 million had been allocated from the HRA business plan, and work had been done on setting up a framework for delivery of construction so as to minimise tendering. She referred to the options to be considered such as selling the land on the open market or taking the scheme forward as a housing association scheme; or to sell part and develop part of the site. All options would contribute an element of affordable housing.

The Housing Enabling and Development Officer introduced the Architect, Tony Welland, who circulated a first draft design plan. The Task Group were invited to consider the initial proposals which had been prepared in light of comments made by Stansted Parish Council and by Councillor A Dean, one of the ward members.

Mr Welland gave an overview of how the work would be phased and described the types of accommodation which were proposed. The accommodation would be a mix of two bedroomed bungalows, two and three bedroomed houses, one and two bedroomed flats and temporary accommodation one bedroomed flats.

Members asked questions about a number of issues including the following:

Footpath adjacent to the site

It was not known at this stage whether the footpath on the North side of the site was owned by the district council. The plan had therefore been drawn up on the assumption that this footpath land would not comprise part of the available land. In reply to Members' questions, Mr Welland said the only design compromise arising from omitting the footpath land was to reduce the size of gardens on the properties nearest the footpath. Legal advice would confirm ownership of the footpath. Members noted that the plan was subject to resolution of this point.

Public open spaces

Mr Welland said he would provide details of the size of the public open spaces. The space would not meet planning requirements in terms of recreational use but nevertheless would provide a pleasant visual and leisure amenity, particularly as the trees would remain. Members felt the appearance of Mead Court was likely to be greatly improved following development.

Design of the flats

Mr Welland described the interior design of the flats and explained the reasoning for including certain features. He explained how he proposed to address issues of overlooking other properties.

Bungalow gardens

Members considered the small size of the gardens proposed for the bungalows and agreed it would usually be the case that elderly people preferred small gardens for ease of maintenance.

Parking

Members considered various issues relating to parking. It was noted the plan set out one parking space per bungalow and two spaces per house, with an additional eight parking places to be provided. Members commented on the need for visitors' parking places for the bungalows which was an issue likely to be raised by the planning department.

Members therefore requested that officers obtain more information through a parking survey to establish how parking was currently used by existing bungalow residents and their visitors.

Access for recycling vehicles

Members emphasised the need to ensure adequate access to the bungalow area for the Council's recycling vehicles. It was important to design the layout so that there would be no need for residents to move their bins far from their properties. A further consideration was that the turning

areas should not be too tight and give rise to damaged kerbs or street furniture when the vehicles tried to turn, as this was a problem which had caused much frustration in some areas of the district. The Chairman said it was essential to get these aspects rights for what would be a flagship project for the council. The Surveyor agreed to provide details of the new recycling vehicle size to the Architect.

Pedestrian access via footpath from Blythwood Gardens

Members sought assurance that the proposals would not interfere with access from the footpath from Blythwood Gardens. It was noted that access to the footpath should be unaffected, but it was agreed that as a point of good practice the Chairman, any interested members of the Task Group, and local ward members together with a representative from Stansted Parish Council, should walk the route.

Access to the rear of bungalows on the north side of the plot

Members questioned the need for a footpath to cross the garden of one bungalow and raised the possibility of rear access to the footpath along the north side of the site. The question of lighting and security was raised. It was agreed the Architect would investigate other options for this part of the plan.

Interior layout

Members asked whether the interior of the bungalows would be wheelchair compliant. Mr Welland explained that the new bungalows would be designed to have sufficiently wide doors but would not be fully wheelchair compliant, as this option meant a compromise on the number of bedrooms for these properties.

Members raised other details such as provision of storage space in the flats; whether residents were likely to require properties with showers or baths; and the design brief for the temporary accommodation.

Further parking issues

Members noted that the two parking spaces allocated for the temporary accommodation might be considered inadequate from a planning perspective.

It was noted that a sliver of land at the north-west corner of the site could potentially be sold to an adjoining house-owner, provided no advantage was lost in doing so.

The positioning of the flats should be further considered, as if the garden to their rear could be reduced, it might be possible to gain parking at the front of the flats by moving the block to form an L-shape.

The question was raised of moving the access road to the flats and their associated parking places. It was noted there was a change in level at this

point and that there was an intention to retain the small secondary green space. However, this space could be re-located if more parking could be gained.

Other issues

Councillor Loughlin asked a question about provision of somewhere for residents to congregate. The Chairman said current residents of Mead Court occupied single-room accommodation and it was for this reason they had required the additional amenity of a common room. The accommodation to be provided under the new development would mean no resident would occupy single-room accommodation. Therefore there would be no point in providing what would in effect be another day centre, particularly as Stansted Day Centre was nearby.

Members raised further points such as the benefit of removing a tree from between parking bays for reasons of space and the desirability of having a distinctive design when turning from the main access road towards the bungalow access road, such as a change of road material, to emphasise the entrance to the residential areas. The possibility of gaining some parking by utilising part of the verges owned by the Council should be considered.

Members agreed it would be helpful to take the next steps prior to meeting again:

- 1 To establish the extent of land around the edge of the existing properties and verges on the site was owned by the Council with a view to using such land to increase numbers of parking spaces.
- 2 To review parking for the temporary accommodation and for the three parking spaces associated with the flats where access seemed problematic on the current design.
- 3 To hold a meeting between the planners and Architect together with the Chairman in order to agree broad design principles.
- 4 To re-visit the plans once comments from this meeting had been incorporated (where feasible).
- 5 To conduct a site visit with the Parish Council Chairman or other representative, and with at least one of the two ward Members.
- 6 Informally to report to residents at a drop-in coffee morning.

RECOMMENDED to the Housing Board that a local authority new build scheme be taken forward as the preferred option for Mead Court.

MC12

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed to aim for a meeting in the week commencing 19 November 2012, the Democratic Services Officer to circulate possible dates and times to the Group.

The meeting ended at 11.10am.