

MEAD COURT TASK GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 4pm on 18 DECEMBER 2012

Present: Councillor J Redfern – Chairman.
Councillors A Dean, V Ranger and J Salmon.
Mr S Sproul (Tenant Forum).

Also present Tony Welland, Architect - The Design Partnership.

Officers in attendance: R Dobson (Democratic Services Officer), A Liles (Housing Assets Manager), R Millership (Assistant Director Housing and Environmental Services), S Robinson (Housing Enabling and Development Officer), J Snares (Housing Needs and Landlord Services Manager) and M Stocks (Surveyor).

MC17 APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Loughlin.

MC18 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2012 were agreed as a correct record.

MC19 MEAD COURT UPDATE

The Housing Enabling and Development Officer tabled updated plans and gave an update on progress with the scheme. The revised plans had been made available at two meetings with residents and discussed with them in detail. Officers had also presented the plans at a meeting of Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council.

The Housing Enabling and Development Officer said residents were in general very pleased about the re-development and were delighted with how it would look.

The group discussed in further detail the disappointment expressed by three residents that the plans would not include a common room. However, it was noted that once officers had explained that they would investigate options for residents to be helped with transport to Stansted Day Centre only two residents had remained concerned about the issue of losing their common room.

Councillor Redfern said following the development, residents would have gained an additional room in their accommodation which would enable them to invite friends and family to come round, whereas their present bedsit accommodation did not lend itself to socialising.

Councillor Dean asked Members to support a request to Highways that there should be a pedestrian crossing on Silver Street, which would improve access for residents to the Day Centre.

He asked whether the plans would comply with the new parking standards. Tony Welland confirmed that they were compliant and that the Planning Department had been consulted from an early stage.

The group discussed the area to be developed for temporary accommodation, which was currently rather neglected and run down.

The group considered the best use of the green area which it was agreed should be used as a seating area with benches and some planted areas. Residents would be invited to form a group to design the planting.

The public footpath along the west side of the site was discussed. Councillor Redfern said various issues regarding the footpath had been taken into account to ensure compliance with the requirements of Secure By Design, with access from the existing car park.

The question of vehicular as well as pedestrian access to the allotments was considered, as some people liked to drive near to their allotment. Councillor Salmon agreed to confirm with the Parish Council whether this was possible. The Assistant Director Housing and Environmental Services said a parking survey would be carried out which could show where there was potential for extra parking to be created. Those accessing the allotments could not use the allocated car parking places. She said that the residents of the bungalows had confirmed they would prefer parking spaces to grass.

Tony Welland then took members through the plans. He drew attention to the traffic calming design at the entrance to the site; parking spaces which had been added to the green area and to the area for temporary accommodation; changes made to the footpath at the back of plot number 4; and the fact that garages in the existing car park would be lost.

The Assistant Director Housing and Environmental Services suggested non-obtrusive lighting be installed on the road towards the temporary accommodation.

The issue of sloped access to accommodation was considered. Tony Welland replied to a question about altering existing steps to slopes, explaining that the costs were too great for this to be practicable.

It was agreed that a pathway should be created through the green area, to make access easier for residents.

The group discussed the question of costs for the different options for bathrooms, and was informed that the costs were the same whether installing baths, showers or wet rooms. This aspect of development would be considered at a later stage.

Members commented on the fact that staircases for the houses and temporary accommodation would be internal and felt this was the best option.

In answer to a question, Tony Welland confirmed that in the three-bedroom houses, there would be room in the downstairs cloakroom to install a shower if occupants desired.

Regarding the flat roof design over the lobby to plots 20 and 22 it was noted a pitched roof would give more security and better weathering.

Councillor Dean described serious design flaws about which he had received complaints in respect of flats elsewhere in Stansted. He asked that every effort be made that the Mead Court development be designed and built to a high standard.

Councillor Redfern assured Councillor Dean that this would be the case, as anything less would be counter-productive.

Councillor Dean asked that if possible the accommodation near St Stephen's Court should not be overshadowed by that building. Tony Welland said the flats should avoid this issue as they would be further to the east.

Councillor Redfern explained that the flats on this part of the site would be used for temporary accommodation, and represented a good use of space.

Councillor Dean asked that the design, particularly along the back of properties near the boundaries of the site, should aim to minimise any prospect of looking rundown or neglected in future, as this issue was the subject of complaints to him at present from one resident on the site.

Councillor Redfern said she hoped that what the Council aimed to achieve with this development would be a great improvement on the existing accommodation and the appearance of the area.

Councillor Salmon asked about the views of residents regarding moving off site during the works. The Housing Enabling and Development Officer said residents would not need to move off the site, as the works would be phased.

Councillor Dean asked about the outcome of the closure of Fullers Almshouses regarding replacement of accommodation. Officers reported that the money from the sale was to be reinvested in social housing within the district. However, the Mead Court scheme did not require external funding, as the scheme was included in the HRA business plan.

Regarding the timescale for the development to proceed, the next step would be an application for planning permission in the Spring. It was the aim to complete Phase 1 by this time next year, depending on the result of searches.

In reply to a question from Councillor Dean, it was confirmed that the number of people for whom accommodation could be provided in the new development would be 76, more than twice as many as at present.

The Assistant Director Housing and Environmental Services said she intended to write to residents to ensure they were aware that a common room would not be re-provided, and that officers would look at transport options for residents to attend the Day Centre.

Councillor Dean advised that there was a number provided by the Day Centre and Parish Council for "Helpline", which already offered transport for those wishing to visit the Day Centre. It was agreed that this number would be included in the letter to residents.

Councillor Dean asked that the letter should include a reference to the request that Highways should provide a pedestrian crossing on Silver Street.

Councillor Redfern thanked all members of the group for their work on this project, as this was the last meeting of the Task Group. She also thanked the architect, Tony Welland. She said she was aware the Housing Enabling and Development Officer would shortly be leaving the Council to start a new job, and thanked her for her excellent work as the lead officer of the group, and wished her well for the future.

The meeting ended at 5pm.