

Committee:	Cabinet	Date:	9th September 2020
Title:	Council House Development Sites		
Report Author:	Roz Millership – Assistant Director for Housing, Health and Communities rmillerhsip@uttlesford.gov.uk	Key decision:	No
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Lees, Portfolio Holder for Housing		

Summary

1. This report provides Cabinet with detail relating to the development of various sites across the District.
2. These sites have been identified as having potential for the development of council owned homes, as part of the council's on-going development programme.

Recommendations

3. That Cabinet approves this report and agrees that these identified sites and other suitable sites out of those currently being investigated, are progressed through the planning application stage.

Financial Implications

4. The indicative costs for the developments have been estimated by our consultant Quantity Surveyor. These costs are currently estimates which will be updated as further detailed information becomes available. They do, however, take account of known site constraints and prevailing market conditions. The final cost will only be known following the tender process for the selection of a building contractor.
5. Should planning permission be gained a separate business case for each development will be brought to Cabinet for formal approval at the appropriate time.

Background Papers

6. 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.

[Housing Strategy 2016 – 2021](#)

[HRA Business Plan 2016 – 2046](#)

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Communication/Consultation	Existing tenants, local residents, Parish and Town Councils and external agencies
Community Safety	Appropriate precautions would be taken during works
Equalities	Equality and diversity is a key issue for the Council with regards to housing provision
Health and Safety	During the management of the project all risks will be constantly reviewed, revised and managed
Human Rights/Legal Implications	Legal team have been consulted
Sustainability	An opportunity to construct new thermally efficient homes for people in housing need.
Ward-specific impacts	Various
Workforce/Workplace	There are sufficient resources in the housing team to manage the development projects identified in this report

Situation

8. Officers have been working on developing a new 3 year development programme with an objective of achieving 200 properties over this period.
9. Opportunities have been identified to source and deliver new housing as follows:
 - Using existing council owned sites within the district – where we own land such as garage sites that have potential to be developed
 - The acquisition of land if economically viable
 - The acquisition of Rural Exceptions Sites if economically viable
 - The acquisition of s106 opportunities with developers and housebuilders in partnership with our registered provider partners
 - The acquisition of existing dwellings that would provide a value for money option and meet an identified need.

HRA Business Plan

10. The Council's HRA Business Plan is a key document in relation to the development and redevelopment of the housing stock. It considers the financial viability of investment in new homes and the numbers to be developed as well as their locations in the short to medium term. The plan is currently being updated to include new borrowing opportunities.

11. To ensure that the Council can continue to fund the development of Council housing it is important that each scheme identified has been properly assessed for viability. There must be an acceptable relationship between the cost of delivering the housing, taking all costs into account, and the rental income that will be received. It is necessary to ensure that the impact of each scheme on the HRA Business Plan is calculated and properly understood. The cumulative effect of the development programme must be affordable in the context of the wider HRA Business Plan.
12. Only schemes that are viable will be progressed and a business case will be brought to Cabinet for consideration.

Development Opportunities

13. Development provides good value for money if it takes place on Council owned land. As such it is important to explore the potential of the Council's land holdings to contribute towards improving the supply of new Council housing.
14. As well as sites that are already being progressed, as detailed in the development programme, the sites below have been identified as development opportunities on council owned land:
 15. **Parkside, Saffron Walden** - This site is currently a Sheltered Housing Scheme, which was identified in the Sheltered Housing Review as providing accommodation that does not conform to modern standards. It has therefore been identified for redevelopment. The existing tenants have been consulted, and suitable alternative accommodation will be identified for them all. Having looked at refurbishment or demolition and re-build, it has been concluded that the later is the better option. Therefore the proposal is to demolish the existing building to provide a new self-contained independent living development of self contained apartments, for residents aged 60 years old and over. Architects have been appointed and are consulting with Planners through a Pre-Planning Application. The current proposal is to construct 21 new apartments on the site, with a mixture of 1 and 2 bedrooms, and also including 2 wheelchair standard flats. The current budget estimate is £3.5 million, and this will be continually reviewed as our proposal for the site is developed further.
 16. **Gold Close, Elsenham** - This site is a small parking area at the above location. It is under-utilised as a parking area because the properties in that locality have their own in curtilage parking provision and some also have garages. Residents were notified regarding the closure of the parking area and it has been closed off since February 2020. The proposal for the site is to construct a 3 bedroom fully wheelchair compliant bungalow for an identified family in housing need. The bungalow has been designed in partnership with the family and their Occupational Therapist to ensure that it meets their requirements now and into the future. On this basis, a Planning Application has been submitted. The construction estimate for the property is £220,000.

17. **Auton Croft, Saffron Walden** - This site is an area of open space in the ownership of UDC. It is accessed via the affordable housing development at Auton Croft. Architects have been appointed and planning colleagues have been consulted via a Pre-Planning Application. Planners are supportive of the development of this site, and plans have been developed to construct 14 new dwellings. The homes will consist of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom houses, and a 2 bedroom wheelchair compliant bungalow. The homes will be heated by Air Source Heat pumps and PV panels will be provided on the roofs where appropriate. The current estimated build cost is £2.1 million.
18. **White Roding** - This Council owned site is an area of disused open space on an existing Council House development. Architects have yet to be appointed to progress this site, but we estimate that it has capacity to deliver up to 12 new rented Council homes. At this stage, we have not undertaken a cost estimate, but subject to site constraints and any abnormal costs, we are budgeting the build cost to be in the region of £2 million. When progressing the site, the necessary surveys will be undertaken, and we will consult with planning colleagues and all local stakeholders.
19. **Alexia House, Great Dunmow** - As with Parkside above, this is a Council owned sheltered housing complex that was identified in the Sheltered Housing Review as not conforming to modern standards. The proposal is to demolish the existing building to provide new self-contained apartments for older people.. The existing tenants have been consulted, and suitable alternative accommodation will be identified for them all. We have yet to instruct an architect for this site, but anticipate, subject to constraints, that it could provide 16 new homes. A budget estimate of £2.5 million has been proposed for this scheme.
20. **Takeley** - The Day Centre in Takeley, owned by the council's General Fund, is now closed as the building is no longer fit for purpose. The proposal under investigation is to develop the site occupied by the day centre, along with an adjacent area of land currently occupied by garages that are in need of demolition due to their poor condition. It is thought that up to 8 council rented homes could be delivered on this site. There is another parking area with garages in the vicinity of this site, so there is also the possibility to extend this row of garages, to replace some of those being demolished. This would have the added benefit of resolving an area that is subject to fly tipping of abandoned cars etc.

Unidentified Sites

21. The Council must consider acquiring land on the open market or by negotiation where practical in order to ensure that homes can be provided where they are needed as our existing land holdings are limited.
22. Housing Officers are currently working with their strategic planning colleagues to identify land already earmarked for potential housing development or stalled sites, that could provide further development opportunities for the

HRA. The intention is to identify 2/3 sites that would bring the number of new council rented homes identified for development by the HRA over the next 3 years, to approximately 200 properties. Further detail of these sites will be brought before members as they are identified.

Development Programme:

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Location	Number of Properties
Great Chesterford	13
The Moors, Little Dunmow	16
Thaxted Road, Saffron Walden	14
Walden Place, Saffron Walden	3 (New)
Parkside, Saffron Walden	21
Alexia House, Great Dunmow	16
Gold Close, Elsenham	1
White Roding	12
Auton Croft, Saffron Walden	14
South Road, Takeley	8
S106 site – currently negotiating with a developer	14
Unidentified sites	71
Total	200

Risk Analysis

24.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Insufficient sites identified for development	2	2	Look at all options available to ensure delivery target is met

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.