

Committee: Housing Board
Date: 2 November 2021
Title: Development Programme
Officer: Judith Snares Housing Strategy and
Operations Manager

Summary

1. This report provides the Housing Board with an update on the proposed development by the HRA across the District.

Recommendations

2. That the Housing Board:
 - i. Notes the contents of this report
 - ii. Makes a recommendation to Cabinet regarding the possible sale of 5 development plots on garden reduction land
 - iii. Agree a position on the way forward with the currently deferred planning application on Auton Croft, Saffron Walden.
 - iv. Considers the councils future investment strategy for the delivery of new affordable housing for the HRA

Financial Implications

3. Financial provision for the development of new council owned homes is included within the Housing Revenue Account. The development of these sites will also enable the use of Right to Buy capital receipts. Homes England grant will be sort on future developments where appropriate.
4. If garden reduction plots are sold any proceeds would be used in conjunction with RTB receipts within the development programme.
5. Re-development of Walden Place already has an agreed budget.

Background Papers

6. None

7.

Communication/Consultation	Existing tenants, local residents, Town Council 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 as detailed in report
Workforce/Workplace	There are sufficient resources in the housing team to manage the project

Situation

8. **The Moors, Little Dunmow**

Work is nearing completion on this site which will deliver 8 affordable rented 2 bed houses and 8 social rented 1 bed flats. There has been delay due Covid 19 and supply issues within the construction industry. Handover is anticipated within the next 6 weeks.

9. **Thaxted Road, Saffron Walden**

Work is progressing well on site with handover anticipated Summer 2022. This site will deliver 14 homes.

10. **Batholomew Close, Great Chesterford**

Work is progressing well on site with handover anticipated Summer 2022. The site will deliver 13 new homes including a 3 bed bungalow specifically adapted to meet an identified family's needs.

11. Parkside, Saffron Walden

The site is now empty. Plans are progressing well towards submitting a planning application in the New Year. Survey work is currently being carried out which will form part of that application. Consultation with the Town Council and nearby residents will be undertaken prior to submission. The Architects for this project have developed a scheme of 24 flats for the over 60s with a mixture of 1 and 2 bedrooms, and also including 2 wheelchair standard flats. The current budget estimate is £3.7 million, and this will be continually reviewed as our proposal for the site is firmed up. If planning permission is obtained a report will be taken to Cabinet to agree funding for this project. We will look to obtain some grant funding from Homes England for this scheme with the remainder borrowed through the HRA

12. Gold Close, Elsenham

This site is a small parking area at the above location where we are constructing a 3 bedroom fully wheelchair compliant bungalow for an identified family in housing need. The project is nearing completion and the family should be in situ before Christmas.

13. Auton Croft, Saffron Walden

A planning application for 14 dwellings, consisting of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom houses, and a 2 bedroom wheelchair compliant bungalow was taken to Planning Committee with a recommendation for approval earlier this year. This application received considerable objection from neighbours and Members of the Committee were concerned about the reduction of amenity space. The Committee deferred the application for a site visit. Following the site visit the report was withdrawn to enable officers to consult further with Housing Board Members as to the way forward with this site. The application is still live and needs to either be determined or withdrawn.

14. St Mary's Close, White Roding

This Council owned site is an area of disused open space on an existing Council House development. Following a pre-app with planning officers it became clear that any development proposals for this site would not be supported by planning officers on heritage grounds. It has therefore been decided that there is currently no further work to be done on this site.

15. Alexia House, Great Dunmow

The proposal here is to demolish the existing building to provide new self-contained apartments for the over 60s. There are currently only 2 residents left within the building. Our architects and officers have met with planning for a pre-app meeting and it is anticipated that a full planning application will be submitted in the New Year. The scheme is for 24 apartments, a mixture of 1 and 2 bed including some fully wheelchair accessible units. Surveys are currently being carried out in support of the planning application. If planning

permission is obtained a report will be taken to Cabinet to agree funding for this project. We will look to obtain some grant funding from Homes England for this scheme with the remainder borrowed through the HRA.

16. Walden Place

Planning approval has recently been granted for this scheme and we are now in the process of contractor procurement. A start on site is anticipated in the spring. The scheme will see the detaching of the listed building from the rest of the sheltered scheme and a build of 2 new flats and new communal facilities. The estimated cost for the building works is £2.3 million and funding has already approved for this through the HRA. A report will be brought to Members on the disposal of the listed building in due course.

17. Takeley Day Centre/Garage Site

Architects have been appointed for this scheme which is looking to deliver up to 6 properties. Officers are exploring with our architects the potential to deliver this scheme using Modern Methods of Construction. This would be with the intention of delivering low carbon homes.

18. Garden Reduction Sites

Officers have identified 5 garden reduction sites which have potential as single building plots. Three outline planning applications have been submitted with one of these approved to date. The remaining applications will be considered at Planning Committee in due course. Two further sites are having plans drawn up by architects. These sites could either be sold on the open market and the funds raised used on other projects within the development programme, or developed by the council to deliver new affordable homes using up RTB receipts and HRA borrowing. Building on single plots is obviously not the most economic form of development for the council but it could relieve future pressure on RTB proceeds if some or all of these sites are held back from sale and developed using RTB receipts. If the sites are sold the total proceeds would be anticipated to be in the region of £750k.

19. Unidentified Sites

We have looked at all council landholding and have been unable to identify any other development sites at this juncture. There will be future garden reduction sites identified that have development potential, but these will again only be for single plots. We have worked with Planning colleagues on a project to identify possible development sites that could have potentially delivered a further 70 to 80 council homes, however the call for sites within the local plan process has meant that landowners are more interested in this at the present time. Meaningful future development within the HRA will require considerable investment in order for sites to be purchased off the open market. This could be undertaken by the HRA stand alone but joint ventures would offer better value for money. Schemes could be configured to deliver market housing for sale or private renting as well as affordable housing.

These investment decisions will need to be considered by Members before officers can look to take these matters further.

20. Section 106 Opportunities

The council has made an offer to Barratts Homes for 18 one bedroom apartments on their site in Great Dunmow. This offer has been accepted subject to Board approval by Barratts and Member approval by the Council. Once we hear from Barratts that they wish to proceed with our offer Cabinet approval will be sought to fund this purchase from HRA borrowing. There is no timetable for delivery of these properties at this time.

We continue to look for other Section 106 opportunities.

Risk Analysis

21.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Not achieving planning permission on re-development sites	1 Planners supportive	4 Development not possible	Pre-planning discussions with planners
Underground services identified	2 Investigations to be carried out	3 Diversions possible but cost implications	Investigations to be undertaken at the earliest stage
Further "abnormal costs" identified.	2. Surveys being undertaken	3 Potential cost implications	Contingency already included with cost estimate
Not meeting RTB receipts expenditure as per government agreement	3 Failure to achieve planning approval	3 RTB proceeds would have to be returned to government with interest	Investment strategy agreed by council to enable purchase of market sites. Single plot sites held back for council redevolment

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.