

**Report by the Head of Housing Need and Environmental Health**

**Development of Council-owned land for affordable housing: Proposals for land at Williams Road**

**1.0 Summary**

- 1.1 This report is to update Members on the latest developments regarding the proposals for the area of land between 86 & 88 Williams Road and to seek a decision on the disposal, or not, of the area of land in question.
- 1.2 The proposal for the land is to dispose to a Registered Social Landlord partner to develop the site for affordable rented family homes, subject to planning permission.

**2.0 Recommendation**

- 2.1 In the light of opposition to the scheme from local residents the Committee is recommended to:
- i) Consider whether the land at Williams Road be disposed of for a nominal sum to Worthing Homes for the purposes of affordable housing.

**3.0 Background**

- 3.1 Members will be aware that in April 2006 the Development and Scrutiny Committee proposed that some Council-owned land assets could be disposed of for development. It was resolved to refer the matter to this Committee for a decision in June 2006, where the general principle was agreed with reference to a number of sites, one of which was Williams Road.
- 3.2 In January 2007, this Committee considered a report from Development and Scrutiny Committee on affordable housing issues, which contained a recommendation of a general principle that land could be disposed of for development to ensure affordable housing. It also resolved that 'the disposal of the land at Williams Road at low or nil cost to a partner Registered Social Landlord (RSL) for the purposes of affordable housing be agreed in principle'.
- 3.3 Since the above decision was made there has been significant opposition to the scheme from local residents which included a petition from over 100 households surrounding the area opposing the development being presented to the Policy & Strategy Committee on 16 October 2007.
- 3.4 In response to the opposition voiced against the proposal, Members resolved at the Housing & Central Services Committee 20 November that:
- (i) a site visit to the land at Williams Road be arranged for Members of the Committee;

- (ii) a meeting be arranged for Members of the Committee to hear the views of local residents regarding the proposal for the land at Williams Road

3.5 The site visit occurred on 24<sup>th</sup> January and the meeting with local residents took place at Milward Court on 5<sup>th</sup> February at which the Chair and Vice Chair of the Housing & Central Services Committee were present. The meeting was independently chaired by the chair of the Southlanders community group, and the purpose was to give residents the opportunity and time to advise the officers and members present of their views.

3.6 Approximately 30 residents attended the meeting who were unanimous and passionate in their opposition to the proposal to develop the land. Their reasons for opposing the proposal are summarised below:

- (i) the proposed development would take away well used green space for children to play on, and the ability to see through to the formal play area to the rear;
- (ii) the space is utilised by children, families and older people especially in the spring and summer months;
- (iii) it is an ideal area for younger children as they are often 'pushed off' the play area next to the proposed site by older children;
- (iv) the proposal could lead to an increase in anti-social behaviour;
- (v) the creation of fenced footpaths around the proposed new development would create general issues of personal safety and fear of crime;
- (vi) the proposed development would lead to an increase in traffic congestion and parking issues;
- (vii) it was suggested that there are more appropriate sites in the District for development;
- (viii) despite being listed in the Urban Housing Potential Study the proposed site does not appear in any searches specific to Williams Road, which may have had a bearing when people were buying property in the area.

#### **4.0 Next steps**

4.1 Members are asked to consider whether they wish to dispose of this site for the development of affordable housing. The need for more affordable housing in the district, particularly for families, has been well rehearsed elsewhere, and is not repeated here in detail. While this site is relatively small, it does provide the opportunity to control what size and type of home (subject to planning permission) goes on it, as it is in the Council's ownership now.

4.2 On the other hand, local residents have made some effective points about the current use of the land and its apparent value to the local community as an informal recreational area, and the perceived safety risks that building on it may engender. If members are minded to approve the disposal of the land for development, then the planning process will be the next stage, at which further local opposition can be expected.

4.3 The issue is clearly to balance the overall housing needs of families in the district against the desire of the residents to preserve the green space from development, and the knowledge that other residents have in the past and may in the future take the same view on other areas of Council-owned land.

## **Local Government Act 1972**

### **Background Papers:**

Reports to Housing and Central Services Committee, 20<sup>th</sup> November 2007, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2007, and 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2006

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## **Appendix**

### **1.0 Council Priority**

- 1.1 Revitalise Adur: Seek to identify sites and opportunities to increase housing provision, including affordable housing.

### **2.0 Specific Targets**

- 2.1 **(A)** Address the housing needs of all residents ensuring the provision of an adequate housing supply to meet the needs of people of Adur;

**(B)** Housing Strategy 2005-10

Key priority 1: balancing the local housing market; exploit development opportunities in the district and help meet government targets

Key priority 2: meeting affordable housing need; maximise affordable housing across a range of tenures

### **3.0 Sustainability Issues**

- 3.1 Matter considered and no issues identified

### **4.0 Equality Issues**

- 4.1 Matter considered and no issues identified

### **5.0 Community Safety issues (Section 17)**

- 5.1 Matter considered and no issues identified

### **6.0 Human Rights Issues**

- 6.1 Matter considered and no issues identified

### **7.0 Financial Implications**

- 7.1 The release of a capital receipt as discussed in 3.9 of the previous report

### **8.0 Legal Implications**

- 8.1 Disposal of Council land under market value is subject to the DCLG consent regime

### **9.0 Consultations**

- 9.1 Local residents affected by the proposals have been kept informed.

### **10.0 Risk assessment**

- 10.1 There is a risk that the opposition to such a scheme will continue and that Planning Committee might refuse permission for the development.

## **11.0 Health & Safety Issues**

11.1 Matter considered and no issues identified

## **12.0 Procurement Strategy**

12.1 Matter considered and no issues identified

## **13.0 Partnership working**

13.1 The Williams Road proposals build on existing partnerships working with housing association partners and the Housing Corporation over the development of affordable housing for local people.