

Date of Meeting	15/03/2007
Title of Report	Request for Affordable Housing Grant (AHG) to Provide Affordable Housing – Westcroft, Chippenham
Portfolio	Housing
Link to Corporate Priorities	Housing
Key Decision	Yes - The decision will result in the Council requiring expenditure or making savings which amount to over £50,000
Executive Workplan Ref	<u>B303</u>
Public Report	Yes

Summary of Report

This report seeks Members' authorisation for an allocation of £127,000 AHG to enable Westlea Housing Association to provide 9 units of affordable rented housing at Westcroft, Chippenham. The scheme will provide 2 wheelchair bungalows for disabled people, 1 wheelchair bungalow for spinal injury temporary accommodation (with Aspire – a spinal injury rehabilitation charity) and 6 units of supported housing for people with learning difficulties.

Officer Recommendations

- 1. Members authorise the commitment of Affordable Housing Grant of £127,000 to enable the provision of 9 new affordable homes by Westlea Housing Association at Westcroft, Chippenham**
- 2. Members delegate authority to the Legal Services Team Leader to agree a nominations agreement with Westlea Housing Association.**

Other than those implications agreed with the relevant Officers and referred to below, there are no other implications associated with this report.

Financial Implications	Legal Implications	Community & Environmental Implications	Human Resources Implications	Equality & Diversity Implications
YES	YES	YES	NONE	YES

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The report seeks Member's approval for allocation of £127,000 of Affordable Housing Grant to provide 9 homes for affordable rent, for older people, spinal injury rehabilitation and people with learning disabilities, at Westcroft in Chippenham.

2. Options and Options Appraisal

- 2.1 To approve the allocation of the requested AHG to assist Westlea Housing Association in providing 9 new affordable homes for rent.
- 2.2 Refusing the request for AHG could result in the 9 new affordable homes not being provided.

3. Background Information

- 3.1 Westlea Housing Association is one of the Council's five affordable housing development partners.
- 3.2 Westcroft, Chippenham is partly an existing garage area owned by NWDC (managed by Westlea Housing Association for NWDC). As part of the Small Sites Project, this site has been identified as suitable for disposal. Part of the site is also owned by Westlea Housing Association, who have obtained detailed planning permission to develop the whole area.
- 3.3 The units provided will comprise 2 x 2 bed bungalows for disabled people, 1 x 2 bed bungalow for spinal injury temporary accommodation and 6 x 1 bed flats for people with learning difficulties (aged o.
- 3.4 The scheme will achieve the following: Scheme Development Standards, Lifetime Homes requirements, Secured by Design Certification, Wheelchair Accessible standards on bungalows and Ecohomes – very good.
- 3.5 The scheme will be jointly funded with the Housing Corporation on a 50:50 basis. The Council's land has been initially valued at £126,000 (taking into account the costs of dealing with contamination on site). A verbal update to confirm the formal valuation of the site will be given at the meeting.
- 3.6 The total scheme costs for the 9 units is £1.404m requiring subsidy of £506,000. The subsidy will be divided as follows; NWDC Land at nil value (£126,000) and affordable housing grant £127,000 plus Housing Corporation grant £253,000. The average public subsidy per unit is £56,222, which represents good value for money taking into account the client groups involved (learning difficulties and physical disabilities). The average public subsidy per affordable rented unit from the Housing Corporation National Affordable Housing Programme 2006-08 for the South West Allocations was £52,837.
- 3.7 Chippenham is an area of particularly high need. As at 2nd January 2007, there were 592 households on the Housing Needs Register with Chippenham as their first choice and the District Wide Housing Needs Survey 2005 indicated a net need for 326 new affordable homes in Chippenham per annum for the next five years.

- 3.8 Wiltshire Social Services and Supporting People identified housing and support needs for people with learning difficulties in the "Accommodation Needs Report" and "Service Users Consultation Feedback" April 2005. There are 300 people with learning difficulties living in the district. The spinal injury temporary accommodation will be managed by Aspire, a national charity supporting people with spinal injuries to be rehabilitated into the community. The use of this bungalow will be closely monitored and if it is found not to be adequately utilised will be brought back into the Westlea general stock and let to an older tenant. Anecdotal evidence indicates that this type of accommodation is required locally to assist rehabilitating spinal injury patients.
- 3.6 Westlea Housing Association has agreed to enter into a nominations agreement to enable the Council to nominate to all of the properties on first let and 75% of re-lets thereafter.

4. Financial Implications

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4.1 The approved budget for 2006/07 for new affordable housing provision is £2m plus £63,241 brought forward from prior years making a total available of £2,063,241.

4.2 Schemes totalling £3,179,745, identified for payment during 2006 - 2009, are shown on Appendix 1 of which £2,297,745 has previously been approved by Members. Unapproved schemes total £887,000 including £127,000 for Westcroft, the subject of this report.

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4.3 Members have previously agreed that Officers could enter into negotiations with RSLs for schemes which could be awarded grant funding in future years as these necessitate long lead times.

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5. Legal Implications

5.1 Local Authorities have powers under s22 (3) of the Housing Act 1996 to make grants to Registered Social Landlords.

6. Community and Environmental Implications

6.1 The provision of 2 new affordable wheelchair homes for disabled people, 1 for spinal injury rehabilitation and 6 new affordable homes for people with learning disabilities in Chippenham with nomination rights for the Council is a valuable contribution towards meeting the high levels of housing need identified in North Wiltshire and the specific need for supported accommodation for people with learning difficulties and physical disability.

7. Equality and Diversity Implications

7.1 The provision of affordable housing helps to enable all residents in the district to have the opportunity to meet their housing needs locally.

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8. Risk Analysis

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8.1 This is considered to be a low risk. Westlea Housing Association is a long-standing partner of North Wiltshire District Council and is requesting funding at a reasonable level for a specific scheme. The site at Westcroft has planning permission and is owned by Westlea and NWDC, therefore the scheme is deliverable.

8.2 It is not considered that this scheme has significant strategic, policy or operational implications and therefore a risk assessment has not been completed.

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Appendices:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appendix 1: Anticipated cash-flow 2005-09
Background Documents Used in the Preparation of this Report:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• District Wide Housing Needs Survey 2005• Application for Capital Funding Pro-Forma• Housing Needs Register Report Summary – First Choice at 03/07/2006

Previous Decisions Connected with this Report

Report	Committee & Date	Minute Reference
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• None		