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Report

Subject : Proposed eco-homes affordable housing development
Report to : The Cabinet
Date : Wednesday 10 October 2007
Author : Andrew Reynolds, Head of Strategic Housing Services
Cabinet Member for Housing: Councillor Ian Tomes

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report considers the opportunity for the development of an eco-homes affordable housing project at Lower Road/Cherry Orchard Lane, Churchfields, Salisbury. Consideration is required as to the suitability and appropriateness of the site and for Cabinet to authorise a more detailed feasibility.

2. Background

- 2.1 Cabinet is keen to promote as one of its key priorities the development of an eco-homes affordable housing project. By this it means a well designed with a dynamic approach to the use of spaces and materials, attractive place to live, with good services and facilities and which connects well to the City.

3. Environmental considerations

- 3.1 The council wishes to promote the use of the Code for Sustainable Homes and in particular the outcomes it is looking for include:
- Incorporate renewable energy systems such that, for homes to reach zero carbon standards.
 - Demonstrate excellence in one particular aspect of environmental sustainability – whether technological (such as more advanced renewable and energy efficiency technologies, sustainable urban drainage or wastewater treatment or grey water recycling, waste management systems) or through adoption of innovative approaches to embedding sustainable behaviours among the community.
 - Planned in a way which supports low carbon living and, in particular, minimizes carbon emissions from transport.
 - Incorporate high standards of water efficiency, particularly in areas of the country defined as severely water stressed.
 - Incorporate environmentally sustainable approaches to managing waste, wastewater, drainage and flooding, in line with PPS25: Development and Flood Risk (e.g. Sustainable Urban Drainage Svstems).



4. Potential sites

4.1 There are two possibilities in seeking to deliver this type of project, working with a private landowner or giving consideration to allocating one of the council owned sites.

4.2 An examination of the private sector and other public sector sites indicates that it will be both time consuming and challenging to work with a third party. In addition there are currently no ideal sites that would lend themselves to a swift process.

4.3 Alternatively, the council has significant land holdings however, much of it is located in rural settlements, is currently being used or is not of a sufficient size to be sustainable for this type of project. However, one site has been identified that is capable of delivering this type of project. With ownership resting with the council, it can control and determine the exact requirements of the scheme. A more detailed assessment is discussed below.

4.4 Lower Road/Cherry Orchard Lane, Churchfields, Salisbury

4.4.1 Extending to 1.8 hectares (Appendix A), formally this site accommodated a number of engine sheds but now identified in the Local Plan as one of two sites for a freight/passenger interchange facility. As this is no longer being pursued the site has the opportunity of an alternative commercial or residential use. The Salisbury Vision, now being consulted upon, proposes that the area of Churchfields becomes residential. This site provides the council with an opportunity to set an example of the type of future development for the area. Cabinet should be aware that the council has also received expressions of interest from other parties for both residential and commercial uses.

4.4.2 Constraints

4.4.3 The land will require a fairly significant regrading exercise in order to achieve acceptable accesses and remediation of any contamination.

5. Delivering the project

5.1 Subject to Cabinet approving this site, options exist in terms of delivery with each having specific timescales attached to them. To achieve the aims, best value and consideration for this project then full market testing will be required. This will take longer but should deliver the project. Alternatively the council could invite one of its Registered Social Landlord partners to support the project and to primarily be a development partner. This process should be quicker but the council may not get the full benefit of testing the market.

5.2 It is proposed that Forward Planning produce a Concept Statement that sets out the urban design principles and the council's affordable housing and environmental requirements. This would then form part of the disposal or partnering requirements.

5.3 A more detailed assessment for disposal or partnering will be produced for Cabinet to consider further.

6. Examples of best practice

6.1 There is an array of good practice for the council to learn from. Recently, in Andover, Testway Housing (which is part of the Aster Housing Group and a preferred partner) has developed an exciting project that meets many of the council's aims. Appendix 2 provides further details on this example.

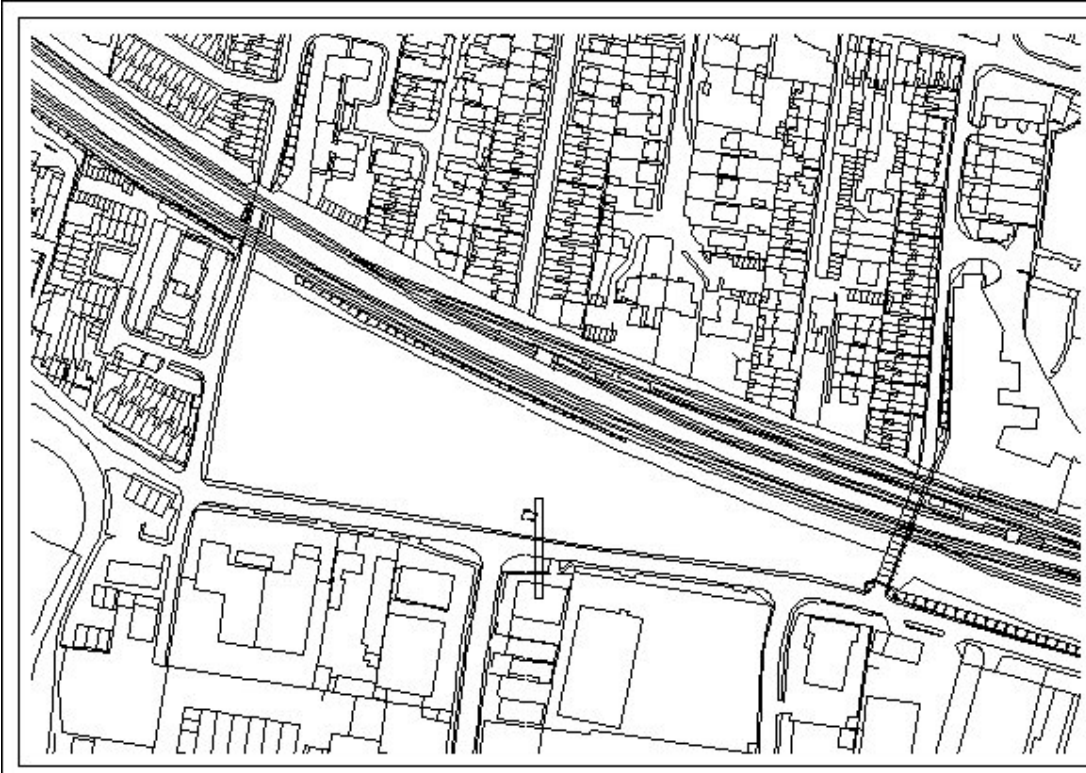
Recommendation

Cabinet are asked to:

1. Determine in principle if the site at Lower Road/Cherry Orchard Lane, Churchfields, is a suitable site and if having made that determination to authorise Officers to prepare a Concept Plan and financial appraisal for further consideration by Cabinet.
2. Receive a further report on the disposal process following consultation with Wiltshire County Council.

Implications

Financial:	None contained in this report.
Legal:	<p>The council is required by section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 to dispose of land on the best terms reasonably obtainable unless it receives the Secretary of State's consent. This would normally mean disposal on the open market rather than to a selected buyer. However independent valuation advice will be obtained. Disposal to a RSL for affordable housing meets one of the council's priorities. In any event the General Disposal Consent [England] 2003 enables the council to dispose of land for the social economic or environmental well being of an area at an undervalue provided that the undervalue does not exceed £2M. Disposal is believed to comply with State Aid rules.</p> <p>As and when the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill becomes law it will be open to the Secretary of State to issue a direction that the Council may not dispose of land worth more than £100,000 in aggregate backdated to 01.01.2007 without the consent of a designated person [likely to be the transition authority]. Any non consensual disposal will not be enforceable against the new Wiltshire authority.</p> <p>Members of Cabinet who are members of any planning committee that will consider any application for planning permission will need to consider whether they excuse themselves from participating in the Cabinet decision or subsequently in any planning decision.</p>
Human Rights:	Article 8 (the right to respect for private and family life) does not confer the right to a home. Any loss of value to neighbouring landowners caused by any development would not of itself be a basis for alleging any article 8 (right to respect for private life) or First Protocol Article 1 (protection of property) breaches.
Personnel:	None in respect of this report
Community Safety:	None in respect of this report
Environmental:	Contained in the report
Council's Core Values	Promoting excellent service, supporting the disadvantaged, being fair and equitable, communicating with the public, wanting to be an open, learning council and a willing partner.
Wards affected:	
Consultation undertaken	Internal only



TESTWAY DEVELOPMENT - Hockney Green, Andover

Hockney Green, Artists Way, Andover

Architect: Bill Dunstar Architects - ZEDfactory Ltd.
Contractor: Feltham Construction Ltd.
Employer's agent: Fry Binks Partnership Ltd.

This development comprises 17 generously sized properties that are designed to reduce energy consumption for the life of the building, therefore cutting down on carbon dioxide emissions.



In order to help local families onto the property ladder, four of the properties will be shared ownership; two x two bed houses and two x three bed houses. The properties are valued at £180,000 and £210,000 respectively, however customers will only need to raise a mortgage on 50% of this, whilst paying Testway Housing rent on the outstanding equity at £51.91 and £60.57 respectively a week.

The houses have many features to them, ranging from the internal balcony located within the sunspace, through to the energy saving elements of the building.

The benefits to the residents will be immediately recognisable, owing to the low heating bill. There is no gas to the properties, as heating is provided by solar panels, with back up from the wood pellet boiler. This boiler is big enough to cater for all 17 properties, residents are charged on how much additional heat they demand from the boiler, over and above that generated for free from their solar panels.

Lower heating bills will be achieved by a series of features that are different from other traditional homes, such as:

Solar panels

The water will be heated by the solar panels on the south facing roofs. On overcast days the water will be heated by a wood pellet communal boiler and backed up by an immersion heater.

Wood pellet boiler

The boiler is alongside the flats; this will come on automatically if there is not enough heat provided by the solar panels. This boiler will be linked to all the homes on the site, and meters will monitor how much every property uses.

Sun spaces

The homes are designed to require as little heat input as possible. All homes have a sun space the height of the building, similar to a conservatory, with a wall of glazing separating it from the outside. This traps the heat from the sun in the winter and creates an extra area, where residents can open doors into the other rooms. In the summer, this space may become hot so windows are available to open.

Heat store

The building uses concrete floors and ceiling, together with 150mm dense concrete blocks for the walls, heat is absorbed by the structure, so a large change in outside temperature will not have the same effect internally; similar to the effect when entering a church in the summer, when inside it is cooler.

Thermal insulation, the walls consist 150mm concrete block, (usually 100mm), with a 300mm filled cavity (over three times thicker than normal).

Radiators

Radiators are located in the lounge and hallway, with a heated towel rail in the bathroom. The radiators are provided as a back up, in severe weather conditions, they are fed from the wood pellet boiler.

Ventilation

Ventilation is achieved from the wind cowls located on the roof, these turn according to the wind direction, as the wind passes around the cowl it produces a negative pressure, which pulls stale air from the building, replacing it with fresh air. This arrangement is called 'passive ventilation', as it does not require any electricity to run it, it also reduces heat loss. The properties also have windows that open, if needed.

The development has low energy light fittings, helping to reduce electric bills and with bulbs that last several times longer than traditional light bulbs.

Waterbutts are provided to store rainwater, which can then be used for garden purposes.