

9. Area North – Affordable Housing Programme – update report

Strategic Director: Rina Singh, Place and Performance
Assistant Director: Martin Woods, Communities
Service Manager: Charlotte Jones, Area Development Manager (North)
Lead Officer: Charlotte Jones, Area Development Manager (North)
Contact Details: charlotte.jones@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01458) 257401

Purpose of the Report

To provide an update on the progress of each scheme within the Affordable Housing programme in Area North.

To provide some background information on differing models for housing tenure and ownership of affordable housing to support a later discussion.

The Area Development Manager (Charlotte Jones) and Development Manager (David Norris) will present the report. If any further information is required prior to committee please contact Debbie.haines@southsomerset.gov.uk 01458-257402

Recommendations

- (1) Note and comment on the report.
- (2) Note background information in Appendix B of this report, and the planned item to discuss different models for affordable housing schemes for June 2010, suggesting key questions for discussion.
- (3) Note that a number of larger schemes include further community benefits other than affordable housing within the section 106 agreement.

Background to this report

Increased provision of affordable homes in South Somerset remains a high priority, as evidence by the adopted Sustainable Community Strategy, SSDC Corporate Plan and the Somerset Local Area Agreement. Local consultation frequently refers to the need to increase the supply of affordable homes for local people.

The Area Committee endorsed the provision of affordable homes as its highest priority and SSDC Councillors have allocated £15,000 from the area reserves to specifically to support the progress of small-scale schemes, which address local housing needs in smaller villages. To date, where progress has been possible, this has been largely maintained from in-house resources, allowing time to fully consider resource requirements.

The Area Development Manager, Development Manager and Corporate Housing Strategy Manager have worked together to improve performance management of the current programme, this has included the establishment of an officer working group with a district wide remit for affordable housing work in rural areas. There are also a series of

sometimes complex relationships distinctive to each scheme between the Registered Social Landlord, landowner, town and parish councils and, of course, respondents to housing needs surveys.

The Area North Affordable Housing Programme

The current programme is attached in **Appendix A**. This includes schemes in progress as part of a major development (35% of new build), RSL redevelopment schemes to increase units for rent / buy and / or refurbish existing stock, and small-scale schemes based on 100% of dwellings for local people in perpetuity.

Recent activity has included:

- Review of local needs surveys with Ash and Long Sutton parish working groups and site assessments – with next steps planned.
- Review of prior work to assess sites in Norton-sub-Hamdon, with RSL and parish council.
- Progress of landowner negotiations and detailed scheme design in Long Load.
- Review of alternative sites in Compton Dundon – site assessment underway.
- Houses let through Choice Based Lettings at Old Kelways (Hastoe).
- Redevelopment underway at Curry Rivel – Westfield, Eastover – Langport and Ilton – Copse Lane (Yarlington).
- Planning application under consideration – South Petherton
- Potential sites from assessment of land in public ownership reviewed and considered by Strategic Housing and RSLs project.

Planned / desirable activity in next 2-4 months includes:

Area North

- Landowner / RSL discussions in Long Sutton, Ash and Compton Dundon with regard to preferred sites.
- Await outcome of bid for funding in Long Load, and submission of planning application.
- Detailed schemes from developer / RSL in Norton-sub-Hamdon, High Ham, Curry Rivel – Westfield (phase2) – subject to decisions by developer / RSL.
- Further construction at a number of sites

District wide

- Identification of further parishes – district wide – for potential schemes.
- Local Development Framework – Consultation on Core Strategy – Development Management policies.

Capacity for rural housing programme.

In view of the importance to local sustainability, Area North has allocated £15,000 to assist in the progress of small scale schemes, with the priority to be on schemes already under development, or where parishes have already spent time considering affordable housing issues.

So far, the funding has been used to support the cost of housing needs surveys (printing and postage). No further funding has been required to date, progress has been secured through greater levels of involvement from Area Development and the Development

Management team, from within existing budgets and increased communication between all parties involved.

However in future resources are likely to be required to support negotiation with land owners, community engagement or other preparatory work. The main costs of scheme development is undertaken by the RSL.

Existing resources include the role of the Rural Housing Enabler, based at the Community Council for Somerset.

A lead planning officer for small scale schemes has been nominated for each Area. The Area North officer is Clare Alers-Hankey.

Background information on differing forms of ownership and models of affordable housing.

Information on types of affordable schemes, and further details of Community Land Trusts included within **Appendix B**. Please note that a further opportunity to discuss the issues raised will be provided. A representative of Hastoe Housing Association – who is currently working with the Community Land Trust project in Somerset and Dorset (see Appendix), is available for the June meeting.

Financial Implications

None from this report

Corporate Priority Implications

The development and delivery of more affordable housing in Area North contributes directly towards the following key target areas in the Corporate Plan:

- With partners, enable the building of 597 affordable housing units by 2011 (Corporate Plan 3.2; SCS Action 26; LAA - NI 155)
- Increase the net additional homes provided (Corporate Plan 3.3; LAA - NI 154)
- With partners, enable the development of 4 housing schemes in rural communities by 2012 (Corporate Plan 3.4; SCS Action 26.1)

And indirectly towards

- Reduce the number of households living in temporary accommodation (Corporate Plan 3.6; NI 156)

Carbon Emissions 7 Adapting to Climate Change Implications (NI188)

All affordable housing in receipt of public subsidy, whether through the HCA or from the Council, has to achieve the minimum code three rating within the Code for Sustainable Homes.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

All affordable housing let by RSL partners in South Somerset is allocated through Homefinder Somerset, the county-wide Choice Based Lettings system. Homefinder Somerset has been adopted by all five local housing authorities in the County and is fully compliant with the relevant legislation, chiefly the Housing Act 1996, which sets out the prescribed groups to whom 'reasonable preference' must be shown.

Background Papers: Area North Addressing Local Priorities in Area North – Affordable Housing - November 08, Feb and March 09, Sept 09, Jan 10.
