



PORTFOLIO: HOUSING

CABINET – 5 DECEMBER 2001

ALLOCATION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY SOCIAL HOUSING GRANT

SWAYTHLING HOUSING SOCIETY HAZEL FARM, TOTTON

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Policy and Resources Committee agreed that £2,660,000 of Local Authority Social Housing Grant (LASHG) would be allocated to support affordable housing schemes in 2001/2002. As yet £994,649 remains uncommitted to specific projects. Individual projects are considered for funding throughout the year with funding being formally agreed at a point when there is a high degree of certainty that the project is deliverable. In this way both spend and the number of dwellings will be maximised.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to consider a request by Swaythling Housing Society for LASHG to help enable a development of affordable housing at Hazel Farm Totton.

2. Development Proposals

- 2.1 At Planning Development Control Committee on 14 November 2001 planning permission was granted for a total of 235 dwellings at the site, 70 of which have been secured as affordable dwellings by means of a planning agreement. The affordable housing is to be provided by Swaythling, one of the Council's partner registered social landlords (RSLs), who recently provided the affordable dwellings on the earlier phase of the development
- 2.2 The development will take place in 3 phases. Although timescales will be dictated by the private developers involved, it is probable that the first phase of 23 units (20 for rent, 3 for shared ownership) will commence in 2001/2. It is likely the remaining units will commence the following year.

3. Social Housing Grant Requirement

3.1 Swaythling have applied for LASHG totalling £994,677 to help enable the first phase of the development (23 dwellings).

3.2 They have also bid to the Housing Corporation for grant to help enable the remaining 2 phases. A decision will not be made on this bid until the New Year.

4. Considerations

4.1 There are currently over 2100 households on the Joint Housing Register. The proposal would meet an identified housing need and represents good value for money.

4.2 Swaythling have a successful track record in developing and managing affordable housing schemes in the District. They have agreed terms with the developers and a planning agreement has been entered into which guarantees delivery of the affordable dwellings.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 Funding to support the project is available from within existing budgets. LASHG is financed from the District's spending power, with the grant itself refunded by the Housing Corporation.

5.2 It is anticipated that £731,200 will be required in the current year, and the remaining £263,477 will be a commitment against the 2002/03 Social Housing Grant programme. The level of resources for next year will not be known until December. However, assuming the same level of resources are made available to support the programme as in the current year, this commitment can be accommodated.

6. Environmental Implications

6.1 The provision of new homes can have environmental implications, however the local planning authority have taken account of a range of these implications in granting planning permission. It is also important to balance environmental implications with the need to provide homes for people in housing need.

7. Crime and Disorder Implications

7.1 There are no specific crime and disorder implications arising as a result of this report.

8. Consultations

- 8.1 Cllr Greenfield, supports the proposal and emphasises that the LASHG allocation considered in this report relates specifically to 23 units on the next phase of development. This can be a “freestanding” phase and an allocation of LASHG does not commit the Council to further spending on future phases.
- 8.2 Ward members have been consulted in writing. Councillor Harrison has written supporting the proposal.

9. Key Decision

- 9.1 This proposal comes within the definition of a "key decision" in the Council's Constitution, because the expenditure that Cabinet is being asked to approve exceeds £50,000, and also exceeds one-quarter of the entire LASHG budget. However, the proposed decision was not included in the latest forward plan of key decisions, as information that the developers wished to proceed so quickly was not received until after the deadline for the forward plan had passed. In these circumstances, the Monitoring Officer has confirmed that she is satisfied that it is not reasonable to delay making the decision until it can be included in a forward plan. (Inclusion in the next available forward plan would mean it could not be taken before January 2002). As required in legislation and the Council's Constitution, full details of the proposed decision were notified to the Chairman of the Housing, Health and Social Exclusion Review Panel by letter dated 15 November 2001, and a copy of that letter has been available for public inspection ever since.

10. Other Options

- 10.1 LASHG may only be used for the capital funding of affordable housing schemes. For the reasons set out in the Conclusions below, and in the absence of alternative proposals that represent better value for money, it is considered that funding should be allocated.

11. Conclusions

- 11.1 The proposal represents good value for money and would help meet an identified housing need. Given the housing need, the supply of dwellings and the track record of Swaythling the proposal is considered deliverable.

12. Recommendations

- 12.1 That LASHG totalling £994,677 to Swaythling Housing Society to fund 23 units of affordable housing at Hazel Farm, Totton.

Further Information:
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Background Papers:
Hazel Farm Housing
Files: includes exempt

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information.