

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

---

**REPORT TO:** Housing Portfolio Holder 20 January 2009  
**AUTHOR/S:** Corporate Manager – Affordable Homes/ Housing Development  
and Enabling Manager

---

### **Purpose**

1. In June 2006 Cabinet agreed to dispose of land in its ownership to Nene Housing Society (now called Accent Nene) to provide 6 affordable homes to meet housing needs for £100,000.
2. The Portfolio Holder for Housing is asked to revisit this decision, in light of current economic and financial matters relating to this project. A copy of the most recent and up to date valuation is attached for the Portfolio Holders consideration.
3. This is not a key decision because the decision to dispose of the site to Accent Nene has already been agreed to. The purpose of this report is to agree to dispose of the site at a revised valuation.

### **Background**

4. The site in question is at the rear of existing houses located at the junction of Oakington Raad and Rampton Road, Cottenham. In March 2008 the scheme for 6 affordable housing units was granted full planning permission.
5. The potential for affordable housing on this site has been under investigation since 1999. There have been numerous delays in bringing forward this scheme, all of which have been resolved. Most recently, and following advice from Scientific Officer for Contaminated Land at SCDC, the issue of contamination on this site has been found to be minimal and there is no need for any removal of soil from the site from a risk point of view.

### **Considerations**

6. The site now has planning permission, and Accent Nene will shortly be making an application for grant funding to the Housing Corporation through the Continuous Market Engagement Process. This application will be supported by the Housing Strategy and Development Team.
7. The original proposal for the site was for a mix of shared ownership and rented units. However, current market conditions are making it almost impossible for applicants registered with Key Homes East (our HomeBuy Agent) to secure a mortgage. Therefore smaller scale development such as this, will only be successful in the current climate if we are able to offer it all as rented.
8. The Housing Portfolio Holder will be aware that our largest demand for social housing is for rented accommodation. It is prudent that we are able to fill properties with families in housing need, rather than let the homes sit empty, which is likely to be the case should shared ownership be insisted upon for this site.

9. This is not an exceptions site, it therefore does not have to go to households with a local connection to Cottenham. However, in this case Accent Nene have agreed that initial lets to these properties will go to people with a local connection to Cottenham.
10. Accent Nene are willing to pay the revised valuation sum of £50,000 as detailed in John Pockocks letter dated 5<sup>th</sup> November 2008.

### Options

11. Should the Portfolio Holder decide to remain with the original decision made by Cabinet in June 2006, the scheme will become unviable as it will require unrealistic grant rates from the Housing Corporation to make it work. This will not be supported by either the Housing Strategy and Development Team or the Housing Corporation. The site will therefore remain undeveloped.
12. The disposal of the site at £50,000 to Accent Nene represents good value for money as we will secure nomination rights to 6 more affordable rented units in an area where there is high demand.

### Implications

13.	Financial	None
	Legal	None
	Staffing	None
	Risk Management	None
	Equal Opportunities	None

### Consultations

14. Consultations were not necessary for the purpose of this report.

### Effect on Corporate Objectives and Service Priorities

15.	<b>Work in partnership to manage growth to benefit everyone in South Cambridgeshire now and in the future</b>
	This project brings together the work of the District Council, Accent Nene Housing Association, Cottenham Parish Council and the Housing Corporation. This site will deliver six more affordable homes
	<b>Deliver high quality services that represent best value and are accessible to all our community</b>
	Accent Nene will be able to provide a good quality and local housing management service which benefits the local community in Cottenham
	<b>Enhance quality of life and build a sustainable South Cambridgeshire where everyone is proud to live and work</b>
	Good quality, sustainable and affordable housing will be developed on this site

### Conclusions/Summary

16. By making the land available for sale at £50,000 the proposed 6 units affordable housing scheme can proceed, subject the input of grant from the Housing Corporation.
17. By making the land available for £50,000 the Council will be able to directly contribute towards meeting its own affordable housing targets.

### **Recommendations**

18. To approve the disposal of the land at Oakington Road, Cottenham in the Councils Ownership for affordable housing purposes to Accent Nene for the revised valuation of £50,000.

19.

**Background Papers:** the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

Cabinet Report dated 8<sup>th</sup> June 2006

Valuation from Pocock Shaw dated 5<sup>th</sup> November 2008

**Contact Officer:** Schuyler Newstead – Housing Development and Enabling Manager  
Telephone: (01954) 713332