



Report To: Portfolio Holder for Housing
Lead Officer: Director of Housing

16 March 2016

Wilford Furlong/Brickhills Willingham Regeneration Project

Purpose

1. To agree a new project plan and milestones in light of the recent changes to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan.
2. This is not a key decision.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the Portfolio Holder approves the revised phasing and longer term approach to the Wilford Furlong/Brickhills regeneration scheme as specified in Option C

Reasons for Recommendations

4. The original option to progress work on this estate was first published in the August 2013 Forward Plan. A set of recommendations to proceed were agreed by Portfolio Holder in March 2014. This report is being brought forward as a decision because there have been changes affecting the original recommendations which need ratification by Portfolio Holder.
5. As a result of reduced rental revenue for the HRA, a review of the master plan approach to the overall regeneration scheme proposed for Wilford Furlong/Brickhills estate was undertaken in the latter part of 2015. This review has resulted in the Option C recommended in this report.

Background

6. Wilford Furlong and the Brickhills estate were built circa 1970 with some additional homes being provided in the area in the late 1980s.
7. The estate currently comprises 129 properties (plus 1 non-residential communal facility) which include a mixture of property types and sizes. 93 of these properties remain in the ownership of South Cambridgeshire District Council, 62 of which are sheltered bungalows.
8. South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) currently manage 72% of the estate and 50% of this is sheltered accommodation. The estate is expensive in terms of spend per property, per annum on responsive repairs.
9. Analysis of the site by architects Saunders Boston demonstrates that the site is inefficient in terms of layout, has a significant amount of unused hard and soft landscaping, and the estate would lend itself well to infill plot development giving us additional affordable homes in the locality with associated increase in rental revenue.

10. The following options were considered as priorities to move forwards in March 2014
- a) **Infill development possibilities** – there is quite a lot of open space and underused garage forecourts which could accommodate some additional new homes for the Council.
 - b) **Reconfiguring hard & soft landscaping** – there is the opportunity to include some of the underused open space areas into existing residents gardens, and possibly incorporate off road parking in some areas of the estate. The open space currently provides for no equipped area of play, is this something that residents want?
 - c) **Property improvements** – The properties are expensive to maintain in terms of responsive repairs. Capital investment from the Housing Revenue Account over an agreed period could reduce the burden on our day to day repairs budget.
 - d) **Increasing energy efficiency across our stock** – the properties vary in terms of SAP ratings from 52 to 96. The SAP average in the area is 71 and is considered low against our overall existing stock which measures at 73.

11. Housing Portfolio Holder previously approved the following initial steps for the Wilford Furlong/Brickhills Project:

- a) To undertake a more in depth survey of residents about where they live and how they feel about their home and current surroundings.
- b) Re-survey all our 82 tenanted homes for consistent SAP and EPC ratings and asset information Work with Saunders Boston Architects to plan Open Days / Planning for real days to explore options with residents.
- c) Approach the scheme as an infill regeneration and renewal scheme; giving better neighbourhoods to existing residents and added value of additional homes to let.
- d) Explore the option of an additional new build site in the locality.

12. All the above was completed by the housing strategy team in 2015.

13. All of the above assumed an ongoing investment surplus in the 30 year HRA Business Plan to fund out the new build and hard and soft landscaping options based on the 2012 self financing settlement.

14. A key component of the approach taken was to involve the community from the outset, take their ideas and embed them into the project. A number of meetings and an open day event to discuss the initial master plan and survey results were held. This led to a Residents Panel being set up. The Panel has been running since October 2015 and is proving to be a catalyst for community activity such as a communal garden project, aside from its work with the Council on the regeneration scheme.

Considerations

15. Our master plans for the regeneration of the Wilford Furlong/Brickhills estate following detailed consultation with residents includes:

- Promoting energy efficiency on each Council owned dwelling by installing technology such as solar PV, EWI (External Wall Insulation), new Quantum electric heating

systems.

- Hard Landscaping such as: Traffic calming measures, chicanes, speed humps, additional lighting, new footpaths, closing off unsupervised areas, introduction of curtilage parking where possible, new parking areas.
- Soft Landscaping such as: additional planting, raised beds.
- Infill development – using some of the unused space on the estate to build new affordable homes for local people. Potential in space terms for 38 new homes – in planning terms and reflecting upon the overall impact on the estate the expectation was for circa 25 new homes realistically.

16. In July 2015 the Government announced its requirement to reduce all social housing rents by 1% each year for 4 years. This takes away £12m from the HRA in the initial four years and £134m from the overall 30 year HRA Business Plan.

17. This represents the entire investment surplus that was previously earmarked for a programme of new build council housing and an ongoing project of estate regeneration beginning with Wilford Furlong/Brickhills Willingham as a pilot.

18. The changes above prompted a revised approach to the scheme as we no longer have a budget capacity to deliver on the original masterplan.

Options

19. **Option A**

The Council has the option to withdraw from the project completely and do nothing on the estate other than routine works.

The impact on the budget and resources is nil if this option is pursued.

This could have a negative impact on the local community and could damage the reputation of the Council given the longstanding and documented intention to improve the Wilford Furlong/Brickhills estate in Willingham coupled with the longstanding community involvement work to achieve this intended outcome.

20. **Option B**

The Council can postpone any works until we have certainty about the rent levels in year 5.

The impact on the budget and resources is nil if this option is pursued.

This could have a negative impact on the local community and could damage the reputation of the Council given the longstanding and documented intention to improve the Wilford Furlong/Brickhills estate in Willingham coupled with the longstanding community involvement work to achieve this intended outcome.

21. **Option C**

Use existing revenue budgets, and top slice them to achieve 'energy efficiency improvement works' (EEIW) to each of the Council owned properties on the estate.

And

Postpone any work on infill property construction or hard and soft landscaping works until we have explored all potential alternative funding options. Should there be a means by which we can proceed a case for decision on this will be put before Portfolio Holder at a future date

This requires:

Final property surveys by April 2016 to assess suitability for the following works funded in 2016 and beginning by Q2 2016/17:

- New electric Quantum Heating Systems
- New windows and doors
- New bathrooms and kitchens as appropriate

The following works funded in 2017:

- Installation of External Wall Insulation (EWI). Works staggered to allow for budget and to ensure all internal and external works completed before EWI installed.
- Continued roll out of Solar PV installations across the council owned properties on the estate.
 - i) The Council has submitted a bid to the EU for £1.5m EU funding plus £120k for ongoing monitoring, analysis and research to fund the roll out of solar PV onto the estate. We await the result of that Bid. If we are successful this element might commence in 2016.
 - ii) The Council is also pursuing other avenues of funding PV installation rollout. Note: The recent cut to the Feed in Tariff is making solar PV a much less attractive investment option for funders.

22. Option C requires careful communication with residents and the community to ensure the message is clear. Works to properties will begin in 2016 and continue into 2017 with the new build infill option remaining on the table subject to future funding streams. The Council hold weekly surgeries on site and regular newsletter updates. In addition 2 noticeboards have recently been erected; one near the bus stop and one on the communal room.

23. Option C is recommend as the most appropriate way of taking the scheme forwards at this time; in light of the government changes to rental revenue 2016-20 and the consequent impact on the HRA and the Council's ability to fund new build.

Implications

24. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered:

Financial

25. The current financial implications of Option C are already budgeted for within the HRA Business Plan as approved as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy in February 2015.

Legal

26. None.

Staffing

27. Staffing is in place 0.4 FTE as resident liaison officer. Head of Development (New Build) has been lead on project to date. Property Services Manager and team will now lead on roll out of EEIW plan. The Council's Housing Development Agency services may be used in future to scope out models for infill development if funding becomes available.

Risk Management

28. The works to be undertaken are risk assessed in line with normal business practice.

Equality and Diversity

29. No equality and diversity implications to report as far as are known. The consultation to date has taken into account the views of all members of the local community and their particular needs.

Climate Change

30. An impact will be made on individual tenants draw on the grid once all elements of the EEIW programme are in place because they will use less fuel to heat their homes and may also (subject to EU funding bid) be generating their own power.

Consultation responses (including from the Youth Council)

31. Broad consultation with existing residents of the estate across all tenures, but focussing more recently on the council tenants and leaseholders. This consultation has crossed all age groups; however the broad age demographic of the estate is older rather than younger. No direct consultation with the Youth Council to date.

Effect on Strategic Aims

Aim 1: ENGAGEMENT

Work with tenants, parish councils and community groups to sustain successful, vibrant villages

Aim 2: PARTNERSHIPS

Build new council homes to provide affordable accommodation to meet the needs of local communities

Background Papers

None.

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