

HOUSING STRATEGY FOR ARBURY PARK (Updated February 2007)

1. Introduction – Aims and Objectives

A development proposal designed to produce a full sustainability package for the future residents at Arbury Park incorporating:

- **Commitment to Partnership Working.**

We are committed to a consistent approach and policies that will provide an effective service and achieve best value.

- **Innovative Quality Design.**

We aim to provide a scheme developed utilising the principles of partnering, shared objectives and commitment to continuous improvement and customer focus. To facilitate this we will evaluate innovative design solutions where they enhance and improve the quality of life of the tenants/residents and will seek to introduce new methods of procurement and construction where it is practical and economically viable to do so.

- **Affordable Warmth and Environmental Design**

We will produce high quality, energy efficient homes with good internal space standards and low running costs, achieving an Eco Homes rating of at least Very Good, whilst aiming for 'Excellent' wherever possible

- **Local Housing and Maintenance Service**

We will provide a local management presence and invite a high level of resident involvement in setting and agreeing service standards.

- **Community Involvement.**

We will demonstrate our commitment to resident involvement in the development process and future management.

We will explore the potential for the provision of training and employment opportunities for local people.

- **Investing in the Community.**

We will include appropriate levels of community development in our planning, with an agreed annual budget to invest in the community.

- **An Inclusive Community.**

We are committed to developing a community that is accessible both in physical terms and in respect of access to community facilities and services. In

doing so we aim to develop a community that is truly inclusive of the needs and aspirations of people with a disability.

2. Consortium Working

The RSL Consortium is fully committed to the concept of joint working and the agreement of common standards, policies and services at Arbury Park. This approach will help to ensure that our customers receive the best possible level of service within a framework of fairness and consistency.

Our view is one of a common approach with consistent aims, rather than identical policies. By this we mean:

- Policies which are fair and treat tenants/leaseholders of the consortium members in a consistent way.

Our approach does, however, recognise diversity. We are very different organisations with different cultures and histories. We do not feel that our policies and our products should be identical. Arbury Park will be a diverse community and we are prepared to embrace diversity rather than stifle it.

We all share common values and a commitment to high standards of customer service.

Each of us has examples of innovation and good practice, which can benefit the other partners and the Consortium as a whole. We are keen to learn from each other and to move our activities to the highest level of quality. This means that our approach is founded upon current best value principles, in particular the principle of continuous improvement. We aim to work together to ensure that our customers do receive continually improving services. Above all, we want to see our tenants/leaseholders having more choice and more say over the way that services are delivered.

3. Innovation and Quality in Design

The RSL Consortium will adopt a common development strategy to ensure consistency in design, space standards, innovation and continuous improvement. Our aim is to provide a high standard of affordable housing with design quality, materials choice and integrity which avoids obvious tenure distinctions and which will provide an attractive living environment now, and in the future.

The RSL proposals include:

- Integrated Quality Design
- Egan Compliance

Our proposals will be incorporated into a common design brief which will fully comply with the Housing Corporation Scheme Development Standards where public subsidy is involved and in a number of critical areas will exceed the requirements, for example:

- All houses (where public subsidy is involved) will incorporate the full 16 point Joseph Rowntree Lifetime Homes specification.

- Installation of appropriate wiring in order to provide easy access to terrestrial TV, satellite, CCTV and the Internet, improved facilities for tele-working and home working and future access to home shopping and e-mail.
- Adoption of principles from the NHF's "Standards and Quality in Development" where appropriate.

Whilst fully complying with the design issues outlined in the tender document, our design will strive to produce a safe Secured by Design scheme, which will incorporate provision for burglar alarms to houses and entry phones to flats.

SCDC and CCC will endeavour to identify potential tenants for the project to allow such involvement/consultation to take place. If this is not possible, the Parties will agree alternative ways of obtaining customer views and input.

The RSLs have a commitment to ensure low running costs for our residents, as well as to wider environmental sustainability objectives. Therefore we will design the homes to achieve:

- Eco homes rating of "Very Good" as a minimum or equivalent Code for Sustainable Homes rating in accordance with Government specified targets
- Water conservation measures, such as reduced flush toilets and provision of rainwater butts.
- Space for and provision of storage containers to promote recycling of household and garden waste.

Tenants/leaseholders will be able to choose internal fixtures and fittings, colour choices and, where applicable, the internal layouts of dwellings. The RSLs intend to work with partners in the form of suppliers and contractors to produce a range of tenants' choice items. The tenants'/leaseholders' choice menu will include a list of optional extras such as extra kitchen units, additional tiling and lighting, but as a minimum, tenants/leaseholders will be able to choose their kitchen units and worktops, tiling, wall colours and floor coverings to the bathroom, toilet, kitchen and shower rooms from selected ranges.

The RSLs will adopt a 'Partnering' approach to develop Arbury Park. By adopting partnering in the procurement process, the RSLs aim to meet or advance the initiatives set out in the Egan report.

The RSLs are committed to producing a high quality environment for our tenants/leaseholders by using best value principles and adopting innovative and advanced construction methods, to ensure that we develop homes that meet residents' needs and aspirations.

Therefore, the criteria for selecting our development partners will not be based on cost alone, but will include experience, expertise, commitment to partnering and innovation, enthusiasm and quality of service.

A written statement of mutually agreed objectives, known as the Partnering Charter will be produced and the Parties may add further innovations and working practices (including levels of local consultation etc).

Agreeing mutual objectives means that all members of the Partnering team agree to work towards achieving all the objectives, such as completing the scheme on time

and within budget, achieving continuous improvement on cost, time, quality and profitability, and exceeding quality requirements.

The project will be assessed by producing Performance Indicators (PIs) to ensure that there is clear evidence of the effectiveness of the procurement process.

The PIs chosen will be wider than cost, time and quality, but will reflect the mutually agreed objectives established in the partnering agreement. The PIs will include:

- Number of defects during the defects liability period
- Total cost per square metre
- Residents' satisfaction surveys

As a minimum, the RSLs will adopt the construction Best Practice Key Performance Indicators.

Having established the PI's the RSLs, together with their development partners, will aim for continuous improvement and will meet as a Focus Group on a regular planned basis during the course of the project, to explore in an open, frank and objective way how the Egan agenda can improve the scheme PIs. This forum will not seek to apportion blame but will welcome positive input towards the aim of continuous improvement and pro-active problem solving.

Typically subjects for discussion may include:

- Exploring opportunities for elemental prefabrication.
- Exploring opportunities in construction methods and techniques, component selection and programming.
- Exploring opportunities to eliminate waste.
- Development of quality management systems with introduction of "right first time" philosophy.
- Learning from experience on site to avoid repetitive mistakes.

The RSLs, Local Authorities and the development partners, by working together in partnership, will provide consistency, continuity, innovation, value for money and resident satisfaction.

4. Delivering a Quality Housing Service

The RSL Consortium is committed to a consistent approach to housing management. Our proposals are based on:

- Best Value
- Consistent Standards
- Local Service Delivery

- **Tenant Involvement**

The early creation of a balanced and sustainable community at Arbury Park will require the establishment of on site project management facilities some time before the first tenants/leaseholders move in. These facilities will provide bases for the delivery of the following services:

- Housing Management.
- Community Development.
- Tenant/resident Participation.
- Tenants'/residents' Choice (including displays of the various ranges of decorative and building materials and finishes the tenants can select from).
- Meetings with the construction team.
- Meeting facilities for the Wider Consortium.

The RSL Consortium plans to involve tenants/leaseholders/residents in the complete range of housing management, sustainable communities and development issues and will be devising a framework to discuss options for the development of a Tenant/Resident Participation Strategy.

The RSLs will regularly audit and benchmark their housing management practices and procedures, including tenancy conditions and leasehold management, to ensure consistent standards. We are then committed to working together to raise these standards in line with the best practice among the RSLs, following best value principles.

Consistent standards will be achieved and maintained through service level agreements covering delivery of items such as estate management and grass cutting/grounds maintenance and so on. The RSLs will establish a framework for regular co-ordination meetings to review housing management policy and procedures and to implement best practice. Regular tenant/resident surveys will be carried out to monitor service quality and consistency.

5. Building Balanced Communities

This agreement sets the policy and process by which rented and intermediate tenure social housing dwellings provided at Arbury Park.

Preamble

The aim of the RSLs and the Local Authority partners is to create affordable housing which cannot be distinguished from the private dwellings on the site. The way that properties are let/sold will make a crucial contribution to the achievements of this objective. In order to create balanced communities the RSLs, the Councils and the Housing Corporation agree that, through a jointly developed and agreed sustainable lettings policy, we must house, at CNF, a mix of people who are representative of the wider community. This means that we must strive to avoid housing disproportionate numbers of children, or disproportionate numbers of households who face disadvantage; and we must balance the economic activity of tenants to avoid single tenure pockets on the estate.

Policy for letting properties

The sustainable lettings policy will set out who will be housed at Arbury Park and the criteria to be used in selecting prospective nominees. The RSLs will accept nominations at 100% net of transfers.

The Homelessness Act 2002 has enabled open access to Local Authority waiting lists so there should be no restriction on where a tenant can register, however being on a register does not confer any level of priority.

Nominations and allocations to key worker housing will be in accordance with national policy guidelines on access and eligibility criteria.

6. Affordability

The RSL Consortium is committed to providing housing to a range of people who are unable to afford to buy or rent suitable accommodation in the housing market. We will therefore:

- Charge rent restructured target rents from first lettings of social rented accommodation.
- Charge shared owners a rental of no more than 2.75% of unsold equity or a rent that will meet any Housing Corporation funding conditions or local authority policy conditions, whichever is the lower.
- Charge a maximum of 80% of open market rental values for sub-market rented properties.
- Sell proportions of equity that are affordable to target client groups for shared ownership in accordance with the local authority's affordable housing policies.
- Subject to the agreement of the local authorities, give residents the option of lower level of service, and commensurately lower service charges where appropriate.

7. Developing Sustainable Communities

The RSL Consortium is committed to improving the quality of life and the prospects of our residents and the Arbury Park community. This will be done by developing and maintaining a sustainable community and aiding integration between the affordable and private housing.

The RSL proposals include:

- Proactive interaction with residents
- Identifying residents' priorities
- Building the capacity of residents to get involved
- Developing partnerships with compatible local organisations
- Flexibility in approach

The specific schemes to be implemented by the RSL Consortium will reflect the needs of the community. These needs will be established by undertaking a community questionnaire within the sign-up process with all potential tenants/leaseholders/residents.

The following projects, which could be implemented by the RSL Consortium will be highlighted in the community questionnaire:

- Neighbourhood based training and personal development; for example computer skills.
- Access to affordable childcare, including after-school provision and activities during school holidays.
- Community development funds for specific projects, particularly tenant/resident-led schemes.
- Help in setting up groups and activities – after-school clubs, tenants/residents groups, and social groups.
- Youth and outreach work.
- Grants for employment and training initiatives.
- Gardening and DIY schemes for tenants/leaseholders who need them.
- Mobile benefit and financial advice.
- Access to financial services.

In general terms the RSL Consortium will expect to deliver some services directly and others in partnership with a range of organisations. A key factor will be to ensure that residents integrate with the wider community and that services are not necessarily targeted solely at social housing tenants.

To carry out a Sustainable Community Strategy, the RSL Consortium will jointly fund Community Development work provided by BPHA and KSHS in proportion to out-turn stock ownership. The RSL Consortium will also jointly work with the District Council Community Development Teams to provide community development services to the whole community. This holistic approach will be enhanced through consideration of joint funding of community development staff who will work with the new community on CNF.

8. Conclusion

The RSL Consortium is fully committed to the development of Arbury Park and looks forward to implementing its proposals in partnership with the local authorities, the Housing Corporation and the wider community.