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| <p>REVIEW OF REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL'S HOUSING STOCK FURTHER TO COMMUNITY CONSULTATION</p> |
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ROXBORO HOUSE BRIEFING NOTE – 23rd JULY, 2010

Background

The Older Persons' Housing and Support Strategy was approved by Full Council on 18th September, 2009. The implementation of the Action Plan was subject to Community Consultation.

Consultation began at the end of September, 2009 and Officers came to Roxboro House in October, 2009 to update residents on the progress of the Strategy, discuss the 'standards' that schemes were being measured against, explain the priorities in the Action Plan and advise what was going to happen next. Consultation ended in March 2010 with a conference at the Town Hall.

One of the elements in the Action Plan involved reviewing sheltered housing and Officers proposals have now been prepared and will be presented to the Executive Committee on 28th July, 2010.

Observations

Initial concerns about the Scheme concerned its hilly location, damp, inadequate parking, security and the high volume of bed sit accommodation. Further inspection has identified more complex issues such as long term roof repairs, fascias, guttering and electrical maintenance required. More importantly it was felt that further investigation into safety and evacuation procedures. Although procedures are satisfactory at the moment, changes to guidelines and regulations could occur that the building will be too old or costly to accommodate. The Council feels further investigation, consideration and consultation is required before a final decision can be made.

The Council, therefore, do not want to make any proposals until it is satisfied that all these areas have been thoroughly investigated and are asking the Committee to grant permission to investigate the options available and to pursue a market valuation for the reasons given below:

- This scheme could not meet adequate health and safety standards without substantial redevelopment. The amount of redevelopment required would be extremely difficult because of the poor access for plant machinery (single track) from the Evesham Road and this would be difficult to extend because of neighbouring properties.

Consideration could be given to the following options:

Option A - Disposal

- The Council could close and demolish the site and put on the open market for sale to a market developer, who could provide affordable housing via a S106 Agreement, which would be the Council's best capital receipt generator, which could fund improvements to other older persons' housing stock. A possible outcome here would be that we could insist via the S106 that as part of the new development, there are bungalows provided on part of the land for the elderly (we could ask tenants if they want to come back on a new scheme)
- Dispose for market housing ONLY which would generate the greatest capital receipt but which would present the borough with a problem in meeting its housing need.

Option B - Other Affordable Provider Options

(RSL – registered social landlord)

- RSL could take over the scheme as an older persons housing facility, but massive investment required to upgrade, scheme problems caused by design will remain – RSLs will probably not be interested as they were with the Frederick Eary House scheme (Anchor) which is similar and for sale at present.
- RSL demolish and rebuild as a new sheltered complex or elderly persons bungalows.
- RSL demolish and rebuild as mixed tenure 100% AH site (subject to availability of HCA grant to pump prime the development and private finance on their part). May need to put some for sale units to cross sub. Some of the scheme could be conditioned as being bungalows and some could go to existing residents if required (pre-let)
- RSL conversion of building to alternative use. Possible but may not be popular.

Option C - Council retention (General Let)

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- As the standards do not meet the needs of older people it could become a general let complex. However, this will need a massive investment to get up to standard and possible sensitive lets policy.
- Scheme could be remodelled to create 1 bed flats. This would be very costly.
- Council could demolish and use HCA Council House Building Grant (subject to 22 June budget and application and finding a partner with the skills to engineer a scheme) to replace with Council owned family houses/flats or mix to be determined. – Going to be hard to achieve and dependent on member commitment to fund part outside of grant with prudential borrowing, dependant on the review of the Housing Revenues Account.
- Council looking to build a mixed tenure for sale and shared ownership scheme to cross subs rented units.

Option D - Council retention (Over 50's housing)

- Standards at this scheme do not meet those identified as desirable for the future needs of older people, especially the high level of bedsit accommodation, inadequate parking, hilly location, restricted vehicular access and safety standards.
- Substantial funding would have to be secured to improve the scheme and ongoing maintenance costs on a building of this age and condition would be high. We also need to be prepared for the strong possibility that tighter Health & Safety regulations will come into place in the future and whether the scheme could accommodate further change structurally or financially.
- The major improvement works that would be required would cause disruption to residents and neighbours and would worsen the already critical vehicular access and parking problems.
- Consideration must also be given to the increased risk that older people may require attendance from emergency services. Essential works to provide external ramps to enable evacuation will impede access in the future.

WHAT HAPPENS NOW

The Executive Committee will consider the request to allow Officers more time to investigate the options on 28th July, 2010 and their recommendation will be

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considered for approval by Full Council on 9th August, 2010. We will contact you again after that date to let you know the outcome.

Whatever the decision we will work closely with you all for as long as necessary. If required you can be assigned a dedicated Officer or independent party who can support you through the process.

CONTACT DETAILS

You can contact any member of the project group for further information or clarification:

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**“My Home, My Future, My Choice Residents Group meets monthly
Next meeting: Committee Room 3, Town Hall, 2pm, 29th July, 2010**