

# **APPENDIX O**

## **WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 8 SEPTEMBER 2008**

#### **LANDLORD SERVICES PARTNERSHIP SIG - 29 SEPTEMBER 2008**

#### **EXECUTIVE – 7 OCTOBER 2008**

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#### **Title:**

#### **MEETING THE DECENT HOMES STANDARD - OCKFORD RIDGE, GODALMING**

[Portfolio Holder for Housing: Cllr R J Gates]

[Wards Affected: Godalming Ockford]

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#### **Summary and purpose:**

This report identifies particular challenges with meeting the Decent Homes Standard at Ockford Ridge, Godalming. There are a number of approaches that could be taken to address the issues. The report suggests that, before any decisions are taken, a consultation exercise with the community should be undertaken to determine the aspirations of local residents. As there are wide ranging community issues potentially arising from this initiative, it is considered appropriate that the Local Strategic Partnership should be involved.

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#### **Environmental implications:**

At this stage there are none.

#### **Social / community implications:**

In recent years, the Council, with its LSP Partners, has been working with local residents and groups to build-up community capacity and provide more services/facilities. There have been a number of successful initiatives. However, there is more work to do to support the community.

#### **E-Government implications:**

There are none arising from this report.

#### **Resource/Value for Money and Legal implications:**

There are potentially significant resource and legal implications dependant on the outcome to the community consultation exercise. The costs of the suggested consultation process can be met from within the Housing Revenue Account Feasibility budget in the Capital Programme, split £15,000 in 2008/09 and £15,000 in 2009/10.

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## **Context**

1. The Council, as landlord, faces significant financial challenges in both capital and revenue terms. It has agreed to prioritise resources to meet health and safety, statutory and cost effective Decent Homes objectives. It is clear that the Council cannot meet the Decent Homes Standard (DHS) by 2010 within the resources available to it.

## **Ockford Ridge Estate, Godalming**

2. One of the areas where there are particular challenges in meeting the Decent Homes Standard is on Ockford Ridge, Godalming (see Location Plan at Annexe 1).
3. The Estate, of some 203 homes, was built in the interwar period (1920 – 1938) by Godalming Borough Council. The homes are therefore some 70-80 years old.
4. 147 homes remain in Council ownership, the remainder having been sold under the Right-to-Buy since 1980, and are now in private ownership.
5. The construction method and age of the properties mean that many of the homes present particular problems when they become vacant and are relatively costly to bring into lettable condition. Some of the issues are:
  - most kitchens do not meet the DHS and are fairly small
  - rising damp through the floor slab
  - lack of wall ties, resulting in flank wall bulging
  - bathrooms so small that there is not room for a WC
  - small single-skin WC extensions are damp and cold (likely to be built post-war)
  - re-pointing needed
  - roofs need strengthening to hold the weight of new roof tiles
  - many of the houses have the original Crittal (metal) windows, which have outlived their life expectancy and are now out of alignment and therefore draughty, single-glazed and contribute to condensation. They need replacing.
  - Rainwater goods have reached the end of their life.
  - Overall, the properties are in poor condition, which is a reflection of the age and lack of regular investment over many years.
7. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, parts of the estate were subject to whole-house modernisations – with new roofs, kitchens, bathrooms etc. Because of the financial constraints placed on the Council in subsequent years, it has not been possible to find sufficient funding to continue such an approach.

## **Stock Investment Needs**

8. The properties are now over seventy years old. Of the 147 remaining in the Council's ownership, the vast majority - 123 - are unmodernised. In many cases these homes have their original kitchen, bathroom and windows

- 9 To carry out the most basic Decent Homes Standard (DHS) requirements to the homes at Ockford Ridge by 2010 will need well over £1 million over the next 5 years. However, the capital resources available to the Council for the whole of its housing stock (4,989 homes) is likely to reduce to just under £4 million per annum, most of which will have to be applied to health and safety related capital works.
- 10 In reality this means that all of the properties on Ockford Ridge that were not subject to major refurbishment in 1980s/1990s will not meet the DHS by 2010.
11. Although responsive repairs are carried out as and when required, if the properties are to remain as homes fit for the next 60 years then substantial investment is required.
12. It is worth noting that the DHS investment does not include any investment in estate improvement works – to paths, fences etc. Whilst these are not essential under the DHS criteria, often estate works can have a big impact on the look of an estate and its acceptance by tenants as a pleasant environment in which to live.

### **Options for the Future**

13. Because of the age and condition of Ockford Ridge, this estate has the largest concentration of homes that will fail the DHS.
14. It is considered that because of the size of the homes, the relative generous gardens and the costs associated with bringing homes up to the DHS and a modern-day standard, there would be merit in considering some redevelopment, rather than refurbishment of existing homes.
15. In summary the options are:
  - a. Do nothing – accept that the Council does not have sufficient resources to meet the DHS and undertake Decent Homes work on a piecemeal basis as and when vacancies occur.
  - b. Transfer vacant properties to an RSL with a view to the RSL bringing homes up to the DHS. Though because of the configuration of the properties some may not achieve DHS status even if money is spent on them.
  - c. Explore the opportunity for a redevelopment approach by selective demolition and replacement.

The redevelopment could simply be through creating development sites by selective demolition and by sale of the land on the open market. This would mean that the Council get nearer to meeting the DHS target by reducing the number of non-Decent Homes in its ownership, and by securing a capital receipt to reinvest in its other housing stock.

Alternatively, the Council could work in partnership with an RSL to redevelop parts of Ockford Ridge with a view to retaining the area as affordable housing. If this approach were adopted, consideration would need to be given to how any redevelopment might be financed.

### **Community Development**

16. Over the last few years there has been much work with the community at Ockford Ridge to improve the area, develop more facilities and build capacity among local people. The Council and the County Council have been jointly funding a Community Development Worker since 2004 who has been working with residents to support and build capacity to address a range of specific projects.
17. It is clear, however, that the physical design and condition of the homes and the estate mitigate against these initiatives. The estate can be considered to be in transition with many long established residents and newer residents.
18. A community consultation exercise at Ockford Ridge could be used to raise the issues facing the Council, assess what local people hope and expect, and start to formulate a way forward for the estate.

### **Conclusion**

19. Ockford Ridge presents challenges and opportunities for the Council, its partners and the community.
20. The community development work being undertaken by the community and the Council have addressed some of the issues identified by residents. The underlying issues of a mixed balance and social inclusion also need consideration.
21. The local school, St Marks Centre, Social Club all provide various opportunities for involvement and action.
22. It is therefore proposed that a community engagement exercise be undertaken to map out the stock condition, physical, social and community needs. As part of this activity a range of options would be developed including identifying possible RSL partners who could be invited to draw up proposals as to how they would regenerate the estate to achieve a more sustainable community.
23. At this stage Members views are sought as to whether they would wish to embark on such an exercise.

### **Financial Implications**

24. There will be costs associated with a consultation exercise. It is suggested that the costs of £30,000 (in total) be split with £15,000 in 2008/09 and £15,000 in 2009/10 from the HRA Feasibility budget in the capital programme.

25. The Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee welcomed the proposed approach and supported the recommendations.

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that

1. a community consultation exercise be undertaken with local residents on Ockford Ridge about how best the Council can help improve the estates and the homes on it, and what options are available;
2. a Steering Group, chaired by the Housing Portfolio, including the Waverley Ward Councillors, representatives from the Landlord Service Partnership and local community be created to oversee the consultation process; and
3. budget provision of £30,000 (in total) be identified, with £15,000 in 2008/09 and £15,000 in 2009/10 coming from the HA feasibility budget in the capital programme, with further details to be discussed with the Housing Portfolio Holder and the Steering Group.

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### **Background Papers (SDCS)**

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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