

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 7 SEPTEMBER 2009 EXECUTIVE – 29 SEPTEMBER 2009

Title:

THE BLACKWATER VALLEY HOUSING MARKET

[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Keith Webster]
[Wards Affected: All Farnham Wards]

Summary and purpose:

To apprise members of housing activity undertaken in the Blackwater Valley and the opportunities it gives to Waverley Borough Council.

This report, which was considered by the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 7 September, recommends a proposal to share nomination rights to affordable housing with neighbouring Local Authorities on larger sites of over new 200 homes in the Blackwater Valley.

How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

Working for more affordable housing to be built, and managing Council housing well.

Equality and Diversity Implications:

There are no equality and diversity implications arising directly from this report.

Resource/ Value for Money Implications:

Grant funding for the development of affordable housing from the Homes and Communities Agency will be available for larger development sites, on the understanding that the resulting housing should contribute to meeting the housing need in adjacent local authority areas.

The properties will be available through the Council's Choice Based Lettings Scheme; 'Home Choice', which many customers access via the internet.

Central Government policy increasingly encourages joint working across Local Authority boundaries. This can be illustrated through the raised profile of sub-regional housing strategies and emphasis on the importance of sub-regional Housing Market Assessments.

Legal implications:

As developments are undertaken, nomination agreements will need to be entered into with the Registered Social Landlord involved, as is currently the case in respect of schemes developed within Waverley and other local authorities.

Introduction

1. The Blackwater Valley is an area where there will be significant housing development in the coming years. Most of this development is planned for:
 - QEII Barracks, Hart
 - Hitches Lane, Fleet, Hart
 - Former Ministry of Defence land at Aldershot Urban Extension, Rushmoor
 - Westgate (Aldershot) Rushmoor
 - Farnborough Central, Rushmoor
 - Concept House, Rushmoor
 - The Atrium, Surrey Heath
 - Deepcut, Surrey Heath (some 1,000 homes, 250 of which as affordable)
 - The only major site in Waverley covered by the Blackwater Valley is East Street (see Table at Annexe 1).
2. Part of the Borough of Waverley falls within the Blackwater Valley area – most of Farnham – but there are no proposals for a significant increase in housing numbers for this part of the Blackwater Valley area. The communication, transport, economic and travel to work profile has resulted in Farnham being considered to be part of the Blackwater Valley area.
3. Local authorities across the Blackwater Valley area have been encouraged by the Government Office of the South East and the Homes and Communities Agency to work together to try to maximise the benefits of this area of housing and economic growth. The local authorities include: Bracknell Forest, Guildford, Hart, Rushmoor, Surrey Heath, Waverley and Wokingham.
4. The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive are members of the Blackwater Valley Partnership.
5. Authorities are being encouraged to carry out sub-regional Housing Market Assessments as a tool, to help form a more strategic, longer term, view of housing demand and need. In 2005, consultants DTZ Pineda carried out a Housing Market Assessment for Rushmoor and the Blackwater Valley. The full report can be found at www.rushmoor.gov.uk. Guildford, Waverley and Woking councils jointly commissioned a Sub-Regional Housing Market Assessment, which was completed in March 2009.

Shared Nomination Rights

6. Given the proposals for major housing redevelopment in the Blackwater Valley area, a Blackwater Valley Housing Officers Group was established in 2003 to consider the implications of housing development and the opportunities to secure affordable housing. One of the requirements of the Homes and Communities Agency has been to ensure that local authorities, which neighbour large developments, have the opportunity to make nominations to affordable housing schemes outside their geographic area.
7. Given that Waverley is an area where development is fairly constrained and limited, this provides the Council with an opportunity to secure nomination rights to housing adjacent to Farnham. Indeed, this builds on the Choice-Based Lettings approach that the Council has adopted.

8. In short, the Blackwater Valley Housing Group is proposing that all the local authorities would allow other neighbouring authorities to have some nomination rights to schemes of 200 dwellings or over within the Blackwater Valley area.
9. The host local authority will have 50% nominations as of right to their own schemes; the remaining 50% was distributed according to relative housing need and demand as assessed by the Housing Needs Index as compiled by the Department for Communities and Local Government. This results in the following percentages:
 - Bracknell Forest 5%
 - Guildford 8%
 - Hart 7%
 - Rushmoor 12%
 - Surrey Heath 6.5%
 - Waverley 7.5%
 - Wokingham 4%.
10. For Waverley, this means that the East Street scheme would be included in these arrangements. However, should Waverley be a partner in the nomination agreement regime, it would be an overall beneficiary in terms of nomination rights to affordable housing schemes in neighbouring areas.
11. If Waverley were to agree to be a partner in the Nominations Agreement, the Council could secure nomination rights to 255 homes. Should the Council decide not to be a partner in these arrangements, it would retain nomination rights to all of the affordable homes at East Street (72 homes) but lose nomination rights to 214 homes in neighbouring authorities.
12. To participate, these arrangements need to be approved by the Cabinet for each Local Authority. To date Rushmoor, Hart, Guildford and Bracknell Forest have agreed to co-operate with the proposed Nomination Agreement and will benefit from shared nominations.
13. Waverley is already involved, through its Choice Based Lettings system with cross boundary working. There is a "Homeselecta" element of the CBL system whereby 10% of vacancies in Guildford, Waverley, Hart and Rushmoor, are open to applicants across all housing registers. The proposals in respect of major affordable housing developments in the Blackwater Valley will be in addition to these arrangements.

Resource Implications

14. There are no financial implications directly arising from this proposal.

Conclusion

15. Should the Council agree to be part of the Blackwater Valley Nominations scheme, Waverley residents would get the opportunity to access more affordable housing opportunities in neighbouring areas than would otherwise be the case. Waverley would be a net beneficiary from this initiative – although it would lose the exclusive nomination rights to the 72 affordable

homes at East Street (it would get 57.5% nominations ie 41 homes); it would receive nomination rights to at least another 255 affordable homes in neighbouring authorities.

16. Under the proposed formula, households from Waverley Borough Council's Housing Needs Register would be entitled to 7.5% of nomination rights to schemes outside the borough and 57.5% of nomination rights within the borough on schemes over 200 units.

Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee

17. The Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee welcomed the fact that this could offer the opportunity of greater access to more affordable housing for Waverley residents and endorsed the principle of the proposed nomination sharing arrangement for larger sites in the Blackwater Valley.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Executive agree the principle of the proposed nomination sharing arrangement for larger sites in the Blackwater Valley, as detailed in the report.

Background Papers (DoH)

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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ANNEXE 1

Local Authority	Schemes over 200 homes	Total Dwellings	Affordable Homes	% Nominations for Waverley	No. of Nomination Rights
Bracknell Forest	None	0	0	7.5%	NA
Guildford	None	0	0	7.5%	NA
Hart	QEII Barracks	850-1,000	422	7.5%	32 homes
	Hitches Lane, Fleet	300	120	7.5%	16 homes
Rushmoor	Aldershot Urban Extension	4,500	1,600	7.5%	120 homes
	Westgate	455	66	7.5%	5 homes
	Farnborough Central	476	143	7.5%	11 homes
	Concept House	253	88	7.5%	7 homes
Surrey Heath	The Atrium	220	55	7.5%	4 homes
	Deepcut	1,000	250	7.5%	19 homes
Waverley	East Street	239	72	57.5%	41 homes
Wokingham	None	0	0	7.5%	NA
TOTAL					255

Table: Schemes of over 200 units which would be subject to cross boundary nominations