

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE

10 JULY 2018

Title:

HOUSING DESIGN STANDARDS FOR NEW COUNCIL HOMES

**[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Carole King]
[Wards Affected: All]**

Summary and purpose:

The attached report sets out the work undertaken and recommendations made by the Member Scrutiny Review Working Group into Housing Design Standards for New Council Homes. If agreed, it is expected that the recommendations of this Scrutiny Review will inform the design proposals for Site C at Ockford Ridge and future housing development.

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

This report relates to the Council's Community Wellbeing Priority with the objective of continuing to invest in the Council's housing stock to maintain decent homes and to deliver affordable housing across the Borough.

Equality and Diversity Implications:

Recommendations that reflect the Working Group's consideration of accessibility and adaptability standards have been made within the report.

Financial Implications:

Changes in design standards might have financial and viability implications on any future development schemes. If standards are increased they may increase development costs. Financial appraisals are completed for each new scheme as part of the budget approval process. This will include Site C Ockford Ridge when the scheme has been developed and the impact of changes can be measured in the first instance on this scheme.

Legal Implications:

In March 2015, the government published the "Technical Housing Standards – Nationally Described Space Standard" (amended in 2016). These standards replaced the different space standards previously used by local authorities. The technical standards remain within the planning system as a form of technical planning standard.

The standard was one of a wider housing standards review package. There are also optional building regulations requirements for access and water efficiency. Powers to introduce these optional requirements are included in the Building Act 1984 (as amended). The optional regulations and space standard can only be applied where there is a local plan policy based on evidenced local need and where the viability of development is not compromised. The review also clarified statutory building regulation guidance on waste storage to ensure it is properly considered in new housing development.

1. Background

The Council adopted the current Housing Standards and Specifications in April 2014. When the report was brought to full Council it was recommended that as government guidance, building standards and best practice change, current standards and specifications should be regularly reviewed to reflect these changes.

Since then the Government has concluded a Housing Standards Review (2015) that aimed to simplify government regulations and standards within a set of Building Regulations. The Government also provided further guidance on Housing Standards by introducing a new Technical Housing Space Standard.

The Housing Standards Review gave local authorities the option of requiring developers to build to higher standards than the minimum requirements in the Building Regulations Part M (access to and use of buildings) and Part L (water usage). In addition the Government no longer requires local authorities to adopt the Code for Sustainable Homes as a planning condition for new developments.

The opportunity to review the Council's Design Standards for new Council Homes was therefore timely and provided an opportunity to collect and review feedback from tenants in recent new builds to learn what aspects of design works well and what could be improved.

Waverley completed a review of its tender specification, which included some elements of design. The latest tender specification was produced in 2017 and is referenced in this report as the 'Draft Waverley General Design and Information Requirements 2017' (GDI). Any approved changes to the Design Standards will be incorporated into this tender specification.

Four councillors and one member of the Tenants' Panel, all members of the Housing O&S Committee, were assigned to form a Working Group to conduct a Scrutiny Review prior to the drafting of updated standards and specifications.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Executive considers the attached report and agrees the recommendations contained within it.

Background Papers

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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