



Cabinet 13 February 2013

Request to Commit Capital Funding for a Housing Scheme in Whepstead (Feb13/16)

1. Summary and reasons for recommendations

- 1.1 Suffolk Housing Society working with Icen Homes are in the process of developing an affordable housing scheme of five homes in Wepstead, including a bespoke bungalow for a family with complex needs.
- 1.2 St Edmundsbury Borough Council has been working in partnership with Suffolk Housing Society, Icen Homes and Suffolk County Council on how best to meet the housing needs of this local family.
- 1.3 This housing scheme forms part of Icen Homes' commitment to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) to deliver affordable homes by March 2015 and therefore will receive funding towards the cost of delivering the homes, however there is a short fall due to the additional requirements of this particular family.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** that:
 - (1) an allocation of £15,000 from the Council's Affordable Housing Capital Programme, as detailed in paragraph 8.3 of Report D283, be approved to enable the delivery of an affordable housing scheme in Wepstead, which will only be released following written confirmation that the other £15,000 allocation from Suffolk County Council has been secured; and
 - (2) the £15,000 allocation be drawn down within 12 months from the approval of the planning permission, otherwise the allocation will be withdrawn.

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3. Corporate priorities

- 3.1 The recommendations meet the following, as contained within the Corporate Plan:

Corporate Priority 1: *Working together for strong, healthy and diverse communities, namely:*

- (a) increase the availability of low cost homes;
- (b) improve life opportunities; and
- (c) improve peoples physical and mental health.

4. Key issues

- 4.1 A Housing Needs Survey was carried out in Whepstead during 2009, which identified a need for a small affordable housing scheme in Whepstead; a scheme has been planned for five homes including a bespoke bungalow for a family (three children) with complex needs. In summary the family includes a disabled child, and both mother and father have a disability.
- 4.2 The family currently live in unsuitable open market housing in Newmarket and wish to return to Whepstead where they have a local connection and other members of their family still live, so that they can be closer for support. Once sold it is anticipated their current home will provide nothing by way of equity, if any is generated this will be used to contribute towards meeting the shortfall.
- 4.3 The Parish Council has chosen Suffolk Housing Society to manage this scheme once completed; the development of the homes is being led by Iceni Homes a delivery partner with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). The 5 homes form part of Iceni Homes commitment to deliver affordable homes by March 2015.
- 4.4 The five homes will be funded in the main by Suffolk Housing Society financial resources with support from the HCA. The bespoke bungalow will require both a larger floor area and specific requirements such as solid wall construction to allow a hoist to be added at a later stage. A shortfall in funding has arisen due to these additional build costs, whilst future rental income remains on par with the other homes in the scheme (80% of market rent).
- 4.5 Iceni Homes have this scheme in their programme and have a site identified and subject to the shortfall being met will be submitting a planning application shortly. Iceni have worked hard with the architect and have reduced the shortfall down to £30,000.
- 4.6 The latest total scheme cost estimate is £862,000.
- 4.7 Suffolk County Council has committed to funding £15,000 of the shortfall, leaving £15,000 still requiring funding, to which the Council has been asked to contribute.

5. Other options considered

- 5.1 Not to provide £15,000 funding towards the shortfall; however this is considered to be a scheme worthy of support as it will provide a long term solution to this particular family's housing need.

6. Community impact

6.1 Crime and disorder impact *(including Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998)*

- 6.1.1 None.

6.2 Diversity and equality impact *(including the findings of the Equality Impact Assessment)*

- 6.2.1 This home will provide a long term solution to this family's housing need. It will facilitate the care of all three children but in particular will enable the child with disabilities to achieve maximum independence in a safe environment. It will reduce family stress dramatically as his parents know they will be able to care for all three children even if their own health deteriorates.

6.3 Sustainability impact *(including completing a Sustainability Impact Assessment)*

- 6.3.1 The homes will be built to meet the HCA design and quality standards and as part of this will meet code for sustainable homes level 3.

6.4 Other impact *(any other impacts affecting this report)*

- 6.4.1 The provision of an affordable housing scheme at Whepstead will help meet a local housing need and contribute to the overall supply of housing to meet demand.

7. Consultation *(what consultation has been undertaken, and what were the outcomes?)*

- 7.1 Whepstead Parish Council has been involved throughout the process.
- 7.2 When a planning application is submitted there will a public consultation meeting.
- 7.3 The Ward Member has been advised of the proposals.

8. Financial and resource implications *(including asset management implications)*

- 8.1 Suffolk Housing Society will be funding their investment in the scheme from their own resources to enable the housing to be provided.
- 8.2 The HCA has committed to the scheme as part of their contract with Icení Homes.
- 8.3 Suffolk County Council has committed to funding half of the shortfall. It is requested the Borough Council commits £15,000 grant from the affordable housing capital budget to assist in delivering this scheme. The St Edmundsbury

Affordable Housing Capital Programme budget has unallocated funds of £304,000.

8.4 Wkepstead housing scheme will assist St Edmundsbury to meet its affordable housing completion targets.

9. Risk/opportunity assessment *(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)*

Risk area	Inherent level of risk (before controls)	Controls	Residual risk (after controls)
Provision of affordable housing	High	Continue to develop affordable housing, including this new scheme	High
Lack of specialist accommodation in Wkepstead (or elsewhere) to meet the specific needs of this family	High	Development of this bespoke home will meet the long term needs of this family	Low

10. Legal and policy implications

10.1 The Council has as part of its strategic housing function, to ensure there is sufficient affordable housing in the district to meet the needs of its residents, including specialist housing where appropriate.

10.2 The bespoke bungalow will meet the long term housing needs of this family, for which the Council have a duty to house.

11. Wards affected

11.1 All.

12. Background papers

12.1 None.

13. Documents attached

13.1 None.