

**Decision maker:** Cabinet Member for Housing

**Subject:** WATTS ROAD CAR PARK DEVELOPMENT

**Date of decision:** 14th January 2010

**Report by:** OWEN BUCKWELL – HEAD OF HOUSING MANAGEMENT

**Wards affected:** Charles Dickens Ward

**Key decision:** Yes

**Budget & policy framework decision:** No

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## **1. Summary & Purpose of report**

- 1.1 To seek approval for a scheme of 12 units of residential accommodation (the scheme) to be built on the Watts Road car park site (the site) and to provide the cabinet member for Housing with an update on the progress of the site development.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 This site is situated within the Charles Dickens ward; it is no longer fit for purpose and has not been used for a number of years. Development of the site has not been previously considered due to the high costs of demolition.
- 2.2 Following a Government initiative in March 2009, Portsmouth City Council successfully qualified to apply for grant funding direct from the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA). The HCA have earmarked funds nationally to enable schemes to proceed that would not otherwise be developed due to abnormal development costs. In consultation with the Planning service, Area Housing Manager, local Councillors and the Housing Options team has enabled Housing Development to determine the size and number of homes that could be developed on the site. An application for grant funding of £840,000 was submitted and Portsmouth City Council is currently waiting this decision from the HCA. Funding is conditional on a “start on site” before 31 March 2010.
- 2.3 In order to meet the funding time constraints set by the HCA it is necessary to use a Design and Build contract. A complete Design and Build contract has been listed on the Intend system using our framework developers and three tenders have been received for the scheme
- 2.4 If the scheme is approved a planning application will be submitted by mid February which should enable a start on site by end of March 2010 in line with the HCA

requirements which will be attached to the funding. Commencement on site will initially be the enabling works until planning permission has been obtained, for this scheme the demolition of the car park.

- 2.5 This scheme will be built to code 4 sustainable homes, currently none of our RSL partners are building to this standard.
- 2.6 Due to the time constraint for applying for this funding, consultation has been minimal, residents have not been consulted, however Housing Development will hold an open day once the development has commenced. Consultation as previously stated has been with Ward Councillors, Cabinet Member for Housing, Area Housing Manager, Housing Options and Planning.
- 2.7 The Housing Scrutiny panel visited the Watts Road site in November 2009, during which 2 Charles Dickens ward Councillors and the chair of the planning committee remained on the bus due to the conflict of interests.
- 2.8 The total cost of this build is £1,655,850; this comprises of;
- £840,000 HCA funding
  - £465,000 prudential borrowing
  - £120,000 S106 funding
  - £125,000 capital receipt from Wecock Farm
  - £105,850 Housing Investment Programme

### **3. Recommendations**

- 3.1 It is recommended that, subject to achieving a start on site by 31 March 2010:
- (1) The scheme to provide 12 new build family homes at the Watts Road site at a cost of £1,655,850 is approved.
  - (2) Authority to determine the final scheme design is delegated to the Head of Housing Management.
  - (3) The changes to the Housing Investment Programme detailed in the Financial Appraisal attached are approved.
  - (4) The Strategic Director & Section 151 Officer's financial appraisal is approved.

### **4. Reasons for recommendations**

- 4.1 The scheme will provide additional social housing to Portsmouth residents as a major contribution to PCC Corporate Priority 6 – "Increase available, affordable and quality of housing".

### **5. Options considered and rejected**

- 5.1 This is a specific single site development utilising HRA land. Watts Road was specifically chosen as the Government initiative for Local Authorities to re commence

building homes was to unlock sites that would not normally be considered due to abnormalities on the site, in this case the demolition of the car park.

## **6. Duty to involve**

- 6.1 Due to the short time scale for a successful start on site of this scheme, no consultation has been carried out with residents, however; Ward Councillors, Cabinet Member for Housing, Area Housing Manager, Housing Options and Planning have all been consulted. Once the development has commenced Housing Development will hold an information sharing day for the local residents on the scheme.

## **7. Implications**

- 7.1 The outcome of the successful development will be positive in terms of creating additional affordable housing for residents of Portsmouth.

## **8. Corporate priorities**

This scheme contributes to the following Corporate Priorities:

- Reduce crime and the fear of crime – through good design
- Increase availability and quality of housing
- Regenerate the city
- Cleaner and greener city

## **9. Equality impact assessment (EIA)**

- 9.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment is being undertaken, and will be completed by mid January.

## **10. Legal implications**

The city solicitor is satisfied that it is within the Cabinet Member's powers to approve the recommendation as set out.

- 10.1 There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report as the car park is already council owned and within the Housing Portfolio.
- 10.2 Any development will be subject to obtaining all relevant consents including planning permission for the units

**11. Head of finance's comments**

11.1 A financial appraisal approved by the Strategic Director & Section 151 Officer is attached.

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Signed by:  
**Owen Buckwell – Head of Housing Management**

**Appendices:**

**Financial Appraisal summary**

**Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972**

Nil

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by Cabinet Member for Housing on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2010.

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Signed by: Councillor Steven Wylie