

Graham Waters: Head of Housing and Personal Services E+E

Tony Michael: planning

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- Purpose of the meeting was to record the Council's general approach towards affordable housing, that would need to be taken into account in the production of the DR/UHS site appraisal study by the planning office;
- A site map, and the current timetable & explanatory text for the project, were tabled;
- Currently there was a certain amount of housing in the study area (eg Rosebery's affordable housing in the Phoenix Court flats and in 58 UHS, both of which were of poor standard; also Homewater House); a mainly residential area lies to the south and east;
- The Council is required under the Housing Act to assess local housing need, and to meet this need as opportunities arise;
- General approach was to seek the maximum amount of housing that could be properly planned for and achieved on these town centre sites, and then obtain 40% of this for affordable housing, when the development had 15 or more units, or the site was 0.5h+;
- The housing mix (of dwelling sizes) for affordable housing on a site was decided by the Council on a case by case basis, driven both by expected housing need and by the site development constraints;
- The assessment method for setting the optimum dwelling mix for affordable housing on future development sites (and on whether there should be more or less of the various "types" of affordable housing – eg: supported, special needs, intermediate tenure) is to be refined and developed further by colleagues of GW;
- Currently, the Council aims for 75% affordable rental, 25% shared ownership; all dwellings should be designed to be "lifetime home" standard; current need for disability standard dwellings appears low in the town centre, as is the need for sheltered housing;
- The Council works primarily with the Rosebery Housing Association, but also with Thames Valley, Orbit, Threshold, Warden; local management presence is desirable;
- Finance (sourced from the Housing Corporation, Housing Association finance, commuted sums etc) for supporting the affordable housing programme has not in the past been a limitation;
- The existing Rosebery flats in the study area are already 100% affordable, and a future redevelopment of self contained dwellings would also be 100%, with its good town centre location; an office for a local HA manager would be desirable on site (ie a converted flat); the recent proposal was for the redevelopment of the present flats, together with the adjoining (Council owned) site, replacing the present 14 flats with 28; the planning application (06/00127/FUL) was withdrawn;
- Conclusion: If additional housing were to be proposed for sites in the study area, this would be generally welcomed.

ENDS