

STAFFORD BOROUGH LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

MEETING WITH HOUSING CORPORATION & STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

DATE OF MEETING - 26 SEPTEMBER 2007

Officers in Attendance:

Robert Kilby - Housing Corporation
Mac McCoig - Stafford Borough Council - Principal Housing Officer
Stephen Ward - Housing Officer - Stafford Borough Council
Alex Yendole - Principal Planning Officer - Stafford Borough Council

Details

- The investment role of the Housing Corporation is split with approximately 80% of the work being spent on activity around funding to bring forward affordable and social housing, and the rest of the activity being time spent as an enabler through discussions and meetings.
- The Housing Corporation works through regional and local strategies to implement affordable housing schemes. The Housing Corporation considers bids from Registered Social Landlords and approved developers against money allocated by the Comprehensive Spending Review and notionally made available to meet priorities as set out in the Regional Housing Strategy. For example £1 billion could be allocated by the Comprehensive Spending Review in order to deliver 40,000 new affordable houses nationwide (sums are entirely illustrative for this example).
- The context for the Housing Corporation's work is set within the Regional Housing Strategy and, in broad terms, funding to deliver housing is directed by this strategy. The Regional Housing Strategy provides a strategic approach for the Housing Market Areas in the West Midlands Region with associated detailed figures. The Regional Housing Strategy covers the period 2005-2007 and this strategy is now being updated for the review in Spring 2008. The new Regional Housing Strategy will ensure a closer relationship between the Regional Housing Strategy and the Regional Spatial Strategy.
- Currently the Regional Spatial Strategy does not provide detailed affordable housing figures down to District level. However in some rural areas the private sector may provide one private house for every one affordable house depending on the strength of local planning policies.
- The Housing Corporation funding helps Housing Associations and approved developers to buy land and then build houses, or to buy existing properties. Appropriate criteria need to be met in terms of this new housing and affordability.

- Stafford Borough Council has been successful in terms of delivering affordable housing through planning gain and therefore has had little requirement to support bids to the Housing Corporation for funds. The Housing Corporation has designed a computer model to establish the potential delivery of affordable housing and targets that could be achieved based on local market conditions. A free training session will be attended by an officer from Stafford Borough Council housing section in order to use the model to predict where affordable housing needs public subsidy to help ensure that it is delivered.
- It is important to have a real world perspective in terms of how much affordable housing can be delivered based on land values and development rates. For example a new scheme at Weston is being delivered through a Housing Trent Trust. Viability issues and abnormal costs which meant that the Borough's preferred percentage of affordable housing could not be delivered. Following negotiations it was established that 19% of affordable housing could be delivered on the site. The Housing Corporation could have been asked to put in the extra funds in order to increase the number of houses above 19%. However in this location it was not considered appropriate by the Borough. As another example, the Foregate Street site in Stafford was sold by Staffordshire County Council to Beth Johnson Housing Association following a contest between Beth Johnson and Churchill Retirement Homes. 40 rented apartments could be secured with appropriate Housing Corporation and the Housing Association may put forward a bid to secure the development.
- The Housing Corporation has limited dealings with Stafford Borough Council because most new provision is secured by delivery through Section 106 Agreements and the private sector. The level of delivery and targets is based on the Stafford Borough Council's aspirations for affordable housing. If Stafford Borough Council wanted to deliver more units and this was not being achieved through the private sector it would be possible to engage more actively with the Housing Corporation. There can be increased participation regarding affordable housing delivery if the Housing Corporation is approached. The main current Housing Corporation investment is for a homeless hostel in Stafford Borough.
- The Stafford and Rural Homes Housing Association can apply to the Housing Corporation for funding to help build houses and bring forward sites. There is a need for affordable housing targets in the Local Development Framework. Opportunities to upgrade houses as well as new build affordable housing should be considered. Existing landholdings could be assessed, including back land areas, garages, etc... owned by Stafford and Rural Homes.
- The Housing Corporation has no current fixed view regarding spatial distributions set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy preferred options approach. The Housing Corporation helps implement the current regional policy and supports the focus on the Major Urban Areas in delivering new housing. The Housing Corporation has no current view in terms of 10,000 new houses to Stafford Borough but current policy (to prevent unnecessary drift from the conurbations) would suggest that affordable housing levels meet

only indigenous local need. The Housing Corporation is also interested in preventing further market destabilization in the North Staffordshire area and therefore will have a view in terms of development locations for Stafford Borough to avoid this scenario. It is important to look at appropriate sites and to avoid Green Belt areas around Meir and Dresden. The Corporation does not have a view on the possible level of development at Stone with 2,000 additional homes. Funding is being considered for a project at Gnosall for a new Beth Johnson affordable housing scheme coming forward next to the new Health Centre.

Date of Next Meeting - March / April 2008 for the Housing Corporation to consider the Development Strategy at that stage and broad locations identified

Note prepared by Alex Yendole
Date last revised: 08/01/2009
Forward Planning Section, Stafford Borough Council