

Coventry Partnership Housing Theme Group Minutes 20th January 2009

Attendees (members)

Richard Monk (RM) - Chair	Whitefriars Housing Group
Stephen Rudge (SR)	Head of Housing Policy & Services, CCC
Ayaz Maqsood (AM) – Advisor	Housing Strategy Manager, CCC
John Payne (JP)	Neighbourhood Management, CCC
Sarah Perry (SP)	Coventry Partnership
Niall McChesney (NM)	City Development, CCC
Clive Benfield (CB)	Benfield Homes
Kim Fawcett (KF)	Housing Strategy, CCC

Attendees (guests)

Inderjit Lahel (IL)	Older People's Commissioning, CCC
Michelle McGinty (MM)	Older People's Commissioning, CCC

1. Apologies and Introductions.

Apologies were received from Tim Brown, Sue Green, Lynda Bull, Mary Wood and Stewart Fergusson.

Sarah Perry was introduced as the new Partnership Support Officer for the group.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

A presentation on the City Centre Redevelopment Plans has been postponed from this meeting until the next meeting on 24th March 2009.

The minutes of the previous meeting on 25th November 2008 were read. One amendment was requested for clarification. Under agenda item 4: LDF and RSS, the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment has identified land for 21,000 dwellings within the built up area of Coventry, not just within the key regeneration areas.

3. Older People's Housing Strategy

Inderjit Lahel, Senior Contracts Manager, Older People's Commissioning Team, gave a presentation on the Older People's Housing Strategy:

Demographics:

- The population of Older People in Coventry is due to increase. This will also bring an increase in the number of people with dementia, which will also impact on services.

RM commented that it would be interesting to know what the impact of the Coventry Partnership's work to close the health gap between the priority neighbourhoods and the rest of the city would have on the future demographics of older people in the city.

Early onset dementia – there may also be a need for services and housing for people with early onset dementia, from age 40, as well as for older people with dementia. There is an Early Onset Dementia Team in Coventry under Adult Mental Health.

The Older People's Housing Strategy:

- The Older People's Housing Strategy was developed in 2006 and identifies key themes to improve the range and quantity of housing provision for older people. It is a live, working document.
- The strategy aims to:
 - Increase the range, supply and choice of housing across all tenures
 - Improve the standards across all tenures by targeted investment, intervention and support
 - Meet the specific needs of vulnerable groups, by encouraging the provision of suitable housing related support services
 - Work with residents and other partners to develop safe, healthy and sustainable communities

IL explained that services for Older People do not have a consistent age that they consider to define 'older people'. For example, Age Concern works with people over 50; Social Services define older people as over 65.

AM – all types of Older People's housing are required across all areas of the city, not just in specific areas.

Delivering the Strategy:

- New Homes For Old Phase 2 is completed, giving 2 new specialist dementia schemes (40 units at Trinity Lodge and 40 units at Godiva Lodge) and 3 new Housing with Care schemes (34 units at Wyken Court, 40 units at Henry Court, and 46 units at Leofric Court).
- This is a PFI scheme with Anchor Trust, and ownership of the buildings will revert to the council after 25 years.

IL - Some families were concerned about their older family members moving out of old schemes and into the new PFI schemes, but most seem happy with the new facilities. All of the PFI schemes are fully occupied.

MM – some people prefer the older type of schemes, depending on their expectations and experiences. Expectations of the older people and their family members (eg their children) may differ.

- Ribbon Court is currently being developed on Foleshill Road. This intercultural scheme will provide 50 apartments for older people for social rent. Ashram will be the onsite care provider, but tenants will be able to use personal budgets to use another provider if they prefer.

AM – work is planned with the local community; there will be community facilities within the scheme. The development is due to complete in November 2009.

IL – community cohesion and links with the local community are important in all Older People schemes.

- Taunton Way, Keresley – this will be a competition for Housing Associations to design and provide approx 30 units for older people in a small community scheme with a village feel and high levels of energy efficiency. A brief is currently being finalised.
- Warwick Court – 52 apartments have become available and a bid has been submitted to the Homes and Communities Agency for a Housing Association to purchase them as social housing for over-55s and people with learning disabilities. This is not a care scheme, but tenants will receive care individually if/when they require it (including telecare and assistive technology).

IL – there is an issue with encouraging older people in large family homes to move into more manageable accommodation such as the apartments at Warwick Court, whilst also respecting that not all older people will want to move.

AM – HAs will be contacted when these apartments are available so that older people who do wish to move out of larger homes are informed of the opportunity.

Influencing Factors:

- National strategies such as 'Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods' – National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Population.
- Is Coventry 'the type of place that people want to grow old in'?
- Personal budgets are having a big impact on the way that services are provided.
- Supporting People funding is being reduced, and the council's Strategic Housing Regeneration Fund has been withdrawn.
- Changes in the national housing market.
- Motivation for older people to move

An explanation of personal budgets was requested. IL explained that this is where an individual is assessed for the level of care that they need, and are given funding in the form of an individual/personal budget, so that they can purchase that care for themselves.

RM – How are the interests of the older person protected? Could they be 'ripped off'?

MM – This is a risk and a concern, with issues over vetting and safety but a lot of work is being done to minimise this. The council's role is moving towards an advice and information service so that people are supported with their personal budgets and have enough information to make an informed choice. Many people still want Social Services to arrange their care, rather than having the choice to arrange it themselves with personal budgets. This may change in the future as expectations change over time.

Existing Housing Stock:

- A large number of older people are living in housing built in 1910s – 1950s, with low levels of energy efficiency and poor building conditions.
- Schemes such as Contact and Connect aims to help Older People in accessing a range of services to help with these types of issues
- Orbit care and repair support older people to remain in their own home through a range of options
- Supporting access to Disabled Facilities Grants for older people

AM – a key change has been the change from grants to equity release loans for repairs for homeowners in the private sector.

4. The Impact of the Housing Market Downturn on Theme Group Members

CB commented that from a developer's point of view:

- The housing market downturn started with the financial crisis, which impacted on the availability of mortgages. The biggest problem now is the loss of confidence in the market, by buyers, sellers and lenders.
- There are very few property sales other than forced sales, repossessions and heavily discounted new build properties, which has skewed reported house sale prices..
- Developers are not building at the moment as they are not able to make a profit, and will not build until they are able to do so.
- Mortgages need to be made more available – housing need is still there.
- In the short term, labour and material prices have fallen but will increase again when the market picks up and development starts again.
- Recently the Government have required higher densities for housing developments, but this may change as a result of this downturn.

RM – What signs are developers looking for that things are starting to recover?

CB – Rightmove recently reported that the number of people making enquiries had doubled; this may be a good sign or people looking for a bargain. Mortgages need to be made more available and with lower deposits to make a real difference.

AM – Are developers that have received funding for HomeBuy Direct actively marketing the product? (HomeBuy Direct scheme allows purchaser to fund 70% of purchase price with 30% equity loan funded equally by the Government and the developer. It is available on certain developments that have successfully bid for funding). There is little marketing in Coventry so far.

CB – The developers are waiting for the contract to be finalised with the Homes and Communities Agency. MyChoice HomeBuy has been more successful but there is no more funding for this financial year. (MyChoice HomeBuy allows up to 50% equity loan for purchase of a suitable property on the open market)

AM – There are many different HomeBuy products and they can be very confusing for purchasers.

RM – RSLs are finding it difficult to sell shared ownership properties. Mortgage lenders want the purchaser to provide a deposit for the share that they are purchasing, which many people cannot afford. RSLs across the country are converting their unsold shared ownership stock to either intermediate rent (at 80% of market rent) or social rent.

AM – the LA is the enabler for the new Mortgage Rescue package announced by the Government to help up to 6000 householders across the country. People facing repossession who are assessed as in priority need and at risk of homelessness may be referred for mortgage rescue. The area HomeBuy Agent (for Coventry this is Mercian HA) either provides an equity loan to reduce the mortgage payments or buys the property outright and rents it back to the household at an affordable rate.

RM – Birmingham City Council are considering offering mortgages themselves.

SR – Whitefriars had considered buying back previous Right-to-Buy properties where appropriate, but now that the Mortgage Rescue scheme is to be run by Mercian HA this might not be possible. This may cause issues, and concerns have been raised with CLG.

5. Major Housing Projects – Update on progress

NDC –

RM updated the group. The outline planning application has been submitted and is due to be considered by the Planning Committee on 29th January 2009. The design code work is expected to take 4-5 months and is being funded by Advantage West Midlands (AWM). Detailed planning application for Phase 1 is expected to be submitted December 2009. Phase 1A will comprise of 154 units, 39 of which are for social rent, the others for sale. The main issue at the moment is mitigation against the risk of unsold stock for the developers. Discussions have taken place with Coventry Building Society to consider providing a mortgage package for some of these properties. Start on site is expected 2010/11.

SR gave an update on the Peugeot Stoke site – the first phase will complete but the next phase will not be started in the current market.

NM stated that the outline planning application for the Canley regeneration had been submitted.

AM gave an update on the Swanswell Regeneration. The redevelopment of the Salvation Army direct access homeless hostel is likely to be on a site at Harnall Lane, rather than the existing site at Lincoln Street. Negotiations are ongoing regarding the Cov/Warks hospital site, which will be a mix of residential, retail, business etc.

SR – The developers of the Belgrade Plaza have applied to change Phase 3 from apartments to student accommodation. The plan for over 500 apartments at The Butts is also being revised.

SR – the Paragon Park redevelopment is expected to commence in 2009. The scrap metal yard will not be moved but will be landscaped to minimise the impact.

CB stated that the National Construction College are considering relocating to Coventry and are looking for a site of approx 5 acres.

6. Any Other Business

RM queried the progress on the National Indicators included in the LAA. SR replied that NI 155 (number of affordable homes delivered) was on target for this year but would rely on HCA funded projects for next year.

JP stated that the Safer Neighbourhoods Group had expressed concern over large housing developments being let in a very short space of time when they are completed, leading to some issues with anti-social behaviour etc. The group discussed the possibility of local lettings policies and intensive management for the initial letting period.

AM updated the group on the Concerto III application, which was submitted in Nov/Dec 08. The application narrowly failed the short-listing criteria, and so work is now being carried out on resubmitting the application. Stewart Fergusson will give an update at the next meeting.

7. Dates of Next Meetings (Spire House 2-4pm)

Tuesday 24th March 2009

Tuesday 23rd June 2009

Tuesday 22nd September 2009