

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Joint Report of Corporate Director for People and
Corporate Director for Corporate Services

to
Cabinet

on
23rd September 2014

Report prepared by: Jacqui Lansley,
Head of Procurement Commissioning and Housing

Agenda
Item No.

**Options for the Regeneration of Housing Land and Property
adjoining the Town Centre (including the 4 Town Centre Tower Blocks)**

**Relevant Scrutiny Committee: Policy & Resources
Executive Councillor: Councillor Norman**

Part 1 Public Agenda Item

1. Purpose of Report

To obtain authority to carry out research into options for the regeneration of land encompassing the Queensway, Coleman Street, land at Short Street, the four Town Centre tower blocks and properties along Southchurch Road as shown on **Appendix 1** (the "Regeneration Area"), with the objective of bringing forward proposals to maximise and improve the housing stock to create a mixed and balanced community and improved environment.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Officers undertake further investigation and feasibility work across the Regeneration Area shown in **Appendix 1** and to review the options available to regenerate and develop the area, including the road network.
- 2.2 That the Draft Objectives attached to this report as **Appendix 2** should form the basis of a Development Brief for the Project.
- 2.3 That Officers seek initial expressions of interest from Developers and / or organisations that have access to significant private sector funding and a proven track record of delivering similar complex projects of this scale. Details of any submissions made will then be brought back to Cabinet to agree the overall regeneration approach.
- 2.4 That the Housing Working Party should oversee the progress of the Project and that the initial views of the Working Party on the project (from its meeting on 15th September 2014) be duly considered by way of pre-Cabinet scrutiny.

- 2.5 That any vacancies that arise in the four Tower Blocks are not re-let on secure tenancies but are used as temporary accommodation until such time as detailed proposals have been drawn up for the Regeneration Area.
- 2.6 That effective consultation and communication plans be established to, ensure the local community are involved in finding the best way forward in meeting the Objectives.
- 2.7 That the sum of £150,000 is prioritised from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) reserves to undertake the initial scoping and feasibility work.

3. Background

- 3.1 The land adjoining the Quantock block of flats at the Queensway has recently been cleared and is being used as temporary car parking for the town centre. The Focus building will be demolished in the near future and with the adjoining Short Street car park has been identified as surplus to requirements and it is therefore proposed to include this land within the Regeneration Area.
- 3.2 The four Tower Blocks in the Town Centre were built in the 1960's and the majority of the 417 flats are still owned by the Council. However there are 56 of the flats which have been sold under the Right-to-Buy to leaseholders, some of which are rented out to private sector tenants. Full details of the units in the Tower Blocks are set out in **Appendix 3**. Although the area has been subject to some anti-social behaviour over the years the vast majority of tenants and leaseholders look after their flats and there is a good community spirit. It would be beneficial to have some representatives from the community working closely with the Council in the coming years and this will be further discussed with the tenants and leaseholders to find the best approach to achieve this.
- 3.3 Within the Regeneration Area there is also a small community facility, the Storehouse, which is very actively used by the local community and is the base for the local Food Bank. A priority of the Joint Administration is to ensure there are sufficient community buildings in the Town Centre and a separate consultation exercise is underway to ascertain the type of community facilities which will be needed in the future.
- 3.4 The Regeneration Area is currently split by the dual carriageway and there is a footbridge which links land to the west of the road to the Town Centre. One of the aspirations for the regeneration project will be to try and bring these two communities together as the existing dual carriageway and underpass is a major barrier between the two areas of land. This will improve the access to the town centre as a result.
- 3.5 Therefore it is proposed to investigate the feasibility of a re-design of the road network to maximise the developable area and improve the connectivity and 'realm' of the whole Regeneration Area, sitting as it does in such a strategic position next to the Town Centre and with excellent public transport links. This feasibility work will also need to carefully consider the impact on traffic flows through the town to the sea front.

- 3.6 Although the majority of the land and properties within the Regeneration Area are in the Council's ownership as shown in **Appendix 1**, it is proposed that the properties along Southchurch Road be also included as a secondary area. These properties are so close it would provide an opportunity to discuss the wider regeneration proposals with the owners of these properties. A separate consultation meeting will be held with these owners in the coming weeks to get their thoughts on the proposals.

4. Draft Objectives

The detailed Draft Objectives are set out in **Appendix 2** and cover the following matters:

4.1 Delivery – Tenants and Leaseholders

- 4.1.1 An important objective with this project is to ensure that the existing tenants and leaseholders are fully consulted with any decisions which affect their homes in accordance with the Council's statutory obligations.
- 4.1.2 It is proposed that all residents in the Regeneration Area will be kept fully up-to-date with any progress in the coming months and throughout the project and that a variety of different consultation and communications methods are used such as direct letters, newsletters and information events held for example.

4.2 Regeneration

- 4.2.1 At this stage until further investigations are carried out in terms of the financial and practical requirements it will not be possible to be definitive as to the final nature of the regeneration proposals. However whatever the outcome there will be a number of overarching regeneration objectives that will result in the area being transformed.
- 4.2.2 At a high level this will include an objective to maximise and improve the existing housing in the Regeneration Area as well as the public realm. Any new dwellings will be built to high standards of design and energy efficiency and in overall terms there will be an aim to increase the number of homes achieved through the regeneration by a minimum of 30%. As the site is highly sustainable being close to the Town Centre any proposals will encourage alternatives to the reliance on the car.
- 4.2.3 The road layout and the accessibility issues from the Coleman Street side to the Town Centre are issues to also be addressed as part of the regeneration project.
- 4.2.4 There are a number of similar regeneration projects, primarily in London Boroughs, be they refurbishments, remodelling, or replacement, which could act as potential a 'role models'. It would be helpful for Officers and Members to visit these projects to learn from their experiences of undertaking a regeneration of this size.

4.3 Economic Sustainability – Balanced and Vibrant Community

- 4.3.1 One of the important issues to be addressed is to create a more mixed, balanced and vibrant community within the Regeneration Area and to create a range of tenures and housing opportunities for single people, couples, families and older people. However it will be an aspiration of the Project to ensure that there will be affordable housing options available to local people through the regeneration of the area.
- 4.3.2 The existing community facilities are well used by the local community and an important objective of the Project will be to improve or enhance these facilities and to make it a multi-use / function building(s) which would be used by the wider community too
- 4.3.2 Whatever the scale of the regeneration proposals there will be a significant investment made in the Regeneration Area and as a result a number of jobs will be created. Therefore there will be opportunities for local people to work on the project and there will be a requirement for the Developer to create apprenticeships throughout the lifespan of the Project.

4.4 Funding

- 4.4.1 The regeneration project will require a significant investment of capital resources in the coming years and it is anticipated that this will include significant private funding to make the project viable.
- 4.4.2 A project of this scale would offer a good opportunity to explore innovative partnership opportunities with private developers / investors in some form of joint venture arrangement which could also include the PSP Southend LLP. Officers will look to maximise such opportunities through the procurement arrangements for the Project, drawing from lessons learnt from 'role model' examples.
- 4.4.3 The significance of the overall Project will also warrant discussions with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) as well as the Local Economic Partnership (LEP) to see whether there are public funding opportunities which could be accessed to help meet some of the capital costs.

5. Corporate Implications

5.1 Contribution to Council's Vision & Corporate Priorities

The review of the Tower Blocks and the rest of the Regeneration Area will have an impact on a significant number of the Council's Corporate Priorities including:

- *Enable well-planned quality housing and developments that meet the needs of Southend's residents*
- *Continue to reduce crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour*

5.2 Financial Implications

- 5.2.1 At this stage it is difficult to accurately predict the total cost of the regeneration of this area but the capital costs are likely to be significant. Therefore a key aspect of any proposal would be to maximise the amount of external investment which can be attracted into the project and in particular attracting private finance investment. The intention would be that the majority of capital funding will come from private funding and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). There will be an expectation that the project will fund the replacement of existing HRA properties by building new Council homes.
- 5.2.2 This key strategic project will require initial pump priming of Council funds to undertake the necessary feasibility and options appraisal study alongside the examination and research of the various funding streams and models of delivery. It is recommended that a sum of £150,000 is earmarked from HRA reserves to undertake this initial scoping work.

5.3 Legal Implications

The legal aspects associated with the regeneration will be further investigated as the Project progresses, as existing tenures and rights, and those that come forth through transition planning need careful consideration.

5.4 People Implications

In order to progress a project of this magnitude this will be led by Senior Officers within the Council but it will be necessary to ensure that there is sufficient Project Management capacity available, as communications, consultations and transition planning with existing residents, businesses and the public will require significant staffing resources.

5.5 Property Implications

There a number of buildings included within the scope of the Project, the majority of which are in the Council's ownership and the impact on any proposals will need to consider the implications on the Council's assets and the revenue returns currently generated.

5.6 Consultation

A robust and meaningful communications and consultation plan will be established alongside the overarching project plans. Some initial communication has been undertaken by way of a letter from Councillor Norman to all of those living within the regeneration area. It is proposed that regular Newsletters will be produced as well as a range of public consultation exercises when more detailed proposals are available.

5.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

A full Equality Analysis will be undertaken as part of the project which will identify the equalities and diversity implications.

5.8 Risk Assessment

There are potentially a wide range of risks that will need to be addressed as the Project progresses and these will form part of the Project Management process.

5.9 Value for Money

One of the important considerations of the overall project will to achieve good value for money for the significant investment that will be required to transform and improve this important area in the Town Centre.

5.10 Community Safety Implications

As the Tower Blocks and the surrounding area have been subject to some anti-social behaviour in the past it will be an important objective for the project to reduce such instances through the regeneration proposals. The developer will be encouraged to work closely with the Police to achieve Secured by Design principles. There will also be some improvements carried out to the existing blocks to make sure they are more secure and security patrols are also being introduced.

5.11 Environmental Impact

There is an aspiration that, within the limits of financial viability, any new properties developed or refurbished would achieve higher standards of energy efficiency than the existing buildings in the area, which will achieve lower fuel bills for the residents and a reduction in CO² emissions.

6. Background Papers

None

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Boundaries of the Project

Appendix 2 – Draft Objectives

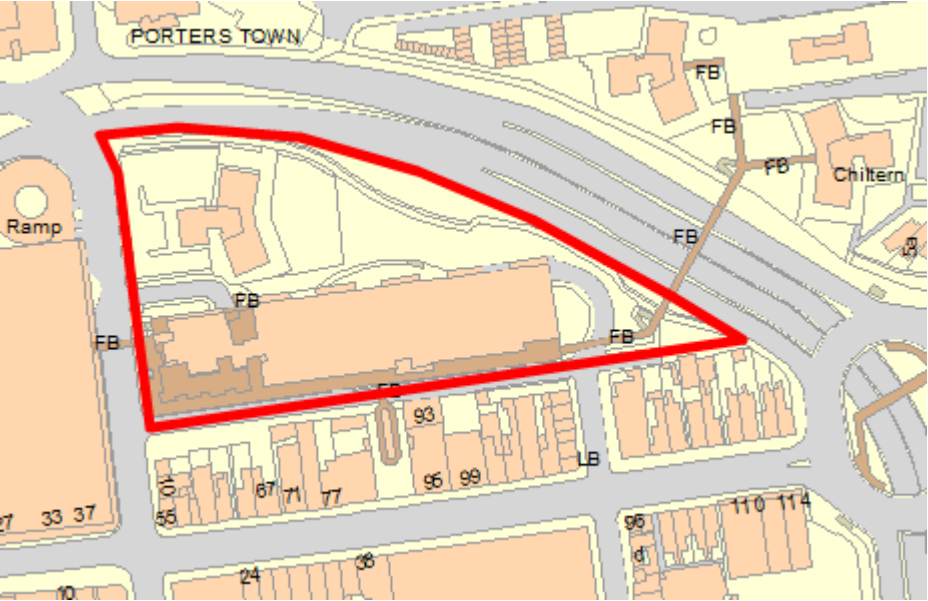
Appendix 3 – Numbers of units within the town centre tower blocks

Boundaries of the Project



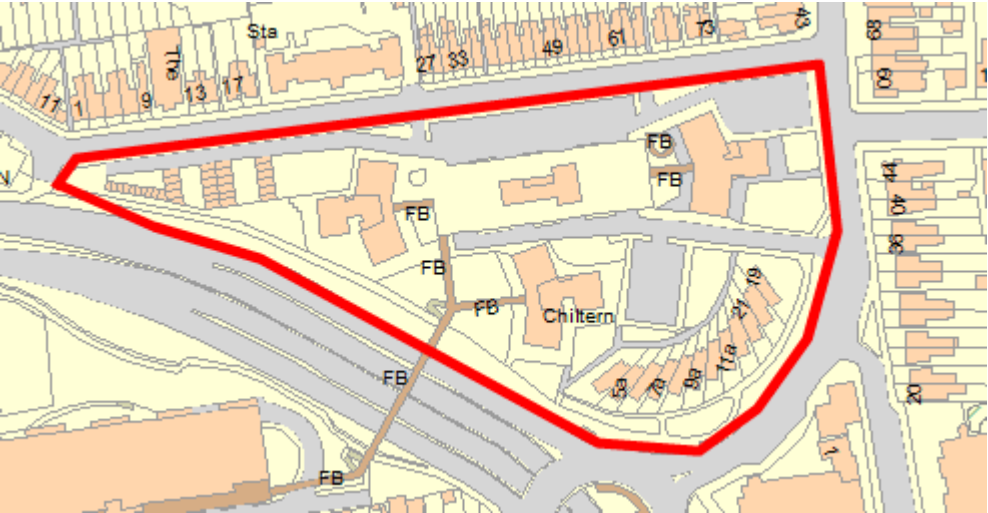
- | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|
| Primary Areas – | 1 | Chichester Road Site |
| | 2 | Coleman Street Site |
| | 3 | Focus/Connexions Site |
| Secondary Areas – | 4 | Highway and Underpass between Areas 1 & 2 |
| | 5 | Properties along Southchurch Road |

Primary Area 1 – Plan of the Chichester Road site



The Chichester Road site comprises one block of flats, and adjacent to the block is former Queensway House site which has been cleared and is being used as a temporary car park.

Primary Area 2 – Plan of the Coleman Street Site



The Coleman Street site houses 3 blocks of flats, a low rise block of 24 flats, a children’s play area and a community centre above unused garages. A further area which houses 10 cycle sheds and 4 blocks of garages is located at the west end of the site.

Draft Objectives to form the basis of a Development Brief for the Project

1. Introduction

Under the Council's corporate aim of "**Creating a Better Southend**" one of the key corporate "Prosperous" objectives is to:

"Enable well-planned quality housing and developments that meet the needs of Southend's residents and businesses".

The Regeneration Area adjoining the Town Centre has been identified as a high priority corporate project, where an improvement in the housing stock and environment is required.

2. Background & Vision

There are four town centre tower blocks at Coleman Street and Chichester Road within the Regeneration Area, being Laing 'Y' design, which present considerable management challenges to South Essex Homes.

They have suffered reputational damage due to a number of high profile incidents of antisocial and criminal behaviour. These properties are of a non-traditional build and present asset management challenges in terms of both maintenance and renovation.

Improving the housing stock and environment for those who live in central Southend is therefore the core vision.

3. Objectives

The following key Objectives will be used to form the basis of a Development Brief for the Regeneration Area.

The Regeneration Area within which these objectives are set is as per the plan in **Appendix 1**, duly noting 'primary areas' and 'secondary areas' of consideration. Although the Council has a legal interest in the majority of the land there are some properties in private ownership which will need to be taken into account as the project progresses. The proposals must also take account of the draft Town Centre Area Action Plan (SCAAP). The Objectives have been split into the following sub headings:

3.1 Environmental Regeneration

- To regenerate the area to improve the housing and the surrounding environment for tenants and leaseholders living in the area.
- To improve the quality of the existing housing in the area either through refurbishment or redevelopment.
- To improve the public realm.
- To increase the number of homes in the Regeneration Area by a minimum of 30%.
- Any new homes to be either town houses, or low rise apartment blocks – no more than 6 storeys high to create a better street scene.
- To ensure that any new homes are built to good space standards and to high levels of energy efficiency.
- To encourage alternatives to reliance on the car such as car clubs, and making use of public transport.
- To review the adjoining road network with a view to maximising the development of the Regeneration Area.
- To work with the owners of the adjoining properties in Southchurch Road to investigate what opportunities exist to improve the area.
- To improve links to the Town Centre, particularly for all who start at street level from the Coleman Street area.

3.2 Delivery – Tenants and Leaseholders

- To ensure that all residents are fully consulted in all aspects of any proposals that will affect their homes.
- To seek representatives from the local community to work with the Council to progress the regeneration proposals.
- To give tenants and leaseholders a reasonable choice in where they want to live in the future.
- To give support and advice to leaseholders about their housing options.
- To minimise the disruption faced by residents and wherever possible ensure that the Council meets their needs through this project.
- To look to create jobs, apprenticeships and training opportunities for residents through the regeneration construction work.
- To ensure that some initial work starts on site in 2015 and that the works are phased over a number of years to minimise impact to the residents.

3.3 Economic Sustainability - Balanced and vibrant Community

- To provide a wide range of housing opportunities for single people, couples, families and for older people.
- To provide a mix of different tenure options including social rent; affordable rent; shared ownership; market rent and housing for sale to create a balanced community.
- To improve or enhance the Community facilities in the area and that any facilities are multi – functional meeting the immediate needs of the wider community.
- Through the investment in the project create new job construction opportunities for local people and create new apprenticeships.

3.4 Funding

- To ensure that the package of proposals in the Regeneration Area is financially viable both in terms of capital and revenue funding.
- To maximise the use of private finance investment into the regeneration project by working with partners who have access to private finance.
- To maximise other Government grant funding through the Homes and Communities Agency and other public funding through the Local Economic Partnership.
- To maximise the use of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) resources.
- To make the best use of other financial vehicles and partnerships available to the Council.

Numbers of units within the town centre tower blocks

	Bedsit	1 bed	2 bed	Sum
Chiltern	14	30	60	104
Malvern	14	30	60	104
Pennine	14	30	60	104
Quantock	15	30	60	105
Sum:	57	120	240	417

There are 24 flats in Sutton Road which are also included within the regeneration area.