

Agenda Item 12

Housing Review Board

10 September 2009

EC/SJ



St Paul's, Heathpark, Honiton – a review of the work taking place on the estate to look at enhancing its appearance

Summary

During the 2007 Audit Commission inspection the Inspectors commented that there were problems on the area of St Paul's, Heathpark, Honiton leading to the estate having a 'neglected appearance'.

A report was presented to the Board at their meeting on 27th November 2008, following which the Board resolved that a working party be established to discuss the issue.

The working party met on 20th January 2009. They requested that plans were drawn up to give potential ideas and likely costs for improvement works. Following this Swan Paul Partnership Ltd was commissioned to draw up initial plans.

Using the ideas from these plans a questionnaire for residents has been circulated around the estate to establish exactly what local residents wish to see on the estate. The results from the questionnaire are discussed in this report.

Following on from these results it was decided to investigate further what could be done regarding a safe play area for young children by the Community Flat and further details are given in the report. It is estimated that these improvements and alternations will cost a maximum of £10,000.

Recommendations

- To meet the Audit Commission requirements regarding improvements to the Heathpark estate, £10,000 is allocated for the improvement work. (This will need to be found from savings within the HRA and/or contributions from partners).
- The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion agrees the weekly equipment inspection with the Head of Streetscene and the cost implications of increasing the frequency of weed clearance and litter picking in the area.

a) Reasons for Recommendation

To meet the requirements of the Audit Commission Inspection Report and to meet the requests of local residents.

b) Alternative Options

Not to meet the Audit Commission requirements and fail to meet local residents expectations.

c) Risk Considerations

The target from the Audit Commission inspection report is not met. Also the expectations of local residents are raised and not met.

d) Policy and Budgetary Considerations

As no money has been allocated for this work within existing budgets the money requested will need to be found from within the HRA

e) Date for Review of Decision

Within six months of the HRB meeting.

1 Background information

- 1.1 The rationale behind this project and background information on the Heathpark estate are given in the HRB paper presented on 27th November 2008.

2. The working party meeting on 20th January 2009

- 2.1 The Housing Review Board asked for a working party to be set up, to include Jamie Buckley (Engagement and Funding Officer), Ishbel Ramsay (Arts Development Officer), Ward Members for Honiton, and local social landlords.

- 2.2 The working party met on 20th January 2009. The first part of the meeting was a 'walkabout' around the estate, followed by a round table discussion. Please see the notes of the meeting (**Annex 1**) for a list of attendees and the matters discussed. Unfortunately, although invited, no representatives from other social landlords or any of the local ward members attended.

- 2.3 The meeting considered the background to the situation, possible ideas from members' present, funding issues and next steps. The meeting heard that there was no current funding identified, so any monies required would have to be allocated by landlords or raised through grant applications etc.

- 2.4 It was agreed that consideration should be given to the whole Heathpark estate and not just the area around the square at St Pauls. It is important to make the area inclusive and it was felt that focussing work and funding on one small area was not likely to achieve this.

- 2.5 The meeting agreed that priority should be given to:
1. Improving the appearance of the 'Square' at St Paul's;
 2. Play areas particularly the area by St Marks, and the potential site(s) for a community centre;
 3. Allotment space.

- 2.6 It was felt that the work needed to be undertaken in stages:
- a. Obtain a consultant's view of what might be possible in the different areas identified above and what the likely costs of such works would be;
 - b. Review these ideas and consider whether funding is available and from where;
 - c. Consult fully with local residents.

- 2.7 The meeting asked that plans be drawn up to give the working party some ideas of what might be possible and the likely costs involved. A sub group was appointed to select a consultant to carry out this work.

3. Appointment of consultant to draw up initial plans

- 3.1 The Housing Service has a small budget for maintenance work at St Paul's and there was sufficient money in the account to pay for a consultant to draw up the initial plans.

- 3.2 A project brief (**Annex 2**) was drawn up for potential consultants and, following advice from Neil Blackmore, Landscape Architect for EDDC, five consultancy firms were invited to apply for the work.
- 3.3 On 16th March 2009 the subgroup of the working party met with 3 consultants to discuss the project and afterwards offered the work to Swan Paul Partnership Ltd.
- 3.4 Their charge, to produce a master plan of the estate with suggestions for improvements and likely costings, will be a lump sum fee of £1,200, plus mileage and printing (excludes VAT).

4. Swan Paul Partnership's initial proposals

- 4.1 Members of the sub-group met with Steven Swan on 22nd April 2009 to consider his initial plans and proposals.
- 4.2 The suggestions concentrated around two areas on the estate – the 'square' at St Pauls and the area around the play park at St Marks. For each area they proposed various improvements together with an indication of the likely costs. The improvements were such that a 'mix and match' approach can be adopted.
- 4.3 These included:
For the St Marks area:
- Increasing the number of large trees and more shrubs
 - New paths, seating and dog bin
 - Enhancing three areas – the grassy area in front of the play park; the tarmac area in front of the multi-use games area; the tarmac area behind the multi-use games area.
- For the St Paul's area:
- Increasing the number of large trees and more shrubs
 - Terracing the grass area for 'allotment' type area
 - Converting hard surface to play area
 - Metal fencing to protect terraced area and play area
 - Patio outside community flat
 - Seats and dog bin
 - Gated bin store
 - Remodelling of parking area.
- 4.4 The sub-group agreed that residents should be consulted further on these ideas prior to any further work. However it was felt that it would not be beneficial to show the plans as they currently are, as this may raise expectations when funding for all the work may not be available.
- 4.5 The attached questionnaire (**Annex 3**) was drawn up to ask about the individual ideas proposed without suggesting that they will all be achievable.
- 4.6 The questionnaire was posted through every property on the estate and residents asked to return to the Community Flat by Friday 22nd May 2009.
- 4.7 To encourage further dialogue an 'open day' was held on Friday 29th May for residents to come along and discuss their ideas. Low energy light bulbs and other energy saving devices were handed out and there were games and ice creams for the younger children.
- 4.8 The sub-group also decided to carry out a car park survey to monitor the usage of the car parking spaces around St Paul's Square. This was carried out from 5-11th May 2009.

5. Feedback from the questionnaires, 'open day', and car park survey

5.1 We gave out over 140 questionnaires and had 21 returned (quite a low response). The answers are given below.

	Yes		No	
	%	Number	%	Number
Do you feel that changes need to be made to the estate?	84%	16	16%	3
Would you like to see more trees and plants throughout the estate?	53%	9	47%	8
Would you like to see a communal garden or allotment on the estate?	47%	9	53%	10
If a communal garden or allotment is provided would you be interested in maintaining it?	39%	7	61%	11
Do you feel that the estate needs a safe play area for young, pre-school children?	85%	17	15%	3
Do you agree with suggestion for a patio outside the Community Flat?	53%	9	47%	8
Do you agree with suggestion for grassy area in front of St Mark's play area to be improved and fenced to allow ball games to be played there safely?	75%	15	25%	5
Do you think car parking needs to be improved on the estate?	74%	14	26%	5
Would the estate benefit from a new community centre?	56%	9	43%	7

5.2 It seems that there are four areas where residents are in agreement:

- changes are needed to the estate;
- a safe play area is needed for pre-school children;
- the grassy area by St Mark's play area should be improved;
- car parking needs to be improved on the estate.

5.3 The most popular place for a play area for pre-school children was by the Community Flat (38 St Paul's Road).

5.4 Car parking on the estate - The survey of car parking within the St Paul's Square area, carried out in May, showed that the number of parking spaces was adequate. However residents want to park as near to their own property as possible. Residents have been informed that they can park on the area in front of the squash court - this is not just for users of the squash court but is for residents on the estate as well. Also staff at the Little Ones Day Nursery have been asked to park further down on the estate so that there is ample parking for residents behind 20-26 St Paul's.

5.5 We have written to all residents to let them know the outcome of the questionnaire (**Annex 4**).

6. Assessment of what can be done to provide a safe play area for young children and by St Mark's play area, and other improvement ideas

6.1 Following discussions with the Senior Engineer from Streetscene we are making some suggestions for small scale improvements which would meet with the needs expressed by the community.

These include:

- a trim trail, similar to the one at the St Leonard's play area but designed specifically for very young children (approximate cost £3,000).
- excavating the grassy area between the car parking spaces and front door to the community flat and laying stone and coloured tarmac which could have some play markings such as snakes and ladders (approximate cost £1,500 plus extra amount for coloured tarmac).
- installing a bench seat on the grassy area by the community flat and one by St Marks play area (approximate cost per bench plus installation £750).
- when the tarmac is replaced in the St Mark's play area using coloured tarmac or paint, with marked play areas (exact costings not yet available).

The exact details of the equipment, play markings, site for the bench, will need to be finalised.

6.2 The trim trail equipment would need to be included within the weekly inspection regimes carried out by Streetscene. As Streetscene are seeking to reduce the number of areas inspected this would need to be agreed between the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion and the Head of Streetscene.

6.3 The total cost for this work should not exceed £10,000. We should explore other sources of funding for this work, including other landlords with housing on the estate.

6.4 It has also been suggested that the appearance of the estate would be improved with more regular clearing of weeds and litter from the paths and roadsides. There may be cost implications for increasing the frequency of these services which would need to be discussed with the Head of Streetscene.

7. Recommendations

7.1 To meet the Audit Commission requirements regarding improvements to the Heathpark estate, £10,000 is allocated for the improvement work. (This will need to be found from savings within the HRA, grants and contributions).

7.2 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion agrees the weekly equipment inspection with the Head of Streetscene and the cost implications of increasing the frequency of weed clearance and litter picking in the area.

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications requiring comment within the report.

Financial Implications

There is no available budget for the £10,000 which will have to be found from savings within the HRA.

Consultation on Reports to the Executive

Ongoing consultation with local residents as outlined in the report.

Background Papers

- Housing Review Board paper 'St Paul's, Honiton – review of enhancement work' presented to meeting on 27 November 2008

Emma Charlton ext 2982
Housing Projects Officer

Housing Review Board