

Report to Custom and Self Build Task Group

Potential Custom and Self Build development at Bradfield Place, Stoke Ferry

September 2021

Summary

The Council's Custom and Self Build Action Plan includes an action to identify council owned land to deliver an exemplar custom/self build site in order to demonstrate to private land owners the potential for this type of development. Land at Bradfield Place, Stoke Ferry was previously identified as being suitable and the council has explored various options regarding how to bring the site forward. The preferred option is to commission a specialist Custom Build Enabler to project manage delivery of the site and sale of plots. This would involve the design and construction of site infrastructure (road and services) and sale of plots to individuals to recoup to the costs of the infrastructure and generate a land value for the site.

During the pandemic, officers lacked the capacity to progress proposals further and other priorities such as delivery of the Accelerated Construction Programme and Towns Fund mean that officer capacity remains low. However, it is expected that once an enabler is commissioned, this will enable the site to be delivered with limited draw on officer time.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Custom and Self Build Task Group endorses a report to Cabinet seeking delegated authority to procure the services of a Custom Build Enabler to project manage the delivery of the site as custom and self-build housing. The project will be reviewed at a certain point prior to any construction work being carried out to ensure that delivery of the site is viable.

Background

The borough council retains a 1.5-hectare (3.7 Ac) area of unused amenity land at Bradfield Place, Stoke Ferry which has been identified as being suitable for the delivery of custom and self-build housing. The site accessed via a former local authority estate, benefits from open views over the adjacent agricultural fields and retains a secluded setting;

The site is partially allocated with 0.7ha allocated for at least 10 dwellings (Policy G88.2 Stoke Ferry - Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016) and a similar sized area unallocated but with the potential to deliver a further 10 dwellings. The unallocated section of the site was previously a preferred allocation within the Local Plan Review. However, any allocations within the village will now be made within the parishes Neighbourhood Plan. Opportunities to have the land allocated will continue to be explored.

In order to commence development without a significant delay (awaiting the outcome of the Neighborhood plan), it is likely that the site would need to be brought forward in 2 phases. This would enable the success of the first phase to be reviewed prior to committing to development of the second phase.

A demand assessment for custom and self-build in Stoke Ferry was commissioned in 2020 and this identified 86 individuals interested in building their own home in Stoke Ferry. Whilst this is encouraging, it is anticipated that interest from a wider range of potential buyers will grow when the site has planning permission and the plots can be actively marketed locally.

Following advice received from the National Custom and Self Build Association (NaCSBA), officers met with a number of Custom and Self Build Enablers in order to understand how they operate and how they could assist with delivery of Bradfield Place. Whilst there are different types of Enablers, it was previously agreed by the Task Group that an agent/consultant enabler would be most appropriate to assist with Bradfield Place, Stoke Ferry in order for the council to retain control of the development and give plot purchasers sufficient choice regarding how their home is delivered.

It is envisaged that the enablers role would include the following

- Feasibility, Viability, Strategy, and Concept Designs,
- Design / Management of Site Infrastructure works,
- Design of Affordable Housing Units (depending on delivery model), and
- Submitting outline planning application
- Development of design code and plot passports/strategy for Custom / Self Build building plots,
- Development of legal pack for sale of plots
- Marketing strategy / Marketing of plots,
- Management of plot reservations,
- Engagement with Mortgage services providers/development of lender panel,
- Assisting/signposting plot purchasers through the process of engaging professionals and contractors,
- Overseeing of plot construction and support self-builders through build

Whilst it is inevitable that the enabler would use sub-contractors for some of this work, they would act as the overall project managers. This will ensure that all aspects of the project are tailored for custom and self-build development as well as the draw on officers capacity being kept to a minimum.