
Marvillion Court: Strategic Housing Context – Director of Health and Housing (November 2012)**Existing Russet Stock in East Peckham**

Russet has 30 homes in East Peckham designated for occupation by for persons aged 55 years or older, consisting of 24 bungalows and 6 flats. In examining the circumstances of the existing tenants for these homes it has been confirmed that all are indeed over the age of 55. These 30 homes represent nearly a quarter (over 23%) of all of the 130 dwellings of social housing stock Russet manages in this location for any household type. This is a disproportionately large percentage compared with the vast majority of other parishes in Tonbridge and Malling. For example the percentage of bungalows to the wider social housing stock for other parts of the borough are Ightham 2.3%, Hadlow 5.9%, East Malling 5.6%, and Burham 13%. It can be robustly argued that social housing provision for older persons is already adequately provided for, and there is clearly an existing generous bias towards bungalow provision.

Housing Need Boroughwide

In terms of the wider context for the Council I can report that 34% of total applicants on the housing register are aged 50+, and for the period June 2011 to June 2012 nearly a third (30%) of all applicants re-housed were aged 50+. Whilst this is not based just on East Peckham, this does provide evidence to strongly suggest that the overall housing need for older persons across the borough is being met, and this is without the continued availability of housing stock at Marvillion Court. This is notwithstanding that many applicants aged over 50 will also bid for general needs housing, which is also planned in the proposed new redevelopment at the Marvillion site.

Housing Need in East Peckham

In terms of a local housing “need” a study has been made, of the recent social housing allocation history for East Peckham, which illustrates how the existing social stock may not be serving this part of the Borough as fully as it could. Of the 14 homes becoming available since 2009 only two have gone to a household from within East Peckham. For example of the three 1 bedroom properties advertised since 2009 all new tenants have been from outside East Peckham. However six of the applicants were from East Peckham, but were not prioritised for housing in a way a local lettings plan would now enable (a Local Lettings Plan would be available for the scheme at Marvillion Court if planning permission is granted). There have been three 3 bedroom houses advertised since 2009, of which 3 households from East Peckham applied, but only one was successful.

Of the existing 30 homes for over 55s managed by Russet in East Peckham only half of current occupants came from a previous address within East Peckham (including 5 decanted from Marvillion Court), with the remaining half equally split between those having a local connection to Tonbridge and Malling and those from other locations (sometimes very much further afield) from outside the Borough.

In analysing the recent allocation data it is clear that only 14.29% of available homes since 2009 have been allocated to residents of East Peckham (14 lets and 2 allocated to local residents), even though there is a demonstrable immediate need to draw from.

Shared Ownership Tenures

In relation to the proposed shared ownership properties, the HomeBuy Agent that administers these schemes for the South East reports that (for November) 433 households are registered from Tonbridge & Malling, 29 of which are aged 50+. Within this total figure 4 are from East Peckham, one is a current housing association tenant, and another is aged over 55 and retired.

Local Lettings Plan

The introduction of a bespoke Local Lettings Plan for the proposed Marvillion Court scheme in East Peckham would ensure that a broad range of tenures and unit types would be prioritised for those with an immediate local connection to East Peckham, for the immediate benefit of local families. This is an operational document that requires that, for available lets at the new scheme, Russet must prioritise applicants with a local connection to East Peckham first, before seeking to house those from elsewhere in the Borough. This is a robust (non-optional) and very successful process that is used between Russet Homes and the Council extensively elsewhere, to enable schemes to truly meet a defined local need.

Housing Summary

What emerges is the clear impression that there is a local social housing need in East Peckham that remains unmet, because successful allocations are mainly to those with high priority from other locations within the Borough – in part because no Local Lettings Plans are applied to existing stock. The new scheme could bring stability to the local community by both seeking to serve the local need as first priority and also assisting those households that would otherwise have to move out of East Peckham to find suitable accommodation elsewhere. This could be secured through a robust Local Lettings Plan to function for the new Russet homes and ensure the scheme continues to serve East Peckham.