

NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET – 21 SEPTEMBER 2010

Title of report	OURPLACE™ QUALITY RATING SCHEME
Key Decision	a) Financial Yes b) Community No
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Purpose of report	To update Cabinet on the development of the Council's ourplace™ quality rating scheme. To obtain Cabinet approval for the extension of the ourplace™ quality rating scheme to other local authorities.
Reason for Decision	Under Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 local authorities have the power to do undertake activities that they consider are likely to contribute towards economic, social and environmental well-being. Cabinet are required to consider whether the ourplace™ quality rating scheme will contribute towards the promotion or improvement of well-being.
Strategic aims	The proposed initiative meets the following aims of the Council Delivery Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger, Safer and Healthier Communities • Prosperous and Sustainable Communities • Organisational Development
Implications:	
Financial/Staff	No staff implications. Financial implications are outlined within the report.
Link to relevant CAT	Place Shaping
Risk Management	A risk assessment has been undertaken.

Equalities Impact Assessment	Not applicable - Building for Life is Government supported national standard for well designed homes and neighbourhoods.
Human Rights	None.
Transformational Government	This will be considered as part of the Value for Money programme
Comments of Head of Paid Service	The report is satisfactory.
Comments of Section 151 Officer	The report is satisfactory.
Comments of Monitoring Officer	The report is satisfactory.
Consultees	Teams within Place Shaping Service. Procurement Manager.
Background papers	<p>NWLDC (2010) ourplace™ Quality Rating Scheme Risk Assessment</p> <p>NWLDC (2010) Standard licence agreement: Local authorities.</p> <p>NWLDC (2010) Standard licence agreement: House builders.</p> <p>NWLDC (2009) Helping you find your ideal place to live</p> <p>NWLDC (2 December 2008) Cabinet report: Urban Design Initiative Proposals</p> <p>CABE (2007) Delivering great places to live – 20 questions you need to answer.</p> <p>CABE (2007) Housing Audit: assessing the design quality of new housing in the East Midlands, West Midlands and South West.</p> <p>Department for Communities and Local Government (2007), Homes for the Future: more affordable, more sustainable.</p> <p>NWLDC (2008) 'North West Leicestershire Design initiative' Powerpoint presentation</p> <p>NWLDC (2008 and 2009) Annual Monitoring Report (reference: H6 Housing Quality data)</p> <p>NWLDC (2008) Urban Design Initiative Risk Assessment.</p> <p>NWLDC Saved Local Plan Policies</p>

	Note: All of the above background items are held by the Council's Principal Urban Designer, with the exception of the Annual Monitoring Report (held with the Spatial Planning Team).
Recommendations	<p>A) THAT CABINET APPROVES THE EXTENSION OF THE OURPLACE™ QUALITY RATING SCHEME TO OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES.</p> <p>B) THAT CABINET DELEGATE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SETTING OF LICENCE FEE CHARGES TO THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT IN CONSULTATION WITH THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER, WITH FEES REVIEWED ANNUALLY.</p>

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Cabinet approved the Council's first design initiative on 2 December 2008 and resolved to share the aspirations of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) in expecting residential led development of 'very good' and 'good' standard (as defined by the national Building for Life standard) to become the norm as opposed to the exception.
- 1.2 The ourplace™ design initiative seeks to encourage and inspire people to create and expect places that contribute to our everyday lives and support our natural, built and social environment. There is a complementary relationship between ourplace™ and the Council's Green Footprints Challenge which seeks to encourage and promote more environmentally responsible lifestyles.
- 1.3 Cabinet also approved the establishment of a 'scores on the street' scheme for all new build homes and neighbourhoods, which was subsequently launched in October 2009.
- 1.4 Since October 2009, 14 formal Building for Life assessments have been completed and the first 'A+' and 'A' quality rating certificates will be presented to developers on 30 September 2010 by Council Design Ambassadors.

2. QUALITY RATING SCHEME

- 2.1 It has become apparent that the use of quality rating certificates provides a valuable additional tool in raising the standard of new residential led developments, complementing enhanced design policies and guidance within the emerging Local Development Framework and the Council's decision in 2008 to appoint an urban designer as part of the Place Shaping service.
- 2.2 The ourplace™ quality rating scheme is recognised by CABE as an innovative and emerging example of best practice, with the scheme being shortlisted for a national award in August 2010.
- 2.3 The scheme has attracted considerable interest from other local authorities and it has become apparent that there is significant potential to capitalise upon the Council's innovative approach to raising the standard of new build homes and neighbourhoods.

2.4 The benefits of extending the scheme are three fold:

- The more local authorities that use the ourplace™ scheme, the more effective it will become, both within North West Leicestershire and beyond its administrative boundaries.
- The opportunity to generate an income stream via licensing arrangements (please refer to appendix one).
- The opportunity for North West Leicestershire to be recognised for its innovative approach to urban design and homes.

2.5 Since 2008, the Council has been monitoring the standard of completed residential led developments. In 2009, such monitoring became a Key Performance Indicator within Annual Monitoring Reports. Figure 1 illustrates the national, regional and district baselines against completed schemes (2009) versus schemes approved since October 2009. It is expected that of schemes approved since October 2009, three of these will be completed in 2011 and form part of the Council's Annual Monitoring Report returns next year.

Standard (as defined by national Building for Life standard)	National baseline (source: CABE)	Regional baseline (source: CABE)	NWLDC baseline (2008)	NWLDC H6 (2009)	Residential led schemes (8no.) approved since October 2009
'Very good'	5%	3%	Nil	Nil	12.5%
'Good'	13%	0%	Nil	Nil	75%
'Average'	53%	42%	67%	50%	12.5%
'Poor'	29%	55%	33%	50%	Nil

Figure 1: Monitoring residential led development design quality in North West Leicestershire.

Notes:

a) 'Very good' and 'good' developments reflect the Council's design aspirations.

b) 8no. schemes approved as follows: Market Place, Whitwick, Clements Gate, Diseworth, 57-57a Whitehill Road, Ellistown, Battleflat Drive, Ellistown, Homestead Road, Thringstone, Swebstone Road, Heather, Huntlands, Long Whatton and Sence Valley, Ibstock (Bellway Homes large development).

CONCLUSION

3.1 Early evidence suggests that the Quality Rating Scheme is having a positive impact on the quality of new homes and neighbourhoods within North West Leicestershire.

3.2 Given the increased expectation placed on local planning authorities to secure good design, share best practice and generate income the scheme offers clear opportunities for growth.

3.3 Building for Life is a trademark and the property of the Building for Life partnership, led by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE). If the licensing scheme is successful and any profits are generated it may be necessary to enter into discussions with CABE regarding the continued use of the intellectual property rights within the Building for Life quality rating scheme.

APPENDIX 1

LICENSING STRUCTURE

Local authorities

Local authorities with an Accredited Building for Life Assessor will be invited to enter into a licence agreement with North West Leicestershire District Council to operate the ourplace™ quality rating scheme within their administrative boundaries.

As part of the licence agreement local authorities participating in the scheme are required to notify North West Leicestershire of developments awarded 'A+' or 'A' rated certificates.

House builders

House builders that secure either an 'A+' or 'A' rating certificate will be invited to enter into a licence agreement with North West Leicestershire District Council.

The licence agreement will enable house builders to maximise the brand differentiation opportunities offered by association with the ourplace™ brand.

Licences are strictly limited to a named development and/or a particular phase of a larger development. Licences are therefore not transferable between sites.