



ECONOMY REGENERATION & HOUSING COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 27 March 2024

REPORT TITLE:	ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF HOMES ENGLAND COMPLIANCE AUDIT REPORT OUTCOME
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION & PLACE

REPORT SUMMARY

This report seeks acknowledgement of Homes England's Compliance Audit Report outcome. The audit was to ensure compliance with Homes England funding requirements for the 2021-26 Affordable Homes Programme. This related to a previous decision made by Housing Committee on 10th March 2021 to approve the purchase of six new Council homes in Rock Ferry. The Council was awarded grant from the above Homes England programme to support the development.

The audit reported a grade of "Green – meets requirements". No breaches were identified.

The housing development contributes to Theme 4 of Wirral's Working Together Plan 2023-27 by working to deliver people focussed regeneration.

The Ward affected is Rock Ferry.

This is a non-key decision.

RECOMMENDATION

The Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee is recommended to note the outcome of the Homes England Compliance Report 2023/24 as outlined within the report.

EXEMPT INFORMATION

Appendix 1 contains exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. It is in the public interest to exclude the press and public under Paragraph 3 'Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding the information).'

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 Homes England requires that the Council brings the outcome of this audit, any breaches, and recommendations to this committee's attention within three calendar months of receipt of the report. The last date on which this can be done is 24th April 2024.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 No other options are available to the Council as acknowledgement of the Audit Report outcome is a grant funding requirement.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Council was successful in its bid in late 2021 to Homes England for grant funding to contribute towards the development of 6 housing units in Rock Ferry. Grant was provided from the Affordable Homes Programme 2021-2026. In mid-2022, the subsequent grant funding agreement was executed between the Council and Homes England. The agreement committed the Council to be subject to a Homes England Compliance Audit. The housing development commenced in June 2022 and the first Homes England grant tranche was drawn down shortly afterwards.
- 3.2 In June 2023 the Council was notified that it would be audited to ensure compliance with Homes England's Capital Funding Guide in respect of general grant compliance and compliance connected with the development, but not compliance post-development which may be subject to a future audit. The Council was required to appoint an independent auditor and a company called BDO was subsequently appointed. BDO carried out the audit in August 2023 and found full compliance. BDO reported this directly to Homes England. The report is enclosed as Appendix 1 to this report. Appendix 1 contains exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. It is in the public interest to exclude the press and public under Paragraph 3 'Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding the information).'
- 3.3 Homes England issued an advance notification of its Compliance Audit Report to the Council on 17th January 2024, which reported a grade of "Green – meets requirements". It formally issued the report on 24th January 2024. No breaches were identified.
- 3.4 The housing development referred to at paragraph 3.1 of this report successfully completed in December 2023 and the homes are now occupied.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising from the Audit Report outcome.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Council would be in breach of its grant funding agreement with Homes England should the report outcome not be acknowledged.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 There are no staffing, ICT or assets implications arising from the Audit Report outcome.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 If Committee were to not acknowledge the Audit Report outcome, the Council would be in breach of its grant funding agreement with Homes England. This risk is mitigated by the presentation of this report to Committee.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 No engagement or consultation was necessary for the Audit.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no equality issues arising from this report.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The content and/or recommendations contained within this report are expected to have no impact on emissions of Greenhouse Gases.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no community wealth implications arising from this report however the housing development contributes to Theme 4 of Wirral's Working Together Plan 2023-27 by working to deliver people focussed regeneration.

REPORT AUTHOR: Ed Kingsley
Principal Strategic Housing & Investment Officer
telephone: 0151 691 8243
email: edwardkingsley@wirral.gov.uk

APPENDIX

Appendix 1 – Compliance Audit Report 2023/24 – Exempt from publication by virtue of Appendix 1 as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. It is in the public interest to exclude the press and public under Paragraph 3 'Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding the information).'

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Compliance Audit Report – 2023/24 for Wirral Council, Homes England, January 2024 (confidential);
2. Homes England and Wirral Borough Council Grant Agreement, June 2022.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Housing Committee: Proposal to Acquire Units for Affordable Housing Use	10 th March 2021