

101391022
Revision 01

ACCOMMODATION WORKING GROUP

NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

Meeting:	21 st October 2024, 9:00-11:00
Location:	MS Teams
Chair:	Fern Lincoln (FL) – ESC
Attendees:	SZC – Rebecca Calder (RC), Niki Pieri (NP) – (Observer), Mike Humphrey (MH) – (Observer), James Solomon (JS) – (Observer) ESC – Fern Lincoln (FL), Teresa Howarth (TH) – (Observer), Naomi Hayes (NH) – (Observer), Alexis Corless (AC) – (Observer), Philip Ridley (PR) – (Observer) SCC – Isaac Nunn (IN), Andrew Rutter (AR) – (Observer)
Apologies:	-

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Meeting Notes:

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

These were:

- AC to arrange internal ESC discussion on how to progress the Tourist Accommodation Plan – this has been progressed and a consultant appointed. Action closed.
- JS to provide an initial and ongoing updates to ESC on SZC engagement with tourism accommodation providers – Action closed but noted that updates will continue through the accommodation working group discussions / future decision making will be guided by the Tourism Accommodation Plan.

SZC UPDATE

Project Update and Feedback from Community Forums

- RC noted that information on the Housing Fund grants had been shared at the Leiston Placeboard meeting, Community Forum and Main Development Site Forum, with ESC's leaflets also shared at the latter. Northern and Southern Transport Forums are scheduled for November, providing an additional platform for promotion. TH advised that she would check if Sarah Allison is available to attend and present. FL expressed interest in attending as an observer also.
- RC inquired about how best to engage with Citizens Advice as the grants / opportunities to rent out accommodation to workers may be of interest to people struggling with the cost of living.

Project Accommodation

- SZC will take over Pontins Pakefield from 1 January 2025.
 - Pontins is at full capacity until December 31st, and refurbishment cannot begin until January 1st.
 - 112 club apartments, located in a separate area of the park, will be refurbished first, allowing other rooms to be worked on later without causing disturbance. The plan is to refurbish and release 50 rooms every two weeks.
 - Accommodation will be self-catering (although may be offered as catered on a transitional basis until the refurbishment work is done). Amenities such as the bar, café, pool, and gym will be available to workers.
 - PR noted that ESC understands that SZC plans to host a day at Pontins for potential contractors to discuss refurbishment and that this might be of interest to ESC's housing maintenance team.
 - JS added that 60 companies have expressed interest in reviewing the refurbishment program and understanding its scope.
- JS / NP are working on a planning application for touring pitches and aiming to submit this by the end of the year.
- Archaeological mitigation fieldwork has started on the campus site.

Accommodation Management System

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- JS reported that there are currently bed spaces available on the AMS across a wide range of accommodation types and prices; SZC would like to see more accommodation in the £50-£70 per night range.
- There are currently 194 seekers (NHB workers registered with AMS).
- FL inquired about availability in Felixstowe, to which RC responded that there is no accommodation under £75 per night offered in that location currently.
- FL asked JS if landlords with large properties have been in contact. JS confirmed that they had but noted that landlords often prefer to have a lead booker who then finds others to share the house.

Action – JS to signpost owners of larger accommodation to ESC to check whether HMO licence is required.

Workforce Survey

- RC set out that this has been undertaken and will be reported in due course.

Action – RC to share workforce survey results once available.

Local Providers - New Accommodation Proposals

- It was noted that a number of local providers have approached ESC with a view to seeking planning consent for new accommodation for SZC workers. The balance to be struck between the potential benefits of new accommodation coming to market to house SZC workers and the potential transport / planning impacts of this coming forward in the wrong places was discussed.
- TH requested that she be more connected to potential developments at local caravan sites, particularly for touring caravan pitches; PR noted that NP provided an update to the Planning Group on some potential sites.
- The potential for workers / tourists to share sites was discussed - RC / JS advised that this has worked well at HPC, with no safeguarding issues arising, at sites such as Quantock Lakes (noting that workers are subject to the Worker Code of Conduct and vetting / pre-employment checks).

ESC UPDATE

Private Housing Market Supply Plan – roll out

- Information is now available on the ESC website, including a contact email. Leaflets have been produced for wider promotion.
- TH confirmed that resources and a robust process are in place for the launch, and delivery will commence immediately following legal approval.
- TH set out that there have been five inquiries regarding HMOs, all requiring significant work to become viable. TH will be visiting local community groups over the next few months to generate interest.
- FL will be collaborating with the East Suffolk lettings model to identify private landlords interested in participating and also plans to meet with social landlords in the area.
- FL and TH are still in the process of recruiting for the development officer role.
- Work will soon commence with registered providers to address empty homes.

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- RC inquired about the timing of the next Private Housing Supply Plan - TH advised that the current plan will run for a year.

Tourism Accommodation Plan

- AC advised that the Tourism Accommodation Plan is being developed and the consultants producing this are on board. An inception meeting with ESC has taken place, and they are compiling documentation for background reading and due diligence.
- AC emphasised the importance of finding the right mechanism to ensure ongoing conversations with potential operators are effectively integrated. This will ensure that relevant information is communicated to the consultancy working on the plan, keeping all parties aligned and informed.
- Meetings will be scheduled to move the plan forward.
- RC inquired when the first draft might be ready - AC indicated that this is likely to be in January 2025.

Community Feedback / Any Emerging Issues

- FL reported that wider issues could affect the district, including the need to support refugee accommodation and other organisations seeking bed spaces in East Suffolk. The situation will depend on government decisions regarding visas, the end of the Homes for Ukraine program, and incentive payments for accommodating guests etc. These factors could significantly impact the work being done across the district and are important emerging issues to monitor.

REPORTING TO SOCIAL REVIEW GROUP

- While on one hand it is positive that the market is responding and bringing forward accommodation, this presents challenges in terms of control, location, and management.
- There is initial interest in housing grants, but time will tell how many people move beyond initial expressions of interest.
- The Chair and one SZC member of the AWG will attend the SRG - FL and TH will determine who should attend.

Action – FL or TH to attend Social Review Group meetings

AOB

- The Terms of Reference were agreed.
- The next meeting is to be scheduled for January 2025.

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Actions raised during the meeting:

Date Raised	Ref.	Description	Lead	Date Due
21 st October 2024	1	JS to signpost larger properties to ESC to check whether an HMO licence is required.	SZC	Ongoing
21 st October 2024	2	RC to share workforce survey once available.	SZC	Ahead of next meeting
21 st October 2024	3	FL or TH to attend Social Review Group meetings	ESC	Ongoing

Author: Caitlin Murphy (SZC) / Reviewed by RC (SZC) ahead of circulation to AWG