

**Appendix A**

**A Review of Housing for older  
people in the south of  
Central Bedfordshire  
Consultation Plan for Toddington**



## **Foreword from Julie Ogley, Director of Social Care, Health and Housing**

Central Bedfordshire Council would like to hear your views on housing for older people in Toddington. In this document you will find information on the reasons why the Council is undertaking a review on its current and future provision and how you can have your say.

Currently, Council housing for older people is provided through our Sheltered Housing and Extra Care schemes and older person's bungalows. These are designed to meet the needs of older people who may need a little extra support to remain living independently. The schemes benefit from having an alarm service and assistance from Sheltered Housing Officers who make contact with residents on a regular basis. There are also older people who live in standard Council accommodation that has been adapted to help with mobility issues.

There are over 600 units of sheltered accommodation throughout the south area of Central Bedfordshire, many of which were built over thirty years ago. A growing number have begun to 'show their age' and we have become increasingly concerned that they do not meet modern standards or the expectations of future residents. This is not the case for every scheme but for some we continue to experience great difficulty in attracting potential residents. As people are living longer and remaining healthier the demand for sheltered or extra care housing of the type we currently provide is decreasing. We are aware that people are looking for alternative solutions to support them staying longer in their own homes and we are looking at how this support is delivered.

For these reasons the Council has decided to undertake a review of its current provision and likely future demand. To inform this review a full consultation process has been developed. The views of existing residents and potential future residents will be sought and used to inform a range of options that will then be consulted on before a decision is taken by the Council.

The first area to be reviewed is the current provision in Toddington at Crescent Court. During this consultation process, which will take around eight months, no decision will be made on the future of Crescent Court.

**I hope that you will take the opportunity to let us know your views.**

**Public meeting Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup> May at 7.00pm in Toddington Village Hall.**

## **Why is the Review taking place?**

Over the last few decades the housing needs of older people have changed. People are living longer and remaining healthier. They want to retain their independence and stay in their own homes for as long as possible. As the main provider of social housing in the South Bedfordshire area the Council wants to make sure that it is planning to meet future needs in the right way. It also wants to make sure the housing that is provided now for older people is safe, secure and meets modern standards.

Over the coming months the Council will be undertaking a review of its current provision and giving consideration to how it meets the needs of older people now and in the future. An important part of this review will be the views of current residents of our sheltered housing schemes and potential future residents. We will also be seeking the views of the local community, our health colleagues and other professionals involved in the support of older people.

To begin the review we are looking at the provision of housing for older people in Toddington, Bedfordshire. Later in this document you will find information about Crescent Court, the sheltered housing scheme in Toddington. This information outlines some of the issues that had led the Council to look at the future of Crescent Court as part of the overall review.

At the end of the document you will find a set of questions and answers. Some of these are questions that have been raised by local residents over the last few weeks. We will be publishing these questions and answers on the Council's website and will add the questions and answers that are recorded at the public meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2011 and the meeting with Crescent Court residents on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2011. The details of how we plan to carry out the consultation to inform the Review are described over the page.

## **What do we know about the future housing needs of older people?**

A major new report published in May 2011 by Henley Business School, '*Housing markets and independence in old age: expanding the opportunities*' highlights the growing challenge for Britain's ageing population. Research shows that by 2033, there will be an extra 3.5 million households aged over 65 years, a 60% increase on current figures

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) for Bedfordshire published in 2010 states that the number of single pensioner households will grow significantly between 2007 and 2021. In addition survey data in the document suggests that over 20% of older person's households in the county contain someone with a mobility problem and that rural areas and the urban fringe have the fastest growth of older people

The SHMA also reports that the housing requirements of older people differ from other household groups. Older people are mostly already housed. The issue for them is the suitability of their present housing. They move less frequently than other household groups and national policy is aimed at enabling them to live independently for as long as possible. Older people are not a homogenous group. They have different needs and requirements; it

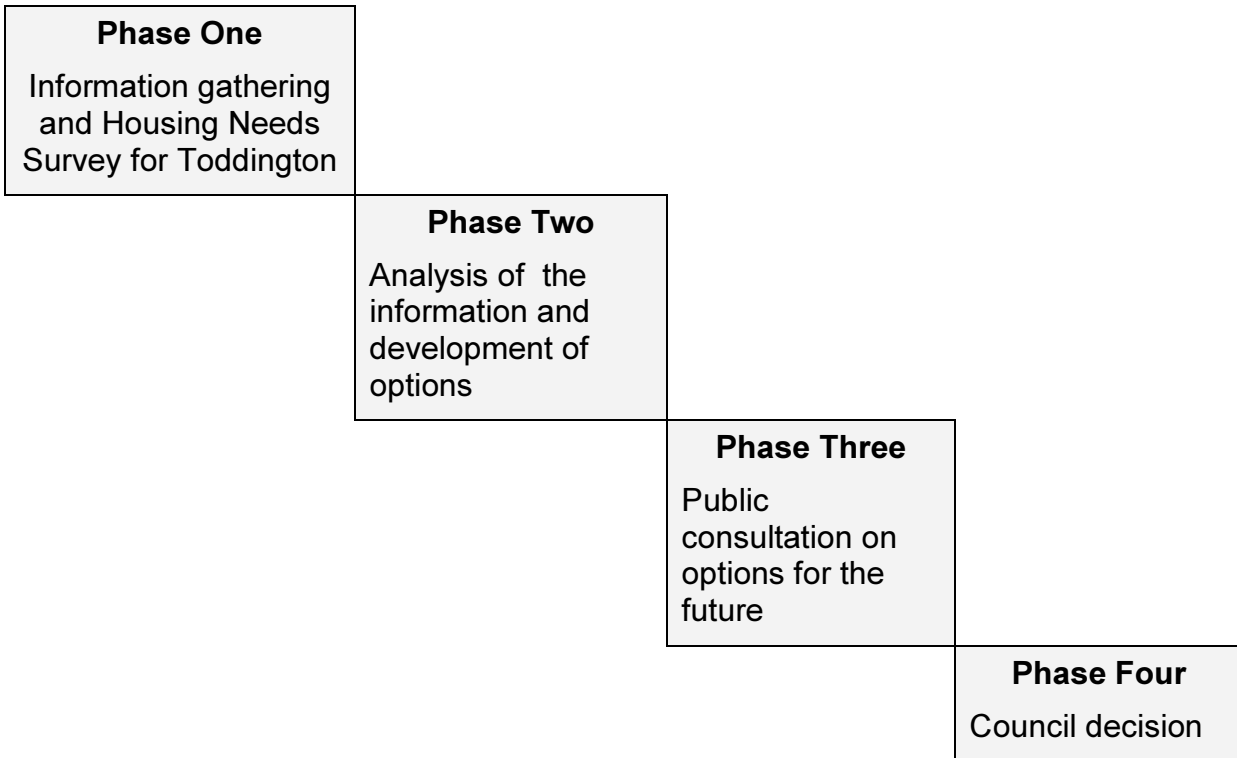
is those that are likely to be frail or suffer long term limiting illness that need additional consideration over and above other households.

Central Bedfordshire is expected to experience a significant growth in the numbers of older people over the next 10-20 years. The number of people aged 65 and over is projected to increase from 37,000 to 55,000 an increase of 53% by 2021. An even higher rate of increase, of almost 65%, is projected for those aged over 75. People aged 80 and over are expected to increase by 86%.

# The Consultation Plan

## How you can have your say

The consultation plan will have four key phases of activity



<b>May to July 2011</b>	<b>Aug to Sept 2011</b>	<b>Oct to Nov 2011</b>	<b>Dec 2011 to Jan 2012</b>
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### Phase One – Information gathering

- Public meeting to launch the Consultation Plan
- Independent survey of all Toddington households to assess current and future housing needs
- Review of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and population forecasts
- Meetings with stakeholders and partners
- Audit of existing accommodation, including a review of the lettings pattern
- Seek community led ideas and solutions
- Seek potential interest from housing associations on any redevelopment opportunities

An independent professional advisor, paid for by the Council and selected by the residents of Crescent Court will be appointed during this phase. Their role is to provide independent, impartial advice throughout the consultation process, making sure that residents' views and feelings inform decision making.

## Phase Two – Developing Options

- The Council will analyse the information gathered from Phase One, including the feedback from the Housing Needs Survey. A range of options will then be developed that would meet current and likely future demand. Each option will be costed and the relative advantages and disadvantages identified. It is likely at this stage that the Council will identify their preferred option(s) and the rationale for that choice.

## Phase Three – Consulting on the options

The Council will publish a consultation document and seek feedback. This document will provide information on the outcome of the review, views of existing and local residents, the outcome of stakeholder meetings and current and likely future demand. The document will then outline the options and the rationale used to assess each option. Those options that are considered by the Council to be feasible will be further developed within the consultation document. The Councils Overview and Scrutiny Committee will also be asked to consider the Options although no decision will be made by them at this stage.

The Council will undertake a full consultation at this stage. Feedback forms will be made available on the Council's website and at appropriate locations around Toddington. We will communicate specifically with residents of Crescent Court and residents of Toddington at this point to ensure everyone has the opportunity to take part in this consultation. A meeting will also be held with the Parish Council to seek their views.

## Phase Four – Council Decision

The Council's Executive will consider the options and the public feedback and make a decision on the future provision of housing for older people in Toddington. The Council's decision will be communicated in full to the whole community. Communication with residents of Crescent Court will be undertaken in a timely and sensitive manner.

### For more information

<b>Housing Needs Survey</b>	John Goody Housing Strategy and Development Officer 0300 300 4449      john.goody@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk
<b>Consultation Plan</b>	Sue Marsh Housing Services Manager 0300 300 5662      sue.marsh@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk
<b>Choice Based Lettings</b>	Michael Jellow Housing Options Manager 0300 300 5666      michael.jellow@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk
<b>On the web</b>	www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk
<b>Write to us</b>	Housing Service, Central Bedfordshire Council , Watling House, High Street North, Dunstable, Bedfordshire LU6 1LF

### Information about Crescent Court, Toddington

#### Key facts about Crescent Court

Crescent Court is a two storey sheltered scheme in Toddington, Bedfordshire. It was built in the mid 1960's and consists of 17 self contained flats and 4 bedsits. The property is situated on a large plot of land and includes extensive communal gardens to the front and rear with landscaped areas and a car park for residents.

#### Why are the Council considering the future of Crescent Court

The Council is committed to providing a good standard of accommodation for all of its residents. For its older residents the Council takes its responsibilities very seriously and wants to ensure that the accommodation it provides is fit for purpose and meets modern standards. With this in mind there are a number of issues relating to Crescent Court that has led the Council to consider the future of the building.

#### Accessibility issues

The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on the Council to make reasonable adjustments to buildings so that they are accessible to people with disabilities so that they are not disadvantaged. In Crescent Court the corridors are narrow, the fire exits do not allow easy access for wheelchair users and the width of the door openings to the flats and bedsits do not comply with current Building Regulations requirements.

The estimated costs of modernising the building is as follows

- £120k to meet minimum standards
- £660k to ensure the scheme is suitable and meets modern expectations for the next thirty years.

The estimated cost of replacing the communal heating system is £200,000 – see below.

#### The heating system

The communal heating system (boiler, pipes and radiators) has reached the end of its useful life and is becoming uneconomical to repair. Due to the age of the boiler replacement parts are becoming obsolete and are therefore increasingly hard to locate. It is possible that the heating system will not last another severe winter.

As stated above, the estimated cost of replacing the heating system (boiler, pipes and radiators) is £200,000. Residents should be assured that if the heating system were to break down at any time a temporary solution would be put in place immediately.

### **Current demand for in Crescent Court**

Based on information from the Councils Choice Based Lettings system (Bedfordshire Homefinder) there has been very low demand for vacant first floor flats and bedsits in Crescent Court. Bidding activity is often quite low with Council officers seeking out potential residents in some cases. In addition, there are a number of residents who were successful in their bids whose level of housing need (their priority) is relatively low.

Between March 2009 and February 2010, five flats / bedsits in Crescent Court took between 90 – 280 days to let. This compares with an average period of 57 days for all sheltered housing schemes.



## Questions and Answers

### **Q1. Who will undertake the Housing Needs Survey and what's in it?**

A1. The survey will be carried out by the Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC) who are the leading independent community development agency working across Bedfordshire, with a proven track record over more than 50 years.

The survey will be used to identify if anyone living or working in Toddington has a housing need, including supported housing. It will be delivered to all households in Toddington. Anyone who previously lived in the parish who would like to move back may also want to complete a survey.

In rural communities affordable housing can be developed on "rural exception sites", where an exception can be made to district planning restrictions to allow affordable housing specifically to meet local parish need. Conditions are attached to planning permission for this to ensure these homes will remain affordable and for local people with a housing need into the future. Typically two types of housing are provided: shared ownership housing and social rented housing, which would be managed by a Housing Association. Exception site housing can only go ahead if backed up by evidence of actual need. The information supplied by the residents of Toddington will be treated in confidence and not seen by any other resident of the parish. Only summarised details of the survey will be published and it will not be possible to identify any individual(s) from this.

The report will be compiled by the Rural Housing Enabler, at Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity, who works with local councils, housing associations and local people to increase the provision of affordable housing where needed in rural communities across Bedfordshire.

### **Q2. What is a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment?**

A2. Local Authorities (Central Bedfordshire Council) and Primary Care Trusts (NHS Bedfordshire) are required by Government to produce a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). The purpose of a JSNA is to gather information about the needs of the local community in relation to their health and well being. This information is then used to shape commissioning and the provision and delivery of services in order to achieve the following:-

- better prevention and early intervention for improved health, independence and wellbeing
- more choice and a stronger voice for individuals and communities
- tackling health inequalities and improving access to services
- more support for people with long term needs

### **Q3. How will I be able to have my say?**

A3. During the first phase of the consultation process you can have your say at the public meeting and through completion of the Housing Needs Survey which will be sent to every household in Toddington. During the third phase a public meeting will be held where the options for the provision of housing for older people in Toddington will be presented.

People will be able to complete a survey which will be available at the public meeting and online. Residents of Crescent Court will also be invited to a residents meeting to discuss the options and express their views. During the entire length of the consultation process residents of Crescent Court will be able to talk to the Council's Tenant Liaison Officers, Sheltered Housing Officer and the Independent Tenant Adviser.

**Q4. What is the role of an Independent Tenant Adviser?**

A4. The Independent Tenant Adviser (ITA) will be paid for by the Council and selected by the residents of Crescent Court.. Their role is to provide independent, impartial advice throughout the consultation process, making sure that Crescent Court residents' views and feelings inform decision making.

**Q5. What is the difference between the Council's duty in relation to the Equalities Act 2010 and Building Regulations and its desire for the accommodation at Crescent Court to meet modern standards ?**

A5. The Equalities Act 2010 places a duty on the Council to make reasonable adjustments to buildings. It states that 'where a physical feature puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in relation to a relevant matter in comparison with persons who are not disabled to take steps as it is reasonable to have to take to avoid the disadvantage'.

Building Regulations are statutory requirements that apply to new buildings and extensions to ensure that they meet industry recognised modern standards.

In relation to modern standards the Council wants to make sure that its accommodation for older people responds to an expectation for an independent lifestyle whilst at the same time ensuring that individuals' needs for safe, secure and supported accommodation are met.

**Q6. If the scheme is modernised or the site redeveloped, what will happen to Crescent Court residents?**

A6. A decision on the future of Crescent Court will not be made until the final phase of the Consultation Process at the end of this year.

If a decision is taken to modernise the existing building to an extent that it will not be habitable for a period of time, residents will be offered a number of options. These include staying with family or friends or in another Council property or sheltered scheme on a temporary basis and then returning to Crescent Court, or moving on a permanent basis to another property using the Choice Based Lettings process.

If a decision is taken to demolish the building and redevelopment of the site includes housing for older people the above process will again apply.

**Q7. If a Housing Association develops the scheme would existing residents become tenants of the Housing Association ?**

A7. Residents would become tenants of the Housing Association and retain the same tenancy rights they have now. We are aware that the experience of tenants in the north of Central Bedfordshire with a Housing Association landlord has been very positive.

**Q8. Why did the Council start talking to Crescent Court residents before the launch of this Consultation Plan ?**

A8. The Council held an initial meeting with Crescent Court residents to provide them with an early indication of the review of housing for older people and possible implications. The purpose of the meeting was to begin the dialogue with residents and to respond to any requests that they may have. A wider consultation process is now being launched where residents will be able to have their say on the possible options for the future provision on housing for older people in Toddington. Having the initial meeting at Crescent Court has given us some ideas and suggestions as the best way to approach this consultation.

**Q9. Crescent Court was substantially modernised in the 1990's. Why was it not improved to meet modern standards then?**

A9. The modernisation work that took place in 1997 was mainly focused on converting a number of the bedsits into self contained flats. After this date more bedsits were converted into flats and a lift shaft was constructed. These improvements were seen at the time as meeting modern standards. People's expectations for sheltered housing had changed and the demand for the bedsits was relatively low.

**Q10. Does the Council have the resources to pay for the replacement heating and the modernisation works ?**

A10. The Housing Service operates to a thirty year business plan. It has an annual budget which is used for the upkeep and modernisation of its entire housing stock. This is a separate budget which is ring fenced from all other Council budgets. The decision on how to spend the money is informed by a number of issues including legal requirements and building regulations, disrepair caused through age, the demand for properties and the desire to meet residents expectations for safe, secure and affordable accommodation that meets modern standards.

In the third phase of the consultation process the Council will seek residents' views on a number of options developed by the Council on the future provision of housing for older people in Toddington. These options will be informed by the issues outlined above. During the development of the options the Council will determine the costs of each one. If at the end of the consultation process a decision is taken by the Council to retain Crescent Court and undertake the necessary works, the costs will be met from the overall housing budget.

**Q11 Does the Council want to sell the land ?**

A11. The value of the land is not a consideration. In consulting on future options, the Council's main purpose is to meet the accommodation and support needs of older people, by providing or enabling Housing Association's to provide affordable housing for rent. The Council is open to any community led ideas which achieve that objective. The land is a valuable asset, used to meet local housing need. No consideration has been given to selling the land.