
Meeting: Executive

Date: 14 February 2012

Subject: Future of Crescent Court Sheltered Housing Scheme
(Review of housing for older people in the south of
Central Bedfordshire)

Report of: Cllr Hegley, Executive Member for Social Care, Health and Housing

Summary: The report proposes that officers explore the feasibility of the development of a mixed tenure Extra Care Housing Scheme either on the site of the existing Crescent Court Sheltered Housing Scheme or on a new site in Toddington.

Advising Officer: Julie Ogley, Director of Social Care, Health and Housing

Contact Officer: Sue Marsh, Housing Services Manager

Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: Toddington

Function of: Executive

Key Decision Yes

**Reason for urgency/
exemption from call-in
(if appropriate)**

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

Supporting and caring for an ageing population – This report looks at ways in which the Council can respond to the housing needs of older people in Toddington (and beyond). It looks at the growing trend towards Extra Care Housing as an approach that provides care and support to older people in a way that enables them to enjoy an independent lifestyle

Financial:

1. All of the options for the future of Crescent Court have financial implications for the Council's Landlord Services Business Plan. These range from approximately £2m for a refurbishment with additional flats to approximately £5.5 – 6m for the replacement of the existing sheltered housing scheme with an Extra Care Housing Scheme.

2. The changes that are currently being made to the way that Council housing is financed does provide an opportunity for the Council to undertake the development of the Extra Care Scheme, if it is the preferred option.
3. The report recommends further work being done on the feasibility and viability of two of the Options alongside work to replace the current heating system and address the fire safety issues. It is estimated that this will cost in the region of £250,000. (The intention would be to recycle parts of the new heating system, e.g. the boiler, in approximately five years time on the basis of Crescent Court being replaced by the new Extra Care scheme, should that Option be approved.)

Legal:

4. At this stage there are no legal implications associated with this report.

Risk Management:

5. None identified.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

6. Not Applicable.

Equalities/Human Rights:

7. Public authorities have a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
8. The current accommodation at Crescent Court does not fully meet the needs of older people. The access arrangements are inadequate for wheelchair users and the layout of the flats is not suitable for people with mobility issues. In addition, there is a growing demand for housing for older people that is not currently being met.
9. As part of the consultation process outlined in this report, an Independent Tenant Adviser was appointed to support the residents of Crescent Court Sheltered Housing Scheme. Their remit was to ensure that the residents were kept fully informed and supported in the communication of their views to the Council on the options for the future of Crescent Court.
10. Authorities must ensure that decisions are made in a way which minimises unfairness and without a disproportionately negative impact on people from different groups such as ethnic groups, disabled people, women and men. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and is available as a background document.

11. The options described in this report all advance equality of opportunity through the provision of refurbished or new housing for older people to meet the needs of an ageing population. There are equality and human rights implications related to the three proposed options, but these can be mitigated through working closely with the tenants affected to ensure their equality and human rights are met.
12. The current accommodation is not fit for purpose. The replacement of the heating system must be weighed up against the other problems with the accommodation and the impact changes could have on current residents. Low priority households are moving into the accommodation, as it is unsuitable for many high priority applicants, whose needs it is meant to be addressing
13. The options proposed would ensure that the accommodation for older people in Toddington would be fit for purpose. In particular option 1 would provide a scheme that was more attractive to live in due to the removal of bedsits and increased accessibility. However the scheme would not deliver extra care services or services for the growing population of people with dementia. Options 2 and 3 would deliver extra care accommodation and dementia facilities which is important in meeting an ageing population's needs. However option 2 would have a temporary impact on current tenants through moving out temporarily before (for options 2 and 3) being given the choice to move to the new facility.

Community Safety:

14. Not Applicable.

Sustainability:

15. Not Applicable.

Procurement:

16. Not Applicable.

Overview and Scrutiny:

17. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the report on Monday, 23 January 2012. Prior to debate, the Committee heard from a representative of the Friends of Crescent Court and the Independent Tenant Adviser to the Crescent Court residents, requesting support for the Residents Option. The Committee had a full debate on the item and agreed unanimously to support the recommendations detailed below. During the debate, Members expressed their strong support for the development of an Extra Care scheme in Toddington, with Crescent Court residents fully involved in the design of the Scheme.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Executive is asked to:

1. **note the outcome of the consultation on the future options for Crescent Court Sheltered Housing Scheme and the comments and recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;**

2. **agree that officers continue to explore the feasibility and viability of Option Three (Development of an Extra Care Scheme on a site in Toddington being progressed as a mixed tenure scheme through Neighbourhood Plan for Toddington);**
3. **agree that officers explore the feasibility and viability of aligning Option Two (Development of an Extra Care Scheme on the existing site) and the Residents Option. The remit is the phased development of a mixed tenure Extra Care Scheme with provision for people with dementia whilst retaining the existing building. The existing flats would be refurbished over time as the opportunity arose;**
4. **agree that residents be invited to participate in the design aspect of any new development, in particular to avoid any new development being institutional in character;**
5. **request officers to report back to the Executive by September 2012 with the results of the feasibility studies and a recommended way forward in relation to the development and the funding arrangements;**
6. **agree to work commencing at Crescent Court to address the health and safety issues and replace the heating system; and**
7. **agree to all existing Crescent Court residents being offered a tenancy in any new development for older people in Toddington.**

<i>Reason for Recommendations:</i>	<i>So that the Council can provide flexible, extra care accommodation in Toddington that contributes to meeting the growing demand for housing for older people.</i>
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Executive Summary

18. In May 2011 a consultation process was launched regarding the future options for Crescent Court Sheltered Housing scheme in Toddington.
19. Views were sought on three options – (i) retention of the Scheme as Sheltered Housing, refurbishment of the building and development of two new wings, (ii) development of a replacement Extra Care Housing Scheme on the existing site and (iii) development on a new site.
20. During the consultation period an alternative Option for Crescent Court was developed by the residents proposing it's retention as Sheltered Housing, refurbishment of the building (excluding individual flats) and development of a number of additional buildings.
21. Whilst there was a low level of public response during the formal consultation phase, there have been strong views expressed by a number of Toddington residents regarding the retention of housing for older people in Toddington and their concerns for the health and wellbeing of the Crescent Court residents.

22. Officers have recommended that a feasibility study be undertaken on the phased development of an Extra Care Scheme on the existing site or the development, via a Neighbourhood Plan, of an Extra Care Scheme on a new site. Officers to report back by September 2012 on the study and a recommended way forward.

Background

23. In February this year, a review of housing for older people in the south of Central Bedfordshire commenced. The purpose of the review, which is still underway, is to inform current and future provision so that it responds to customer expectations and needs, emerging trends in this field and the Council's financial constraints. Currently, Council housing for older people is provided through 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.
24. There are over 600 units of older persons' 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 there are concerns that they do not meet modern standards or the expectations of future residents. This is not the case for every scheme but for some, and especially those that still have bedsit accommodation, there are problems with attracting potential residents from Central Bedfordshire.
25. Prior to the commencement of the review, an asset review of the Sheltered Housing schemes was undertaken to prioritise those schemes that had health and safety issues and building and maintenance issues that would likely impact on its ability to meet future demand. One of the early outcomes of the review was the identification of Crescent Court as having a number of issues requiring attention.
26. Crescent Court is a typical two storey sheltered housing scheme with 21 self-contained one and two bedroom flats. It was converted in the 1990's from bedsit accommodation into flats, with four bedsits remaining. The design of the flats is not ideal for people with mobility issues. The demand for the bedsits has declined and they are often let to people from outside of the Central Bedfordshire area.
27. The general layout of the building has not altered since it was built. There is only one lift in the centre of the building which is a considerable distance from the flats at the end of each wing of the building. The corridors are narrow and the fire exits do not allow for easy access for wheelchairs. A recent statutory audit by a Fire Safety Officer identified a number of improvements required, including the replacement or upgrading of all internal doors to meet current regulations and upgrading of the fire alarm system. (These improvements will be implemented at the earliest opportunity.)

28. The heating system has been in place since the scheme was built and is unreliable. Whilst there has not been a breakdown in recent times, the boiler is closely monitored and preventative action is regularly taken to ensure its continuity. There is a risk that the heating system will breakdown and be beyond repair. Contingency plans are in place should this occur.

Consultation on the future of Crescent Court

29. In May 2011 a formal consultation process was launched. To ensure that the Crescent Court residents were fully supported during the consultation process, an Independent Tenant Adviser was appointed (selected by a group of Crescent Court residents). The Friends of Crescent Court (a support group to the residents) were also recognised as a group representing the best interests of the residents and were kept informed and consulted on the development of key documents in the consultation process.
30. The first stage of the consultation process focused on information gathering and research. A housing needs survey with specific questions relating to housing for older people was circulated in Toddington and the surrounding areas. Research was also undertaken to identify trends in housing for older people and the likely future demand within Central Bedfordshire.
31. Exploratory discussions were held with a number of local housing associations to understand the issues that would arise if a new development operated by a housing association was considered the most appropriate way forward.

Results of the Information gathering and research

32. Before the launch of the consultation phase, many residents of Toddington expressed their strong support for the retention of housing for older people in Toddington. They also expressed their concern for the health and wellbeing of the residents of Crescent Court during this period of uncertainty for them. A public meeting held to launch the consultation plan was well attended and the Parish Council, local G.P and church representatives have all expressed their support for the retention of housing for older people in Toddington.
33. By 2030, the total population of Central Bedfordshire aged 65 and over is predicted to increase by 75% from 39,300 to 68,900. Recent studies have also indicated that over 500 new Extra Care places (accommodation for older people with care support) are needed in Central Bedfordshire to meet existing demand.
34. In relation to people with dementia, research has indicated that in the Central Bedfordshire area, there could be 3,031 people age 65 and over with dementia. Whilst there will be a very large number of these people who will remain in their own homes, the current forecast is that there will be a demand for supported housing beyond that which is currently available
35. The Toddington Housing Needs Survey identified a level of need (albeit a relatively low level) for housing for older people in Toddington. This need was 'split' evenly between support at home, older person's bungalows and Crescent Court. The information supplied on income levels indicated that there may be people who would not qualify for affordable housing but could be interested in shared ownership.

36. A final piece of the research highlighted a general trend away from the provision of sheltered housing (and residential care) and towards what is known as extra care or flexi care housing. This type of housing is aimed at the growing number of older people who want to retain their independence (and their own front door) whilst at the same time having access to full time care and support in a building designed to meet a range of care and mobility requirements.

The three options for the future of Crescent Court

37. Using the information gathered during the research phase of the consultation process, three options were developed.
38. The first option was a refurbishment of the existing building and the development of two additional wings at an overall cost of approximately £2m, over a three to four year period. This option would address the health and safety, access and mobility issues. It would extend and refurbish all of the existing flats, replace the heating and increase the number of properties from 21 to 28 (the bedsits would be taken out). To improve residents access, two new lifts and stairwells would be incorporated in the development.
39. This option could cause a significant level of disruption to residents. To mitigate this impact, the work would be undertaken on a phased basis to reduce the level of disruption and minimise the time that people would have to move out of their flats. For those people who have to temporarily move out of the building, the Council would respect a commitment given by Councillor Mrs Hegley to provide alternative temporary accommodation in Toddington.
40. The second option was the demolition of the existing building and the development of a mixed tenure Extra Care Housing scheme on the existing site, at an overall cost of approximately £5.5- 6m over a 3 – 4 year timescale. This would provide around 48 self contained flats and include provision for people with dementia. There would be a range of communal facilities and an on site care team. The building would be designed to give people the opportunity to retain their independence whilst also being supported with their mobility and care needs.
41. Originally this option proposed the need for all residents to move out during the demolition and development of the new building. Following the consultation, officers are now recommending that the feasibility of a phased development should be explored which would enable residents to remain on site.
42. The third option was the development of a mixed tenure Extra Care Housing scheme on a new site in Toddington, at an overall cost of approximately £5.5 – 6m over a three to five year period. At the time of writing this report, no land has been formally identified although discussions are taking place regarding the potential for a 'nil value' land swop. If this Option was approved, it would most likely need to be progressed via the development of a Neighbourhood Plan. Crescent Court residents would remain in their current accommodation during the development. On completion they would be offered a flat in the new scheme.

Outcome of the consultation phase

43. A range of options for people to have their say were provided through this phase. These included a survey form that was available on line and at several locations throughout Toddington, a public meeting in Toddington Village Hall and a series of 'manned' displays held during the week and at weekends. Meetings were also held with the residents at Crescent Court and Toddington Parish Council. In addition, the Independent Tenant Adviser held a number of group meetings with Crescent Court residents and their family and friends as well as one to one meetings or phone calls.
44. There was a very low response to the consultation survey, with only twenty three completed surveys; nine from residents of Crescent Court and nine from local residents and a few others. There was a clear order of preference from Crescent Court residents – Option 1, 2 and lastly option 3 and for Option 2 and 3 to be council run. Local residents had a more mixed opinion; although this is only based on nine responses so may not be very representative of the wider community.
45. The public meeting was attended by approximately 50 people and the discussion covered a range of topics in relation to the three Options. During the meeting the Director of Social Care, Health and Housing invited people to put forward any options that they consider to be appropriate and would be a good fit for Toddington whilst meeting current and future demand. In summary the key points made at the meeting were as follows:-
 - i. the potential disruption that Option Two would caused to Crescent Court residents and the lack of alternative temporary accommodation;
 - ii. potential rent increases if a Housing Association developed the scheme;
 - iii. the 'fit' of a 48 bed extra care scheme into the village and the lack of suitable land for a new development;
 - iv. concern regarding provision for people with dementia;
 - v. the length of time that each option would take and the continued disruption and uncertainly for the existing residents; and
 - vi. support for the retention of housing for older people in Toddington

46. The residents of Crescent Court expressed their views through a number of routes, including group meetings and one to one interviews with the Independent Tenant Adviser. A summary of their views is set out below :-
- i. Option One had most support although concerns were expressed regarding the health and safety issues relating to building works;
 - ii. there was an appreciation that Option One could only work if the scheme would be viable and safe for residents in health and safety terms. One resident pointed out that the danger from brick/building dust would be very real;
 - iii. residents were concerned to refute any suggestion that they were living in some form of 'squalor' (their actual wording). They felt their homes were fine and the building was worth preserving. One resident made the comment that the need to introduce a lift at the end of the block was not necessary as residents could cope with the existing facility in the middle of the block. Two others said that the heating system service for the scheme was somewhat intermittent but that the cost of replacement had been somewhat exaggerated;
 - iv. Option Two was considered unrealistic as they felt that there limited opportunities for existing residents to move temporarily in the village so that a new build could be constructed on the existing site;
 - v. Option Three was considered to have a long timescale. Queries were also raised regarding the availability of alternative locations;
 - vi. residents were pleased that the Council had given such an unequivocal assurance that residents would have the right to stay in the village; and
 - vii. the general consensus was that they would ideally like to see the existing building upgraded and four extra flats constructed at both ends of the block. This was Option One in a somewhat expanded form.
47. With support from the Friends of Crescent Court, the Independent Tenant Adviser and the Parish Council, an alternative Option, known as the Residents Option was developed. An early version of this option proposed the retention of the existing building without refurbishment of the existing flats and the addition of two new wings. It also proposed provision for people with dementia and the addition of an on site care team.
48. This Option was subsequently developed further to propose four new blocks at the corner of the existing building providing approx 60 new flats. Subsequent discussions with the Friends of Crescent Court regarding the feasibility of this option resulted in a proposal to consider it alongside Option Two to ascertain whether the two options could be integrated into a phased development built around the existing building with individual flats being refurbished as the opportunity arose.

49. The Parish Council expressed their support for the Residents Option, whilst recognising the potential benefits to Toddington of additional housing for older people. To this end they have expressed a willingness to work in partnership with the Council if a development on a new site in Toddington were to go ahead.

Conclusion and Next Steps

50. In evaluating the three options, plus the alternative option submitted by the Crescent Court residents, officers have taken three key factors into consideration. The first factor is how each option meets current and future housing needs for older people. The research outlined in this report indicates an increasing need for housing for older people in the Central Bedfordshire area. The research also indicates that Extra Care Housing is replacing both Sheltered Housing and Residential Care as it promotes independent living alongside 24 hour care and support.
51. The second factor is the outcome of the Consultation process. With regard to wider resident feedback, there was a very low level of written responses. This could in part be due to the options all guaranteeing ongoing provision of housing for older people in Toddington. It could also mean that residents and other interested parties were aware of the development of a Crescent Court residents' option and there was implicit support for this option. The Parish Council have indicated their support for the residents' option and also for Option Three, development of an Extra Care Scheme on a new site in Toddington. Clearly, Crescent Court residents that took part in the consultation process are in support of the residents' option.
52. The third factor is the health and welfare of Crescent Court residents. Officers are mindful of the residents concerns regarding any option that would involve them moving out of Crescent Court. They are also mindful of the health and safety issues and the risks associated with the current heating system and fire doors. In addition, officers are aware that whilst the majority of the existing residents may not have many mobility issues currently, this situation could change as time progresses and as new residents arrive. A key design feature of Extra Care schemes is the ability to respond to residents changing needs in terms of health and wellbeing, care and mobility.
53. Taking full account of the factors summarised above, it is proposed that Option One (refurbishment) should not be progressed as it not meet the need to provide additional housing for older people in the Central Bedfordshire area.
54. It is further proposed that Option Two should only be progressed if the development could be phased in a way that would mean no resident having to move off site. With regard to the Residents Option, it is proposed that further work be done to explore a possible alignment with Option Two – this would mean a phased development of a mixed tenure Extra Care Scheme on the existing site, maintaining the existing building, and refurbishing individual flats as the opportunity arose.
55. For Option Three, it is proposed that further work is undertaken to explore the feasibility of the development coming to fruition as a mixed tenure scheme via the Neighbourhood plan process.

56. Whilst the further feasibility work is undertaken, it is recommended that work commences to address the health and safety issues at Crescent Court and a replacement heating system installed.
57. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has agreed to the way forward as detailed above. They have requested that a report be submitted to them by May 2012 evaluating the two Options described above and recommending an Option to be progressed.

Background Papers: (open to public inspection)

The following documents are available on the Councils website
www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk – Home and Housing, Sheltered Housing, Crescent Court

- (1) Housing for older people literature review
- (2) Review of housing for older people in the south of Central Bedfordshire
- (3) A review of housing for older people in the south of Central Bedfordshire – Consultation plan for Toddington
- (4) Future options for Crescent Court Sheltered Housing Scheme – Consultation Document
- (5) Outline development plans and drawings for the three options
- (6) Crescent Court Equality Impact Assessment