
Meeting: Social Care, Health and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 18 June 2012
Subject: Future options for the provision of housing for older people in Toddington (Crescent Court)
Report of: Cllr Hegley, Executive Member for Social Care, Health and Housing
Summary: The report proposes that older person's accommodation should be re-provided on a new site in Toddington, which shall be identified and brought forward through the Neighbourhood Planning process.

Advising Officer: Julie Ogley, Director of Social Care, Health and Housing
Contact Officer: Brian Queen, Interim Head of Operations, Housing Services
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: Toddington
Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

1. The Council's Medium Term Plan has a priority to 'Promote Health and well being and protect the vulnerable' through a range of targets including the delivery of 65 extra care housing units. There is also a commitment in the Plan to develop an accommodation strategy for older people to incorporate a range of support models such as extra care. This report recommends an increase in the provision of housing for older people in Toddington.

Financial:

2. Council Housing Finance has recently undergone fundamental reform as part of the Localism Act 2011. The subsidy system has been replaced by a self-financing regime for stock retaining authorities such as Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC). The new system allows the authority the option to invest resources in new build provision, including accommodation designated for older people. This could result in efficiency savings to the General Fund, as a result of reduced adult social care expenditure.

Legal:

3. This report proposes the submission of the proposed development of housing for older people for inclusion in the Toddington Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan is being developed by the Parish Council which has received front runner status by the Government. The development of the plan is being supported by the Council which will receive government funding to support the process. On completion, the Plan will be put to a referendum of electors in Toddington. If at least 50% of those voting support the plan it will become a legal planning document that sits below the Council's Development Strategy and Development Plan for Central Bedfordshire. Both plans will be for the period up to 2031.

Risk Management:

4. Not applicable.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

5. Not Applicable.

Equalities/Human Rights:

6. Public authorities have a statutory duty to advance 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.
7. 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 being met.
8. Full consultation was previously carried out with the Crescent Court residents, who were supported by an Independent Tenant Adviser. The residents have also been supported by the 'Friends of Crescent Court'. Council officers have involved this group in the assessment of the viability and feasibility of the two future options for Crescent Court.
9. The two options described in this report both advance equality of opportunity through the provision of new housing for older people to meet the needs of an ageing population. There are equality and human rights implications related to the two options, but these can be mitigated through working closely with the tenants affected to ensure their equality and human rights are met.
10. Both options would provide additional accommodation for older people. Option One would provide a small increase in the number of flats as the floor space standards are now greater than when the scheme was built. It would also create a high level of disturbance to residents as the aim would be for them to remain on site during the building works. Option Two provides a greater number of flats that would all meet current space requirements. The current residents would be offered a tenancy in the new scheme on completion.

Public Health

11. Any new development of housing for older people will be designed following government guidelines and best practice. The indicative drawings used during the consultation process on the future of Crescent Court used the 'Design Principles for Extra Care' issued by the Department of Health. The National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society, 'Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods' will also be used to inform any new development of housing for older people in Toddington.

Community Safety:

12. Not Applicable.

Sustainability:

13. Not Applicable.

Procurement:

14. Not applicable.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

The Committee is asked to:-

- 1. Recommend to the Executive that the Council seek to provide housing for older people on a new site in Toddington, to be identified and brought forward through the Neighbourhood Planning process**

Background

15. At its meeting on 23rd January 2012, the Committee considered a report on the future of Crescent Court Sheltered Housing Scheme. Following an informative debate, the Committee agreed that officers should assess the feasibility of the development of an Extra Care Housing Scheme on either a new site in Toddington or the existing site, whilst retaining the existing building. The latter proposal was based on an option submitted by the Friends of Crescent Court on behalf of the residents during the consultation process.
16. On 14 February 2012 the Executive considered a report on the future of Crescent Court and the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Executive agreed that a feasibility and viability study be undertaken on the two options and that officers report back with the results of the study and a recommended way forward in relation to the development and the funding arrangements.

Outcome of the feasibility and viability study on the two options

17. **Option One – Development of an Extra Care Housing Scheme on the Crescent Court site** – In assessing the feasibility and viability of a development on the existing site, officers were mindful of two key issues. The first was the level of disruption that would be experienced by residents who would remain on site during the building works. The second was the size of the site in relation to the space requirements of a 45 – 50 unit Extra Care Housing Scheme.
18. Using the government guidelines ‘Design principles for Extra Care’, a detailed drawing was prepared of an Extra Care development on the existing site, whilst retaining the existing building. This resulted in a forty seven unit scheme with a range of communal facilities and outdoor space. However, to achieve a viable number of units and take out the bedsits, it is not possible to retain all of the existing building, and only eleven of the current units would be retained. As a comparison, existing units at Crescent Court are between 27 – 40m². The current recommended size for similar units is 51 m² for one bed units and 64 m² for two bed units.
19. With regard to the overall development, there are two concerns. The first relates to the retention of the existing building. As it is approximately forty five years old, it will deteriorate at a faster rate than the new buildings in the development. This will impact on the cost of maintenance and cause major disruption on site if, due to age, it needed to be demolished whilst the new buildings were still viable. . The second relates to the density of the site caused by a larger building, coupled with the different widths of existing and new buildings and the particular problems that may arise with linking old and new roofs.

20. Given the scale of the development officers are concerned about the health and well being of the residents who would remain on site during the building phase. There would be a high level of disruption on site that could last for twelve to eighteen months. Whilst every effort would be made to phase the development and reduce the amount of moves that any resident would have to make, it is evident that the impact will be great for a considerable period of time.
21. Officers also considered a number of other issues in relation to the on site development. These include the additional parking requirement brought about by the increased number of units and the additional costs that would emerge through a phased development of the site.
22. **Option Two – Development of an Extra Care Housing Scheme on a new site in Toddington** – A recent outcome of the Localism Act has been the decision taken by Toddington Parish Council to develop a Neighbourhood Plan for the area. Neighbourhood planning empowers communities to shape the development and growth of a local area through the production of a neighbourhood development plan. Such plans then become part of the local statutory development plan and will form the basis for determining planning applications. The plan will be subject to a referendum to ensure that the local community has the final say on whether a Neighbourhood Plan comes into force in their area. Toddington Parish Council has received front runner status by the Government and is being assisted by CBC who will receive government funding to support the process. It is estimated that the Plan will be developed over the next two years.
23. The Toddington Neighbourhood Plan will provide an ideal opportunity for the Council to work with the local community in the identification of a suitable site for the provision of housing for older people. In recent months a potential site in Toddington has been identified that would meet a range of criteria including size, location and availability. However no formal terms have been discussed and it is proposed that this potential opportunity be further considered as part of the overall development of the Neighbourhood Plan

Funding arrangements

24. The Landlord Service Business Plan contains a 30 year programme of investment in the Council's sheltered housing stock. A specific reserve for Sheltered Housing Re-provision has been incorporated into the model, with annual contributions of approximately £4m. The HRA Capital programme anticipates usage of £8,250k for an Extra Care Housing scheme in the 2 years from April 2013. However there is flexibility to increase or reduce this amount depending upon the Council's prioritisation of debt repayment or investment in the stock. There is a potential efficiency saving to the General Fund, as it is proposed to reduce the reliance on residential placements for older people by increasing the use of extra care housing. Efficiency savings of £200k in 2013/14 and £280k in 2014/15 are proposed in the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Conclusion and Next Steps

25. In assessing the viability and feasibility of the two options officers have been mindful of the Council's commitment to provide housing for older people in Toddington. As previously agreed by the Executive, work will soon commence on the central heating boiler at Crescent Court, alongside a number of alterations to meet fire safety regulations. These will result in the building being a safe and warm environment for its residents for an extended period of time.
26. With regard to option one, the development on the existing site, officers are of the view that the impact of the building works on the residents, who would remain on site, would be detrimental to their health and well being. In addition, the density of the site and the design difficulties that would be caused by the integration of old and new buildings are not seen as suitable in terms of long term investment. It is therefore proposed that in terms of viability and feasibility, option one should not be progressed.
27. With regard to option two, officers are of the view that the planned investment in the central heating boiler at Crescent Court does provide a timely opportunity for the Council to pursue the provision of new housing for older people in Toddington via the Neighbourhood Plan process. It is clear from the earlier consultation process on the future of Crescent Court that there is strong support in the community for housing for older people in the area and it is hoped that this enthusiasm would be reflected in support for a development proposal within the Neighbourhood Plan. It is therefore proposed that in terms of viability and feasibility, option two should be progressed.
28. Since the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January this year, officers have worked with the Friends of Crescent Court to inform the feasibility and viability study of the two options. This process worked well and ensured that the residents concerns were taken into consideration. A meeting was held on Thursday, 3rd May with the residents of Crescent Court to discuss the outcome of the feasibility and viability study. One of the ward members, Councillor Nicols and the Friends of Crescent Court also attended the meeting.
29. During a good discussion, residents expressed their concern at the level of disruption that would be caused by the on site development. There was also concern expressed for the off site option should it not gain approval through the Neighbourhood Plan process. At the close of the meeting, residents decided that out of the two options proposed by CBC, they were in favour of a development on a new site in Toddington, close to local amenities.
30. Should the Committee agree to recommend the off site development option to Executive, and it were agreed, the next step would be to work with the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group on the identification of a suitable location for the development. During this process, Crescent Court residents would be kept informed of progress and invited to become involved in the design of new accommodation.

31. On a wider scale, a key priority for the Social Care, Health and Housing Directorate plan is a project that is taking an integrated approach to the housing needs of older people. There are three strands to the project - a review of all sheltered accommodation in the south of Central Bedfordshire, a plan for the future of residential care and an approach to creating choice in the housing market for older people. The learning points from the Crescent Court project will be captured and used to inform both the management of the integrated approach and any consultation that is carried out.
32. In summary, officers are recommending to Overview and Scrutiny Committee that the option to develop housing for older people on a new site in Toddington should be recommended to the Executive.