

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - HOUSING BRIEFING NOTE

1.0 Introduction

The Council's Communities Scrutiny Committee have identified housing as a key theme, which they would like to review as part of their forthcoming activity. At a scoping meeting involving the Chair, Directors Katherine Kynaston and Fliss Mercer in January, suggestions received from members were considered, and the following two key themes identified;

- Housing for Young People at risk of Homelessness
- Housing for people with physical disabilities and older people (incorporating housing that allows people to age well)

Both themes are highly relevant and support the recent supply and demand work which has been undertaken to identify the short, medium and long term housing requirements across a range of potentially vulnerable client groups, including those identified above. The table below summarises the current position and the consistent shortfall in provision across these key groups.

	Supported & specialist housing needs (‘Need’ estimates are not cumulative)	2020/21	2025/26	2030/31
A	Older people:			
1	Housing for older people for sale/shared equity (units)	703	789	903
2	Housing for older people for social rent/affordable rent (units)	340	587	913
3	Housing for older people for market rent (units)	40	45	50
4	Extra care housing including mainstream and high needs/dementia care (units) (included within 1 and 2)	136	395	531
5	Residential care (beds)	--	--	--
6	Nursing care (beds)	46	197	292
D	Adults with physical disabilities (need for adapted and accessible properties)	12	60	120
F	People at risk of homelessness who have (non-assessed) mental health need^{1*}	150	250	400
G	Vulnerable young people	86	107	127

*Includes estimated need for supported housing and mainstream housing.

These figures underpin an emerging Specialist & Supported Housing Strategy which will be brought to Cabinet in March. In this context, the work of the Scrutiny Committee has the potential to secure improvements to service delivery in relation to what are two key user

¹ This typically relates to single people at risk of homelessness (who may have ‘non-assessed’ mental health needs). The Council’s homelessness strategy covers the needs of a wider cohort of the population at risk of homelessness.

groups where both need and demand are proven and which provide opportunities to innovate as a Local Authority in our approach to future proofing supply.

This note provides an overview of work underway to safeguard appropriate housing solutions for these people, and proposes for further discussion, some options for how the Committee could work with officers to further develop our approach.

2.0 Young People and Housing

Current Service and Offer

Any young person facing homelessness is given advice and support through the Council's Housing Solutions Service. If a young person presents as homeless or is likely to be homeless within 56 days, a Housing Solutions Officer will meet the young person and Children's Services and will carry out an assessment to develop a personalised housing plan where the young person's wishes and feelings will be captured. Our aim is always to try to prevent their homelessness by offering a number of solutions such as;

- Mediation with the young person's family where appropriate;
- Negotiation with landlords and housing providers;
- Accessing supported accommodation.

Where there is an emergency homeless situation we would offer a place within our XRoads provision which provides emergency accommodation and 24/7 support on site. Support ensures the young person knows how to; manage a tenancy, access welfare benefits, education, training and employment and advice around managing a home. The young person will also be supported to identify move on accommodation either through the Thrive short-term supported accommodation or with other providers within the Borough. Thrive is a partnership of Bromford Housing, Maninplace, YMCA and STAY and is funded through supporting people to provide both floating support and accommodation based support (www.inspire2thrive.co.uk). Through a successful funding bid to MHCLG we employed two Tenancy Sustainment Officers who work within the homeless service to provide support to vulnerable clients to help them sustain their tenancies through providing advice and support.

If the young person is unable or does not wish to access the XRoads provision, advice and support is provided to enable the young person to access other short term supported accommodation with the range of providers within the Borough or if applicable directly with a landlord, either privately rented or through a registered housing provider.

Future Developments

In 2019, MHCLG Housing Advisory Support Team visited Telford & Wrekin Council to look at our services for homeless young people and praised the XRoads provision and many of the services we have in place. They also provided us with a number of recommendations which we are working to achieve:

- Review and develop current processes to maximise information sharing, referrals and assessments from partners (with consent) to reduce duplication and create joined up support, plans and shared outcomes. *Progress: Pathway workshops commissioned for the new year which will design the pathways and highlight any gaps.*

- Update practice to ensure all homeless 16/17 year olds have a Child in Need Plan, including those who refuse S20 accommodation, in line with Joint DfE and MHCLG Guidance. (Section 20 is where the local authority has a duty to provide a child with somewhere to live if the child does not have a home or a home which is deemed unsafe). *Progress: Already in place, however will review this under the pathway workshops commissioned for the new year, which will design the pathways and highlight any gaps.*
- Explore the development of a multi-agency accommodation panel for care leavers, to join up and improve accommodation and support planning across Housing and the Leaving Care Team. *Progress: Current Xroad meetings cover this, however we are expanding this to review future young people coming through the system and linking into the Supported Accommodation meeting.*
- Design user-friendly information with young people to explain the different support available under Children and Housing Act duties. *Progress: Joined the youth homeless charity Centrepoint (centrepoint.org.uk) and have had recent conversations regarding the development of a young person's housing app or website. Three options we are considering include:*
 - *Housing Advice App*
 - *Interactive Website aimed at young people*
 - *Educational game for early intervention in schools*

They have also provided a number of good practice website examples such as:

- <http://broxtoweyouthhomeless.org.uk/>
- <http://www.yhdevon.co.uk/>

Through discussions with the lead Cabinet Member for Housing, we have agreed that it is critical that the information we provide is developed in conjunction with young people and therefore the first stage is to engage with young people of different ages, particularly vulnerable young people, to ensure that the information and advice we're providing really meets their needs.

Potential Areas of Work for Scrutiny.

1. Look at what other authorities are doing to address youth homelessness and identify best practice examples.
2. Review what other authorities are doing to intervene early and provide advice to young people who are not homeless but would like housing advice.
3. Support the planned engagement with young people to identify if they would use any of the options above to get housing information and advice, if so what they would want from it and how we could involve young people in developing this.
4. Consider the effectiveness of the interventions proposed

3.0 Housing for People with a Physical Disability and Older People

The Council has already seen some real success in the delivery of a wide range of supported and specialist housing in the borough for older people. The map included at Appendix 1 shows existing provision in the borough across Extra Care and Retirement/sheltered schemes.

But despite this strong base, and in line with national projections, the identified shortfall in provision is considerable. In response to this, key themes in the Council's emerging Specialist & Supported Housing Strategy include:

“deliver an increase in housing suited to older residents, including access to support and assistance to remain living in their own homes and access to a wider range of high quality specialist housing that is suited to ageing well in later life, including bungalows for over 55s”.

“Stimulate the development of additional accessible and adapted housing that is suited to adults and children with physical disabilities and long term health conditions.”

To achieve this the Council is amongst other things:-

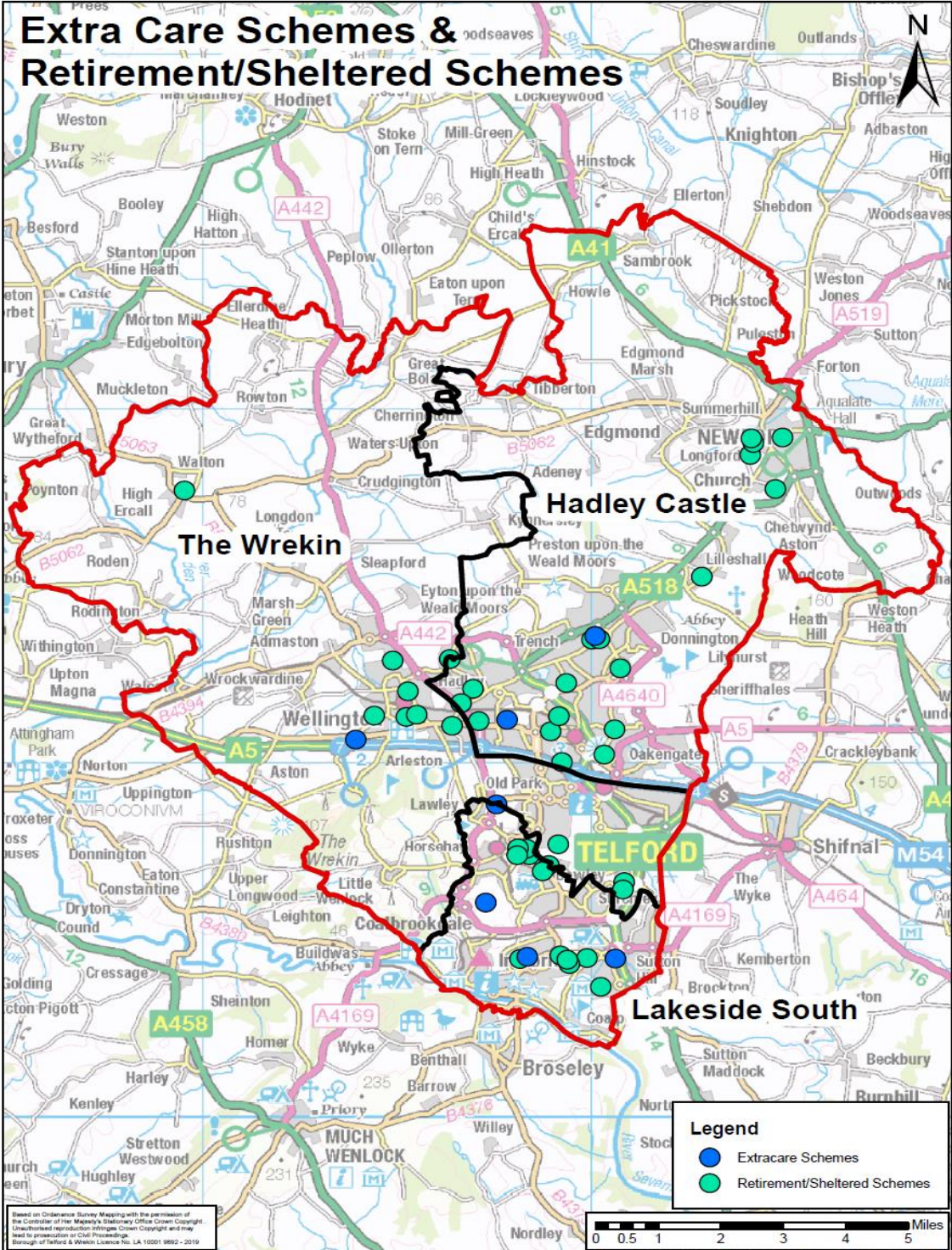
- Supporting people to remain living independently at home through the use of disabled facilities grants and wellbeing grants as set out in the Housing Assistance Policy launched in June 2016:
 - Disabled Facilities Grant provides statutory funding of up to £30,000 to meet the recommended needs identified by an Occupational Therapist. Various works can be carried out under this grant to enable an individual to remain living independently at home.
 - Wellbeing Grant funds works of up to £10,000 to avoid people being admitted to, or to allow them to be discharged from, hospital or care. Funding can be for a wide range of items connected to the fabrication of the home such as stair lifts, dangerous electrics, heating systems or as simple as moving furniture to allow for a hospital bed to be placed in the home.
- Supporting developers and providers to deliver housing for disabled and older people in its role as Local Planning Authority, land owner and Commissioner. The Borough already boasts seven extra care housing schemes which is testimony to this. However, the Local Plan Review provides opportunity to consider how planning policy can more proactively help safeguard delivery of not just specialist housing for older and disabled people, but also improve build standards for more mainstream housing in order to allow people to live and age well and remain in their homes for longer.
- Directly delivering housing specifically for people with a physical disability and/or over the age of 55 through Nuplace Ltd at a site in Dothill. This housing, currently under development and due for completion in summer 2020, is integrated with general needs housing and will be available for private and affordable rent. It will be a vital pilot into the future provision of accessible housing by Nuplace.

Potential Areas of Work for Scrutiny.

1. To review the Housing Assistance Policy and suggest any amendments to ensure it meets need.
2. To look at what other authorities are doing to secure delivery of housing for older people and people with a physical disability.
3. To review and identify best practice in relation to planning policy and the incorporation of build standards that facilitate independent living.

4. To engage with older people and people with a physical disability to understand:
 - a. Their housing aspirations as they age – what might the drivers/barriers be to moving to age designated / accessible housing.
 - b. The type of housing would they aspire to in terms of both the natures/scale of property (e.g. Bungalow, Extra-care, Sheltered/retirement living schemes) and tenure (e.g. sale, shared equity, private rent, social, affordable, private rent)
 - c. How they would like to access advice and support regarding housing options as they age.

Extra Care Schemes & Retirement/Sheltered Schemes



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