

# **Older People's Housing Strategy**

## **(HRA)**

2019 - 2023

**Date Adopted:** April 2019

**Date for Review:** April 2021

## Foreword

In 2015, Stroud District Council (SDC) commissioned Ark Consultancy to undertake an in-depth review of its sheltered housing accommodation, to assess the viable options for achieving a sustainable sheltered housing service and to advise on a modernisation strategy. This work followed on from a review carried out by the Chartered Institute of Housing in 2014 which provided a detailed assessment of the sheltered housing support service.

The findings of the Ark Report 'Sheltered Housing - Getting Better, Getting Fit for the Future' (*Appendix A*) resulted in the Council committing to a 10 year modernisation programme which is now in its third year. Within the Ark Report, a number of schemes were categorised as 'red' and were considered unsuitable for older people's accommodation. The Council agreed to dispose of a number of these sites, in order to generate income which is required to reinvest in the redevelopment of some of the red sites to provide better quality, more energy efficient older people and general needs accommodation. The money is also being reinvested in the 'green' and 'amber' schemes to improve the quality of accommodation and to make it more attractive for current tenants and also future tenants who may wish to downsize. A number of the amber schemes were identified as 'consider for an alternative use' therefore in response to this, the Council set up a number of working groups to explore what these alternative uses might be.

This five year Strategy has been developed as a result of the Ark Report and subsequent working groups views to support the delivery of the modernisation programme and to deliver SDC's vision for its older people's accommodation in the district. Delivery of the Council's vision will make its older people's accommodation more attractive into the future and which will also provide a positive impact on the number of households who wish to downsize - in turn freeing up some of our much needed suitable family accommodation.

SDC knows that the increasing older population is also becoming more diverse, and more people are living into very old age which brings a number of challenges in terms of health and support. It also acknowledges that people's aspirations for their lives as they age, are changing too. The services SDC commissions and provides, and the way in which it does so, will have to evolve to meet these changing needs and aspirations.

SDC owns a portfolio of 5,071 affordable homes throughout the district. Within this stock, there are over 700 properties which form part of 26 sheltered housing schemes, and are currently let specifically for older people over the age of 60. There are also a number of bungalows and ground floor flats, which are let as general needs accommodation that are also suitable for older people or people with physical needs.

All of SDC's sheltered housing schemes have communal facilities, such as a communal lounge, kitchen and laundry, some of which are under utilised, and could create additional accommodation which would assist in meeting the increasing need for older people's housing.

The Council recognises the demographic shift highlighted in the Ark Report, which anticipates a significant increase in the ageing population over the next 20 years. The report confirmed that 41% of households in Stroud are made up of only older people (age 55 and over) and that

Stroud is likely to see an increase of approximately 78.5% of single people of pensionable age retiring in the district. Due to the popularity of the district to people of pensionable age, this increase is likely to impact Stroud more than any other district in Gloucestershire.

This Strategy is formed in a challenging financial climate; however SDC is committed to delivering its vision of “providing good quality older people’s housing which meets a variety of current and future needs – where people want to live.” SDC commits to delivering adapted housing and services which are good quality and provide value for money, with an emphasis on affordability to the tenant and the Council. SDC would like the homes it owns to ‘enable’ older tenants to live as independently as possible within the resources available.

In order to do this, the Council will need to think creatively about how this can be delivered in times of financial constraint, coupled with the current crisis in personal care services. This Strategy links strongly with Stroud’s Corporate Vision of “making Stroud a better place to live, work and visit for everyone” and the Corporate Delivery Plan 2018-2022 priorities, one of which is to implement the sheltered housing modernisation programme.

This Strategy sets further context about how it has been established and the strategic objectives which need to be achieved to deliver SDC’s vision for its older people’s housing. The action plan provides a list of robust actions to ensure delivery of this Strategy, in turn achieving SDC’s vision.

*Councillor Chas Townley and Councillor Jenny Miles*

Chair & Vice Chair of Housing Committee



## **Index**

Foreword	Pages 1 & 2
Index	Page 3
1. Our Local Landscape	Page 4
2. The Corporate Context	Pages 4 & 5
3. Setting Our Vision	Page 6
4. Our Vision	Page 6 & 7
5. Consultation – What Future Customers Want	Pages 7 & 8
6. Strategic Objectives	Pages 8 & 9
7. Our Range of Accommodation	Pages 10 – 12
8. Monitoring and Review	Page 13

## **Appendices**

Appendix A – Ark Report 2015 ‘Sheltered Housing - Getting Better, Getting Fit for the Future’

Appendix B – Vision & Strategy Group ‘Terms of Reference’

Appendix C – Task & Finish Group ‘Terms of Reference’

Appendix D – Future Focus Research ‘Older People’s Accommodation Research’

Appendix E – Older People’s Housing Strategy (HRA) - Action Plan

## 1. Our Local Landscape

The Stroud District is a largely rural area covering 175 square miles in the south of Gloucestershire. Much of the eastern half of the district falls into the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which covers just over 50% of the District's total land area. The district has a rich built heritage, including 42 conservation areas in a wide variety of towns and villages each of which are unique in character.

Stroud has a population of 118,130 (2017) and over 50,000 households. There are currently 47,640 private homes in the district with 5,071 properties in the ownership of the council and 1,640 housing association homes. The population is predicted to grow to 136,000 by 2041. There are currently over 600 people currently on the waiting list that would be eligible for older people's accommodation.

There are currently 21,114 young people (aged 0 – 15), 70,802 working age adults and 26,214 retirement age adults. The increase of people of pensionable age is anticipated to rise significantly in the future as a result of rising life expectancy and the demographic impacts of two generations of baby boomers.

The Stroud district benefits from a vibrant community spirit, offering a mix of culture and countryside. The towns benefit from a range of independent cafes and shops all set in a picturesque location, which is proving to be a popular choice to live and retire in, particularly with the larger towns of Cheltenham, Cirencester and Gloucester not far away.

## 2. The Corporate Context

The Council's Corporate Delivery Plan 2018-22 (CDP) was published in 2018 (<https://www.stroud.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/corporate-plans-and-policies/corporate-delivery-plan-cdp>). New challenges for our housing stock include; customer affordability issues arising from welfare reforms, increasing customer expectations, increasing demand and the need to provide more sustainable homes against the back drop of recent legislative reforms which have significantly affected income streams from 2016-2020. The Council's key priorities contained in the CDP are:

- **Economy** – help people and businesses grow the local economy and increase employment;
- **Affordable Housing** – provide affordable, decent and social housing;
- **Environment** – help the community minimise its carbon footprint, adapt to climate change and recycle more;
- **Resources** – provide value for money to our taxpayers and high quality services to our customers;
- **Health and Wellbeing** – promote the health and wellbeing of our communities and work with others to deliver the public health agenda.

The Older People's Housing Strategy supports the CDP and includes key strategic objectives and targets for our sheltered housing assets and appropriate general needs stock to ensure they provide good quality accommodation for older people. It also provides detail on our future

investment strategy through the sheltered modernisation programme and the effect this will have on our assets. The diagram below reflects how the Strategy fits within the wider corporate context.



Diagram 2.1 Link to wider corporate context

### 3. Setting Our Vision

The subsequent need to set a vision and a strategy for our older people's accommodation for the next five years was founded on the Ark Report (2015) and the Council's commitment to deliver the sheltered modernisation programme. SDC completed the improvements to the first scheme in 2018 which opened further discussion about which improvements were priorities and what our older people's accommodation should be delivering for current and future tenants. The sheltered modernisation programme is fundamental to improving the health and wellbeing of our older tenants. The improvements to the internal and external environment of the first scheme completed (Sherborne House, Stonehouse) had a positive impact on the tenants living there (for example, the construction of external paths not only enabled tenants to access the back door of their property using a mobility scooter for those with mobility constraints; it also provided a space for tenants to walk around outside, so that they could enjoy the benefits of fresh air, sunshine and the opportunity to chat to neighbours, all of which have a profound effect on an individuals' sense of health and wellbeing.)

A Vision & Strategy group was formed (Terms of Reference *Appendix B*) with a variety of officers across the council to examine the challenges for older people in the future, particularly during a time of austerity and reduced spend on care and support; with a greater onus on enabling people to live independently in their homes for longer. The focus of this group was solely on current and future SDC tenants, and how some of the future challenges may be overcome. Together a vision was proposed with a number of areas identified which needed further examination and consideration.

One of the objectives was to form a Task & Finish Group (Terms of Reference *Appendix C*) comprised of elected councillors and officers. The purpose of the group was to explore the expectations of the 'next generation' in relation to the council's older people's accommodation, which was a recommendation within the Ark Report. In order to follow up on this recommendation, the group commissioned a telephone survey of 500 Stroud district residents which was undertaken by Future Focus Research. The questions in the survey were carefully considered to establish what people want from their accommodation as they age. The survey was open to anyone over the age of 18 and was structured so that all age groups were proportionally represented.

The results of the survey have been fed into this Strategy, so that the council is delivering older people's accommodation across its stock which is as closely aligned to the expectations of the next generation as resources will allow (summarised in *Appendix D*).

## 4. Our Vision

The vision proposed by the Vision & Strategy group is:

**“To provide good quality older people’s housing which meets a variety of current and future needs – where people want to live.”**

In order to achieve this vision, the Council must set strategic objectives, supported by a robust action plan which can be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis.

## 5. Consultation - What Future Customers Want

The survey commissioned by the Task and Finish Group provided useful, tangible feedback for SDC. The detailed findings of the survey are contained within the ‘Older People’s Accommodation Research’ produced by Future Focus Research (*Appendix D*). A summary of some of the key findings are as follows:

- The survey found that two thirds of residents perceived the term ‘Sheltered Housing’ to be associated with older person’s accommodation where 24 hour care is provided. There have been a number of changes to the sheltered housing service over the past 5 years, and the results of the survey suggest that there is a need to re-brand sheltered housing with something which reflects the current service on offer.
- The survey confirmed that 61% of residents interviewed plan to retire in the Stroud district, with the majority having access to friends/family and/or social groups in the area.
- Accessibility and security in and around the home are important to most residents, with good access to healthcare and support services a high priority. When asked what else the communal lounge could be used for, health clinics were the most popular choice.
- The use of communal spaces by outside groups was not as popular, with only 37% of residents believing this would be a good idea – this could be partly due to the priority of living in a secure environment and uncertainty about who would be using the space.
- Access to Wi-Fi in communal areas was considered a priority by 77% of residents interviewed. SDC currently provides Wi-Fi access to tenants in all communal lounges and it is important that this is retained to ensure tenants are able to connect with friends and family.
- Parking and external communal space was important to most residents, which suggests that access to external green space is essential for health and wellbeing as people age as well as the independence which cars provide.

- When asked about various elements in the home which could be provided to enable individuals to live independently, the highest priority was a walk in shower/wet room, however all the elements identified in the question were considered either very important or fairly important to residents.
- The majority of those over the age of 55 had made plans for their accommodation needs for old age.

As a result of these findings, the Task and Finish Group made a number of recommendations to Housing Committee in February 2019 (<https://www.stroud.gov.uk/media/971200/item-6b-older-persons-strategy-task-and-finish-group-final-report.pdf>), which were approved for inclusion in this Strategy. A summary of the recommendations are detailed below:

- Work towards the development of a range of accommodation for older people, rather than 'one size fits all'. This may involve the re-designation of some schemes which could potentially be linked to a hub scheme to ensure that access to services is not lost.
- Re-brand Sheltered Housing.
- Improve awareness of our Independent Living options to encourage households to downsize – schemes should become more desirable as a result of the sheltered modernisation programme which is improving communal areas and accessibility to these spaces.
- Consider conversion of communal areas, which are not utilised, to additional accommodation where those communal areas are not suitable to offer genuinely desired facilities for both residents and older people in the vicinity.
- Seek areas of improvement to the Council's Corporate Asset Management Strategy to ensure that SDC's older people's schemes and general needs accommodation enables rather than disables – allowing tenants to live as independently as possible.
- The Older People's Housing Strategy should seek to enhance partnership working with external agencies to improve support and care provision across the district.
- Undertake further visits to other affordable housing providers to examine the range of accommodation and best practice on offer.
- Carry out focus groups with existing tenants to further examine specific areas within the survey.

These recommendations have been developed into this Strategy, along with the Task and Finish Group's input into the strategic objectives.

## 6. Strategic Objectives

Although the issues that face SDC are not uncommon to other local authorities the vibrancy and variety of the local landscape which includes a mix of rural and urban areas, alongside the demographic of our population, do present SDC with some unique challenges. A few of these challenges are, social isolation, access to health and support services, transport links, access to retail and leisure facilities and the lack of a range of good quality older people's accommodation.

In response to these challenges, and to achieve the Council's vision, this Strategy seeks to deliver six strategic objectives:



Diagram 6.1 Strategic Objectives

The Council recognises that a number of local authorities and housing associations have undertaken similar reviews in recent years. Whilst it is felt that there is good practice that can be replicated, SDC also understands that the district itself is unique and diverse, therefore it may require a different approach to other housing providers.

The six strategic objectives will provide the 'unique' approach that Stroud needs to future proof its older people's accommodation, to meet the needs and aspirations of its current and future tenants.

These strategic objectives will shape Stroud's housing stock to provide a range of accommodation which is suitable for a diverse group of older people, whilst remaining affordable in the longer term. The key objectives highlighted should also assist with the crisis in personal care, by enabling tenants to live independently in their homes for as long as possible.

## 7. Our Range of Accommodation

Currently SDC offers older people’s housing in the form of general needs or sheltered housing schemes with a mix of accommodation such as flats, bungalows and houses. Tenants in sheltered housing schemes pay a standard service charge across all schemes, which isn’t necessarily reflective of the service provided by the council and in some cases is heavily subsidised.

The new model proposed, as a result of the consultation undertaken with Stroud residents and the Task and Finish Group’s recommendations will create a range of accommodation options for tenants. This will provide choice for future customers who may not need all of the services provided at a hub scheme and may not wish to pay for services they do not use or need. The new model is set out below:

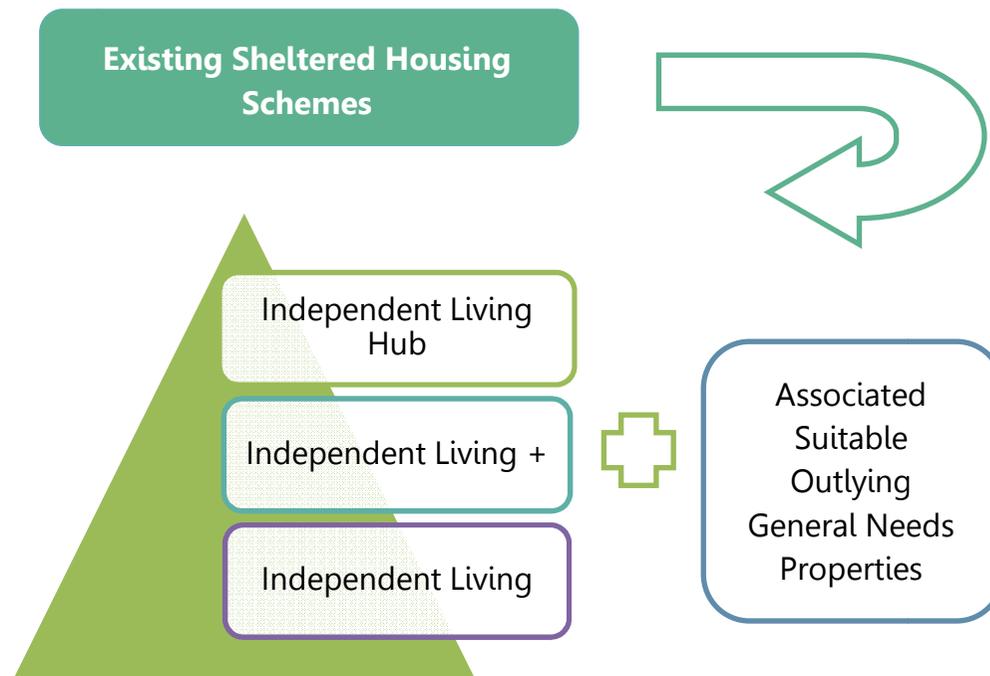


Diagram 7.1 Transitional Model - Reflects New Range of Accommodation

The Strategy recommends that to achieve this new model, each scheme is reviewed and categorised as one of the following; ‘Independent Living Hub’, ‘Independent Living +’ or ‘Independent Living’ with a new service charge which is reflective of the service provided in each of the schemes. The service charges will need to be made clear to current and future tenants so that there is complete transparency about the costs of the service. The delivery of this Strategy needs to be undertaken alongside the service charge project and could result in decreases or

increases in service charges. Where possible, the schemes also need to be spread geographically to ensure a range of options in as many areas as possible and to avoid a concentration of hubs in specific areas. The key criteria of the accommodation ranges are:

## Independent Living Hub

- Communal lounge which can also be used for health clinics, police surgeries and activities for tenants of the scheme whilst also offering this service out to outlying properties which could be affiliated with the scheme
- 100% provision (or as close as possible) of mobility scooter storage and charging points
- Level access provided throughout the building and externally
- Visiting Site Officer
- Support Coordinator visiting as needed

## Independent Living +

- Communal lounge where tenants can socialise to reduce social isolation
- Improved provision of scooter storage and charging
- These schemes may not benefit from level access
- Visiting Site Officer
- Support Coordinator visiting as needed

## Independent Living

- No communal lounge - this will be used to create additional accommodation where possible
- Visiting Site Officer
- Support Coordinator can be contacted if needed

## Associated Suitable Outlying General Needs Properties

- There is the potential to incorporate any general needs properties suitable for older people (e.g. bungalows) to any of the Independent Living schemes identified above. This would allow general needs residents access to the enhanced services provided at the Independent Living schemes. This would help to support the future viability of social activities provided at Independent Living schemes.

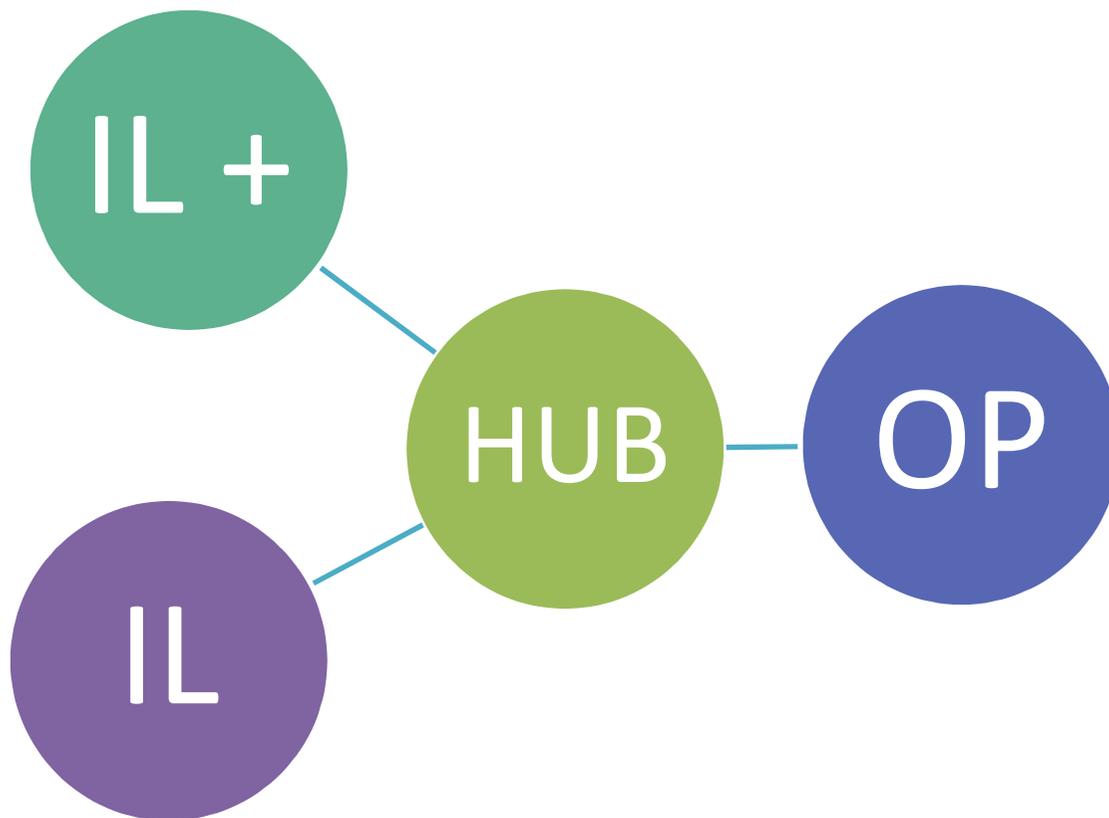


Diagram 7.2 Hub & Spoke Model

**HUB = Independent Living Hub**  
**IL + = Independent Living +**  
**IL = Independent Living**  
**OP = Outlying Properties (general needs bungalows)**

### Hub & Spoke Model:

This diagram shows how the range of accommodation could operate as a hub and spoke model.

- Independent Living Hub schemes will be located around the district with a range of Independent Living + and Independent Living schemes also provided in that locality where possible.
- Independent Living Hubs will be the centre of the Independent Living community for their area. Social activities such as health and wellbeing clinics and recreational events will be organised and held at these schemes and extended to wider residents.
- The residents at Independent Living + schemes would be invited to join in any group activities in the Hub schemes, however they would also benefit from a communal lounge at their own scheme allowing them the ability to socialise, building neighbourly relations and a support network.
- The Independent Living schemes would not have any communal lounge, however they would also be invited to use the Hub or IL + communal lounges and attend any social activities, this will ensure that residents living at these schemes have the opportunity to live independently but still have the ability to socialise when it suits them.
- Any suitable outlying properties, such as existing general needs bungalows which surround Independent Living schemes, could also be given the opportunity to attend activities at the Hub extending the community network.

## 8. Monitoring and Review

### Monitoring of the Action Plan:

This action plan (*Appendix E*) will provide a robust method of monitoring delivery of the strategic objectives to achieve the Council's vision for its older people's accommodation.

The action plan will be monitored on a bi-monthly basis by the Head of Housing Services, with progress made being reported on an annual basis to Housing Committee.

### Review of the Strategy & Action Plan:

The strategy and the action plan should be reviewed fully by the Head of Housing Services by April 2021, with any changes to the strategy reported to Housing Committee.

**Document Owner: Kevin Topping, Head of Housing Services**

**Date for Review: April 2021**