



Committee and Date

Item

Public



Draft Independent Living & Specialist Accommodation Strategy

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1. Synopsis

1.1 The Independent Living and Specialist Accommodation Strategy has been drafted with a primary focus of supporting people with a range of diverse needs to live independently in suitable accommodation. Approval is sought for eight-week public and stakeholder consultation.

2. Executive Summary

2.1. The draft Independent Living and Specialist Accommodation Strategy highlights the critical importance of housing as more than just shelter, emphasising the need for homes that meet various housing needs, especially for older people, those considered to be vulnerable, and people with disabilities. It aligns with the Shropshire Plan 2022-2025¹ “Healthy People”, which centres on priorities promoting healthy living, a robust economy, a sustainable environment, and an efficient organisation, all of which are connected to housing initiatives. It focuses on addressing the housing needs of vulnerable populations in Shropshire, emphasising supported independent and specialist accommodation. This report provides valuable insights into the risks faced by the strategy and offers recommendations for improvement.

¹ [The Shropshire Plan 2022-2025 | Shropshire Council](#)

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. Approve the draft Independent Living and Specialist Accommodation Strategy, outlined in Appendix 1 for an 8-week public and stakeholder consultation following which the updated strategy will be presented to Cabinet for approval.

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1. Inadequate Accommodation Supply: There is a risk that the current housing supply may not adequately meet the demand for vulnerable populations. This could result in delays in providing suitable accommodation. To mitigate the risks, the strategy advocates for additional accommodation, including dispersed move-on units and supported housing schemes, targeting areas of highest need.
- 4.2. Collaborative Partnerships: Establishing and sustaining partnerships with both statutory and voluntary organisations to support vulnerable populations, for example working with refugees, could encounter challenges (resource constraints, policy misalignment, co-ordination issues), potentially impacting the effective delivery of services. To mitigate the risk, it is proposed to identify and address these challenges through a robust collaborative framework, which can enhance effectiveness of partnerships and improve outcomes for vulnerable people.
- 4.3. Addressing potential resistance to a preventative approach to homelessness and re-offending is essential to the success of the plan. The Council recognises the sensitivity of the issue within the community and an awareness campaign could be launched to highlight the benefits of a preventative approach, fostering a sense of community support and understanding. Our approach is to engage in constructive dialogue that bridges gaps and promotes a more comprehensive solution.
- 4.4. An initial Equality, Social inclusion and Health impact Assessment (ESHIA) has been undertaken ahead of the proposed consultation on the draft Strategy. Given the recognised intersectionality across the nine Protected Characteristic groupings as set out in the Equality Act 2010, there will be a predicted low to medium positive impact for individuals and households across groupings, particularly in the groupings of Age and Disability. There are additional positive impacts anticipated for people from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, who are considered as being included in the Protected Characteristic grouping of Race.
- 4.5. The initial screening process ahead of the proposed consultation has also indicated likely low to medium positive impacts for those individuals and households who are considered at risk of social exclusion. In Shropshire, this includes those whom we may regard as being vulnerable, either by virtue of their circumstances as individuals for example, young people leaving care or by virtue of their circumstances as households, for example, households living in fuel poverty and refugee households. In our definition of vulnerable individuals, we would also include people who experience rough sleeping, particularly over a long period. The Council will seek to maximise positive equality impacts for those we may consider to be vulnerable, including people fleeing hate crime and people with disabilities. Additionally, there will be an anticipated positive impact for veterans

and serving members of the armed forces and their families, for whom the Council seeks to have due regard to need through our tenth category of consideration of Social Inclusion. This is not an Equality Act category, rather representing our efforts as a Council to consider the needs of households in Shropshire and the circumstances in which they may find themselves.

- 4.6. A potential negative impact currently identified, pending consultation feedback, is displacement or disruption of support networks. Efforts will need to be made during the consultation process to obtain feedback from as wide a range of people and stakeholder organisations as possible, in order to seek to gauge the depth of this potential negative impact as well as ways to enhance predicted positive impacts.
- 4.7. The authority will also seek to share approaches with comparator authorities, particularly other rural unitary authorities and other authorities in the West Midlands, to promote good practice. Additionally, the proposed action plan will be subject to regular monitoring and the Strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis, building upon ongoing engagement with people in the Protected Characteristic groupings of Age and Disability as well as working with vulnerable groupings including young people leaving care, people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and veterans and serving members of the armed forces and their families. In evaluating the strategy's impact on housing stability, mental and physical health, and social inclusion, opportunities to enhance positive impacts will be at the forefront of monitoring and review.
- 4.8. Being able to access an affordable dwelling which meets a household's needs is essential to health and well-being. For example, this could be an allocation of a flat in an extra care sheltered scheme to an older person with disabilities, allowing them to be able to continue to have "their own front door" and live independently instead of moving into residential care or potentially being admitted to hospital due to a fall. Or instead providing a house which is affordable, of good quality and has security of tenure to a family threatened with homelessness, allowing them to create a home for their children and reducing the worry of a no fault eviction or being able to afford an increase in rent. Regarding homelessness, people who experience rough sleeping over a long period are more likely to die young than the general population. Rough sleepers also experience some of the most severe health inequalities.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. Approving this strategy for consultation has no direct financial implications. Each project associated with the strategy will be subject to its own spend, contingent upon a thorough business case evaluation. This approach ensures that financial considerations are addressed individually for each project, maintaining transparency and accountability in resource allocation.
- 5.2. Operational Costs: The strategy proposes the development and management of various supported housing schemes and accommodation for vulnerable populations. This will likely result in increased operational costs relating to staffing, maintenance, and ongoing support services. This may be off set against other savings, for example, residential care costs, where costs are not fully recovered through Housing Benefit and the application of Intensive Housing Management charges, where eligible.

- 5.3. **Service Delivery Costs:** Collaborative efforts with statutory and voluntary organisations may require financial commitments to ensure effective service delivery to vulnerable populations, including refugees and older individuals. Any proposed financial commitment will be considered against its ability to deliver best value and best outcome for individuals and the authority.
- 5.4. **Maintenance and Adaptations:** Ensuring accessible and adaptable housing may involve expenses related to maintenance, adaptations and modifications over time. Any future financial commitment will be appraised to ensure it delivers value for money, and that it is within the scope of agreed budgets.
- 5.5. The draft Strategy recognises that capital funding will be essential for the construction, development and adaptation of additional accommodation, including supported housing schemes and dispersed move-on units. To secure the necessary capital, the strategy outlines a multifaceted approach. One significant avenue is government grants and programs specifically aimed at supporting vulnerable populations and homelessness prevention. These grants can provide substantial financial support for the capital requirements of the strategy, ensuring the necessary infrastructure can be developed and adapted to meet the community's needs. Where the delivery is undertaken by Shropshire Council it will always be the intention to develop residential accommodation within the Housing Revenue Account. Each proposed development would be subject to its own business case and individual approvals process.
- 5.6. **Property acquisition:** If new properties are acquired to support vulnerable populations, capital expenditure will be necessary for property purchase. We should consider the potential use of right-to-buy receipts as a valuable source of capital for this strategy. These receipts can be reinvested strategically to support housing initiatives, including the development of affordable and supported housing solutions, aligning with the goals of this strategy. As with the development of new accommodation, it will always be the intention, when delivery is undertaken by the Council, to acquire residential accommodation into the Housing Revenue Account. Each proposed acquisition would be subject to its own business case and individual approvals process.
- 5.7. The Council recognises the need to strategically utilise the Domestic Abuse Grant from The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities funds. This grant serves as a crucial resource allocation, enabling the facilitation of specialist support services to help people rebuild their lives in a safe environment. The funding will be used by the council to plan support services and work closely with local charities and other service providers to best meet the needs of victims who have had to flee their homes.
- 5.8. Homelessness Prevention grants can be implied to support affordable housing construction, expand supported housing, fund adaptive housing developments, promote housing first initiatives, housing for vulnerable populations, funding Sanctuary schemes, investing in supported infrastructure, collaborative projects and preventative measures such as homelessness prevention programs, mediation services to keep individuals and families at risk of homelessness in stable housing situations.

- 5.9. Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) Funding can be channelled into the creation of housing options through a strategic and collaborative approach. To include; acquisition or development of housing units, supportive housing models, rapid housing programs, housing first approach, housing navigators and case managers, landlord partnerships, temporary housing solutions, community based housing and allocating a portion of RSI funding to prevention strategies.
- 5.10. Social Impact Bonds (SIBs) present a potential funding source, promoting collaborations across public, private and voluntary sectors to effectively address social challenges within the strategy. This approach not only diversifies funding sources but also aligns with the broader goal of achieving meaningful social impact through strategic financial partnerships.
- 5.11. Collaborative Funding: It involves the pooling of resources, both financial and non-financial, from multiple stakeholders, such as government bodies, charitable organisations and private entities, to address specific social challenges. This collaborative approach encourages a shared responsibility towards achieving common goals, such as improving independent living facilities and specialised accommodations.
- 5.12. In light of the fluid nature of funding resources, it's crucial to remain adaptable. While approving the draft strategy has no direct financial implications, and any projects seeking funding will be subject to approved budgets and where applicable individual business cases, its essential to explore available funding streams at any given time to address potential financial implications.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1. Energy efficiency and Carbon Offset: Positive effect – The strategy's proactive approach to accessible and energy-efficient housing design is anticipated to result in reduced energy and fuel consumption among vulnerable populations. This not only leads to lower utility costs for residents but also aligns with carbon offsetting and mitigation goals. This strategy emphasises sustainable practices such as tree planting, along with the extensive use of recycled or biogenic building materials. This comprehensive strategy addresses both immediate energy consumption concerns and broader objectives related to carbon emissions, contributing to a more sustainable and environmentally friendly housing solution.
- 6.2. Renewable Energy Generation: Positive effect – While the report does not specifically address renewable energy generation, the emphasis on modern, aspirational housing may include provisions for renewable energy sources. This could contribute to increased renewable energy generation in the long term.
- 6.3. Climate Change Adaptation: Positive effect – While not explicitly mentioned, the strategy's focus on adaptable and accessible housing suggests a proactive approach to climate change adaptation. Housing designed to withstand climate challenges can enhance the resilience of vulnerable populations.

- 6.4. Environmental impact: Positive effect – the strategy’s emphasis on accessibility and sustainable design principles is likely to have a positive impact on the environment. Reduced energy consumption, improved building materials, and sustainable practices contribute to a more environmentally friendly approach.

7. Background

- 7.1. It is good practice to have a specific housing strategy that effectively addresses the diverse needs of vulnerable individuals within our community, even though it is not a statutory requirement. The Independent Living and Specialist Accommodation Strategy has a clear vision: to enable older, vulnerable and people with disabilities to lead independent lives in housing suitable to their needs.
- 7.2. This vision underpins our two overarching objectives, which are at the heart of this draft strategy. First and foremost, our strategy is committed to promoting independent and healthy lives for all vulnerable populations. We recognise the significance of empowering older, vulnerable, and people with disabilities to maintain their independence within housing suitable to their needs.
- 7.3. Secondly, the strategy is dedicated to delivering, enabling and commissioning supported and specialist accommodation that directly addresses the housing needs of the community. We understand that not everyone’s housing needs are the same, and therefore, we are committed to providing a range of housing solutions to cater to the diverse requirements of our residents. These objectives serve as the guiding principles of the strategy, shaping the direction of our actions and initiatives. Our ultimate goal is to enhance living conditions and support services for vulnerable individuals across Shropshire.
- 7.4. The strategy is inclusive, encompassing a broad spectrum of vulnerable populations, including older adults, people with physical and mental disabilities, people with less visible disabilities such as neurodiverse conditions, or Crohn’s Disease, individuals with hidden disabilities, care leavers, survivors of domestic abuse, ex-offenders, and refugees. We are dedicated to tailoring our housing solutions to meet the unique needs of each group, ensuring their safety and wellbeing.
- 7.5. Key to the approach is a strong emphasis on supported housing schemes, including both temporary and permanent housing options. This approach extends to additional accommodation, such as dispersed move-on units and supported housing schemes, strategically expanding in areas of the highest need. By doing so, we are committed to providing appropriate and accessible housing design, along with the necessary adaptations, to enhance the quality of life for people with disabilities.
- 7.6. The strategy will involve a targeted consultation approach, identifying key stakeholders, community representations, and experts through open forums, surveys and direct engagements. This inclusive process aims to gather valuable input. Following this, a thorough review will be undertaken, incorporating received feedback to refine the draft strategy, ensuring alignment with community needs

and objectives. The aim is to present the post-consultation updated strategy to Cabinet for approval in its final draft form.

Conclusions

- 8.1 In conclusion, the Draft Independent Living and Specialist Accommodation Strategy represents a commitment to improving the quality of life for vulnerable populations within our local authority. While approving the draft strategy has no direct financial implications. We are dedicated to exploring various funding sources, optimising budget allocation and off-setting cost savings, and collaborating effectively to ensure the delivery of the strategy and, most importantly, the wellbeing of all our residents.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Local Member:

Appendices

Appendix I: Draft Independent Living and Specialist Accommodation Strategy for Consultation

Appendix II: Action Plan

Appendix III: Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessment.