

# CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE

## DEVELOPING AN ATTRACTIVE PROPOSITION PROMOTING INVESTMENT IN HOUSING SOLUTIONS FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Central Bedfordshire is an area of considerable growth. The council has ambitious plans for new homes and new jobs in the area by creating new, vibrant, sustainable communities, while also enhancing Central Bedfordshire's picturesque setting. Accommodation for older people will be an integrated part of its plans.

Central Bedfordshire's economy is growing fast. Central Bedfordshire is generally an affluent area, with only 13 per cent of older people living in income deprived households and three quarters of older residents owning their home.

To address the housing requirements of its older population the council has developed a comprehensive and sophisticated approach to using a detailed qualitative and quantitative evidence base to produce an 'investment prospectus' to set out its vision for the range and mix of housing and accommodation required and to invite investment to deliver housing solutions.

The council has established a thorough evidence base to underpin its strategic approach to identifying the range of opportunities to grow and develop more refined housing choices for older people.

Like much of the rest of the UK the council is forecasting an increase in its population of older people. This rise represents both an increase in the number of older people and the proportion of older people in the local population. In 2015 people over 65 made up 17.2 per cent of the population, by 2035 they will be 23.3 per cent. The reasons for this trend are increasing life expectancy coupled with baby boomers starting to reach later life.

The effect is most significant in the 85 and over age range where the population is set to rise by 2.5 times from 5,400 in 2015 to 13,700 by 2035.

As people live longer many are living with one or more long term conditions, and for a significant number, advancing age brings frailty. Currently in Central Bedfordshire there are over 15,000 people aged 65 and over who are unable to manage at least one personal care task and by 2030 this is predicted to rise to over 24,000 people. There is a similar rise in the number of people living with a limiting long term condition, which in 2015 equated to roughly 20,000 and by 2030 will be over 32,000.

### How is it innovative?

#### The council's approach

From this detailed evidence base, the council's vision is to:

**“Secure the best quality of life we can for our older residents both now and in the future. This means delivering a range of accommodation that enables older people to live fulfilling lives and enjoy good health in attractive homes that meet their needs and allow them to retain their independence as they age.”**



The detailed evidence base and this vision forms the basis for a highly attractive and sophisticated 'investment prospectus'<sup>35</sup> document which the council is using to invite investment in a range of housing and accommodation options for older people.

The original plan was to produce a more 'traditional' market position statement document, however the investment prospectus was produced to provide a more attractive and engaging approach to stimulating the market.

The investment prospectus, based on evidence of housing need and this vision, sets out clearly the council's market shaping and housing delivery objectives in the form of development opportunities:

- Facilitate the development of six affordable extra care schemes by the end of 2020. One scheme of 80 apartments or more in each locality area and two additional schemes in areas of high demand.
- Encourage the development of open market extra care schemes to provide apartments for sale and private rent.
- Encourage developers to build mainstream homes that are suitable for and attractive to older people as part of new residential developments, including changes to the design and layout of homes that can make a big difference to 'future proofing' for older people without jeopardising the viability of the development.

- By the end of 2020 reprovide the capacity in the seven council-owned care homes (249 places), in homes that have modern physical and environmental standards.
- Work with current care home operators that wish to improve the physical and environmental conditions in their homes by remodelling or reproviding.

The council's investment prospectus specifically identifies the range of opportunities that will, collectively, address the identified demographic, housing and care/support needs, as well as the aspirations and requirements of older people. These reflect the scale and type of local communities as well as older people's aspirations:

- Develop innovative housing solutions for older people, ie signalling to architects and house builders who want to take the opportunity of a more innovative approach to designing attractive and aspirational housing.
- Developing small scale housing for older people in smaller towns and villages.
- Develop dementia friendly buildings that help people living with dementia to orientate themselves and live more independently.

The impressive investment prospectus identifies in more detail the housing and accommodation options that are required in each of the council's four 'localities'.

<sup>35</sup> [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/housing/independent-living/dev-accom-older-people-bedfordshire.aspx?utm\\_source=website&utm\\_medium=shortcut&utm\\_campaign=opip](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/housing/independent-living/dev-accom-older-people-bedfordshire.aspx?utm_source=website&utm_medium=shortcut&utm_campaign=opip)

Alongside its understanding of the demographic and potential care/support characteristics of its over 55 population, and the evidence from its strategic housing market assessment (SHMA), the council commissioned extensive qualitative research in order to better understand the 'drivers' and motivations behind older people's propensity to move.

This research was specifically designed to cover the same period as the emerging local plan, 2015-2035, and it used the SHMA as a starting point of estimates of housing need for older people. The research sample was selected to be a representative cohort of residents over the age of 55 years across all housing and tenure types. Six hundred short and 80 in-depth surveys were carried out along with focus groups with stakeholder organisations.

Key findings include:

- Twenty seven per cent of respondents would consider moving to more appropriate housing before they needed care and a further 25 per cent would be prepared to move if the need arose.
- Location was by far the most important factor for those people planning or considering a move, followed by design and size, tenure and cost, and facilities.
- Most people planning or considering a move wanted a similar tenure to their existing arrangements, ie most owner occupiers (80 per cent of current 65 plus population in Central Bedfordshire) wanted to remain in the owner-occupied sector if they move.

- Most of the respondents, if they did move, would release a larger property than the one they were taking up.

This is a detailed and very thorough approach to generating a qualitative evidence base to complement the existing demographic and quantitative housing need evidence. It provides more sophisticated intelligence to guide the range of development opportunities set out in the council's investment prospectus. It also produces a numerical estimate of the impact of rightsizing and offers a methodology for doing the same in other areas.

## Outcomes

The council is responding to this evidence through directly developing housing for older people itself as well as inviting both private and social housing providers to develop housing and accommodation 'offers' that will be attractive to older people.

### Delivery outcomes

- A council developed extra care housing scheme of 83 units in Dunstable.
- A private sector 'rightsizer' housing scheme of 32 units in Dunstable.
- Two new care homes with 141 beds in Dunstable enabling the council to close some of its in-house outdated care home provision.
- A housing association extra care housing scheme of 81 units in Leighton Buzzard.
- In developing its Local Plan, consult with residents to explore the opportunities for community-led housing such as co-housing for older people.



### **Planned/required**

- New and remodelled extra care housing in Houghton Regis to provide 140 units of affordable and open market apartments.
- New extra care housing scheme/s in Ampthill or Flitwick.
- New extra care housing scheme of up to 90 units at Biggleswade.
- New care home provision in Ivel Valley.

The council has also made use of the qualitative research to identify the effect on future housing need amongst older people to be included within the emerging Local Plan. The council has used the proportion of older people who state that they are planning to move and extrapolated this with population growth during the local plan timescale gives an estimated need for 3,650 specialist dwellings and 5,400 mainstream dwellings suitable for older people wishing to downsize. This estimate of 9,050 dwellings (not additional housing need as it is assumed that most of the people taking up these dwellings from the existing population) is likely to represent approximately 20 per cent of the overall need for housing growth during the Local Plan period.

### **Contact**

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**Priory view, Dunstable**