

REDDITCH OLDER PERSONS' HOUSING AND SUPPORT STRATEGY**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Older Persons' Housing and Support Strategy examines the background to change, at national, regional and local level and proposes the actions that the Borough will need to take in order to meet strategic directives and the needs and aspirations of the Borough's older people, over the next 16 years.

PART 1 – THE BACKGROUND TO CHANGE

The Government is strongly driving change in the housing and support of older people, based on the national profile of an ageing population. Its intention is to raise standards, based on 'quality, choice and independence' and to ensure support and services are delivered, as far as possible, at the first level of intervention, in the community and in peoples' homes.

Worcestershire follows the national agenda through two principal strategies, the Worcestershire Older Persons' Strategy for the County, and the Worcestershire Supporting People Strategy. This Strategy for Redditch is designed to dovetail with these key framework documents.

PART 2 - CONSULTATION

We have consulted with local residents in order to establish their views on their current housing and their future needs and aspirations. The 'My Home, My Future, My Choice' consultation, conducted in July 2007, collected the views of over 1000 people, including those in the private sector and those who will become 'older people' during the course of the Strategy. We also consulted with other Agencies and partners and linked our own priorities to theirs. All the views collected have been used to inform our proposed actions.

Consultation told us that 97% of people wanted to stay in their own homes for as long as possible. The principal requirement was for 'their own front door' and of prime importance was having a secure and safe environment, the support of a call system and visiting support staff, proximity to shops or town and good transport links.

PART 3 - OLDER PEOPLES' SERVICES 2010-2026

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

We need to plan for a significant increase in our older population over the next 16 years. The over 65 population is projected to increase from 11,200 people in 2009 to 14,700 by 2016 and 17,900 by 2026. The Strategy recognises that people want, and are more likely to remain in their own homes as they get older. It proposes that suitable older persons' housing is increased over the period in accordance with Regional strategic assessments. Because of the move to support more people in their own homes, the proposal is to provide, subject to the necessary funding, support to 20% of the age group.

THE HOUSING STOCK

Significant parts of the Redditch housing stock for older people were set up 25 or more years ago, in accordance with the standards of the day. These do not necessarily meet contemporary standards or peoples' expectations, especially for mobility. We undertook a comprehensive assessment of the current stock to look at their fitness for the needs of older people, both now and in the future.

Following the assessments, the Strategy recommends that:

- the majority of the stock is retained for older people
- a significant number of schemes should no longer be designated, on the basis that they do not, or cannot, provide standards appropriate for older people
- a number of schemes should be investigated further and only remain designated if they can achieve the necessary standards

The Borough has a large and generally excellent portfolio, but few schemes met all the standards we defined. Among the best performing were bungalows, particularly where these did not have problems of mobility due to access, poor internal arrangement or inadequate size.

The schemes that were least fit for purpose included schemes with a high density of studio accommodation, first floor flats with poor access, schemes where entry age limits have been lowered to the detriment of some of the older occupants, and schemes in undesirable or difficult locations. Further investigation of the feasibility of lift installation is proposed to meet peoples' mobility needs.

The Strategy recognises that sensitive transitional arrangements need to be made for any scheme where de-designation is proposed.

HOUSING MANAGEMENT

Overall occupancy performance has significantly improved, but we believe that for some schemes, this may have been achieved in part at the expense of some peoples' enjoyment of their homes, through the reduction in the qualifying age of entry into the scheme. The Strategy suggests that where schemes are retained, a qualifying age of 60 would be desirable. It also recommends that the Borough should investigate whether priority could be given to older people in the scheduling of capital works, and in the quality of landscape maintenance.

HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Redditch Borough Council will be the housing enabler during this period of change. It is recommended that the Council facilitates appropriate growth in services to meet demand, that it encourages a range of provision including retirement villages, that it maintains its positive record of promoting good quality design and building standards, including Lifetime Homes.

HOUSING SUPPORT

The Strategy underlines the value of the Community Warden, Lifeline and associated services that help support people in independence. The Warden Service is due for review in 2009/10 and will be expected to meet Supporting Peoples' aim of equality of service between the public, voluntary and private sectors. It is recommended that plans are accordingly made to change the focus of the service, including the review of staffing structures and promotion and marketing materials. The Borough should also continue to promote 'Telecare' support and is encouraged to investigate whether further practical support might be provided to support independence.

PART 4 - PRIORITIES

The strategy makes several recommendations the resulting proposals have been formulated into an action plan that identifies three clear priorities which are:

Priority 1: Ensure older person housing is responsive to demographic change in the period 2010 – 2026

Priority 2: Ensure older person support is responsive to demographic change in the period 2010 – 2026

Priority 3: To ensure service users are fully informed and involved and their views are taken into consideration

The Action Plan sets down the objectives, outcomes and planned actions and is found at Annex 2.