

Presentations by Ms J Yates and Ms S Hanbury of Wigan Council on the Plans for the Future of the Former Shevington Community School Site in Miles Lane Shevington - 24 January 2019

Jenny Yates (Service Manager – Age Well) began the presentation by confirming that there were no plans for developing the site as a general housing estate. The LA were currently investigating the possibility of introducing and developing an Extra Care provision on the site.

Wigan Council already had four Extra Care provisions of various sizes in other parts of the Borough and were looking at extending the sheltered housing provision for Wigan's ageing population coupled with Extra Care provision on the same site. Ms Yates explained the LA's vision with regard to the nature of Extra Care provision.

Essentially such provision consisted of self-contained apartments (each consisting of one/two bedrooms, a kitchen, a lounge, a bathroom and a toilet) that had been adapted to include assistive technology for residents. On-site staff provided personal and/or domestic support and there was a communal lounge and other groups, such as schools and Incredible Edible, worked with them to enhance the environment and engage the residents.

Residents had to be at least 50 years of age to be eligible for a home on such a site. A care needs assessment was also required to inform eligibility. Residents are able to live on the site independently with just a little support, which can be increased as required. The facilities enabled couples to remain together in the event that only one of them needs to move into a care home. The residents do not own these properties – they are tenants.

The LA are working with Housing Associations to provide the homes. Wardens were employed to be there 24/7 to respond in an emergency. One of the many positives of the service was the opportunity for residents to mix and socialise with people.

Sharon Hanbury (Service Manager – Housing Policy & Reform) informed the meeting that the officers had heard about the history of the site in Shevington and were aware that the GP's Surgery and the Clinic were next door. They were also aware that the Medical Centre wanted to expand services on their site.

Wigan Council owned the former school site and were committed to the Extra Care provision, but had not yet started on the detailed work involved in identifying partners in the project. The officers wished to provide the Parish Council with assurance that the project was moving forward, but could not yet provide a time-frame for completion. At present there were issues surrounding car parking. A detailed scheme was not likely to be available until the Summer and then planning permission would be required.

In answers to questions from members, the Officers replied that:

- It was too early in the day for a decision to be made about the number of residential units that the site would accommodate. Other sites consisted of about 40 units. The busy nature of Miles Lane raised issues of concern.
- Residents of Shevington would have priority.
- They did not know whether the units would cover just the footprint of the school or whether the playing fields would be used as well.

Appendix A

- Altogether 2,000 such units were being planned Borough-wide and would include sheltered accommodation. It would be entirely possible for some housing to be assigned to the over 70s who were otherwise perfectly well.
- Funding was not readily available and the LA would probably have to engage in a long lease with another entity in order to develop the site. The lease would be structured in a way that would ensure that the site did not become something else a few years down the line.

A member suggested that respite care accommodation (particularly for people who had dementia) should be included on the site. A bookable service was needed – at present there was nothing of this nature available. The officers advised that they were in discussion with both the CCG as well as the Surgery about this. The member requested that the Wigan Access Committee would like to look at the plans before they were submitted to the Planning Department.

Another suggestion that the same services should be provided in residents' own homes without the need for them to move was discussed at length. The officers advised that The Care Act 2014 enabled the LA to provide a range of services in people's own homes.

The meeting was then opened out to the public present, who raised concerns about the volume of traffic along the main road adjoining the site, the constraints of the site with respect to the number and type of units that it could accommodate and the quality of the care that the staff would be able to provide. There was a degree of scepticism about putting the provision into private hands, creating a situation where the need to turn a profit could override the needs of the residents.

The officers reported that 25% of the units could be assigned to residents in a younger age group who were in need of Extra Care, e.g. people with Downs Syndrome.

This visit to a Parish Council meeting was one of several informal consultations that the officers proposed to carry out. They were due to visit the Community Association meeting the following week and would be addressing other small groups. After that there would be a larger, formal consultation. This was a requirement of Planning.

Other initiatives for the site also under consideration. The LA were keen to have a Surestart offer on the site again. There was also the possibility of a drop-in Community Hub being provided for non-residents.