
WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE HOUSING DELIVERY 2021-2022

Report by the Director – Infrastructure and Environment

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

14 June 2022

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an annual update regarding the numbers of wheelchair accessible homes delivered against the Council target for the period 2021/2022.**
- 1.2 Revised Scottish Government Guidance required Councils to set all tenure wheelchair accessible housing targets. On 17 November 2020, the Executive Committee agreed an annual target of 20 houses. During 2021-2022, Registered Social Landlords delivered 48 wheelchair accessible homes, and the private sector delivered none.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Executive Committee welcomes the 48 wheelchair standard homes delivered by Registered Social Landlords during 2020/21 and expresses disappointment that no wheelchair standard homes were delivered by the private sector in the same period.**

3 THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT

- 3.1 Over the last 5 years there has been increasing policy interest in the provision of affordable and adaptable housing for household which contain a wheelchair user. In 2016, the Scottish Government launched "A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: Delivery Plan 2016-21". In 2018, the Equalities and Human Rights Commission's 18-month enquiry in housing for disabled people, concluded that that the chronic shortage of accessible homes was a breach of disabled people's rights and was a hidden housing crisis. Most recently Scottish Government has issued Guidance in March and August 2019 which requires Councils to set targets for the delivery of wheelchair accessible homes across all tenures. Councils have a close working relationship with Registered Social Landlord [RSL] sector through the Strategic Housing Investment Plan [SHIP] processes. The Executive Committee agreed the current SHIP 2022-2027 on 14th September 2020, which contains Registered Social Landlords' affordable housing project proposals which also include delivery of a number of wheelchair accessible homes. However, on the other hand, Scottish Councils have expressed their concerns regarding their ability to set and enforce such targets for the private sector.
- 3.2 At its meeting of 17 November 2020, the Council's Executive Committee agreed 20 wheelchair homes as an annual target, with Registered Social Landlords [RSLs] to deliver 15 of these. The Executive also agreed that an annual update report be brought to this Committee to report on progress delivery.

4 WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE HOUSING DELIVERY 2020-2021

- 4.1 During the period 2021-2022, Registered Social Landlords delivered 48 wheelchair standard homes. These were located as follows, 2 houses at Beanburn Ph1 Ayton by Berwickshire Housing Association, and Eildon Housing Association delivered 7 flats at Huddersfield Street Galashiels and all 39 flats within the Wilkie Gardens Extra Care Housing development in Galashiels. However, no wheelchair standard homes were delivered by the private sector.

To set this in some context, during 2020-2021, RSLs delivered 2 wheelchair standard flats, and the private sector delivered none. Delivery of new housing typically has a 3 to 4 year lead in time from design to completion. Therefore it is anticipated that it will take a corresponding time from when the Council set the above target, for new supply wheelchair accessible homes to be produced in addition to those previously programmed. It is envisaged that additional wheelchair accessible homes will be delivered in future years.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

There are no costs attached to any of the recommendation in this report.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

This report is for noting, and no specific concerns have been identified which require to be addressed.

5.3 Integrated Impact Assessments

- (a) In line with both Council policy and legislative requirement, the SHIP 2022-2027 has been subjected to an Integrated Impact Assessment. This Assessment identified any no concerns about the way the delivery of the SHIP is likely to adversely impact on any of the equalities groupings. It is considered that the setting of an annual Wheelchair Accessible Housing target will provide further stimulus toward increasing the supply of such homes throughout Scottish Borders.
- (b) Houses produced by RSLs are allocated according to their individual allocations policy and procedures. As a consequence of being an RSL, they are subject to the weight of Statutory scrutiny via external Regulation and Inspection carried out by the Scottish Housing Regulator.

5.4 Sustainable Development Goals

- (a) In accordance with Section 7 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 pre-screening assessment of the SHIP 2022-2027 was undertaken using the criteria specified in Schedule 2 of the Act. The pre-screening assessments identified no or minimal effects in relation to the environment hence the SHIP is exempt from SEA requirements under Section 7 (1) of the Act.
- (b) By seeking to provide more new affordable houses including wheelchair accessible housing, the SHIP will promote sustainable communities and help to address many of the housing supply challenges identified in the Local Housing Strategy 2017-2022.
- (c) There are no adverse economic or social effects resulting from SHIP delivery, and potential environmental effects from provision of wheelchair accessible and other new build housing will be addressed through the Planning Process and National policies and standards, and will be consistent with meeting the housing requirements and standards as set out by Scottish Government.
- (d) The objectives of the SHIP are consistent with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 11, Sustainable Cities and Communities, and 13 Climate Action. Specifically the SHIP responds to the ambition of SDG 11 by promoting access to adequate, safe and affordable housing by ensuring integrated inclusive and sustainable settlements and by strengthening regional development planning. With respect to SDG 13, development will be at least consistent with Scottish Building Standards and the national objective of net zero greenhouse gases by 2045.

5.5 Climate Change

- (a) It is considered that there are no direct effects on the Council's carbon emissions arising from the delivery of wheelchair accessible housing.
- (b) New Build housing will have a general effect on the region's carbon footprint however these are addressed within the Council's Planning and Building Standards processes, and will be consistent with meeting the housing requirements and current applicable standards as set out by the Scottish Government.
- (c) It is anticipated that RSL affordable housing proposed in the SHIP 2022-2027 will be built to meet Scottish Government's "Silver Standard" as a minimum. In the event that this cannot be reached, new houses will be built to comply with current Scottish Building

Standards, thereby seeking to maximise the opportunity for energy efficiency and reduction of fuel poverty.

- (d) It should be noted that at its meeting of 25 September 2020, the Council committed to setting a target as soon as possible for achieving a reduction in the Council's carbon emissions which is at least consistent with the Scottish Government target of net zero by 2045, and the intermediate targets set out in the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019. The Council's Planning and Building Standards will reflect and implement the developing national and local public policy positions and requirements. In addition, the Full Council Meeting on 17 June 2021 considered and agreed the recommendations set out in a Climate Change Route Map report.

5.6 Rural Proofing

- (a) Rural proofing applies to all areas of Scottish Borders classified by Scottish Government as 'remote rural' or 'accessible rural'. This applies to all areas of Scottish Borders outwith the towns of Galashiels/Tweedbank, Hawick, Peebles, Innerleithen, Selkirk, Eyemouth, Jedburgh and Kelso.
- (b) The SHIP project working group carried out a Rural Proofing exercise in August 2021 as part of the preparation of the SHIP 2022/27. It was considered that the delivery of wheelchair accessible homes will have a positive effect by increasing the supply of affordable homes across Scottish Borders.

5.7 Data Protection Impact Statement

There are no personal data implications arising from the recommendation set out in this report.

5.8 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

There are no changes to be made to the Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation as a result of this report.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Director (Finance & Corporate Governance), the Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director (People Performance & Change), the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications are being consulted and any comments will be incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

John Curry
Director Infrastructure and Environment.

Signature

Author(s)

| Name | Designation and Contact Number |
|------------|---|
| Gerry Begg | Lead Officer - Housing Strategy, Policy and Development 01896-662770 |

Background Papers: SHIP 2022-27 Document Executive Committee 14th September 2021.

Previous Minute Reference: Wheelchair accessible housing target report by the Executive Director Corporate Improvement and Economy to the Executive Committee 17th November 2020.

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Jacqueline Whitelaw can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact us at Jacqueline Whitelaw, PLACE, Scottish Borders Council, Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, Melrose, TD6 0SA, Tel 01835 825431, Fax 01835 825071, Email eitranslationrequest@scotborders.gov.uk