

Exceptional Needs Case for Greenacres Supporting Living development

Introduction

It is our legislative duty to look at the accommodation needs for vulnerable people. Under the Mental Capacity Act. Supported Living is the least restrictive offer.

This case demonstrates the need and the benefits of the proposed Supported Living development at Greenacres Farm, Walford Heath, Shrewsbury with a particular focus on specialist requirements and supported affordable housing, including client considerations and local needs. This is not a new use but an augmentation of an existing use, enhancing the offer at Greenacres. It will, however, require planning permission.

The principle of the project will be mainly considered against Local Plan policies (CS5 and MD7a) which make provision for exception local housing need schemes in a countryside location and Policy CS11 which specifically identifies specialist housing needs. However, other policy considerations may also apply. ASC are aware of the current review to the existing Local Plan but believe the over-arching principles will remain the same for the Greenacres Supported Living development project.

There is a shortage of suitable accommodation in Shropshire that delivers the needs for highly complex individuals, in addition to more expensive out of county placements. We needed to radically rethink how we offer housing to people with a learning disability, autism, mental health or those with a dual diagnosis. It is important to note that having a range of bespoke housing options based on each individual's needs and preferences has a positive impact on health and wellbeing. The project aims to shift provision towards a model that gives people security of tenure and housing rights, with a separate contract for their support enabling people to have choice about their social care provider without jeopardising their home.

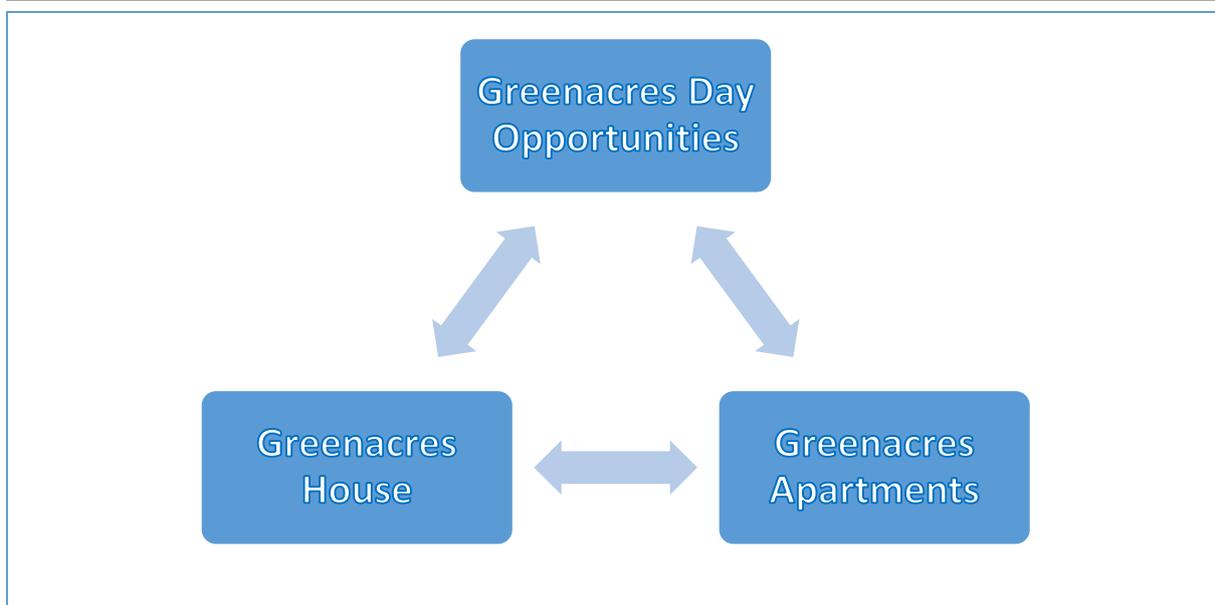
Context and Proposed Development

Cabinet have previously recognised that appropriate accommodation should be made available to enable adults with learning and physical disabilities to live in a community setting. Shropshire Council wishes to develop a different model to future proof buildings to support the demographic demand; be more creative about the range of Assisted Technology used to support an individual's independence and provide alternative individual living units with communal areas, sharing staff to lower care costs.

The project is linked to an existing facility at Greenacres Farm that already provides a range of facilities and day care opportunities to vulnerable people. The day services facility will provide opportunities and support to the new proposed residents of the apartments outlined in this proposal. In addition to this, the empty house situated at Greenacres, will be converted to incorporate a variety of uses to suit the needs of the residents living in the apartments, along with the public.

Combining these three services on one site will allow them to complement each other and provide a range of opportunities, mutual benefits and activities that promotes independent living to not only the residents living in Greenacres apartments but the wider community. A separate entrance will be created to the day service, which will be adjacent to the new project.

Jointly supporting adults with a Learning Disability, Autism and / or Mental Health needs



The following report presents the case as to why Greenacres was chosen as the most favourable location, compared to all other local Shropshire locations that were considered.

The project's intention is to:

1. Build eight single-storey Supported Living units, communal shared area, internal courtyard, outdoor spaces including a sensory garden, fitness area with outdoor gym equipment, a small running track around the perimeter courtyard on council land to provide an opportunity for people with complex needs to live more independently and will reduce the number of placements in residential care outside of Shropshire. In the future this accommodation will be suitable for individuals who may currently live with parents, be at risk of going into residential care, already in residential care, in temporary placements or be at risk in the community. The project will create significant savings on care packages, as care hours can be reduced through shared carers and also by reducing the need for the most expensive out of county packages.

2. Develop an existing empty house on the Greenacres site, which is in close proximity to the suggested apartments, and redevelop it into a more functional useable space to optimise its potential. Various options have been suggested for the house and several would help support residents by creating a central space for activities on a day/evening, such as cooking, education and training, movie nights, take away nights, BBQ, exercise and fitness sessions etc, in addition to supporting the needs of adults with a LD and/or MH needs to help those who wish to transition over to Supported Living. The house is being developed to create a lifestyle for individuals to give them more choice and control and will enable them to get out of their apartments to an alternative building onsite for a number of different reasons.

Planning Policy Context and Exceptional Needs Case

Adult Social Care (ASC) are aware that existing planning **Policy CS5 Countryside & Green Belt** (p. 65) of the [Core Strategy](#) together with [Policy MD7a of the Local Plan](#) (SAMDev) restrict new residential developments in the countryside and are not normally permitted. The project will be based on 100% affordability. The policies do, however, facilitate some exceptions such as conversion and appropriate new affordable accommodation to meet a local need identifying a preference for locations, which is not connected with a settlement are linked to existing developments or enterprises. The relevant extracts of the Policies are set out below.

The project risks have been reduced. Potential planning requirements have been taken into account as much as possible at this stage of establishing, following various discussions with planning officers, in principle policy requirements focussing on advice regarding affordable housing. It is considered that this is compatible with the project intention of providing specialist affordable units to address the need for locally available suitable supported living accommodation for individuals as discussed in more detail later. CS5 states:

*“Subject to the further controls over development that apply to the Green Belt, development proposals on appropriate sites which maintain and enhance countryside vitality and character **will be permitted where they improve the sustainability of rural communities by bringing local economic and community benefits, particularly where they relate to:***

- *dwelling to house agricultural, forestry or other essential countryside workers and other **affordable housing / accommodation to meet a local need in accordance with national planning policies and Policies CS11 and CS12;***
 - *With regard to the above two types of development, applicants will be required to demonstrate the need and benefit for the development proposed. Development will be expected to take place primarily in recognisable named settlements or **be linked to other existing development and business activity where this is appropriate.** “*

- Policy MD7a provides additional detail and states:
“Further to Core Strategy Policy CS5 and CS11, new market housing will be strictly controlled outside of Shrewsbury, the Market Towns, Key Centres and Community Hubs and Community Clusters. Suitably designed and located exceptions site dwellings..... will be positively considered where they meet evidence local housing needs and other relevant policy requirements.....”

The current specialist provision is not available in Shropshire and has and continues to result in individuals leaving Shropshire to live in residential settings or single occupancy homes, especially those with complex needs that can result in people feeling isolated and lonely and away from their family support. These individuals are amongst the highest costed and considerable savings on staffing hours can be made by developing this provision.

The rural location of the existing Greenacres site was chosen to deliver Shropshire’s specialised housing for some of the most vulnerable individuals we support. This is favourable over a more urban location due to the risk urban locations may pose to individuals with complex needs, for example road awareness and increased risk of harm and abuse. Currently there is nowhere in Shropshire for such individuals to live and this is the reason why we would like to bring them back into county, to be near family, friends and their support networks. The opportunity of building an innovative, sustainable building that is future proofed and can be sustained and adapted easily for the young people in Shropshire. The advantages linked to agricultural, livestock and horticultural facilities that are already available on the Greenacres farm site provides an ideal opportunity to develop the facilities from what it currently provides. This includes creating jobs for carers, a gardener, cleaner and maintenance role, in addition to paid or voluntary work to the residents in the farm shop. Out of all the other locations considered, Greenacres was the only site that had the day opportunity facilities attached.

The development will provide a more person-centred, efficient service to people with very complex needs, some of which we do not currently provide a service to within the county. It will make a positive impact on the way vulnerable people live their lives in a way that benefits everyone. The unique approach will enable the tenants to live in good quality homes and lead them on a path of independent living, community integration and volunteer opportunities or employment. It will relocate individuals from high cost expensive residential provision, both in and outside the county, that does not currently best meet their individual needs and choices. It also offers financial savings on an individual basis.

The type of Supported Living accommodation at Greenacres will provide good quality, sustainable housing of the right size, type and tenure of affordable housing. Vulnerable tenants will pay Social Rent. It is proposed, therefore, that it will provide specialist affordable housing for vulnerable people in accordance with **Policy CS11 Type and Affordability of Housing** (pp. 85-89) of the [Core Strategy](#). CS11 states:

“To meet the diverse housing needs of Shropshire residents now and in the future and to create mixed, balanced and inclusive communities, an integrated and balanced approach will be taken with regard to existing and new housing, including type, size, tenure and affordability. This will be achieved by:

- *Seeking housing developments which help to balance the size, type and tenure of the local housing stock;*
- *Seeking to ensure that all housing developments are designed to be capable of adaptation to accommodate lifestyle changes, including the needs of the elderly and people with disabilities, and to achieve the Lifetime Homes standard;*
- ***Supporting the provision of housing for vulnerable people and specialist housing provision, including nursing homes, residential and extra care facilities, in appropriate locations and where there is an identified need;*** “

ASC have confidence they will provide affordable accommodation that meets the needs of local residents in accordance with national and local planning policies.

Although due to be updated, accompanying planning supplementary guidance [Type & Affordability of Housing](#): (pp.2-3) states:

*“2.6 Provision has to be made for the increasing number of elderly people in Shropshire and for other **vulnerable groups who need either specialist accommodation or a setting where appropriate support can be provided.** This provision may be made through the provision of new market housing (eg. for older people), adaptation to existing housing or through some form of **specialist provision, such as supported housing for adults with learning difficulties or other types of accommodation to enable people to live independently in their own homes.**”*

*2.7 Examples of types of specialist housing needs include the provision of **accommodation suitable to meet the housing and support needs of people with learning difficulties; people with physical disabilities; people with mental health problems; people with substance misuse issues; people with acquired brain injuries; people who are ex-offenders; vulnerable young people and also older people who may require smaller and/or adapted accommodation to help maintain their independence for as long as possible.**”*

ASC believe they have the appropriate housing type, including tenure and affordability; that are key to meeting housing needs of the vulnerable people they service and have developed the right mix to provide specialist accommodation which will be supported by a range of specific care packages to each resident. ASC have already had initial discussions with potential residents and families as part of the development process and received positive support and feedback from them.

If ASC gain planning approval, they will engage with the wider local community at relevant stages. The planning application and process requires wider community engagement and will be open to the public to comment. These are priorities of national, regional and Shropshire housing strategies. Greenacres Supported Living development addresses these priorities, will meet specialist housing needs in a rural area, including the need for affordable housing. Greenacres Supported Living development will help ensure that there is adequate provision of specialist accommodation for Supported Living. The design of the housing will be adaptable to the changing needs of the individuals and will be built to a high standard of sustainable design.

The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF 2019):

59. *“To support the Government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay”.*
61. *“Within this context, the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies (including, but not limited to, those who require affordable housing, families with children, older people, students, people with disabilities, service families, travellers²⁵, people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes”.*

Shropshire’s Housing Strategy is being updated and is going out to consultation in August 2020. The Strategy describes specialist accommodation:

“To secure housing to meet the needs of vulnerable people when new developments are identified”. The Strategy also notes “Key to improving the health and wellbeing of Shropshire’s more vulnerable residents is to ensure they can live in and access safe and suitable homes in good condition, built to a high quality and in the right location”.

Greenacres Supported Living project delivers National and Regional housing policies and strategy priorities as described above. The development benchmarks and captures best practice from extensive research into a range of Supported Living schemes and will consider a range of assisted technologies to monitor activity, telehealth, medication management and social connection intervention. With the success of the new model, further consideration will be given to expanding and replicating the accommodation in other areas of the county in the future.

It is a statutory requirement for Shropshire ASC to meet the care and support needs of the individuals this property is designed for and to provide specialist accommodation. Greenacres will meet that need, deliver better outcomes for individuals and families, improve social opportunities and reduced costs. It would utilise land in our ownership which we would retain for future use to develop and support bigger project initiatives by continuing to provide the type of Supported Living housing that is required by young people with complex needs.

PSG are aware of the planning risks and constraints of the site and they have made allowances across all areas which are documented in PSG’s Feasibility Study Report. Their intention is to develop this project as a highly sustainable and independent facility and to that effect we have made allowances to cover for this as identified in the feasibility report. PSG will undertake further studies, investigations and designs to mitigate all issues, concerns and risks raised before any formal planning application is submitted or tender released. ASC and PSG are aware of the challenges of this project; believe they have made the appropriate allowances and have liaised with professional colleagues throughout the process to date. The project has been considered by colleagues in Planning and pre-application advice sought.

Catherine Smith-Ivory
24th July 2020