

# Response to Homes for Life and Ageing Population Housing Questions

<b>Report number:</b>	<b>OAS/WS/22/004</b>	
<b>Report to and date(s):</b>	<b>Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>	17 March 2022
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**Decisions Plan:** This item is not included in the Decisions Plan.

**Wards impacted:** All

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

1. Notes how many Homes for Life are being built in West Suffolk.
2. Notes what is specifically being built for the ageing population.

## 1. Context to this report

- 1.1 This report has been prepared following a request on 12 March 2020 which came out of discussions held on the West Suffolk Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2018-2023: Year 1 Review. The report requested by the Overview and Scrutiny covered two questions:
- How many Homes for Life are being built; and
  - What is specifically being built for the ageing population.
- 1.2 In order to respond to the two questions, the opportunity is being taken to explain the terminology, history of the change and current policy standards being used to meet housing need across West Suffolk.

## 2. Proposals within this report

### **Question 1. How many Homes for Life are being built in West Suffolk?**

- 2.1 West Suffolk Council do not hold any data for the number of homes that had been developed as 'Homes for Life or Lifetime Homes'. This is no longer a recognised standard and there are currently no records of homes that have been or are being built. The following information is provided to show how the previous standard has evolved to the current development standard which replaced Homes for Life.
- 2.2 In February 2008 the UK Government announced its aim for all new homes to be built to Lifetime Homes Standards by 2013 (**Appendix 2**). By 2015 the Government's 'housing standards review' led to the Lifetime Homes standards being replaced by the building regulations standard M (**Appendix 1**).
- 2.3 The building regulations being utilised across West Suffolk for the purpose of having accessible and adaptable dwellings is specifically M4(2) and M4(3). A summary of the requirements is set out below that all developments are expected to meet as a minimum:
- 2.4 **Requirement M4(2): Category 2 – Accessible and adaptable dwellings**  
This requirement is met when a new dwelling provides reasonable provision for most people to access the dwelling and includes features that make it suitable for a range of potential occupants, including older people, individuals with reduced mobility and some wheelchair users.
- 2.5 **Requirement M4(3): Category 3 – Wheelchair user dwellings**  
This requirement is achieved when a new dwelling provides reasonable provisions for a wheelchair user to live in the dwelling and have the ability to use any outdoor space, parking and communal facilities.

- 2.6 West Suffolk Council meet regularly with registered providers and developers that cover West Suffolk, to promote the benefits of housing that meets the needs of our communities. The size and standards of housing is a regular agenda item to ensure West Suffolk promote clear expectations for what is developed.
- 2.7 The Council is currently reviewing the policy recommendations for the West Suffolk Local Plan. This is a way to ensure homes will meet this standard for developments in future across West Suffolk.

**Question 2. What is specifically being built for the ageing population?**

- 2.8 The policy requirements to meet the needs of an aging population are met through the building regulations M4(2) and M4(3) (**Appendix 1**). This refers to accessible and adaptable dwellings, as well as wheelchair accessible homes. This ensures that homes can be adapted to meet the needs of the occupants without the need for them to move to a different property/home.
- 2.9 The housing needs assessment for West Suffolk was published October 2021 and highlighted an increased need for housing to meet the needs of an aging population. The report also highlighted that:
- “there is a need to increase the supply of M4(2) accessible and adaptable dwellings and M4(3) wheelchair user dwellings. In seeking M4(2) compliant homes, the Councils should also be mindful that such homes could be considered as ‘homes for life’ and would be suitable for any occupant, regardless of whether or not they have a health problem or disability at the time of initial occupation”.
- 2.10 The purpose of including this information is to illustrate how nationally set building regulations ensure homes are built to meet the needs of our aging generation through policy in West Suffolk.
- 2.11 As referenced above the Council is currently preparing the West Suffolk local plan, this will consider the types of housing and policies which are needed to respond to specific needs. The Council is preparing to consult on its housing policy parameters, in the preferred options consultation in May 2022.
- 2.12 These policies are guided by National policy, NPPF Paragraph 62 of the National Planning Policy Framework states “the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies”.
- 2.13 In addition, evidence has been prepared to inform our policies, Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk Housing Needs of Specific Groups Study – GL Hearn (2021) (**Appendix 3**) found there is projected to be a 69 per cent increase in the population aged 75 and over between 2020-2040 across

West Suffolk. There is also a 62.5 per cent increase projected for those with mobility problems over the same period. It recommends that where viability permits that the Council consider policies which incorporate appropriate reference to the Building Control requirements M4(2) and (3).

- 2.14 As the local plan is being prepared the Council will also consider what additional monitoring needs to be put in place to measure the effectiveness of the policies which are then included in the adopted local plan.

### **3. Alternative options that have been considered**

- 3.1 There were no alternative options offered in response to the questions raised. However, the responses are to explain how West Suffolk Council currently continues to promote and develop housing that meets the needs of our communities.

### **4. Consultation and engagement undertaken**

- 4.1 There have been no consultations at this stage of the report response for overview and scrutiny group.

### **5. Risks associated with the proposals**

- 5.1 This report is not responding with proposals to the 2 questions which have been raised at this time.

### **6. Implications arising from the proposals**

- 6.1 Changes to existing policies will be addressed through the West Suffolk Local Plan viability assessment.

### **7. Appendices referenced in this report**

- 7.1 Appendix 1 - Building Regulations M4 (2 and 3)
- 7.2 Appendix 2 - Lifetime Homes Standard Guide
- 7.3 Appendix 3 - Housing Needs of Specific Groups - Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk

### **8. Background documents associated with this report**

- 8.1 None