

**Cabinet Meeting: Monday, 05 August 2024**

**Question from: Councillor Carter**

**Question to: Councillor Patient**

The Local Plan currently permits the construction of just 114 accessible homes annually. With the UK's population rapidly aging—a quarter of us expected to be 65 or older within two decades—a substantial increase in accessible housing is urgently needed. This is vital to improve the quality of life for older residents and alleviate the pressure on family housing. What specific actions is the Council taking to address this critical shortage?

### **Response**

Under Policy HS4 of the Local Plan *“the Council will seek to increase the level of housing suitable to meet the needs of older people and disabled people, both through its role as enabler, and also through supporting proposals for housing which contribute to independent living, such as sheltered accommodation and extra care housing”*. Accessible housing is therefore provided in various forms, through different mechanisms.

Policy HS4 goes on to state that *“proposals for residential development should ensure that 100% of units are adaptable and accessible homes”*. It is not therefore the case that the Local Plan *permits* only 114 homes per year to be accessible.

The policy does however go on to recognise that *“in locations in Calderdale where site specific circumstances, including topography and flood risk, will result in this requirement not being possible to achieve or would render a scheme unviable, the Council will consider reducing or waiving the requirement”*.

In her final report following the examination, the Local Plan Inspector found that *“the approach in Policy HS4 maximises delivery of [adaptable and accessible] housing on suitable sites whilst allowing flexibility with waived or reduced levels depending on site-specific circumstances. It forms an important part of the Council's strategy for meeting the housing needs of older people by allowing people to remain in their own homes... Overall, the approach in Policy HS4 represents a positive and flexible approach that would not be a barrier to development.”*

As part of the enabling work the Housing Service does, alongside colleagues in Planning and Accessible Homes teams, we discuss with housing developers and Registered Providers how we can maximise the number of accessible homes developed. This is done alongside the policy approach above. Examples of this include, but is not limited to:

- **Beech Hill regeneration scheme:** as part of this scheme, we worked with Together Housing to agree five plots on the site that would be fully adapted. We met with colleagues from Accessible Homes to identify suitable families for the properties and this allowed us to develop the homes to very specifically meet the needs of the families allocated the homes.
- **Railway Bridge View (Rastrick):** this scheme was developed in partnership with Home Housing Group. It is a 65 unit extra care scheme, with a mix of 1 and 2 bedroom apartments. The scheme was designed to be dementia friendly, as well as ensuring the homes were all accessible.

It is a key consideration of any development we are involved with to look at how we can make as many homes as possible accessible. Our partnership with the Accessible Homes team is long established and we work closely with them to ensure that we meet the needs of their clients who are in housing need.