

## West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041 (adopted June 2025)

**Policy DM19****Specialised Housing**

The provision of new specialist forms of housing designed to meet the needs of those with identified support or care needs will be supported where:

- a. Housing meets a proven locally identified need in the District for the specific housing product being proposed; and
- b. The location is appropriate, in terms of design, layout, and accessibility of facilities, services and public transport, subject to other policies in the Plan being satisfied.

Planning permission for extensions or alterations to existing specialised housing will also be supported where:

- c. The activities and/or operations associated with the development do not cause unacceptable harm to the amenity of neighbours, through increased noise and disturbance or obtrusive light; and
- d. Due regard is given to the design of the development, taking into account the needs of the end users, particularly with regard to on site accessible outdoor spaces and provision of a satisfactory outlook for all residents.

Proposals for new specialised housing or extensions to existing accommodation, should demonstrate appropriate and evidence-based provision for:

- i. On-site car and cycle parking; and
- ii. The storage of mobility scooters and/or wheelchairs.

Specialist accommodation development will be sought as an integral part of the mix from the strategic housing allocations at Sandleford Park and North East Thatcham.

Affordable housing contribution will be required in accordance with the requirements of policy SP16: Affordable Housing, depending upon whether the accommodation falls within Use Class C2 (residential institutions) or C3 (dwelling house) of the Use Classes Order.

**Supporting text**

**11.15** The NPPF indicates that local planning authorities should plan for the needs of different groups in the community including older people and disabled people. There is no single model of housing that is right for everybody. Although many people will live in conventional housing all their lives, specialist accommodation will be required for some to enable access to some form of support or care. This policy sets out how the Council will consider the provision of new specialised housing and extensions to existing accommodation for those with support or care needs.

**11.16** Housing for the elderly and people with disabilities can be provided through adapted market housing, assisted living housing or extra care housing. Extra care housing allows independent living but offers a higher level of support than sheltered housing, with care workers available on site up to 24 hours a day but may not offer as much care as a care home or nursing home where residents have their own rooms but not their own front door. Care homes offer accommodation with personal care and nursing homes also provide around-the-clock care on site from qualified nurses. These types of housing provision all have specialised products which sit within them, with products often spanning more than one category; for example, they may also provide dementia care and/or care for those with learning or physical disabilities.

**11.17** Housing for older people covers a wide range of needs, from sheltered housing (where residents live mainly independent lives whilst sharing some communal facilities) through to extra care housing and care homes, where a level of personal health care is typically provided. Proposals for specialist housing will be considered on their own merits having regard to whether the proposal falls within Class C2 or Class C3 of the Use Classes Order. This will depend upon factors such as the level of personal care offered; the type of accommodation and level of communal space and facilities. Pre-application advice should be sought if clarification is needed as to whether a development is likely to constitute a specialist care housing provision.

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**11.18** The need for specialist housing for older people in the District is estimated to be around 1,710 units over the 2021-39 period (95 per annum) (West Berkshire Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA), 2022, Table 5.8). The LHNA recognises that extra care schemes have higher delivery costs as a result of the higher accessibility standards and the level of facilities and services/support required so may not be appropriate in every location.

**11.19** This Plan contributes through a proposed new extra care scheme allocation at Stoneham's Farm, Long Lane, Tilehurst. New schemes often emerge on previously unidentified redevelopment sites and can also be appropriately located as part of larger general purpose residential schemes such as Sandleford Park and North East Thatcham. The Council will support the delivery of specialist care housing as part of the mix on the strategic housing allocations in the Local Plan and from other large housing sites where feasible. On the other large sites, however, need will be negotiated on a site by site basis as opportunities arise. Provision will also be encouraged on suitably located windfall sites. The provision of dwellings suitable for older people in the villages is also important, as many villages can have even higher numbers of older people. Neighbourhood plans are well placed to identify local need and include provision in neighbourhood plan policies.

**11.20** The location of the proposed specialist housing must be appropriate having regard to access to facilities, services and public transport.

**11.21** Outdoor spaces must be accessible for all users of the development. Residents should be able to enjoy a reasonable outlook from their individual rooms.

**11.22** Assisted living and extra care housing can have specific impacts from noise from centralised kitchen facilities, mechanical and electrical systems and higher levels of outdoor lighting. Where development is proposed for new extra care dwellings, extensions or re-development of existing facilities, planning applications must be accompanied by robust and appropriate evidence of how the proposals may affect neighbouring occupiers. This will enable the Council to assess whether there is a likely to be a likely negative effect as a result of the development in line with any amenity and pollution policies.

**11.23** The requirement of policy SP15 for all new homes to be built to the accessible and adaptable dwellings (Part M4(2)) of the Building Regulations standard would also address issues such as getting in and out of dwellings and getting around within them. This will provide the opportunity for older people to live in their own homes for longer, by providing the necessary flexibility needed to adapt their homes and/or for extra care to be provided in their own home.