

CABINET

Date of Meeting	Tuesday 16 th February 2021
Report Subject	Strategic Housing and Regeneration Programme (SHARP) Update Report
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Housing
Report Author	Chief Officer (Housing and Assets)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report updates on the progress of the SHARP housebuilding programme for Social, Affordable Rent and Shared Equity properties.

The report also sets out changes in housing need, and the rationale for reviewing and revising the tenure types for future property development. The report also covers the complementary delivery routes being actively pursued alongside NEW Homes including the acquisition of Section 106 properties, Design and Build Packages and the availability of the Housing Construction North and Mid-Wales Framework Agreement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	To note progress with SHARP to date.
2	To support the use delivery routes for new social and affordable rent homes including the Housing Construction North and Mid-Wales Framework Agreement.
3	To support the re-allocation of £121K budget for scheme investigation and feasibility works to support new delivery routes.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	BACKGROUND STRATEGIC HOUSING AND REGENERATION PROGRAMME (SHARP) UPDATE REPORT																						
1.01	The Welsh Government's 'Prosperity for All: the national strategy' recognises the central importance of affordable homes, and the role which housing plays in society. In recent times, both the Council and stakeholder partners have stepped in to address the impact of many families struggling to afford food during lockdown the devastation caused by repeat flooding and the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak. All of this work has taken place while continuing with the ever-present challenges of delivering social and affordable housing, high quality care and support services and activity to, or regenerate local communities.																						
1.02	Flintshire was one of the first local authorities in Wales to re-commence building social and affordable housing through its Strategic Housing And Regeneration programme (SHARP) with the aim of delivering up to 500 new Council Social Rented and Affordable Rented properties over a five year period, along with a number of broader economic and regeneration strategic priorities. The Council is working with Wates Construction under a strategic partnership relationship as defined within the Overarching Agreement for SHARP dated 29 th April 2016.																						
1.03	Current Position SHARP																						
1.04	<p>The table below summarises the current position with SHARP.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="320 1153 1197 2063"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2" data-bbox="320 1153 1197 1234"></th> </tr> <tr> <th colspan="2" data-bbox="320 1234 1197 1294">SHARP Property Numbers as at 27th January 20201</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="320 1294 874 1400">Completed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Social Rent</td> <td data-bbox="874 1294 1197 1400">149</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="320 1400 874 1505">Completed NEW Homes (Affordable Rent)</td> <td data-bbox="874 1400 1197 1505">93</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="320 1505 874 1568">Completed Private Sales</td> <td data-bbox="874 1505 1197 1568">26</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="320 1568 874 1673">On-Site Low Cost Home Ownership (Shared Equity)</td> <td data-bbox="874 1568 1197 1673">22</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="320 1673 874 1778">On-Site Housing Revenue Account (HRA)</td> <td data-bbox="874 1673 1197 1778">0</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="320 1778 874 1883">On-Site NEW Homes (Affordable Rent)</td> <td data-bbox="874 1778 1197 1883">0</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="320 1883 874 1946">On-Site Private Sales</td> <td data-bbox="874 1883 1197 1946">86</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="320 1946 874 2009">Cabinet Approved</td> <td data-bbox="874 1946 1197 2009">41</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="320 2009 874 2072">Awaiting Cabinet Approval</td> <td data-bbox="874 2009 1197 2072">30</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			SHARP Property Numbers as at 27th January 20201		Completed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Social Rent	149	Completed NEW Homes (Affordable Rent)	93	Completed Private Sales	26	On-Site Low Cost Home Ownership (Shared Equity)	22	On-Site Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	0	On-Site NEW Homes (Affordable Rent)	0	On-Site Private Sales	86	Cabinet Approved	41	Awaiting Cabinet Approval	30
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	Total	447															
1.05	These schemes will be the final schemes which the existing arrangements allow through the Overarching Agreement with Wates which comes to an end in April 2021.																
1.06	Homes delivered outside of the SHARP																
1.07	In addition to SHARP, the Council and NEW Homes in partnership have delivered a further 148 social (9) and affordable (139) homes. These have been delivered by North East Wales Homes as detailed below.																
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1.08	Section 106 Gifted																
1.09	These properties are transferred to NEW Homes as "unencumbered assets" and have been an important source of growth for the company during its formative years and has helped it reach a total of 159 properties. The positive working relationship which has evolved between the Council, NEW Homes and construction partners through the development of this product has facilitated the rapid delivery of a high quality product in communities where the availability of Affordable Rent properties has enabled local people to remain within their community.																
1.10	NEW Homes currently has 61 Section 106 Gifted units and are anticipating to receive a further 12 homes from developers meeting their affordable housing provision obligations through Section 106 Agreements.																
1.11	Four new bungalows have also been gifted to the Council HRA at Pen Pentre, Sychdyn as part of a developers Section 106 affordable housing contribution. Tenants moved into these properties in August 2020.																

1.12	Section 106 Purchase
1.13	NEW Homes has built on the positive relationship it has developed with local contractors by purchasing Section 106 units. These require minimum resource and are bought at a maximum of 70% of the open market value of the properties. To date, 15 units have been purchased using this approach with the purchase of 4 properties at Northop Hall approved by the NEW homes Board.
1.14	Buy Back of Former Right to Buy Properties
1.15	In addition to NEW Homes, the Council's Housing Revenue Account has also purchased five former Right to Buy properties. The purchase of Section 106 properties by the HRA is now being actively pursued.
1.16	Package Deals with housing associations and private developers
1.17	All of the schemes developed through the SHARP have been undertaken using the Council's own land. However, following the findings of the "Independent Review of Affordable Housing Delivery" which was published in April 2019, the Welsh Government is encouraging local authorities and housing associations (HAs) to work collaboratively by sharing skills, capacity and resources to deliver schemes, including "Design and Package Deals". These require less resource as the developer will provide the upfront finance and expertise and bring the scheme through the planning process – from scheme inception through to delivery on site.
1.18	The NEW Homes Board has approved the delivery of 47 properties to be delivered through package deals.
1.19	If the total number of properties for both the SHARP and NON-SHARP schemes are combined, a total of 565 (SHARP 447 + NON-SHARP 148 = 595).
1.20	Future Council aspirations for affordable house building in Flintshire
1.21	The legislative changes and policy developments which have taken place in Wales during recent years have bought a real base to deliver radical changes to some of our societal, economic and environmental challenges. In light of these policy changes over the past five years and the imminent end of the SHARP contract, it is timely that the Council and North East Wales Homes have both been actively developing and utilising alternative delivery arrangements to realise the Welsh Government's ambitions for housing providers to build at " <i>pace and scale</i> " to meet increasing demand.
1.22	Current Housing Need in Flintshire
1.23	SARTH Housing Register

1.24	<p>As at August 2020, there are approx.1900 households on the social housing register (SARTH) of which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approx. 150 households in band 1 (highest priority need) for social housing; • the majority of applicants on the register, approximately 1090 require 1 bedroom accommodation, with 542 requiring 2 bedroom accommodation; and • over 500 applicants require ground floor accommodation. <p>The highest demand areas are Flint, Mold and Mynydd Isa, Buckley, Connah's Quay, Queensferry and Shotton.</p>
1.25	Tai Teg Affordable Housing Register
1.26	<p>Tai Teg advertises properties as they become available for purchase/ rent. Individuals apply for these properties through Tai Teg and are assessed based on eligibility criteria.</p> <p>There are currently 120 applicants registered for purchase in Flintshire and 216 applicants registered for rent.</p> <p>The highest demand areas for rent and purchase are Buckley, Mold and Mynydd Isa, Connah's Quay.</p> <p>The majority of applicants require 2 and 3 bed houses.</p> <p>The Council held a publicity campaign (using press release and Twitter) during September to promote the Tai Teg register and raise awareness about affordable housing opportunities.</p>
1.27	Specialist Housing Register
1.28	<p>There are 54 households on the Specialist Housing register. Of these households, 47 applicants require an adapted property e.g. wheelchair accessible/ level access. A further 7 applicants need a large family house (i.e. 4 bed plus).</p> <p>Housing Strategy is working with social services and housing allocations to enhance collaborative working and improve the housing opportunities within the new build programme for different cohorts of people who have specific housing need e.g. care leavers, people with learning difficulties, adaptations etc.</p>
1.29	Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan
1.30	<p>The Council's HRA business Plan has a prudent target of 50 new social units per year based upon the existing funding regime which is self-financed by the Council. All of the units delivered to date have been delivered without the availability of Welsh Government capital grant.</p>

1.31	<p>However, it is likely as part of its review of affordable housing in Wales, capital funding may become available to local authorities in Wales to develop new social and affordable housing which is additional to what is currently projected in the Council's Business Plan. Whilst further detail is being awaited from Welsh Government, local authorities are being encouraged to develop plans for new housing schemes in readiness for any new capital funding regime.</p> <p>Initial indications are that new build properties should be at zero net carbon (EPC A) to be able to access Welsh Government grant.</p>
1.32	<p>Welsh Government Land Release Fund (LRF)</p>
1.33	<p>In December 2020 Welsh Government invited funding bids for its Land Release Fund Programme. The purpose of the funding is to help local authorities and Registered Providers bring forward "stalled" sites for residential use (Pre Construction Activity).</p> <p>Two Bids totalling £213.5k were submitted for two sites in Connah's Quay at Glynne Street (£48k) and Ffordd Llanarth (£165.5k). One of the main conditions being that the works are to be completed by 31st March 2021.</p> <p>The purpose of the funding is to bring together a Project Design Team to oversee the development of two inter-dependent schemes intended to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring forward stalled sites utilising Modern Methods of Construction (MMC); • Develop homes that are certified as Passivhaus and adopt Active Building design principles; • Maximise positive impact on the local economy by using local contractors for example through the North Wales Construction Framework; • Integrate renewable energy generation and storage technologies; • Undertake enhanced energy modelling throughout the design process • Adopt an enhanced data based approach to building monitoring and control • Ensure integration of electric vehicles such as cars, bicycles and buses <p>If successful, the funding from the Land Release Fund will be used to bring forward these two challenging sites for the provision of a projected 30 new social and affordable housing on existing Council owned land in Connah's Quay.</p>
1.34	<p>North East Wales Homes Development Strategy</p>
1.35	<p>NEW Homes growth strategy therefore will focus on building 50 units a year through the following streams.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gifted S106 units

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developer S106 purchase • Land and build package deals • Partnership sites with the Council.
1.36	<p>In the absence of any Welsh Government capital subsidy, NEW Homes growth strategy has been partly funded through the availability of commuted sums and shared equity monies which the Council has received through the delivery of new market sales schemes. Whilst approximately £600K has been allocated to future schemes by NEW Homes, there is no guarantee further sums on this scale will be available in the future to maintain the current pace and scale of new developments. In this instance, the availability of Welsh Government capital grant is essential to maintain the progress which the company has made has been made in recent years.</p>
1.37	<p>Self-Build</p>
1.38	<p>Self-Build Wales is delivered on behalf of the Welsh Government by the Development Bank of Wales. WG views self-build as a complementary approach to housebuilding and they would like to see all Local Authorities offer the scheme as it can provide a meaningful contribution to housing supply.</p> <p>Self-Build Wales seeks to encourage individuals, families or communities to build their own homes and provides an alternative route into home ownership. The scheme aims to remove developer profits and provides the opportunity to build a home that is tailored to needs, lifestyle and at a more affordable budget. Homes will be sustainable, high quality and with good design, built using local labour and materials, keeping expenditure in Wales.</p> <p>The financial model is administered by the Development Bank of Wales to help provide a loan to purchase the plot and complete the construction of the house. This is repaid when the house is complete the individual can then mortgage the property.</p> <p>Local Authorities, Housing Associations and private land owners can contribute land to the scheme and provide build ready 'plots' (with services and planning permission in place). The plots are made available for people to purchase at open market value. Once purchased the individual is supported through the Development Bank to complete the construction process. The Council can define an eligibility criteria for those wishing to purchase e.g. local connection/ key workers etc. Individuals apply for the scheme and plots through the Self Build Wales website.</p> <p>The Council is exploring opportunities to provide a small number of self-build plots within an existing development to trial the scheme.</p> <p>More information can be found at: https://selfbuild.wales/</p>
1.39	<p>Housing Construction North and Mid-Wales Framework Agreement</p>

1.40	<p>In addition to the delivery streams outlined earlier in this report, a further strategic development designed to promote greater partnership working through local and regional procurement frameworks, to support local supply chains has seen the establishment of the Housing Construction North And Mid-Wales Framework Agreement. This framework has been established by the Welsh Procurement Alliance (WPA) who were asked by all North and Mid-Wales local authorities and zoned housing associations across the region for assistance to make the procurement of new-build housing developments more efficient and in compliance with public sector procurement rules.</p>
1.41	<p>A core principle is the need to encourage as many local contractors to bid to be on the framework as possible. The framework needed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure compliance with public sector procurement rules • provide a quick and easy procurement process • allow for early engagement with local contractors • deliver value for money offer measurable community benefits • Maintain the quality of the developments. <p>At the same time the solutions offered by the framework needed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be mindful of energy efficiency and the decarbonisation agenda • take into account the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 201 • provide a collaborative approach with shared expertise and resources
1.42	<p>Framework and Specification</p>
1.43	<p>The framework will be used for the building of all types of housing, including bungalows, flats and apartments, care homes and sheltered and shared accommodation, covering all forms of tenure.</p>
1.44	<p>It also provides for the delivery of associated community buildings to residential developments (such as hubs and sporting facilities e.g. meeting places, health and care centres, recreational facilities and libraries) plus, any associated commercial facilities such as car parks and retail units. However, whilst scope for this associated development is included, bidders were not substantively evaluated on this aspect of development, and clients seeking to commission such developments (permissible only as incidental to a residential scheme) will be advised to carry out a mini competition. Capability to compete such developments was also not criteria for selection.</p>
1.45	<p>The framework is divided into four work streams across different geographical areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects of up to 5 units on single or multiple sites • Projects of 6 to 15 units on single or multiple sites • Projects of 16 to 49 units on single or multiple sites

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects of 50+ units on single or multiple sites.
1.46	Modern Methods of Construction (MMC)Offsite solutions
1.47	The tenderer's contracting package may include an offsite system and works offered shall satisfy the performance requirements set out in the framework specification (Section DD3). Where an Appointed Company proposes to use an offsite system for use in the construction of buildings under the framework, they shall provide full details of the proposed suppliers. The construction of the system shall be in accordance with the relevant manufacturer's instructions using an appropriately trained or qualified workforce.
1.48	Standards
1.49	All housing for Wales shall meet the Welsh Government's Development Quality Requirements (DQR). The requirements of the DQR shall take precedent over the general specification provided with the ITT where relevant and shall be considered when pricing works under the framework. Any future call-offs must be in line with the DQR or subsequent requirements set by the Welsh Government following its current consultation process. The products and services offered shall be capable of complying, as a minimum, with all relevant British, European and International standards, 'or equivalent'.
1.50	Procurement and Project Support
1.51	WPA are able to provide procurement advice and technical support relating to project requirements and can assist at various stages from inception to completion, including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aggregation of demand especially regarding offsite construction Project specifications, adhering to regulations and standards Planning and Building Regulations advice including self-certification schemes Independent evaluation of tenders as part of your client team Post-tender mathematical checks to ensure price validity Price validations, verifying prices against framework rates Attendance at prestart meetings and subsequent project monitoring Interventions should contractors not perform
1.52	Community Benefits
1.53	The tender process included evaluation of suppliers in relation to general corporate, social responsibilities, delivery of community benefit projects and social value initiatives. WPA also encourage our clients to include project-specific community benefits initiatives in their call-off contracts. As a not for profit organisation, WPA intends to re-invest any surplus income generated through its procurement activity to support community benefits projects and social value initiatives in the local communities we serve.

1.54	Scheme investigation and feasibility Works
1.55	The Council currently has an annual budget of £121K allocated for scheme investigation and feasibility for schemes in the SHARP. As these works have now been undertaken for all of the schemes in the SHARP pipeline, it is proposed that this budget is now used to assist bringing forward new schemes using the Housing Construction North and Mid-Wales Framework Agreement.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	In the Spring Budget in 2020, the UK Government announced a new, discounted rate of Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) lending to support social housing in England, Scotland and Wales, this new rate is available to any local authority with an HRA for loans that will finance expenditure within that account. The value of this discount is 100 basis points (1.00%) below the rate at which the local authority currently borrows from PWLB. The Council is only able to access this rate if it ensures this borrowing is solely used as funding within the HRA.
2.02	Given the above development and the imminent announcement of capital grant funding becoming available for social and affordable new build housing programmes, both the HRA Business Plan and NEW homes Growth Strategy will be reviewed to reflect the emerging financial position and funding arrangements.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	<p>The key risks are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Not meeting local affordable housing need - The provision of affordable housing ensures that all of the county's residents have a greater opportunity access their own home. If we do not meet this need, homelessness will increase impacting on the Council's budget. 2. Not maximising the impact of commuted sum income in addressing the affordable housing shortage in Flintshire – the Council has its own delivery targets to ensure efficient delivery of affordable housing in areas of greatest need. 3. The environmental impact - This is considered and mitigated during the construction phase. All affordable homes built will meet modern standards for sustainability and energy efficiency and the Flintshire Housing Standard.
3.02	<p>All housing schemes delivered through the SHARP are considered and approved by Cabinet. Oversight and monitoring of the SHARP is done through the Housing and Regeneration Programme Board.</p> <p>All schemes are financially assessed to ensure they meet agreed financial parameters for additional borrowing in the HRA and NEWH.</p>

	<p>WG are also working in partnership with all Councils with HRA stock to ensure borrowing prudential indicators are monitored with their business plans to ensure sustainability of borrowing in the HRA.</p>																			
3.03	<p>Ways of Working (Sustainable Development) Principles Impact</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Long-term</td> <td>Positive - more affordable homes will be provided in the right location.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Prevention</td> <td>Preventing - preventing people becoming homeless through ensuring there is relevant services and accommodation available.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Integration</td> <td>Positive – the delivery of a range of affordable homes will contribute to Integration within communities.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Collaboration</td> <td>Positive – the proposed financial arrangements will facilitate greater collaboration between the Council and the local communities which it serves.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Involvement</td> <td>Positive - the Council has consulted extensively with the local community on the proposed scheme.</td> </tr> </table> <p>Well-being Goals Impact</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Prosperous Wales</td> <td>Providing good quality affordable homes, aiming for low / zero carbon. Also ensuring the homes are in the place that people need them and will meet their housing needs. Maximising local employment and training opportunities for local people.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Resilient Wales</td> <td>Positive - Developing low / zero carbon homes though adopting modern methods of construction and other relevant technologies.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Healthier Wales</td> <td>Positive - Ensuring our homes are fit for purpose and will enable people to stay in their home for longer, and ensuring we have homes that meet the needs of all people in our society including those who are most vulnerable supporting their wellbeing.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>More equal Wales</td> <td>Positive - Providing good quality and</td> </tr> </table>		Long-term	Positive - more affordable homes will be provided in the right location.	Prevention	Preventing - preventing people becoming homeless through ensuring there is relevant services and accommodation available.	Integration	Positive – the delivery of a range of affordable homes will contribute to Integration within communities.	Collaboration	Positive – the proposed financial arrangements will facilitate greater collaboration between the Council and the local communities which it serves.	Involvement	Positive - the Council has consulted extensively with the local community on the proposed scheme.	Prosperous Wales	Providing good quality affordable homes, aiming for low / zero carbon. Also ensuring the homes are in the place that people need them and will meet their housing needs. Maximising local employment and training opportunities for local people.	Resilient Wales	Positive - Developing low / zero carbon homes though adopting modern methods of construction and other relevant technologies.	Healthier Wales	Positive - Ensuring our homes are fit for purpose and will enable people to stay in their home for longer, and ensuring we have homes that meet the needs of all people in our society including those who are most vulnerable supporting their wellbeing.	More equal Wales	Positive - Providing good quality and
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		decent homes for the most vulnerable people in society including temporary, single household, adapted etc.
	Cohesive Wales	Positive - Contributing to attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities through promoting good design and collaborative delivery.
	Vibrant Wales	Positive - Ensuring our communities are diverse through good communication of housing opportunities and support.
	Globally responsible Wales	Positive - The outcomes of the strategy will contribute to improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	None required as part of this report.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>The North & Mid Wales framework information is at:</p> <p>https://welshprocurement.cymru/frameworks/housing-construction-north-and-mid-wales/</p> <p>Link to Welsh government's Sell to Wales website is at:</p> <p>https://selfbuild.wales/</p>

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Melville Evans, Housing Programmes Manager Telephone: 01352 701436 E-mail: Melville.evans@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p data-bbox="320 394 1380 501">Strategic Housing And Regeneration Programme (SHARP) – Flintshire County Council House Building Programme which will build 500 new homes (303 Council) and 197 (affordable).</p> <p data-bbox="320 539 1380 719">Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) - Flintshire County Council will be spending £111 million over six years on a major refurbishment and maintenance programme of works bring its 7,200 Council homes up to the Welsh Government’s Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) new properties across the Council during the next five years.</p> <p data-bbox="320 757 1380 904">Standard Development Scheme Assumptions - agreed allowances for voids; maintenance costs; rental income levels (including CPI etc.) and will be used to assess all potential future development schemes to determine Scheme feasibility and viability.</p>