

Less disability by independent living in Surrey

Purpose-built housing to support people with learning disabilities or autism to lead active and fulfilling lives in the community has been given the go-ahead at three Surrey sites.

Backed by investment of £24million, the three developments – planned for Horley, Byfleet and Cobham – will between them provide housing for 44 residents who will be supported to gain independence and daily living skills.

Planning permission has been granted for the three sites and with Morgan Sindall Construction now lined up to build them, construction is expected to get underway early next year.

The three supported independent living developments – at the site of the former Manor School in Byfleet, the former Coveham Hostel in Cobham and the former Horley Library – are expected to be ready in 2025 for tenants to move in.

The county council is aiming to reduce reliance on traditional residential care for residents with learning disabilities or autism, or both, and is also considering other potential locations for supported independent living. As well as earmarking sites on its own land, the council is working with independent care providers to further boost available specialist housing.

Mark Nuti, Surrey County Council's Cabinet Member for Adults and Health, said: *"With a building contractor and planning approvals now secured, we've reached a significant milestone on our way to developing the first three of our planned new housing schemes for people with support needs so they can enjoy a better quality of life.*

"With support from trained staff, residents will be able to take control, make choices in their everyday lives, access more opportunities and play an active part in their communities, whether through volunteering, paid work or other activity of their choosing."

Guy Hannell, Area Director for Morgan Sindall Construction in the Southern Home Counties, said: *"We're looking forward to continuing our collaborative relationship with Surrey County Council by delivering this batch of three supported independent living developments. Having recently completed several education projects alongside the county council, I know we share a strong commitment to sustainability and achieving high-quality environments that enhance local communities. This is illustrated by the use of our digital carbon assessment tool Carbonica, which allows us to carefully analyse a project's carbon emissions and ensure that we're creating an efficient building design that will provide accessible, futureproof spaces.*

"Not only will we be bringing our experience of delivering award-winning residential developments in the South East to this project, but the innovation and insights gained from creating these facilities will inform Surrey's future programme of supported independent living housing."

Architects' images show how the three housing developments could look. They will be homely rather than institutional and include shared spaces such as landscaped gardens. Support workers will provide care and support tailored to people's needs.

Each development will comprise self-contained one-bedroom apartments. Two developments, in Horley and Byfleet, will also include, for those who would prefer a group living environment, five-bedroom shared houses. Tenants will be able to make choices about their living arrangements.

The accommodation is part of a wider Surrey County Council programme to enable older people and others with care and support needs to live independently in the community knowing that care is close at hand. It includes:

- **Extra care housing** – plans for 725 new homes across a number of Surrey sites which will give older people the freedom and independence of their own front door and the reassurance that care is on hand if they need it
- **New short breaks accommodation** – two new purpose-built short breaks centres to give adults with learning disabilities or autism, or both, a change from their daily routine and their families a break from their caring roles
- **Mental health needs** – new supported independent living accommodation for people with mental health needs which for some would be a permanent base and for others a shorter stay, to avoid a hospital admission or until they recover