

Historic site providing housing for over 55s gets new lease of life

Thornley House, situated on the site of a former medieval hospital in rural Durham, is being given a new lease of life thanks to £560,000 of grant funding from the Government's Affordable Homes Programme.

Registered Provider, Sherburn House Charity, is working with Esh Construction and Edwards Architecture to renovate the Grade II and Grade II* listed properties, delivering 14 self-contained flats for over 55's, including 12 Sheltered Accommodation and 2 general needs flats, available for affordable rent.

Due to the heritage of the site, this scheme requires a sensitive renovation. The site dates back to 1181 and was founded by the Bishop of Durham to care for lepers with living accommodation for the monks and nuns who cared for them.

The grant funding has been vital in helping the developer manage the high costs of materials such as welsh slate and stone slab for roof coverings; cast iron rainwater goods and the preservation of timber doors and sliding sash windows.

Although already operated by Sherburn House Charity as accommodation for older residents, this project is critical for the ongoing operation of the scheme. Poor layouts, shared kitchen facilities, poor standards of insulation and heating, and communal utilities charges render some units unlettable and they fall short of Sherburn House's aim of supporting independent living and reducing social isolation.

The work being undertaken will ensure that these historic buildings continue to support independent living for its residents. The communal heating system will be replaced with individual central heating systems and bathroom and kitchen renovations will bring these homes up to date.

Pauline Bishop, the Charity's Chief Executive said: "We are so excited to present our newly refurbished Sheltered Accommodation properties. The Charity Trustees acknowledged that the properties were past their best and required substantial investment to bring them up to standards required of modern living. They agreed to invest the Charity's own money which was substantially supported by Homes England funding.

"The work was part of a 5-year programme of renovation on the site which includes a 55-bed care home, independent living accommodation and a large 4/5 bedroom house which will support adults with care needs."