

Works starts on new £9m housing estate in the heart of Livingston

Work has started on a vital new £9m housing estate in the heart of Livingston.

George Paul, the Executive councillor for services for the community joined contractors for a ground-breaking ceremony on the site.

The council faces surging demand for homes and is building supported housing for young people and affordable homes at Almondvale Crescent in the town centre.

West Lothian Council is one of the few councils in the country to build housing for this scale of project by utilising off-site construction to provide modular homes.

Construction started this week, with the homes completed and ready to let by September 2025.

The land was a vacant site behind the Tony Macaroni restaurant adjacent to West Lothian College's campus.

The supported housing consists of 28 one-bedroom flats, with 16 flats designed with potential for future use as mainstream housing.

Flexible office space will be provided for a maximum of ten staff along with staff overnight accommodation to provide dedicated space and privacy, whilst still being on hand to assist and support the young people.

The affordable housing will provide 20 homes with a mix of two and three-bedroom houses, along with 2 three-bedroom flats.

The demand for affordable housing for young people continues to grow. West Lothian has a high rate of youth homelessness in Scotland and has a history of significant numbers of homeless presentations by young people.

In 2022/23 the percentage of homeless applications for those aged 16-25 was 25%, compared to a national average of 22%.

Hub South East, the council's development partner, is building the homes, with Connect Modular appointed as the main construction contractor.

There are many benefits to modular construction methods including efficiencies in programme delivery, factory controlled processes which allow for more precise and consistent manufacturing, and better quality control than with traditional construction methods.

Since much of the construction is completed off site and within a factory, bad weather plays less of a role in the construction process.

Julie Whitelaw, the head of Housing, Construction and Building Services said: "This is an important development and demonstrates that although the council has severe financial constraints, we will ensure that the funding we do have is used to tackle local priorities – in this case affordable housing and support for young people experiencing homelessness."

Councillor Paul added: "Tackling homelessness, poverty and inequality is one of the council's key priorities and I am delighted that work has begun. It is vital that we continue to support young people who are experiencing hardship and cannot find alternative accommodation.

“The site we have chosen is close to amenities with the college, hospital, transport and shopping facilities all within walking distance. These are all important factors in choosing a site that is specifically designed to help young people in need.”

“The availability of affordable homes is one of the most important issues that affects local people today. Demand vastly outstrips supply however we are continuing to create more affordable homes across West Lothian, but the issues affecting young people require more funding, and quickly.

“The creation of additional housing for young people is urgently required to meet the needs of the young people of West Lothian.”

Paul McGirk, Hub South East’s Chief Executive, said: “It’s exciting to reach the construction stage in Livingston where we can start to make these plans a reality, benefiting young people and helping our client deliver on its acute need for more social housing.”

Connect Modular CEO, Jennifer Higgins, described the project as a “milestone” and added: “Our modular build process delivers better quality homes faster. With site preparation works and housebuilding occurring simultaneously, the project time line is significantly condensed, allowing the future residents of Almondvale Crescent to occupy their homes much more quickly.”

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter