

Press release

Wanted! Local charities' independent-living bungalows need their first residents

Bungalows being built at Walsden through the voluntary efforts of two local charities are now nearing completion and will be ready to receive their first residents in March.

The six two-bedroom bungalows help meet a pressing need for affordable housing for rent in the upper valley. All are designed for older people who need easy-to-maintain homes purpose-built for independent living. The two charities, Calder Valley Community Land Trust and John Eastwood Homes, are now inviting applications from potential residents. All six will be available to people over 65 who have a strong connection to Todmorden.

Simon Brearley, Chair of Calder Valley CLT, said: "This development has successfully demonstrated that community-led initiatives can create much-needed new homes through direct bottom-up voluntary efforts. We're absolutely thrilled that our bungalows will soon be being lived in."

Chris Barker of John Eastwood Homes almshouse trust said: "We know already from our existing twelve bungalows in Walsden how much demand there is for accommodation of this kind. We've been delighted to work with Calder Valley CLT in this pioneering community partnership."

The bungalows have been designed with two bedrooms, to allow for residents to receive guests or to have overnight carers. They are on land in Birks Lane, Walsden, close to the main bus route and to the station.

Calder Valley CLT, who will retain four bungalows, is choosing to use the KeyChoice on-line system (also used by local housing associations) for their allocation process and applications can be made this week (January 8) and next. Potential applicants who have not already registered on KeyChoice are asked to do so as soon as possible. There will also be a short supplementary questionnaire for shortlisted

applicants. The bungalows will be allocated only to people over 65 with at least ten years' residency in the Todmorden Town Council area, or exceptionally to those who have very strong reasons for needing to be housed in Todmorden.

Applications will be assessed on housing need. The CLT has asked two independent housing experts (one from a local housing association and one from the council) to join them on the Allocations Panel to ensure that procedures are followed fairly.

John Eastwood Homes, the local almshouse trust which already has twelve homes in Walsden, will operate a slightly different application process. Details of how to join the John Eastwood waiting list can be obtained through their administrator David Storah at 46 Halifax Rd, Todmorden (01706 813214). Their criteria are also a little different, and they require applicants to have at least twenty years' residency in Todmorden.

Simon Brearley and Chris Barker both warn that they are expecting very strong demand for the new homes and that unfortunately not everyone who applies will be able to be selected.

The development has been overseen by the volunteer trustees of Calder Valley CLT, a member organisation with 150 local supporters as members. The total cost is over £800,000, and the funds have been found in part through a grant from the government's agency Homes England of £240,000. Local people have contributed over £60,000 in community share investments and John Eastwood Homes has also invested in the project, as well as meeting two-sixths of the total build costs. Further support has come from the Quaker Housing Trust and Calderdale council, which gifted the land to the CLT. A bank loan of £170,000 completes the funding package.

Simon Brearley added: "It's taken four years of hard work to get the finance assembled and to progress the detailed plans for the development. Our builders have also had to cope with particularly wet Autumnal weather. But, once completed, we're sure that these six new bungalows will very quickly become a much-loved addition to local Walsden life."

The two charities will be holding an open day to celebrate the completion of the bungalows in late February.

Editors note:

More information: Andrew Bibby (CVCLT Secretary) 01422 844026

Photograph of bungalow development attached