



## **Prioritising our ageing population in the planning system**

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The planning system in Wales has considerable untapped potential to increase the supply of housing that is suitable for an ageing population.

Currently planning policy and guidance focuses on securing an overall mix of housing types to meet a whole range of housing requirements, but does not require any specific priority be given to delivering housing that is suitable for older people. The result of this is that, with a few notable exceptions, Local Development Plans rarely include policies designed to meet the housing needs of older people, and even fewer identify specific sites or areas that are suitable for this kind of development. Whilst planning obligations to deliver other specific types of housing are common as part of large scale residential housing schemes, it is very rare for planning authorities to seek an element of housing designed for older people.

It is worth remembering that a significant proportion of older people in Wales own their home. Therefore the private sector, companies such as McCarthy & Stone, are going to play a critical role in meeting the housing needs of older people. However, higher land and build costs for this kind of housing, the need to provide a range of associated facilities (often up to 30% of the floor space of a development) and increasing competition for central locations mean that the viability of housing for older people is often difficult. Notably, unlike at the other end of the age spectrum (i.e. starter/affordable housing) there are currently no policy or financial incentives to provide housing that is designed to meet the needs of our ageing population, or to help older people move. They may have the equity, but they are often cash poor and worry about the stress of moving, despite having a desire to downsize.

However, there are actions that can be taken by local and national government to unlock the potential for more housing that is suitable for an ageing population. Cardiff Council has recently consulted on new Supplementary Planning Guidance which recognises the benefit of specialist housing for older people and seeks reduced contributions for things like open space and community facilities where a development is already providing a significant element of communal facilities on site, and will not seek affordable housing, open space or community facilities contributions from developments that provide a 'significant element of care' because of the wider social benefit these developments bring.

The recently concluded review by the Expert Group, ['Our Housing AGEnda: meeting the aspirations of older people in Wales'](#) is calling on the Welsh Government to articulate a clear national policy, giving a high priority to housing an ageing population in Wales. They should strengthen practice guidance in this area, provide practical tools to local planning authorities understand their housing needs for older people, and develop incentives to attract more private sector house builders into the

housing market for older people – to build both specialist retirement housing and age-sustainable housing.

*Following the launch of the expert's group report, the Housing LIN has invited other members of the Expert Group to contribute in writing a blog on their particular area of expertise. We hope to bring these to you over the coming weeks and months.*

*And if you have been inspired to write a case study for the Housing LIN on one of your innovative specialist housing developments or housing related care and support service, please email us at: [cymru@housinglin.org.uk](mailto:cymru@housinglin.org.uk).*

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