

Vertical Housing with Care: Remodelling a tower block as extra care housing at Callendar Court, Gateshead.



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Brief Description

This case study describes Callendar Court in Gateshead, an 11 storey former council housing tower block that has been remodelled as extra care housing. A description of the scheme is followed by an exploration of the factors that need to be taken into account in projects of this type and some of the issues and challenges involved.

Thanks are due to Housing 21 and the staff and residents of Callendar Court for their help in preparing this case study.

Background

An increasing number of local authorities are deciding to remodel existing sheltered housing or care homes as extra care housing. This is often because it is seen as one way of meeting government objectives for promoting choice and independence without the costs of new build. It is also seen as an effective way to 'recycle' hard to let social housing. A study carried out at Kings College London identified many of the benefits that can be achieved by remodelling.¹ These included higher levels of tenant satisfaction, greater accessibility and better facilities. However, a number of potential problems were also highlighted, including tensions between tenants and limited opportunities to socialise. The researchers also identified several unanticipated issues that often arose. In particular, the costs of conversion were often much higher than expected, space standards and design specifications for new build were not met and the disruption to tenants was considerable. They concluded that while remodeling can appear to be the best overall option, there are major challenges and it needs to be carefully considered.



A useful Housing LIN checklist outlines some of the factors that should be taken into account when remodeling sheltered housing as extra care.² These include consulting tenants and other stakeholders, considering existing strategies at District, County and Regional levels, assessing the potential impact of the more generous space standards required by ECH on the number of units that will be provided, and of course the costs and funding sources of the exercise.

¹ Tinker, A. and Hanson, J. and Wright, F. and Mayagoitia, R.E. and Wojgani, H. and Holmans, A. (2007) *Remodelling sheltered housing and residential care homes to extra care housing: advice to housing and care providers*. Research report. King's College London and University College London, London, UK. (Unpublished) <http://eprints.ucl.ac.uk/4790/>

² Extra Care Housing Toolkit 2006, Chapter 5, Tool 2: checklist of considerations in the decision to rebuild, remodel or refurbish ordinary sheltered housing. http://networks.csip.org.uk/library/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Toolkit/Checklist_of_considerations_inthe_decision_to_RebuildRemodelorRefurbish_ordinaryshelteredHousing.doc

About Callendar Court

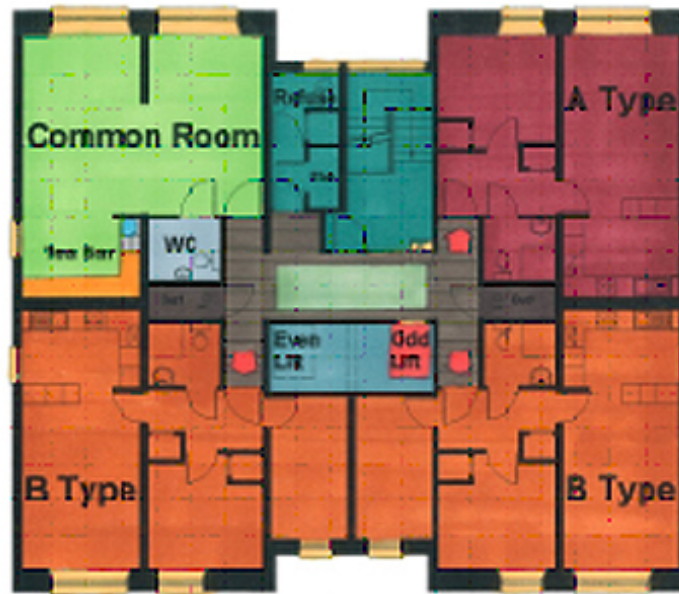
Callendar Court is a tower block that has been re-modelled to provide extra care housing on 11 storeys in 40 one and two bedroomed flats. A major feature of the re-modelling was the addition of a ground floor extension, as shown in Figure 1 and picture 2 below. The new entrance opens into this area, which houses a range of facilities that are open to residents and local people, including a lounge, café, lifts, laundry, guest room, hobby room, shop, and hairdressing salon. It also contains the scheme offices, the kitchens, a wheelchair store and toilets. The Court has two wheelchair accessible flats, both of which are on the ground floor. The facilities are well used by residents and people in the area, which is a close knit community, and this helps to make the court feel integrated with the estate on which it sits. Further facilities are available nearby, including bus stops (200yds), a social centre (200yds), general store (400yds), post office (400yds) and a General Practice (800yds). The nearest town centre is Gateshead approximately 1 mile away.

Each of the ten storeys above the ground floor contain 4 flats with either one or two bedrooms and two storeys also have a common room, as shown in figure 2. The central area is taken up by two lifts (one stops only at even number floors, the other only at odd numbers), a stairwell and a service area. Residents report high levels of satisfaction with the Court and the panoramic views across Gateshead and beyond are particularly valued. One wheelchair user chose a flat on the top floor for this reason, rather than one of the designated wheelchair flats on the ground floor. The layout seems to create a domestic feel to the scheme, with each storey serving as a small cluster of 4 flats. This also seems to work well for residents with memory problems, who find it easier to negotiate than the long corridors commonly found in new-build extra care schemes. The fact that the two lifts serve different floors (one odd, the other even) has proved not to be a problem in this respect.



Figure 1. Ground floor plan including extension
Note: C Type flats are wheelchair accessible

Gateshead Council provide the care via a 24/7 community based service, while Housing 21 provides laundry and housework facilities. Non-resident management staff operate from offices on the ground floor and the court is fully fitted with community alarms.



*Figure 2. Floor plan showing upper storey accommodation
Note: A Type flats have one bedroom, B Type have two bedrooms.*

The development of Callendar Court

Callendar Court opened in 2006 as the last of 5 courts developed by Gateshead Council with Housing 21, as part of a £15 million modernisation scheme for older people's housing. It is unusual for an extra care scheme because it is a refurbished tower, which sits alongside 2 other tower blocks on the edge of one of several large council estates in the High Fell ward of Gateshead. This is an area that records a relatively low quality of life, a high proportion of young people and high levels of unemployment.

A Housing Needs Assessment carried out by Gateshead Council in 2002 identified an oversupply of social rented accommodation in the south of Gateshead, an area that includes the Beacon Lough estate. This estate was the subject of a detailed review, which culminated in October 2003 with the Council's decision to demolish 153 dwellings on the estate and to seek alternative options for the use of Callendar Court, a multi-storey block of flats. At that time the block was 62% empty and there had been a history of management problems. In 2003 the Council agreed to consult with all the residents of Callendar Court about the possibility of being re-housed in preparation for a suitable alternative use or demolition. 78% of residents agreed with this proposal.

A decision was then taken to transform the tower block into retirement housing and the subsequent £3.6 million scheme saw the block gutted and stripped back to its supporting structure and then completely refurbished with the addition of a ground floor extension to house additional communal facilities. The building was also rewired and reroofed, a new entrance was built and a secure outside area was created to take advantage of the surrounding environment, which contained trees and grass. This decision can be viewed in the context of the Gateshead Housing Strategy, as summarised in the box below, which

includes an aim to increase provision of extra care housing in order to promote independence for older people. Conversion of the existing building was also seen to contribute towards the social care modernisation programme of re-providing residential care and developing community based options, as well as to the regeneration of Beacon Lough East. In addition, the Council felt that re-provision as an extra care scheme, rather than demolition and new build, supported the Council's policies to achieve communities living in a sustainable environment.



Picture 2. This extension was added during re-furbishment and contains most of the communal facilities.

The conversion process was part funded by a Department of Health extra care grant of £3.3 million, with the remaining £1.4 million coming from Housing 21. From the point of view of Gateshead Council, the sale of Callendar Court to Housing 21 meant a net rent loss after subsidy of about £144,000. In addition the redeveloped building would incur housing support and home care costs, although the exact amount of these was not known at the time. It was anticipated that the additional housing support costs could be met from the Supporting People Grant, while the home care costs would have to be accommodated within existing resources.

The alternative to remodeling was that Callendar Court could be demolished and the site sold or leased to Housing 21 to build a new facility. The estimated cost of demolition at that time was approximately £600,000 and Housing 21 estimated the cost of new build to be around £3.7m. However, this option would entail the Council identifying resources to fund the demolition, which would be problematic due to demands on the Housing Investment Programme at that time.

Gateshead Council Housing Strategy for Older People 2007-2012. A summary

The Housing Strategy for Older People aims to re-balance the older persons' housing market, to ensure independence and social inclusion and ensure that older people have active and fulfilling lives within sustainable communities. It will work towards meeting the needs and aspirations of older people well into the future. It aims to provide more new accommodation, detail investment in existing housing across tenures, provide affordable housing and Lifetime Homes, and provide more extra care accommodation. It is based upon extensive stakeholder and service user consultation as well as research which supports our understanding of what we need to do.

The four main objectives of this strategy are to:

- Ensure that the housing options available to older people more closely meet their aspirations and create choice;
- Support people to stay in their own home for longer;
- Support independence and social inclusion; and
- Ensure that older people have access to warm and eco friendly housing in safe and secure communities.

Learning Points

- A wide range of factors need to be taken into account when re-modelling any existing form of housing as extra care, including planning requirement, building standards and costs.
- Consultation with all interested parties is crucial. Particular consideration should be paid to the views, needs and preferences of existing residents, including how they will be re-housed and/or the potential impact of the work on their living environment. (See Factsheet 8 on User Involvement in Extra Care Housing)
- Any decisions to re-model should take full account of all appropriate existing strategies at district, county and regional levels, including those that specifically relate to older people and/or housing.
- Imaginative approaches to re-modelling can transform unsatisfactory buildings into environments that support a good quality of life for residents. In the current example, a hard to let tower block has become a popular extra care scheme that is integrated into the local area. A key factor in this success has been the addition of a ground floor extension, which provides a range of facilities for residents and the local community.
- This vertical model of extra care works well and residents express high levels of satisfaction. This design has brought unanticipated advantages for residents with dementia due to the fact that each storey of the building acts as a small cluster of flats which is easy to navigate. This is in contrast to many new build extra care housing schemes where flats are often arranged on long corridors and way finding can be problematic.

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Other relevant Housing LIN resources:

Housing LIN Factsheet No.10: Refurbishing or Remodeling Sheltered Housing – a checklist for developing Extra Care.

Housing LIN Case Study No.42: De-Commissioning and Decanting Sheltered Housing at The Manors, Northumberland.

Available to download at the Housing LIN website:
<http://www.networks.csip.org.uk/housing>

Other Housing LIN publications available in this format:

- Case Study no.20: **BME Older People's Joint Service Initiative - Analysis and Evaluation of Current Strategies (Sheffield)**
- Case Study no.21: **Estimating Future Requirements for Extra Care Housing (Swindon)**
- Case Study no.22: **'The Generation Project': a sure start for older people in Manchester**
- Case Study no.23: **Developing ECH in Cheshire: the PFI route**
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- Case Study no.35: **Ledbury Community Health and Care Centre**
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- Case Study no.40: **Combining Extra Care Housing with Health Care Services at Barton Mews**
- Case Study no.41: **Integrating Retirement Villages with the Local Community at Painswick**
- Case Study no.42: **De-Commissioning & Decanting Sheltered Housing at The Manors**
- Case Study no.43: **Reeve Court Retirement Village: Block Contracting Care in Bands, & Individual Budgets**

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www.networks.csip.org.uk/housing

The Housing LIN welcomes contributions on a range of issues pertinent to Extra Care housing. If there is a subject that you feel should be addressed, please contact us.

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