

Housing an ageing population: the consumer's perspective

By Tony Watts OBE

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Three million older people would like to downsize, yet only about 7,000 new retirement properties are built for sale each year.

(WPI Economics and Homes for Later Living)

70% of over-65s would consider moving to a bungalow.

In 2020, just 1,942 came out of the ground:
around 2% of the total housing supply.

The 1987 build figure was 26,000.

Immediate Benefits:

Reducing maintenance and heating costs

Releasing some capital along the way

Homes for families to move into

Warm, safe, healthy homes to live in

Revitalise the High Street

Laing & Buisson expect the number of specialist seniors housing units in the UK will grow by 9% over the next five years.

“The rate of delivery will still be dwarfed by the UK’s ageing population, deepening the existing imbalance between supply and demand.”

“The benefits of a larger seniors housing sector to society are substantial. Yet, just 20% of local authorities in England have supportive planning policies or sites allocated to seniors housing.”

Laing and Buisson

“Planning officers recommended the application for refused, describing the design of the building as ‘a bland and monolithic structure that would detract from the character of the area’.”

“The committee concluded that the development ‘does not meet the needs of the ageing population’.”

“There is not enough standard housing whilst there is a proliferation of retirement buildings currently available.”

“There is already a lack of GP facilities locally: add more residents of the town who will likely need a higher than average medical support, it is untenable.”

“The location is also not appropriate for elderly having to navigate steep hills to access basic amenities.”

“The property market is saturated with Retirement Homes. Some of these apartments have been for sale for a number of years without being sold – even when sellers are prepared to lose a considerable amount of money.”

“This is prime building land for first time buyer properties.”

“Plans for 34 retirement living apartments for the over 60s have been recommended for refusal because the scheme does not include affordable housing.”

“Relaunch of retirement flats bid for ex-police station could dash hopes of affordable housing alternative.”

What needs to happen?

1: Make every new home built suitable for people to age in place

2: Win the argument about the benefits

3: More choice

4: More local consultation at the pre-app stage

1: Make every new home built suitable for people to age in place

By 2066, a further 8.6 million UK residents will be aged 65 years and over: an additional cohort the size of London.

The fastest increase will be among those aged 85 years and over.

The UK has the oldest housing stock in Europe

To replace it at current rates, each new build will need
to last 1,000 years

2020 Building Research Establishment report

Around 40% of those aged 60 to 74 have a lifetime limiting illness, rising to almost 60% at 75 and over.

DCLG estimates a supply gap of up to 45,000 units a year
– and growing

A baby born in 2020 has a 54.3% chance of reaching the
age of 90

There will just be one new accessible home erected in the next 10 years for every 77 people in the population – down from one for every 67 two years ago.

Habinteg Housing

Category 2 requires a home to be accessible to most people and fit for purpose for older people, those with reduced mobility and some wheelchair users.

Estimated additional cost to developers: an extra £1,400 per home.

2: Winning the argument

Every time an older person moves into a purpose-built unit, it frees up a home for a younger couple or family to occupy

£83,100: the aggregated savings to the State over 10 years for each new specialist retirement housing unit built

3: Choice

Homes near existing support network and facilities

Easy access – including public transport

More room/flexibility

Mix of tenures

Shared housing / co-housing

Intergenerational /integration

“Smart hamlets”

4: Consultation

“(Approval) has been made possible by genuine collaborative working with the local community and key stakeholders. Following over a year of design development and extensive discussions with the planning authority, we are pleased to see our proposals unanimously approved by the committee.”

To conclude:

Win over the public with the benefits

Provide more choice

Listen to local older people

And, perhaps above all, make sure that EVERY home you build from now on will allow people to age in place for longer.

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Daily news digest: <https://paper.li/LaterLifeAGEnda>