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Planning Use Classes Order – Any Use? No Use! An irreverent view

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When Noah was a lad, well 1950, Government took steps to manage the health and wellbeing of the populous by managing industrial and commercial development in both town and country environments. The Town & Country Planning (Use Classes) Order was born. The baby was a healthy 6 pages long and sound of mind and body. 1972 saw some change to accommodate teenage years and the changing world. However, upon reaching adulthood in 1987, metamorphosis - new Use Classes were introduced.

Class XIV: home or institution providing for boarding, care and maintenance of children, old people or persons under disability, a convalescent home, a nursing home, a sanatorium or a hospital) combined with

Class XII: (residential or boarding school or a residential college) and, became:

Class C2: Use for the provision of residential accommodation and care to people in need of care (other than a use within class C3 (dwelling houses); use as a hospital or nursing home; and use as a residential school, college or training centre, and new:

Class C3: (dwelling houses) comprises use as a dwelling house by an individual, by people living together as a family.

How far our baby has come with last month's Housing White Paper!

But, as long as it dealt with industrial and commercial uses alone, examination of and direction for our 'youth' was seen as appropriate in a changing nation, but no more is the review considered necessary, although it now covers ~~every~~ aspect of the nation's lives, cradle to grave, literally.

Our supreme ability to fudge and swerve, leaving it to precedent in law and local negotiation, as long as it's "not me that has to do it", reigns. How much angst has been generated in a thousand arguments with Planning Authorities,

saddled with an Order that fails to represent how a significant and increasing proportion of our population wish to live, and in a time that seems to have no end in sight, of general housing undersupply and how many homes have failed to be delivered because of it?

If this Order can change for such modern day issues as internet cafes, or office to residential conversions, can it not be adapted or modified for our increased life span needs in our advanced years? Better yet, can it not be refreshed completely? Is it still fit for purpose? And what defines 'care' in 2017?

So, does Class C2 cover the breadth of the old Class XIV adequately and if that is its intent, has anyone told the planners (.....home.....providing boarding, care and maintenance.....of.....older people.....)?

There are some encouraging signs in the White Paper on housing for older people more generally. For example, clause 4.42 states: *"... to ensure that there is more consistent delivery of accessible housing, the Government is introducing a new statutory duty through the Neighbourhood Planning Bill on the Secretary of State to produce guidance for local planning authorities on how their local development documents should meet the housing needs of older and disabled people..... It will also set a clear expectation that all planning authorities should set policies using the Optional Building Regulations to bring forward an adequate supply of accessible housing...."*

However, in my view, we also need to revisit updating Use Class Orders when considering the future housing with care needs of our ageing population. How can planners conceive that Assisted Living, Extra Care, Retirement Villages, or any other marketing inspired term isn't anything other than C2? These flood waters have receded - surely we don't need to return to the Ark?!

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