

Painswick Retirement Village near Stroud, Gloucestershire

A private development of 56 apartments for older people and 24 en suite nursing care bedrooms in a rural location.

Eighteen of the apartments are designated for independent living (1 x 1 bed, 16 x 2 bed, 1 x 3 bed) and 38 for assisted living (32 x 1 bed, 6 x 2 bed).

Richmond Villages is the developer, manager and service provider and the scheme was designed by local architects Batterton Tyack Associates. Building was completed in 2007 and it received a Highly Commended award in the Assisted Living category at the Daily Telegraph Your New Home Awards.



Painswick Retirement Village, near Stroud © Richmond Painswick

Background

Richmond Villages has opened four retirement villages in the past 10 years and has several more in development. All provide a range of accommodation and care options for people aged 55 and over. Painswick villagers felt there was a need for retirement housing because older people who needed specialised housing were leaving the village. Villagers were surveyed and a site was identified.

Painswick has around 4,000 residents, with a mean age of 47. More than a quarter – 27 per cent – of the population is aged 56 or over, compared to a national average of 18 per cent. The village amenities include hotels, pubs, tea rooms, a library, a GP surgery and a pharmacy.

The retirement village is based on a philosophy of continuing care, and residents do not need to move unless they need hospital admission. Most residents fund their own housing and care, and applicants undergo risk and health assessments. The village aims for a population with mixed levels of care. Access to other amenities such as a supermarket or cinema means travelling to a nearby town.

Design and planning

It took several years to obtain planning permission, largely because the land was a greenfield site.

Development and building

Development costs were high, largely due to building on a slope, incorporating local features such as Cotswold stone, and building below ground to comply with height restrictions. These costs are reflected in the price of apartments, which are at the high end of the market. The site slopes and this compromises accessibility.

Accommodation

The 18 independent living apartments have two bedrooms, two bathrooms, a kitchen and a parking space. Some also have a private balcony or patio.

The 38 assisted living apartments have a living room, galley kitchen and bedroom with en-suite shower room. The price includes food and soft drinks, a laundry, a daily maid service and utilities (gas, electricity and water). Flexible care packages can be purchased as needed. All apartments are

leasehold, although some of the assisted living apartments can be rented for a short period.

The nursing centre has 24 beds and offers long-term and post-operative care, but not dementia care. The Commission for Social Care Inspection gave the centre a one-star rating in January 2008. Fees for the care centre vary depending on a resident's needs.

Services

The village caters for people aged 55 or over with a range of care and support needs, including visual impairment, deafness, incontinence and moderate memory problems. Richmond Villages' on-site domiciliary care team operates 24 hours a day. Flexible, tailored care packages are available and residents can buy whatever level of care they require. Most residents are self-funding. A wireless nurse call system covers the site. The care service covers its costs, but does not aim to make a profit. Housing staff are on duty 24 hours a day and there is a non-resident manager. Meals are available in the village restaurant, or can be delivered to residents' homes.

Facilities

The village has a communal lounge, dining room, restaurant, laundry, guest rooms, garden, conservatory, community centre, hobby room, café, shop, hairdresser, library with internet access, gym, swimming pool and jacuzzi. There is a small treatment room and most residents are registered with the local GP and dentist. All communal areas are accessible by wheelchair users and there are several areas of communal garden around the site

Social interaction and links with the local community

There is a lively social life within Richmond Village, and residents feel that the programme of activities including shopping trips, crossword sessions, bridge, computer lessons, a music club and a range of outings is crucial to getting to know each other.

The retirement village has strong links with the local community; 40 per cent of those in the assisted living apartments are from Painswick and 40 per cent are from the wider local area. Many of the village facilities are open to local residents and there is a liaison group that includes local representatives. There are also good links with the local school. The retirement village residents belong to many

of Painswick's 60 clubs and societies. Local people are also able to take part in activities organised in the village.

Painswick village is about 100 metres away along a narrow, sloping pavement, making it difficult to negotiate with a wheelchair or mobility scooter. The retirement village provides a regular shuttle bus to and from the village, the cost of which is included in the service charge. A private car can also be booked at a cost of £1 each way.

Feedback

The village is very popular and in mid 2008 there were 71 people on the waiting list for independent living apartments. The developers are preparing to apply for permission to extend the village onto an adjoining area of land.

Learning points

One of the main challenges for developers of retirement villages is finding a site. The high price of land and the complexities of planning mean that many developments are either on the edge of a town or in the middle of the countryside. This raises questions about potential social isolation, particularly when residents grow older and become less mobile.

The government's strategy for housing in an ageing society, *Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods* (CLG, 2008) focuses on creating homes that enable older people to interact with the local community. Rural locations can make it difficult for some residents, particularly those needing higher levels of care and support, to meet up with friends and family and get around.

Locating a retirement village within an existing community has many benefits.

These include:

For the retirement village residents:

- Ease of maintaining existing social networks and opportunities for wider social interaction
- Access to a range of services, facilities and leisure activities
- Opportunities for inter-generational contact
- Opportunity to remain near to family and friends rather than leaving the area.



For the local community:

- Jobs for the local community
- The retirement village residents can make local shops and services financially viable
- Access to facilities and specialised health services in the retirement village.

It is important that links with the local community are fostered and that physical access is suitable for people with mobility problems. It can be difficult to gain planning permission to build retirement villages within or close to existing communities, and here the support of the local community was crucial. However, the costs were still high and, as a result, the apartments are expensive.

Design and architectural features

- A choice of accommodation options according to the needs and preferences of residents.

Points for residents

- Ease of maintaining existing social networks and opportunities for wider social interaction
- Access to a far greater range of services, facilities and leisure activities than can be provided within the village itself
- Walking to the local village is difficult, particularly for residents with impaired mobility.

