

SECTION B, PAPER B2

The design and build of successful extra care housing

This briefing paper forms part of Section B of the Strategic Housing for Older People Resource Pack which explores the planning, designing and delivery of extra care housing as a particular approach to meeting the needs and aspirations of older people. References are made to practical tools and resources provided at the end of Section B.

Section A of the Pack looks in more detail at the wider policy context and understanding demand and the market. A comprehensive bibliography and webliography is provided in Section C.



Housing LIN

Directors of
adass
adult social services

ipc
Institute of
public care

Introduction

In addressing the question of building design, commissioners and developers of extra care housing need to consider that the space being created should meet not only the needs of its future older residents but also the staff that will use it as a place of work, and visitors who may use it as a community resource. However, above all else is the need to recognise that if we are to break from the past, planners, developers and architects need to remember they are designing housing first and foremost, not an institution. There are a number of extra care housing schemes which have excellent accommodation ruined by a building that instantly identifies it as an institution, most frequently the look and feel of a care home for older people.

This paper explores the key areas to be addressed during the developmental stages of an extra care housing scheme in order to successfully respond to these challenges.

Key lessons for successful, modern social care environment:

- *"Design for home care or support must recognise that each building is someone's home, not just a place for social care."*
- *Those delivering the schemes need to be aware of the experiences of the ageing and disabled population poverty and affluence, discrimination and equality, isolation and inclusion, and the needs and requirements of a diverse society.*
- *Internal housing design and layout needs to be flexible to accommodate changing care or support needs.*
- *Independence and quality of life require high quality design, management and services.*
- *Design for social care means future-proofing the buildings we already have so that a resident knows they can remain in their home as their needs change.*
- *Schemes need to be seen as community assets which allow residents to mix with local people but also enable them to feel their home is secure and private.*
- *Developers and providers should talk to, and involve, residents, both before and after development and occupancy."*

CABE and Housing LIN (2009). Homes for Our Old Age: Independent Living by Design.

Building design

Research has shown that the way a building is procured, designed and configured, and the services that are provided within it, has a direct impact on the ability of extra care housing to deliver successful outcomes for older people. This is both in terms of their health but also their independence and wellbeing²⁵. There is also an increasing awareness of issues of sustainability with the potential for reduced environmental impact, lower running costs and features that enhance health and well-being²⁶.

"To address these and future needs, all London's future housing should be built to 'The Lifetime Homes' standards and 10 per cent should be designed to be wheelchair accessible or easily adaptable for wheelchair users. LDF policy departures from these requirements must be justified by authoritative evidence from local needs assessments."

Greater London Authority (2011). The London Plan: Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London.

Housing commissioners will need to consider the degree to which they set out local standards and desired outcomes for the development of extra care housing, or how they influence the design and delivery of schemes in their authority²⁷. There are also

a range of national building standards and regulations, as well as locally determined requirements which will need to be followed, including those provided by funders^{28,29}.

Location within the community

Location is of considerable importance in the development of extra care housing and can mean the difference between a scheme and its residents being part of an external community, or remaining segregated and isolated.

In some areas there is a tendency to perceive specialist housing for older people as not needing to be in densely populated areas.

"Now I am near the city life and friends. We have very much to do – concerts, theatre, shopping: it's an old town, so there are lots of things to see."

Homes and Communities Agency (2009). Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) report.

However, where a scheme is located may influence the degree of community involvement, it may limit its attractiveness to staff to work in if it is inaccessible, and it may discourage relatives or friends from visiting.

²⁵ Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2008). Social wellbeing in extra care housing. Housing LIN (2011). Case Study 53: Trees Extra Care Housing – Highgate.

²⁶ Housing LIN (2010). Technical Brief 4: Extra Care Housing: Designing, assessing and delivering sustainable homes.

²⁷ See: Housing LIN website for examples of local authority design standards as well as Housing LIN (2009). Case Study 49: Developing a Design Guide for Housing with Care/Support at Sunderland City Council.

²⁸ At the time of writing the Homes and Communities Agency is consulting on Design and Sustainability Standards. See www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/Core-standards-proposal

²⁹ For further information on standards and regulations see RIBA (2011). A Guide for Assisted Living: Towards LifeHome 21.

The front door with cafe sign invites local people in, and encourages community involvement. ►

Some schemes have been built in the grounds of care homes; however, whilst this might make land cheap and planning considerations easier, it may also mean the scheme is seen as part of, or an extension to, residential care and therefore is less likely to be attractive to a mobile population of older people who have little need for care.

The main location issues are set out below:



Key location factors



- Is it easy to walk on and off the scheme?
- Are the surrounding areas wheelchair accessible?



- Is there level access to community facilities, including shops, leisure facilities, health centres etc?
- Is there access to local transportation services?



- Is the scheme likely to attract local people?
- Is its location likely to facilitate continued contact with friends?
- Will residents be able to access local activities they had engaged in prior to moving?



- Does the proposed scheme link with other older people services?
- Will residents be able to access these services?
- Will people living nearby be able to access services within the scheme?



- Is this an area that will be attractive to older people in terms of feeling safe?
- How will the design of the scheme combat any perceived risks?

³⁰ Homes and Communities Agency (2009). *Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) report*.

Size and viability

There is considerable variety in the size and design of extra care housing schemes, ranging from the very small (6 – 12 properties) to the very large retirement villages (300 plus properties).³¹ There will always be a tension between the greater efficiencies of larger schemes, with the desire to develop a scheme on a domestic scale which is attractive to live in.

Schemes also need to fit the environment and community in which they are located and be sustainable in the longer term. Future proofing may mean greater expense now but longer life in terms of schemes still looking attractive to people in twenty years time.



Good practice suggests new housing should have generous internal space standards, with the potential for three habitable rooms and designed to accommodate flexible layouts³³.



Communal areas within extra care housing are also important given the desire to address social isolation as an outcome for older people, as well as enabling the provision of additional services such as meals, communal activities, etc. The design of communal areas is often a key determinant of whether a scheme feels institutional or more of a neighbourhood. However, they can also be expensive to provide and commissioners and providers need to work together to achieve the right balance.

Providing a local shop whether run by the community or by a local business can act as a social hub for the community, as well as supporting independent living.



³¹ Tetlow R (2006). *Continuing Care Retirement Communities: A guide to planning*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Planning Officers Society.

³² Homes and Communities Agency (2010). *HAPPI (Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation) Report*. Photographer Stephen Arnold.

³³ At the time of writing the DWP consultation on reforms to Housing Benefit for Supported Housing is underway, and reforms may impact on decisions about the size of accommodation.

³⁴ Further information about Popple Well Spring is available at www.northyorks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=12031

³⁵ For more information about Margaret Court see www.retirementsecurity.co.uk/search_courts.asp?cID=31

New build or refurbishment

Providers are faced with six options when reviewing existing sheltered housing provision³⁶:

- Refurbish or remodel an existing ordinary sheltered housing scheme.
- Provide additional services at the ordinary sheltered housing scheme.
- Provide additional units of accommodation and/or purpose built communal facilities at the ordinary sheltered housing scheme
- Demolish and build new on the same site.
- Demolish and build new on a different site.
- Dispose of the land and use the resource to acquire an alternative site.

"Imaginative approaches to renovation can transform unsatisfactory buildings into environments that give residents a good quality of life."

CABE and Housing LIN (2009). Homes for Our Old Age.

Commissioners, developers and providers need to ensure that a balance is found between best practice and local constraints such as land and building availability, location, and cost. If the constraints are so significant that they make it impossible to achieve the required standard for a proposed scheme, then it may be better to use the buildings for some other purpose.

Remodelling an eleven story council block into extra care housing. ►

USEFUL RESOURCE

Tool A4 in Section A of this Resource Pack provides an outline of an approach to assessing current sheltered housing stock.



Callendar Court, Gateshead³⁷

³⁶ See Paper 2 for further discussion of this decision process. See also Housing LIN/University of Sheffield (2010). Evolve: Evaluation of older people's living environments.

³⁷ Housing LIN (2008). Vertical housing with care: remodelling a tower block as extra care housing

Physical design

The physical design of the building and surrounding public spaces is of great importance to the prospects for active ageing and promoting well being in older age.



The Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) report identified ten key design elements which should be considered and introduced as far as possible to ensure an attractive and successful building³⁹:

- Space and flexibility.
- Daylight in the home and in shared spaces.
- Balconies and outdoor space.
- Adaptability and 'care ready' design.
- Positive use of circulation space.
- Shared facilities and 'hubs'.
- Plants, trees and the natural environment.
- Energy efficiency and sustainable design.

- Storage for belongings and bicycles.
- External shared surfaces and 'home zones'.

This section briefly describes some of the main design issues that commissioners and providers need to consider, with references provided to further information on each.

SPACE AND FLEXIBILITY: Schemes need to provide homes which offer flexible and attractive space which can respond to changing care and support needs as well as being attractive and practical.

This means considering space standards, storage and the layout within homes and within communal areas.



³⁸ Housing LIN/CABE (2009). *Homes for our old age: Independent living by design*.

³⁹ Homes and Communities Agency (2009). *Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) report*.

⁴⁰ Housing LIN (2011). *Case Study 53: The Trees, Highgate*.

PROGRESSIVE PRIVACY⁴¹: Ensuring the privacy of private occupants is essential in maintaining their sense of home and security. Many schemes adopt 'progressive privacy' design principles to ensure adequate separation between scheme and facilities⁴².

"The communal facilities are sustained partly through their use by people from outside. Non-residents use the main entrance but cannot get into the residential areas of the building, ensuring the privacy, safety and security of tenants."

CABE and Housing LIN (2009). Homes for Our Old Age.

Task lighting directs light where it is needed for detailed activities. Increasing the amount of light on the task will make it easier to see and less tiring to do⁴³. ▼



INCLUSIVE DESIGN: Extra care housing through design needs to reflect the lifestyle that older people wish to lead, whether this be city living or rural tranquillity. At the same time however, it needs to incorporate inclusive design features⁴⁴ which can support people with a range of needs including visual impairment, hearing impairment, mobility impairment, cognitive impairment and learning difficulties⁴⁵. Examples of these features are provided below.

Contrasting wall, wall-light and wall painting, plus kitchen window sited to provide cues for orientation which are particularly helpful for people with cognitive impairment. ▼



⁴¹ Progressive privacy has been defined as 'the concept of ranking each constituent element on a scale of ascending privacy with the most public spaces close to main entrances and the private dwellings the farthest away from the main entrance.

⁴² See also Housing LIN (2008). Factsheet No 6: Design Principles for Extra Care, and also Wojgani H and Hanson J (2008). Extra Care Housing: A paradigm Shift, University College London.

⁴³ RNIB/Thomas Pocklington Trust (2010). Making the most of your sight: improve the lighting in your home.

⁴⁴ Housing LIN (2010). Viewpoint No. 14, Putting inclusive Design into Practice.

⁴⁵ Henry Stewart Publications (2009). The design of housing for people with dementia.

⁴⁶ See bibliography for examples of design guidance and good practice.

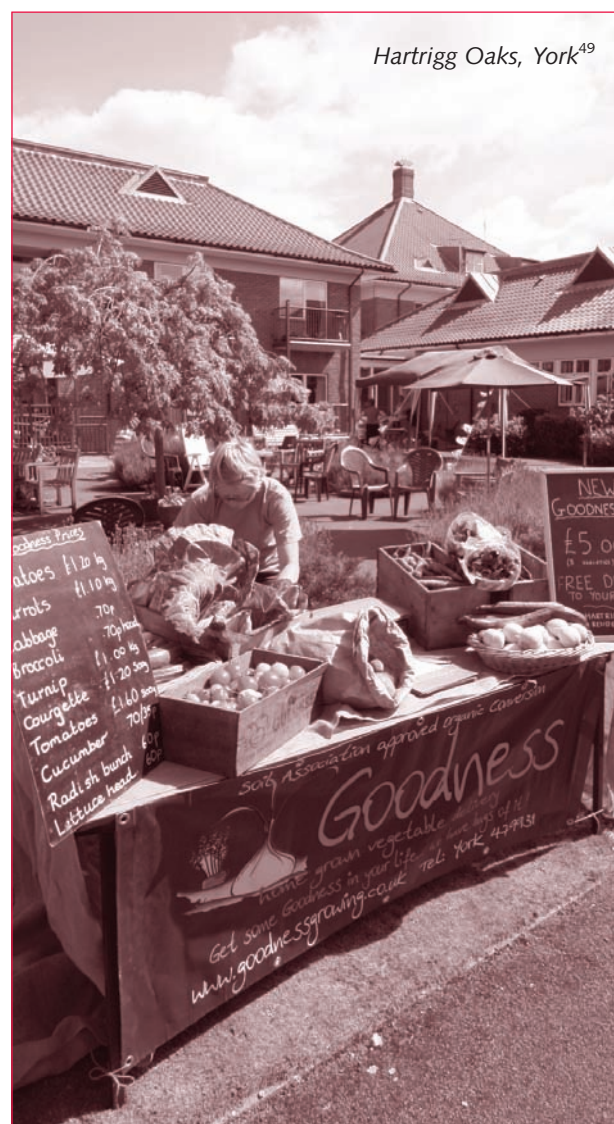


▲ *The height of window transoms should allow a view from a wheelchair or chair. Windows should be easy to operate⁴⁷.*

This sounds relatively easy, yet it may prove harder in practice. For example, features that work well for enhancing independence, such as pull cords requiring activation, may not be ideal for those with cognitive impairment. Careful consideration of the layout and design of the building and landscaping can enable a building to compensate for these impairments, whether it is through high levels of visual access, use of contrasting colours throughout, or of placing of multiple cues throughout the scheme to help with orientation. However, developers will need to ensure that the integration of services and

the inclusiveness of design does not make the scheme look or feel institutional in nature.

EXTERNAL DESIGN: The pleasantness and safety of the outdoor environment is also known to be significantly associated with people's perception of their quality of life. It is therefore important to consider the design features to be adopted both in the grounds of the scheme and in the immediate vicinity⁴⁸.



⁴⁷ The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and BRE Housing (2011). A guide for assisted living.

⁴⁸ For more information on the importance of outdoor space for older people see www.idgo.ac.uk

⁴⁹ Homes and Communities Agency (2010). HAPPI (Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation) Report. Photographer Rejash Bhela.

SUSTAINABLE DESIGN: Both commissioners and developers need to explore the delivery of sustainable homes, and seek a balance between the costs, the delivery and the longer term benefits. Issues that will need consideration include⁵⁰:

- Maximising effective use of land and local microclimate through building orientation.
- Managing flood risk.
- Working with natural free energy resources before considering renewable technology.
- Flexible design to enable re-use and modification based upon users' changing needs.
- Conserving and enhancing the natural environment, particularly in relation to bio-

diversity and enable easy access to open spaces.

- Enabling older residents to keep utility costs down and avoid fuel poverty.

Located on a green field site, it was important that the impact of the Exning Court, Newmarket, development on the existing ecology and biodiversity was minimised. Existing tall hedges bounding the site were protected and retained, and the landscape strategy developed to enhance natural landscape and amenity for the residents. Rainwater is collected from the roofs being used for external irrigation.

The central courtyard provides a protected environment for residents to sit out in and enjoy as well as providing visual amenity from inside the building⁵¹. ▼



Exning Court, Newmarket

⁵⁰ Housing LIN (2010). Technical Brief no 4: Designing, assessing and delivering sustainable homes.

⁵¹ Housing LIN (2010). Technical Brief 4: Extra Care Housing: Designing, Assessing and delivering sustainable homes.

"Designers and managers should make full use of the unique perspective that older people have to shape their living environments to create the kind of person-centred care that we all want to see."

CABE and Housing LIN (2009). Homes for Our Old Age.

RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT: Developers need to ensure they have planned to get formal post-occupancy feedback from residents about the design of the building and whether it is achieving the desired outcomes such as enabling independence. This may enable adaptations to be made to improve the existing building and will ensure any mistakes are not repeated in future developments⁵².

FUTURE PROOFING THROUGH DESIGN: To ensure best use of scarce resources, commissioners, developers and providers will need to provide homes that meet the needs of their residents for as long as possible, ideally a "home for life"⁵³.

"When we know that the alarm will be raised if we fall, or fail to get up in the morning, and that a 'smart' energy system will moderate the extremes of hot or cold weather while looking after our fuel bills, we have a greater sense of security."

Homes and Communities Agency(2009). Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) report.

This means ensuring housing is both accessible and adaptable, and is designed "to be 'care ready' so that new and emerging technologies, such as telecare and community equipment, can be readily installed"⁵⁴. It also means ensuring that the expectations and requirements of future generations can be met within the schemes through consultation not only with residents and prospective residents, but also with younger people.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY (AT) AND TELECARE: There have been considerable advances in our understanding of the potential of assistive technology and telecare in enabling independence amongst older people, and supporting them to remain within their homes and communities. This includes supporting people with dementia.

However, there remain a number of challenges, including how to provide appropriate response systems, and how to persuade both professionals and the wider population of its benefits. Commissioners should, as a minimum, ensure that buildings are designed to be capable of taking new technologies, and should be working with their partners to maximise the benefit of the technologies available^{55, 56}.

USEFUL RESOURCE

Tools B5 and B6 provide further information about good design and space standards in extra care housing.



⁵² See: Housing LIN and Suffolk County Council (2008). Very Sheltered Housing in Suffolk: A Design and Management Guide.

⁵³ See www.lifetimehomes.org.uk

⁵⁴ Homes and Communities Agency (2009). Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) report.

⁵⁵ HACT (2007). Extending independence: successfully introducing assistive technology

⁵⁶ Housing LIN (2007) Switched on to Telecare: Providing Health and Care Support through Home-based Telecare Monitoring in the UK and the US.

Whitebeck Court, Manchester



Key messages

Choices around the design and location of individual schemes will have a direct impact on their success in delivering the desired outcomes, whether this is for their residents or the local community.

Extra care housing is about providing flexible and attractive homes for individuals which can meet their aspirations as well as their needs; it is not about providing a further form of institutional care.

Lessons need to be learnt from past mistakes around design in housing for older people to ensure today's extra care housing is not only fit for purpose now, but will still be an attractive and effective option in the future.