

HAPPI

Housing our Ageing Population:
Panel for Innovation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Residents are at the heart of the HAPPI project



UK housing provision widely assumes that as we age we will wish to stay put in family homes acquired over a lifetime – often houses with gardens – even though the priorities that led us to choose these homes no longer apply. As a result, there is little housing choice for those who do wish to move. This reinforces the notion that moving is always a last resort.

Yet in visits to European housing schemes for older people, HAPPI – the Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation – found evidence of different attitudes to ageing, and different approaches to housing and care. Case studies show that a housing ‘offer’ tuned to the priorities of older age can have real appeal, tempting ‘empty nesters’, and those prepared to plan for future care needs, to trade in homes that have often become a burden for something new.

If the mechanisms for delivering housing in the UK – the regulatory framework and industry standards; the drivers for innovation and stakeholder processes – were aimed at comparable objectives, everyone could benefit, including families in need of the multi-bedroom homes that are currently in short supply.

Demographic change echoes this scenario; while the population bulge of the baby-boomer generation reaches retirement, the housing needs of the wider population are diversifying.

This report sets out HAPPI’s findings in four chapters, the last of which offers detailed recommendations directed towards the government and key organisations. Four important issues are captured in the following headlines:

- the time has come for a national effort to build the homes that will meet our needs and aspirations as we all grow older.
- we should all plan ahead positively, creating demand for better choice through a greater range of housing opportunities.
- housing for older people should become an exemplar for mainstream housing, and meet higher design standards for space and quality.
- local Planning Authorities should play a key role to ensure delivery of desirable housing in great places, tuned to local need and demand.

The HAPPI report

Setting out the case for change in the provision of housing for older people, the report asks four questions, each leading on from the one before:

- *Why* is meeting older people's housing needs a national priority?
- *What* kind of housing will meet our needs as we grow older?
- *How* can this housing be delivered?
- *Who* can make it happen?

Acknowledging the complexity of the topic – a layered debate with many voices to be heard – the structure of the document interleaves its core text with case studies and 'talking heads'. This strategy allows residents, commentators, Panel members and industry figures to have a say in the discussion, set against the background of case studies chosen for the lessons they can teach us.



Background

HAPPI – Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation – was commissioned by the Homes and Communities Agency, on behalf of Communities and Local Government and the Department of Health, to consider how best to address the challenge of providing homes that meet the needs and aspirations of the older people of the future.

The Panel's work builds on *Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods: a national strategy for housing in an ageing society*, with a focus on:

- **Improving the quality of life** of our ageing population by influencing the availability and choice of good housing
- **Challenging the perceptions** of housing for older people
- **Raising the aspirations** of older people to demand higher quality, more sustainable homes;
- **Spreading awareness** of the possibilities that innovative design can offer.

Why is meeting older people's housing needs a national priority?

Not only are we living longer, so that our 'oldest old' are twice as many as 15 years ago, but the average Briton is now comparatively middle aged. Although the young population is shrinking, half of babies born now will live to be a hundred. Bearing these facts and figures in mind, the Panel sought to collect existing knowledge and inspire new thinking to enhance housing choice for an increasingly diverse older population.

The report sets out its understanding of the spectrum of care, from 'mainstream' to 'specialised' housing typologies, within a discussion that accounts for the role of *Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods* in the context of social change. Whilst recognising the variety of needs represented by the ageing population – a group as diverse as any other age range – the Panel welcomed the opportunity to respond to what older people have in common, encouraging all concerned to imagine a new and better kind of housing.

What kind of housing will meet our needs as we grow older?

The question 'what' makes us think about ourselves – about what we want our housing to do for us, and where we want to live. Digging deeper into the question of what we want from our housing as we grow older, and what the barriers are to getting it, the Panel drew on contributions from stakeholders and residents. Connections between the environment and identity – how one's sense of self changes with age – inform housing priorities, underpinning the way that places come to matter.

Case studies provide insights into social and practical aspects of housing options, including cohousing and mutual housing models, the relevance of neighbourhood integration, and the challenges of specialised care. Design has a role to play in creating value; housing that offers real choice will respond to its physical and social circumstances.

How can this housing be delivered?

Meeting the needs and aspirations of our ageing population concerns the entire machinery of housing delivery, from planning to construction. Emphasising the space of the home, HAPPI identified ten key design elements:

- 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'

Who can make it happen?

Implications for national and local policy makers, planning and funding authorities, housing and care providers across all sectors – and for each of us – are framed as an appeal for coordinated action, with recommendations directed to particular organisations and bodies. The challenge goes beyond the task of simply delivering housing. It entails changing attitudes as well as public opinion. The final chapter of the report builds on earlier calls for all concerned to raise awareness of the significance of this issue, which touches all citizens and communities, and for research and development in the built environment to promote debate about how better design can add value to older people's lives and homes.



Case studies

Six study visits – three in the UK and three in continental Europe – took the HAPPI panel to the following 24 case studies in six countries: the Brunswick Centre, Holly Street, and Darwin Court (London); Patching Lodge (Brighton); Oranjehof, and de Plussenburgh (Rotterdam); de Rokade (Groningen); Colliers Gardens (Bristol); Painswick Village (Gloucestershire); Spire View (Pickering); Hartrigg Oaks (York); Allerton Bywater Millennium Community (Leeds); Gradmann Haus, and Sankt Antonius (Stuttgart); Irchel, and Gibeleich (Zurich); Konradhof (Winterthur); Flurgarten, and Solinsieme (St Gallen); Neptuna (Malmö); Postiljonen, and Opus (Skanör); Flintholm (Copenhagen), and Herfra til Evigheden (Roskilde).

The Panel

Combining breadth and depth of experience – from housebuilding to the social sciences; from first hand knowledge of life in retirement housing to design expertise – the HAPPI panel is made up of the following 13 members: Lord Richard Best OBE (chairman), Roger Battersby, Dr John Belcher CBE, Vera Bolter MBE, Antony Hamilton, Peter Maxwell, Sir Richard MacCormac CBE, Aggie MacKenzie, John Penton MBE, Prof. Anne Power CBE, Tony Pidgley, Judith Torrington, and Dru Vesty MBE.

The team

Communities and Local Government and the Department of Health commissioned the Homes and Communities Agency to manage the HAPPI process and publication. HAPPI has been supported by a team of consultants who organised the panel process, conducted background research, and produced outputs including this report. Pollard Thomas Edwards architects and Levitt Bernstein Associates anchored the team, working with Design for Homes who arranged case study visits and commissioned the films.



Case study films are available to view online at: www.youtube.com/user/HCAuk; reports on HAPPI visits, biographical notes on the Panel, and a list of stakeholders are available to download at: www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/Housing-Ageing-Population-Panel-Innovation

Copies of the full report can be obtained from the publisher.

Homes and Communities Agency
110 Buckingham Palace Road
London SW1W 9SA

0300 1234 500

www.homesandcommunities.co.uk