

PREP for PRP's Specialist Housing Conference: 17 November 2009

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Roger Battersby, Managing Director of PRP, argues that in the wake of the Credit Crunch and in the light of government policy on housing and care for older people, some of our existing models will need to flex and adapt to suit the new market circumstances.

The Challenge

We are facing one of the greatest housing challenges in recent times with the huge projected increase in our ageing population. The good news is that we are living longer, healthier lives. The challenge this presents, however, lies in the associated costs to society of meeting both our care needs and the demand for appropriate, attractive retirement housing as we get older.

Around 85-90% of older people needing support are currently living in their own homes in the community. This statistic is unlikely to change significantly in the future so it is imperative that we move towards more inclusive design standards in all new housing. However, 'staying put' is not a panacea. There are many older people living in social isolation, dependent on over-stretched Home Care agencies, whilst under-occupying large family properties unsuited to their changing needs and circumstances.

Broadly, the challenge we face is to provide a new generation of attractive Retirement Homes where we will want to live and retain control of our lives. If this is to be affordable, we need to locate our new housing at the heart of Communities where it can be interdependent on existing social and economic networks which will help to provide support as we get older.

Policy Developments & Market Pressures

There have been two very significant shifts in government policy in terms of housing and care for older people over the past few years.

The first, *'Lifetime Homes and Lifetime Neighbourhoods'*, focuses on housing and aims to address the issue of sustainability, in its broadest terms, both in the design of new housing and to the nature of neighbourhoods where the housing is located.



CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

We are living longer, healthier lives. However our higher standards of living and care needs create more demand on our finances.

The second, which was set out in a series of policy initiatives, focussed on how care is delivered to the individual who can exercise choice in terms of how they wish to spend their personal budget.

The combined impact of these two policy developments will have a very significant impact on the housing models that we are currently delivering for older people.

At the same time, we are in the midst of a global economic crisis and the resultant Credit Crunch is having a very considerable impact across both the public and private sectors.

We would like to examine how our existing models might need to change to adjust to this new situation.

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In broadest terms, we believe that these factors will provide three principle points of focus that will shape our housing to cater for our changing needs as we all get older:

- Inclusive design including better space standards in mainstream housing.
- Attractive Retirement Housing that will provide a lifestyle alternative to living in social isolation in our own homes in the community and that a move at the right time will be desirable rather than enforced through circumstance.
- A general focus on community, both with reference to the 'communities' within larger Retirement Housing developments but also in terms of location within and the interdependence of Retirement Housing on the wider community within which it is located.

Local Authority Role

If we are to meet the challenge of housing our ageing population, it is essential that Local Authorities play a more prominent role in assessing the housing and care needs for their ageing population and in acting in a pivotal role to bring together the different agencies across the housing, health and care spectrum.

Local Authorities should develop strategies for housing older people, by setting targets for suitable housing provision and identifying sites in their Local and Regional Development Frameworks which embrace the concept of Lifetime Neighbourhoods. Housing for older people should be an essential component of all urban regeneration, extension and new communities.

Planning authorities, too, need to be made aware of the pressing need for suitable housing provision for older people. Under Section 106 Agreements, the provision of housing for older people should be interchangeable with affordable housing because many of the residents will be freeing up family housing when they move into a new development. Greater clarity is needed on Use Classes as much of our housing for older people falls between C2, institutional, and C3, housing.



TREES, HIGHGATE. HDA 2009 ROLL OF HONOUR

'A home for life' offering the choice of different levels of care and support as and when required. The residents will live independently whilst enjoying a sense of community and companionship.

Existing Models

Much of the new housing developed in recent years to meet this demand has been designed in the form of Extra Care housing in the public sector or Assisted Living, the private sector equivalent. These models have offered independent-living opportunities to residents in self-contained apartments which share a range of communal facilities and supportive services within the development. Extra Care was conceived as a more affordable and more attractive alternative to the more institutional Residential Care Home where expensive 24 hour care was provided irrespective of whether residents needed it.

There are now about 45,000 Extra Care dwellings across the United Kingdom and the model has proved a great success in transforming the lives of thousands of older people whether they have moved to these developments from their own homes in the community or from more institutional nursing or care homes.

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However, in the wake of the Credit Crunch the affordability of the Extra Care, particularly in smaller developments, is now being seriously questioned. The extensive shared facilities are often under-used and catering costs are becoming very expensive and difficult to manage particularly as residents increasingly have the choice to self-cater or make alternative arrangements.

We would like to examine the future of the Extra Care model. Will it survive, and if so, how will it need to adjust to these new circumstances?

Attractive Retirement Homes

If we are to develop a new generation of attractive Retirement Housing for the private sector, we need to rethink our approach and aspirations for the product. We need to remove reference to Ageing, Care, Support, Shelter etc. and 'rebrand' to promote an attractive lifestyle choice.

Perhaps we need to start with existing perceptions and look the labels that currently stigmatise housing for older people: Sheltered Housing, Supported Housing, Extra Care, Close Care, Assisted Living, Care Homes, Continuing Care Communities etc. They all describe places where none of us would wish to go if we had any choice.

We could debate how our retirement housing could be labelled or perhaps simply refer to it as Retirement Housing.

We then need to look at the product itself. Many of the current generation of Extra Care or Assisted Living developments being developed in the UK are introspective, offer small single aspect flats accessed off long internal corridors and often in undesirable locations far from shops and other facilities that we need. At the same time the dwellings are often poorly orientated and inadequate in terms of storage and amenity.

European Precedent

Housing for older people in northern Europe and Scandinavia provides some interesting lessons. They have adopted a cohesive and integrated approach to housing and care with close partnerships between housing provider, local authority and care provider to cater for the full range of care needs in the community.



ORANJEHOF (AND DE LOMBARDE), LOMBARDIJEN, ROTTERDAM

An example from the HCA's HAPPI tour; A five storey block of 'independent living' apartments linked by a hub to small group care facility in a densely populated suburb of Rotterdam.

In Holland, for instance, rather than develop supported housing models such as our Extra Care or Assisted Living they build Continuing Care Communities, with independent-living retirement apartments adjacent to nursing homes embedded within the community so that people do not need to move away from friends and family or the neighbourhoods to which they belong.

At the same time they welcome the community into the development through shared use of restaurant and range of other facilities such as a library and an internet café. Volunteers from the community also play a very significant role in caring for and supporting their older people.

Their Retirement Housing is contemporary in design and makes no stylistic concessions to the fact that older people will live in the development. Apartments are light and spacious, and generous in terms of amenity and shared facilities.

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Carnarvon Place, Newbury
Winner of Independent Living & Older People Category, Guardian Neighbourhood Awards 2008

Flexing our Extra Care Model

With the increasing pressure on funding in the public sector, it would seem that the traditional Extra Care model, with around 40 dwellings offering a wide range of communal facilities, will simply not be viable in the future.

We believe that the model will therefore need to flex to suit the particular circumstances of its site and the community within which it is located:

- There will therefore be pressure for Extra Care developments to be larger if they are to offer a range of facilities and that to achieve viability in revenue funding these might need to offer a service to older people in the wider community.
- The model will also need to adapt to suit its location. If situated in a Lifetime Neighbourhood that is secure, close to amenities, transport links, shopping and health facilities, the communal provision could be scaled down to a minimum - perhaps no more than a communal lounge with domestic scale kitchen. Alternatively, if located in a rural location, on the edge of a village the development or in a more challenging urban location the development might need to be more self-contained and provide the full range of Extra Care facilities.

Good examples of how the model might be adapted to location and circumstance include our developments at Carnarvon Place in Newbury and the recently completed Extra Care developments in Cheshire developed under a PFI initiative.

Carnarvon Place, for Sovereign Housing, is a development of 100 sheltered housing and shared ownership apartments strategically located within half a mile of Newbury town centre. In view of the excellent transport links and the range of facilities in the immediate locality, our client took the decision to limit the communal provision within the development to a community lounge and small servery/kitchen for social occasion. At the same time they increased the size of the dwellings by 10% or more to future-proof them in terms of our aspirations for better space standards.

All the apartments are dual aspect, accessed from gallery/deck access whether from the internal atrium space or external walkways around a secure parking court. The cost per unit was perhaps as much as 20-30% less than the average Extra Care apartment.

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CHESHIRE EXTRA CARE PFI

The UK's first extra care housing PFI delivering five extra care housing developments across Cheshire, creating a model for the future provision of housing and care provision for older people across the country.

Cheshire Extra Care PFI provided 433 dwellings on five sites across the county. The developments range in scale from 53 to 133 apartments and each includes a wide range of communal facilities including a restaurant, lounges, a village hall and winter garden, a health centre/gym, shop, hairdressing salon etc. They were conceived from the outset as community resources and have been designed to welcome older people from the neighbourhood to share the facilities. Although it is 'early days' with the last of the developments only completed a few months ago, all the indications are that they are being embraced by the wider community. In Middlewich the local hairdresser has chosen to relocate his business to the development. In Crewe the local shopkeeper will be managing the shop as an extension of his business. The shop at Winsford is being run by a local charity.

At the same time, these developments have the effect of uplifting and regenerating the communities in which they are located.

'Staying put' in our own homes, however good the 'home care' arrangements, will not cater to all of our needs and will leave much of our family housing stock under-occupied. Extra Care has been a good model and it is essential that we hang on to the best aspects of what the model offers and adapt it so as to provide affordable and attractive housing where we can live independently, make our own choices and retain control of our lives for as long as possible. Inherent in this challenge we believe that there is a real opportunity for developers in both the public and private sectors.

For all of our futures, we need to raise the issue of inclusive, sustainable and attractive Retirement Housing up the political and social agendas now.