

# Better Homes: housing for the third age

A FRAMEWORK FOR DELIVERING OLDER  
PEOPLE'S ACCOMMODATION ACROSS KENT  
AND MEDWAY





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## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	p.3
1. Vision.....	p.4
2. Why do we need an older people’s accommodation framework?.....	p.4
3. What do we mean by older people’s accommodation?.....	p.7
4. Who are the main delivery partners?.....	p.8
5. Helping people make choices.....	p.10
6. Engaging with the community.....	p.11
7. The development process.....	p.15
8. “Moving in” .....	p.22
9. Implementation.....	p.24
ANNEX A - Things to consider.....	p.26
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	p.28



## INTRODUCTION

*This Framework has been developed following recommendations within the Kent Forum Housing Strategy, which identified housing an ageing population as a key concern for Kent and Medway.*

*The number of people aged over 50 is rising both nationally and a County level, putting significant demands on housing and services. People's housing needs can change greatly as they grow older and we need to ensure that people have the opportunity to choose to access to the right accommodation at the right time.*

*The aim of this document is to encourage a consistent and positive approach to the development of older people's accommodation across Kent and Medway and to the delivery of housing information, advice and guidance services for older people. It is intended to be used by a wide range of stakeholders involved in the provision of older people's accommodation including local housing and planning authorities, care providers, health authorities, adult social services, private and public sector developers, Parish Councils, landowners and local communities.*

*The Framework has been developed at a time of great change at the national level. The majority of the proposals from the Coalition Government are still in the early phases and this document does not seek to second-guess the government's intentions.*





## 1. Vision

Through this Framework, we will work together to:

- 1) Develop and maintain a **consistent, proportionate** and **efficient approach** to the **delivery** of older people's accommodation across Kent and Medway
- 2) Develop new and innovative ways of **facilitating** the delivery of older people's accommodation across Kent
- 3) **Raise awareness** and **understanding** amongst local communities, Parish Councils and Members of older people's housing needs and how they can be met
- 4) Ensure that older people can exercise **choice** in determining their housing options

We will do this by:

- Working together to **overcome** any organisational or policy **barriers** to delivery
- Developing and adopting commonsense and **pragmatic approaches** in relation to **design, quality** and **viability** in the **planning process** for older people's accommodation
- Working with local communities, Parish Councils and Local Members to **highlight** the opportunity for older people's accommodation and demonstrate the **benefits** it can bring
- Providing and promoting **consistent, high quality information, advice and guidance** on the housing options available for older people

## 2. Why do we need an older people's accommodation framework?

### 2.1. Background

Britain's population is ageing. The number of people aged over 55 is set to increase dramatically over the next 20 years. DTZ estimate that in 2031 there will be just under 720,000 people aged over 55 living in Kent and Medway, compared to around 490,000 in 2008, a population increase of nearly 50%.

In the UK this is due to two factors:

- On average, people are living longer, and the expectation is that year by year, longevity will increase.
- The 'baby boom' generation (those born 1946-64) are now aged 47-65 and form a particularly large population cohort, all of whom will be reaching retirement age over the next 20 years.



Across Kent and Medway the great majority of the older population will continue to live in the existing housing stock, though, as in the past, high numbers of older people may choose to live within certain popular areas. This could put significant pressure on demand for new homes as older people “under occupy” large family homes and on the support and care services needed to enable older people to remain in their own homes.

More of the future older population are likely to own their home than has been the case in recent years. DTZ estimate that by 2031, three out of four people aged over 55 will be a home owner. This has

a significant bearing on older people’s housing aspirations and their expectations if they move out of their existing home into specialist accommodation. If and when these home owners need more specialist provision, they are more likely than past generations to be in a position to buy their accommodation. Along with a greater ability to pay for quality and space than past generations



they may have much higher expectations, such as having their ‘own front door’ and two bedrooms. Not all older people will be in this position.

The majority of those over 50 will be healthy and active well into retirement, with increasing numbers probably choosing to, or feeling they need to, continue working. However, the numbers of people aged over 75 (the group most likely to need specialist housing provision) will increase significantly (DTZ estimate from 135,000 in 2008 to an anticipated 251,000 in 2031) and the proportion of those who are frail or infirm or need some form of care will increase significantly as a consequence.

Thus, as the number of people aged over 75 increases, there will be increasing demand for care, whether provided in the client’s existing home, or in specialist accommodation and care facilities.

## ***2.2. Better Homes: Older People’s Housing Needs and Aspirations***

The Kent Forum Housing Strategy identified housing for older people as a key priority for Kent and Medway.

The Strategy recommended that further research be undertaken to identify the housing needs and aspirations of older people, to ensure that the right accommodation can be delivered that older people will want to live in now and in the future.



*Better Homes: Older People's Housing Needs and Aspirations*, produced by DTZ and the Social Innovation Lab for Kent, undertook quantitative and qualitative research to take a fresh look at the housing needs and aspirations of older people across Kent and Medway. A full copy of the report can be found at:

<http://www.kenthousinggroup.org.uk/uploads/CopyofBetterHomesv4smaller%5B1%5D.pdf>

The research found that:

- Older people were unclear about their housing options and confused about the different choices of accommodation available.
- A lack of attractive smaller accommodation and fears about the actual process of moving were major barriers to older people downsizing.
- People were worried about becoming old and being isolated from the local community if they entered specialist “elderly” accommodation
- Planning issues were becoming increasingly common for older people’s accommodation, particularly in relation to the Use Class of the accommodation and the implications of affordable housing contributions on the viability of development

### 2.3. The recommendations

The report suggested three recommendations to be taken forward by the Kent Housing Group:

- 1) To develop an **information advice service** for older people to assist in considering options for future housing and explore what practical help they need. The service could be piloted in a small number of localities, promoted essentially to “home owners” who currently feel poorly supported in this area.
- 2) To produce a **protocol** which strengthens understanding and relationships between local authorities, housing, planners, adult services and health services, and develops a common Kent and Medway wide approach to assessing development proposals for older people’s accommodation.
- 3) To produce a **community toolkit** - essentially for all those involved in designing and providing older people’s accommodation and support services. The Toolkit will offer practical advice and guidance on how to build a community within a residential setting and approaches to forging links with neighbours.

This Framework has been developed directly to take forward recommendations 2 and 3. Recommendation 1 is being taken forward as a pilot by the three West Kent local authorities (Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells) and further details on this are to be found in **section 5** below.



### 3. What do we mean by older people's accommodation?

Older people's accommodation is not homogeneous. It can include both purpose-built accommodation and a person's existing home which has been adapted to meet their needs as they age. A variety of different types of purpose-built accommodation currently exist, which tend to offer a range of care and support services, from none at all to 24 hour on-site care. Older people have many different needs and aspirations for their accommodation in later life and a good mix of accommodation types is required to ensure that all of these needs and aspirations are met.

A summary of the main types of purpose-built older people's accommodation can be found in the table below.

<b>Type of accommodation</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Private Developments</b>	Self-contained properties, normally privately owned. On-site care or support services are not provided. Larger developments may include shops and recreational facilities. Residents can buy in care if they require it.
<b>Sheltered Housing</b>	Self-contained properties, which are available to rent or buy. Normally managed by an on-site manager. Emergency call response scheme is provided for residents. Some form of communal facilities such as gardens are normally available. Residents can buy in care if they require it.
<b>Extra Care ("Flexicare")</b>	Self-contained properties, which are available to rent or buy. Sometimes known as "very sheltered housing" or "assisted living", Extra Care accommodation provides on-site care and support, sometimes up to 24 hours depending on the needs of residents, and can include support for people with dementia. An emergency call response scheme is also provided. Access to at least one main meal is normally available, as is access to some form of domestic help. A range of communal facilities such as a lounge and gardens are normally available and schemes normally include shops and recreational facilities, which may be open to the wider community.
<b>Residential and Nursing Care</b>	Individual rooms within an overall care home, where there is a weekly charge either to the individual, the local authority, or both. Care homes provide the highest level of on-site care and support, both for personal care and for nursing needs if required. Some care homes specialise in particular types of illness such as dementia.



#### 4. Who are the main delivery partners?

Partnership working is critical to the delivery of older people's accommodation. To successfully complete a new older people's development, the input of a range of different partners is needed, who all bring unique expertise and specialist skills to the table.

A summary of the main local partners involved in older people's accommodation and their role and responsibilities are set out in the table below.

<b>Who are they?</b>	<b>What is their role?</b>
<b>Elected Members</b>	Elected Members provide local leadership on housing and planning and set the local strategic direction. They can act as great ambassadors and advocates for older people's accommodation, particularly where there is concern amongst local residents about proposed development.
<b>Parish Councils</b>	Parish Councils have a critical role in ensuring that the local community is involved and informed about the development process and can help facilitate communication between local residents, developers and council officers. They may be involved in the development of Neighbourhood Plans for their local community. They are also a statutory consultee within the planning process.
<b>Homes and Communities Agency</b>	The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) is a Government body responsible for housing and regeneration across England, which provides funding for the delivery of new affordable housing. Housing for older people is a one of their key priorities.
<b>Developers</b>	Developers can be either public sector or private sector. Developers will purchase the land, commission the architect and construction company to design and build a new development and submit the planning application.
<b>Local Housing Officers</b>	Local housing authorities (Districts and Boroughs and Medway Council) have a housing enabling role and are responsible for making sure the housing needs of their local older population are met. Officers will make sure a proposed development fits in with their overall housing strategy and can provide data to assess local need. They can help with engaging the community and promoting the benefits of development to local residents. They also advise on the allocations process.
<b>Local Planning Officers</b>	Local planning officers from District and Borough Councils and Medway Council create local planning policy and determine what development what take place.





	<p>They can provide pre-application advice on potential sites, design and quality of proposed older people's accommodation.</p> <p>They also process the final planning application and decide whether the proposed accommodation is subject to affordable housing contributions.</p>
<b>Care Providers</b>	<p>Care providers provide in-house care and support services to residents of Extra/Flexi Care housing and residential and nursing care homes. Depending on the nature of the accommodation, in some cases care providers will also manage the housing schemes.</p>
<b>Support Providers</b>	<p>Housing related support services for vulnerable older people are commissioned and funded by the Supporting People Programme. It is aimed at supporting vulnerable people to maintain or access independent living in their own independent accommodation in the community and includes sheltered accommodation, extra care accommodation, floating support, community alarms and services delivered by Home Improvement Agency/ handyperson services.</p>
<b>Social Services</b>	<p>Social Services provide a view on the developments needed for older and vulnerable people who may require care and support services.</p> <p>They can also assist with design standards where adapted housing is being considered and can provide support for developments that strategically fit the population needs requiring care and support.</p>
<b>Voluntary and Community Organisations</b>	<p>Voluntary and community groups could be crucial to service development depending on the nature of the accommodation developed. They could support tenant activities along with providing services to the wider community as the scheme develops.</p>
<b>GPs and Commissioners of Health Services</b>	<p>New older people's accommodation will impact on local GP and health services. GPs and health commissioners would be able to support new developments if brought in at an early stage and could also help shape services as they develop.</p>
<b>Home Improvement Agencies</b>	<p>Home Improvement Agencies provide advice, guidance and support to older homeowners. They can undertake repairs or provide adaptations to a property to help that older person to continue to live as independently as possible in their own home.</p>

## 5. Helping people make choices

Research carried out by the Social Innovation Lab for Kent (SILK) identified that a lack of clear information and guidance about the different types of older people's accommodation available, how much it costs and the eligibility criteria for accessing accommodation has left many older people in Kent and Medway confused about what their housing options are and what they can afford.



Local housing authorities and housing providers should consider developing simple guidance on older people's housing options and support services using language which is clear, easy to understand and jargon-free. In particular, the eligibility criteria for different types of accommodation should be explained as clearly as possible. Sevenoaks District Council are developing a range of simple easy-to-read one page leaflets across a range of different housing issues, to help guide local residents who visit the Council Offices looking for housing information.

The SILK research highlighted that people tended to put off thinking about their potential change in housing and care needs for as long as possible. As a result, often by the time they move they are in a position of urgent need and of an age where the whole moving process is considerably more traumatic. Many people aged in their 70s or older stated that they wished they had thought about their housing options when they were younger (i.e. in their 60s) and were better able to make decisions and cope with the transition into older people's accommodation.



Local housing authorities should seek ways to engage with people who are in their 50s and 60s and not currently in need of older people's accommodation and encourage them to start thinking about their future housing and care needs and start planning accordingly.

Local authorities should consider different ways of reaching different types of audiences, as people's preferred communication channels may vary with age and lifestyle i.e. those in their 50s or 60s may be more willing to access information on the internet than those in their 80s, who may prefer face-to-face interaction. A practical approach should be taken to communication, recognising in particular the importance of home visits. An older person's family may also have an important role to play in advising them about their housing choices and this should also be factored into any communications.

Authorities should also consider working with a range of partners, such as GP centres, libraries or leisure clubs to disseminate information, in particular to owner occupiers, who may not be as aware of housing options and support as those already living in social or affordable housing.

A pilot housing information advice and guidance service has been developed by the West Kent local authorities (Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells), in conjunction with the Elderly Accommodation Council's FirstStop Advice Service.



The pilot will assist in the development of a framework for a new advice service that can be rolled out across Kent.



The aim of the pilot will be to address housing issues for older people before they become urgent and/or acute. This will help make transitions less daunting and more manageable, whilst helping to avoid future crises. Key to this process will be the provision of easily-accessible information to better inform older people of their housing options.

A referral mechanism will also be put in place to assist older people seeking to move to more suitable accommodation. Referral services will be delivered primarily by FirstStop and include support such as preparing for a move, packing and removals organising utilities and mail re-directs and settling people into their new home.

## 6. Engaging with the community

A key part of successfully delivering new older people's accommodation is to engage positively with the local community.

### 6.1 Raising awareness

Local residents are often understandably concerned about the potential impact of new development within their local community. This can be particularly so where a new development is taking place within a rural area. Raising awareness within the community of the local need for older people's accommodation and the potential positive impacts it may have on the lives of local people, such as enabling different generations of families to live close to and support each other, bringing new amenities and jobs to the area, can help to alleviate concerns and minimise opposition.

### 6.2. Neighbourhood planning

The Localism Act introduces a new right for communities, including Parish Councils in rural areas, to draw up a neighbourhood plan, to help influence future development within their local area. Developers and local housing authorities should seek to engage with local communities and Parish Councils in the development of these plans to ensure that older people's accommodation is represented where there is a local need now or potentially in the future.



### 6.3 Early and continuous involvement

Dialogue with local communities, including Parish Councils should begin at an early stage, before development has been agreed. Local people should be kept involved in decision-making and informed of progress throughout the development process.

Engaging early, consulting on initial proposals for facilities, building design and quality in an open and transparent manner will help to build trust and good relationships with the local community. Getting good engagement right is crucial. Failure to do so could lead scepticism or mistrust in the scheme and increased public opposition.

#### **CASE STUDY – KING EDWARD COURT, HERNE BAY**

Part of the Kent Better Homes Active Lives PFI, King Edward Court has a gym, shop and hairdressing salon. It was the on-site bar that caused controversy as Housing 21 applied for a 24 hour alcohol licence. The reason was to afford a degree of flexibility for residents to hold social events and celebrate special occasions as well as providing residents with the flexibility they would enjoy in their own homes. A petition and letters of objection were sent to the District Licensing Committee by local Herne Bay residents.

Although Housing 21 made use of local media to publicise King Edward Court and posted notices advising of the licence application, they did not sufficiently involve the local community and underestimated the level of concern with regard to the bar and licensing arrangements. As a result, a compromise was reached with the licensing authority and a reactive written and face to face communication took place with the local community in order to alleviate concerns.



Despite this initial set back, King Edward Court now enjoys a positive relationship with its neighbours, but the learning that can be taken is to never underestimate perception and the power of local communities.

Developers should ensure that they use the right channels to engage with the local community. Open days, where local people can come and look at, ask questions about and feedback on issues such as design proposals, potential facilities and access arrangements can be particularly successful, as can working with local community groups, older people's fora, schools and the Parish Council.

## CASE STUDY – JOSEPH HADLUM COURT, ASHFORD



At Joseph Hadlum Court, Ashford, Housing 21 involved the local community throughout the development and construction phase. On one occasion 30, year 4 pupils from St Mary's C of E primary school and their teachers were joined by the Mayor of Ashford to plant 6 oak trees on an adjacent site, Hopkins Field recreation ground. This gave the local children a chance to feel part of the landscaping works connected with the development.

Engagement with the school continued once residents had moved in. At the scheme's 'Bridging the Gap' event called "Remember When", which was held on Dignity in Care Day, the school children came and spoke to the residents about growing up in the early 1900's. There was a good display of items from the 1900's and these ranged from a wind up gramophone to a 1980's mobile phone.

Positive engagement with the local community should continue throughout the development process. Developers should consider the use of "considerate constructors" during the building phase to help to minimise the impact of building works on the local community.

### 6.4. Community facilities

In particular, where older people's accommodation include facilities such as shops, hairdressers, cafe or restaurant which are intended to be open for public use, developers should consult with the local community about what type of facilities may be most beneficial. Ensuring that the scheme's facilities compliment rather than go into competition with local services will help the scheme to integrate with the existing community.



Where there is already strong local provision of services, developers should consider offering retail space within the new scheme to local retailers or service providers.



Where services have been removed from an area, such as the Post Office or a library, developers should consider whether there is scope to include re-opening a similar service within a development.

### **CASE STUDY – SYCAMORE HALL, BAINBRIDGE**

Local residents in the village of Bainbridge in Wensleydale celebrated following the reopening of their village Post Office in Sycamore Hall, Housing 21's extra care scheme for older people. The opening by Post Office Ltd of the outreach service from Sycamore Hall followed the earlier launch of a new library outlet service from the scheme, which has become a real hub for the local community.

Housing 21 was initially approached by Post Office Ltd to see if they could provide room for an outreach post office service. The rural location can make it difficult for residents and some local people to access other Post Offices, so having this facility is ideal and it has become a valuable asset to local people.



### **6.5. Generating interest**

Engaging with the local community can also help to generate interest in a new housing scheme from potential residents.

Developers should seek to start creating interest in a new scheme from potential residents before the building is completed, by using local media channels to advertise the development.

Open days, using marketing suites and showrooms, are a great way of generating interest and letting potential residents and the local community understand what is on offer both in terms of accommodation and of community facilities. Developers should consider using innovative approaches to open days, based on local community interests, to increase media coverage and attract a high level of attendance. For example, at an open day for new older people's accommodation in Lewisham, Court Royal Development hired a Cockney Pride band to put on an old-style London event.



## 7. The development process

### 7.1. Identifying opportunities

Older people's accommodation is an on-going and growing need across Kent and Medway. Developers and local authorities should consider ways of identifying opportunities to provide suitable accommodation to meet this demand.

Developers should try to work with local landowners to secure land for older people's accommodation where they are aware that there is a local need.

#### **CASE STUDY – DELIVERY THROUGH PLANNING GAIN**

Medway Council has no funding to assist with the delivery of extra care accommodation and has adopted an innovative approach to delivering this via planning gain (S106 agreements).

Working with the HCA, developers and Registered Providers (RPs), the Council have sought to secure extra care accommodation as part of the affordable housing provision required on larger sites. To deliver a typical 60 unit extra care scheme the Council has considered most sites of 300 residential units or more for suitability of delivering extra care accommodation.

Medway's first extra care scheme delivered via a S106 agreement, Prospect Place, accepted its first residents in May 2012 with Bellerophon House currently under construction on Rochester Riverside and a further two schemes due to commence on-site in summer 2012.

It has been recognised that in future HCA funding towards the delivery of extra care schemes is less likely and at much lower rates. To combat this viability issue Medway is currently working with developers and RPs to assess the possibility of delivering mixed tenure extra care schemes via S106 agreements with the developer contribution being in the form of free serviced land.

Local authorities and other public sector agencies could consider using their own land for the development of older people's accommodation, potentially putting in the land for a deferred return once all the units are occupied. This would enable need and aspiration to be met in areas where there is a scarcity of land available for development or where land values are particularly high.

In this climate of dwindling finance to support the delivery of new housing, developers should also consider how they can access alternative sources of funding to enable the delivery of new older people's accommodation.

## **CASE STUDY – ALTERNATIVE FINANCE**

Court Royal has been able to establish a unique partnership relationship with Triodos Bank, based in Bristol but who are part of a larger Dutch organisation. The Bank position themselves as an ethical lender who will only lend funds to acceptable borrowers who meet their stringent requirements.

Uniquely in this climate Triodos are very open-minded to fund development with the aim to then provide long term debt finance (typically 20 year loans) for the completed scheme.

Court Royal's scheme of 25 extra care apartments in Ticehurst had great local support from residents and once Court Royal demonstrated a clear need for the accommodation locally, Triodos were happy to support it.



### **7.2. Responding to the local market**

In developing new older people's accommodation, developers need to ensure that they fully understand the local market where the new scheme is to be built. Each development should be unique in that it should respond to an area's particular set of local needs and aspirations for older people's accommodation.



Before the design stage, developers should engage with local communities and community leaders to understand what type and tenure of accommodation might be required by the local older population. Parish Councils in particular have a key role to play here in understanding local need and demand and their support can be crucial in gaining approval for new older people's accommodation.





## CASE STUDY – EYLESDEN COURT, BEARSTED

Eylesden Court, Bearsted is a retirement housing scheme of 22 units completed for English Courtyard Developments in 2004-2005.

Following a series of unsuccessful planning applications to develop Bearsted House, (a listed building and former school, situated on the village green) for housing, the Parish Council took the view that eventual development of the site was inevitable and that they would do well to try and ensure that development would be of a type which they could reasonably accept.



The Parish Council investigated several local schemes including Atwater Court in nearby Lenham, an English Courtyard / Sidell Gibson scheme from the late 80's. They liked the scheme and then approached English Courtyard who accepted the challenge to work with them to design and develop a suitable scheme.

The initial scheme did not meet with approval but the principal of a retirement scheme was accepted on the basis of the very strong local support, which was also instrumental in gaining support from local Highways and Housing officers.

After a major presentation of a revised scheme to the Parish Council, at which their continuing support was secured, a planning application was made in summer 2001 and approved in early 2002.

It is crucial that developers ensure that the accommodation they build is aspirational. As we move into the future, the vast majority of older people are likely to be homeowners, with potentially little incentive to move out of their existing home. Purpose-built older people's accommodation will need to be attractive, well-designed and somewhere that older people want to live, to encourage people to make that move.

### 7.3. Design

Good design is crucial to the on-going success of an older people's development. A high quality approach to design of buildings both inside and out and of external space such as gardens is vital.

Attractive, well-designed properties that people want to move into provide older people with positive housing choices and are more likely to encourage older people to consider moving out of their existing homes, helping to tackle wider housing issues such as under-occupancy.



Developers should consider the Homes and Communities Agency's non-mainstream housing design guidance when developing new older people's accommodation.

Developers should ensure that they consult thoroughly on the design of new older people's accommodation, to ensure that it is attractive and appealing to people. Developers should engage with local communities in the design process as well as with residents from existing housing schemes, who are best placed to be able to comment on what works in a development on a day-to-day basis.

Developers should also ensure that they consult with local planners early on in the design phase of a new development, as this can help to improve the planning application process further down the line.

Again, developers need to consider who their target market is when designing older person's accommodation and ensure it is designed accordingly based on local need and aspiration. Where the accommodation is seeking to respond to a local market which consists mainly of older people living in owner-occupied family-sized homes, developers need to ensure that their accommodation is aspirational enough, in terms of design, quality and size to encourage older people to actively choose to downsize and move into their scheme. For example, research carried out by the Social Innovation Lab for Kent (SILK) indicated that the majority of those who were currently homeowners felt that 2 bedrooms was "a must" for any older people's accommodation.



Older people's accommodation also needs to be designed in a way which enables them to be integrated within the community as much as possible, rather than being isolated or disconnected "bubbles". Accommodation with community facilities such as shops can help to draw the local community into the development. However, developers still need to ensure that residents feel safe within the scheme and that there are private areas which are not for the public. Innovative design ideas, such as the use of "progressive privacy" can help to achieve the right balance between privacy and public space.

## CASE STUDY – “PROGRESSIVE PRIVACY”

Housing 21 use the concept of “progressive privacy” within their schemes to create a zone of privacy expectations and to control where a visitor can go.

The concept introduces three zones into the planning of the scheme, with each distinguished from the other by way of usage, design and the provision of "physical" barriers. There are two essential control points in the system:

- Door entry system at the front door of the building, linked to the Scheme office and individual residents apartments
- The linking door between the semi-public common rooms facilities and the areas of the scheme intended to private to the residents



Typically a summary of the three zones would be:

- Zone 1 - The semi-public areas, both external and internal, which would normally include access from the street, location of car parking, entrance to the scheme, communal areas and managers office, all of which are usually freely accessible to the public. These zones should be planned to encourage successful and vibrant contact between the residents and the general public as well as people attending the scheme to use its resources.
- Zone 2 - A more private area where access is by invitation, normally where residents own facilities are located. They include access corridors to individual apartments. A "linking door" will require a residents "pass key" to enter the zone.
- Zone 3 - A fully private individual apartment under full control of the resident.

Older people’s accommodation needs to appeal to people of a range of ages and with varying degrees of care needs. The SILK research indicated that clever design which enables accommodation to be adapted as people’s care needs change is likely to be more attractive than those already built with safety and care features, such as handrails, already in place.

In designing new accommodation, developers should give ample consideration to the affordability of living there for current and future residents. Fuel poverty is a particular issue for older people, who tend to have fixed incomes once they have retired. Developers should therefore look to use renewable and sustainable forms of energy to ensure that the running costs for residents remains as affordable as possible.



#### 7.4. The planning process

There is considerable value in having a shared understanding between local authorities and developers about the different types of older people's accommodation that are on offer, particularly when it comes to the aiding the planning process.

When assessing planning applications, local authorities can often face some difficulties in deciding whether many housing schemes coming forward for planning permission should be regarded as planning use class C2 (residential institution with provision of care) or as planning use class C3 (mainstream housing).

The difficulty arises because accommodation schemes are increasingly coming forward which offer care if required, but older people can buy into a scheme before they need care. This is particularly true of Extra Care accommodation, where people can have access to care on a 24 hour basis but not necessarily everyone living there has need of such a high level of care.

The distinction between C2 and C3 use class designation is important since developers are required to make affordable housing contributions for C3 use, but not for C2 developments, and developers argue that this has a material impact on the viability of development and can inhibit their ability to provide older people's accommodation.

In assessing whether an application for extra care falls under C2 or C3 use, planners often focus on what level of care and support will be provided. In some cases the level of care provided is not fixed, or lower levels of care appear to be provided once the scheme is up and running than the developer had anticipated when submitting the planning application. In these



cases, planners can be given the impression that the development is no different from any other housing scheme (i.e. C3 designation) and should therefore be subject to developer contributions for affordable housing.

Lack of clarity causes frustration to both local authority planners, who are concerned that developers may be 'evading' making a contribution to affordable housing provision; and to developers of specialist accommodation where the costs and funding of development entail a different model to that of mainstream housing development.

The care requirements sometimes imposed by the planning process as a result can also have cost implications which have a significant impact on a scheme's viability.



The Retirement Housing Group has approached the Department for Communities and Local Government with a recommendation that the Use Classes Order be modified to recognise the various forms of accommodation for older people. Their suggestions can be found in the box below.

### **Retirement Housing Group – Suggested Modifications to the Use Class Order**

#### **Class C2(a) – Secure Residential Accommodation**

Use for the provision of secure residential accommodation, including uses as a prison, young offenders' institution, detention centre, secure training unit, custody centre, short-term holding centre, secure hospital, secure local authority accommodation or use as a military base

#### **Class C2(b) – Residential Institutions**

Use as a hospital or nursing home\* for the provision of non-self-contained residential accommodation for people in need of care by reason of long or short term physical or mental impairment. Also use as a residential school, college or training centre.

#### **Class C2(c) – Extra Care Accommodation**

Use as self-contained residential accommodation and associated facilities designed and managed to meet the needs and aspirations of people by reason of age and/or existing or foreseeable physical or mental impairment.

#### **Class C2(d) – Sheltered Accommodation**

Use as self-contained residential accommodation specifically designed and managed for older people not in need of support by reason of physical or mental impairment.

\*this would include care homes

RHG's view is not necessarily the view of all local authorities in Kent. Some authorities have expressed concerns in particular about the proposed inclusion of sheltered accommodation within C2, as C2 accommodation is excluded from affordable housing policy and does not contribute to an authority's overall housing numbers.

Whilst there is no immediate "catch-all" solution to the grey area between C2 and C3 uses, most cases, like any planning application are dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Problems can be mitigated by on-going evolving dialogue between stakeholders and planners involved in delivering older people's accommodation.

At a strategic level, developers, social services and care providers should seek to engage with and influence local planning authorities as they update their Local Development Frameworks and publish their supplementary planning guidance.



## 7.5. Working together and local leadership

In order to aid planning authorities in their decision-making, developers responsible for delivering older people's accommodation should engage with local planners at an early stage before submitting a planning application.

Working through these issues together at the pre-application stage can save a lot of time and prevent potential delays during the planning process by ensuring that the planning application submission answers questions of design, quality and addressing local need.

It is recommended that when developing the initial proposal, a roundtable discussion is held between the major players to discuss the proposal and deal with any potential issues, particularly around viability and the nature of the accommodation on offer, before the planning application is submitted. As well as organisations involved in the delivery of the specific development, such as the developer, care provider, health authority and local authority housing and planning officers, this could include representatives of the local community, such as Parish Councillors or local interest groups, to ensure that local people's views are taken into account and any concerns dealt with.



Elected Members can also play a crucial role in removing blockages to development by engaging with other Members and senior managers where negotiations at officer level have stalled or reached an impasse.

## 8. "Moving In"

### 8.1. Tenure

Developers need to carefully consider the mix of tenures that are available within a new older people's accommodation scheme and ensure that older people are able to exercise choice when deciding their housing options. This is growing into a particularly significant issue, as more and more people seeking older people's accommodation are homeowners, who are likely to want to have the choice of whether to rent, buy outright or part-buy.

The Homes and Communities Agency have introduced a specific shared ownership product for older people, enabling them to buy a share of their accommodation. This would be particularly beneficial to older people who are currently on a standard shared ownership product, who currently rent and could not afford to buy outright or homeowners who have equity built up within their existing home, who do not wish to use it all to purchase their new accommodation.



Tenure should be selected carefully, based on research into local housing needs and markets, to ensure that it responds appropriately to the needs of the local community.

Developers should also consider the possibility of flexing tenure to fit with an individual's personal circumstances. For example some schemes allow older people to rent a property first whilst they sell their home, rather than having to wait until they have the money available to purchase. Once the sale of their previous home is completed, they are able to purchase the flat they have been renting.

### 8.2. Occupation levels

Developers need to be realistic about the likely levels of occupation within a new housing scheme when it first opens. Older people need time to make a decision about what is the right home for them and it is unlikely that a scheme will be fully occupied from day one.

### 8.3. Service offer

Older people's accommodation is likely to have some form of care provision available to residents, which will be used by people to varying degrees. Older people have spoken about the need to ensure that modern specialist older people's accommodation does not feel too much like a nursing home or that the care offer is not too prescriptive. This is particularly important when trying to attract residents who are still fit, healthy and active to achieve a balanced community within a scheme. Where possible, the level of care services offered within a scheme should be as flexible as possible, to create a bespoke feel, rather than a generic offer. This enables older people to choose what care they need and when they need it and supports the personalisation agenda. It will also help scheme managers to respond better to people's changing needs as they age.



To ensure the provision of the right levels of service, providers should ensure that there is enough staff with the right skills and experience on the scheme from day one, even where the scheme may not be fully occupied. Experienced staff should be used to mentor new scheme managers

Staff should also remember that new residents may feel a little overwhelmed when they first move into a development. Staff can help this be adopting a positive attitude and showing an appreciation of the changes that residents are going through as they adapt to their new home. The use of residents' handbooks to help people get to know both the services and facilities that are available to them both within the scheme and within the local area is seen as helpful.



#### 8.4. Dealing with complex cases

As the ageing population grows, it is likely that the make-up of residents within older people's accommodation will reflect the wider society and potentially include people with more complex needs, such as ex-offenders, the long-term unemployed or those suffering with dementia. Local authorities and providers will need to ensure that they have the appropriate support mechanisms in place to meet the needs of these more vulnerable residents.

### 9. Implementation

#### 9.1. Governance and monitoring

It is the intention that this Framework will be endorsed by all Kent County Council, District authorities in Kent and Medway Council. It will be owned by the Kent Housing Group (KHG) on behalf of the Kent Forum.

Monitoring of the Framework against the criteria set out below will be undertaken by the Housing Strategy and Enabling Sub-Group (HSEG) of the KHG. HSEG will report detailed monitoring to the KHG Executive Board and provide regular briefings on progress to the whole KHG.

This will be reported back to the Kent Forum by KHG as part of the overall monitoring of the Kent Forum Housing Strategy.



#### 9.2. Monitoring criteria

The intended effect of this Framework is to improve older people's access to a range of high quality housing across Kent and Medway.

To assess whether this is being achieved, and establish where any potential blockages may be, the Housing Strategy and Enabling Sub-Group will monitor the following:

1. Number of older people's accommodation schemes consented and completed, size and number of units provided
2. Type of older people's accommodation schemes consented and completed
3. Tenure of older people's accommodation schemes consented and completed
4. Number of planning refusals and reasons given

HSEG will also use the monitoring information provided by the FirstStop/West Kent information pilot to assess the information services provided to older people.





In addition to quantitative analysis, Kent Housing Group will consider appointing an independent organisation to undertake some qualitative research across Kent and Medway, to gather how people experiences and understanding of older people's accommodation have changed since the launch of the Framework.

### 9.3. Review

The lifespan of this version of the Framework is 4 years. A formal review of the Framework and its effectiveness will be carried out by the Housing Strategy and Enabling Sub-Group (HSEG) on behalf of KHG in 2015.

If necessary, the Framework will then be refreshed by HSEG to reflect changes in policy and procedure and any recommendations from the review.





## THINGS TO CONSIDER

This provides a summary of useful things to consider for the various players involved in delivering older people's accommodation. This is not intended to be an exhaustive checklist but to act as a reference guide through the development process.

### Elected Members

- Have you engaged with the Parish Council and/or the local community where the accommodation is proposed?
- Have you promoted the benefits of the proposed older people's accommodation to your ward?
- Have you highlighted your support for proposed older people's accommodation within your ward to other elected Members?

### Parish Councils

- Have you considered older people's housing needs within your local neighbourhood plan?
- Have you had a housing needs assessment undertaken in your parish within the last 2 years?
- Have you engaged with your local residents on the potential positive impacts and benefits the older people's accommodation will have on your parish?
- Have you engaged with the developer about community facilities within the proposed new accommodation?
- Have you encouraged the local community to engage with the developer about the design of the scheme?
- Have you provided information to local residents about how to find out more about older people's housing and advertised new available homes appropriately within your parish?

### Developers

- Have you engaged with the Parish Council in the development of their Neighbourhood plan?
- Have you worked closely with the relevant Parish Council and considered their views in designing the proposed development?
- Have you consulted with and reflected the views of residents of the relevant parish on the proposed development before submitting a planning application?
- Have you researched your local market and ensured that the new development will meet the needs and aspirations of the local community?
- Have you ensured that the design of your proposed development is attractive and aspirational?
- Have you engaged positively with relevant housing and planning officers and highway officers in the pre-application stage to ensure your application is robust?



- Are you keeping the relevant Parish Council up-to-date on the progress of the housing development?
- Do you have an appropriate mix of tenure within the new accommodation?
- Have you ensured you have adequate staffing levels within the new accommodation?
- Have you worked with the relevant Parish Council, community groups etc to advertise homes within the new development?
- Have you advertised the new homes on First Stop?

### Housing Officers

- Are older people's housing needs included within your local Housing Strategy?
- Have you had input into the development of your parishes' Neighbourhood Plans?
- Have you promoted the potential benefits of older people's housing to your Members?
- Have you established whether your Council owns any land that may be suitable to meet older people's housing need?
- Have you engaged positively with the developer and your planning officers in the pre-application stage to ensure the final planning application is robust?
- Have you supported the Parish Council and the developer in their engagement with local residents on the proposed development?
- Have you informed Elected Members of the proposed development and kept them updated on progress?



### Planning Officers

- Do you have planning policies in place that relate specifically to the housing needs of older people?
- Have you had input into the development of your Parishes' Neighbourhood Plans?
- Have you given short, general advice on potential sites that have been identified for older people's accommodation?
- Have you engaged positively with the developer on the design of the proposed scheme?
- Have you engaged positively in pre-application discussions with your housing colleagues and the developer?



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Framework follows on from on research into older people's housing needs and aspirations carried out by the Social Innovation Lab for Kent and DTZ, which was a direct recommendation within the Kent Forum Housing Strategy.

It was developed by a Task and Finish Group set up by Kent Housing Group.

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Tracey Jones, Avante Partnership  
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Virginia McClane, Housing 21  
Gavin Missons, Sevenoaks District Council  
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Jill Pells, Kent Housing Group  
Jo Purvis, Kent County Council  
Gary Reeve-Wing, Court Royal Development  
Richard Robinson, Ashford Borough Council  
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Cath Stubbings, Retirement Housing Group  
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Thanks go to Jo Purvis from Kent County Council for drafting the Framework.