



Later living: a blueprint for planning to deliver homes for older people.

This blueprint sets out Stantec's recommendations to central and local Government to ensure the appropriate planning and delivery of housing for older people in England.



Image credit: Inspired Villages Group.



Actions for Government

Set a national target of 82,000¹ net additional homes for older people to be provided each year and the split between retirement/sheltered housing and housing with care such as extra care and Integrated Retirement Communities (IRCs).

This should be an ambitious target aimed at making-up existing shortfalls and keeping pace with the increasing number of people in older cohorts so that people have access to a greater range of options.

Adopt a standard method for determining the share of the national target to be delivered by each local planning authority, giving a local annual target.

The share should be based on the predicted number of older people's households in each local authority area as at 2032.

Require that through plan-making, each local planning authority adopts the local annual target as a policy objective and adopts development plan policies which indicate how the required development will be delivered.

Targets may be aggregated over plan periods to allow a ramp-up in delivery but trajectories should reflect the immediate critical need.

Require in a national development management policy that in the absence of up-to-date policies adopting the local annual target and setting out how that target will be achieved, significant weight should be given to the benefits of specialist housing for older people in determining planning applications reflecting the critical need.

To ensure that the absence of an up to date plan is not a barrier to delivering necessary homes for older people.

Require all local planning authorities to adopt specific affordable housing policies and CIL rates (or nil rates) for retirement/sheltered housing and housing with care having proper regard to the viability of such forms of development.

Evidence should properly assess the viability of specialist housing for older people, based on robust evidence. Only initial development value should be taken into account as development value: service charges and pay-as-you-go or deferred management fees should be disregarded.

Incentivise local planning authorities to boost the delivery of homes for older people by recognising the additional benefit of rightsizing in freeing-up family homes.

Each unit of housing for older people delivered should be counted as 1.5 homes against the overall housing target in an up-to-date adopted local plan.

¹The number of older persons households in England is due to increase by 900,000 from 5.2m to 6.1m in ten years between 2022 and 2032. The total supply of specialist housing for older people is around 680,000 homes (including those built and those for which planning consent has been granted) so that there are 1.3 specialist homes for every ten households. With this existing level of provision as context, national planning guidance states that increasing provision is critical.

Research by Professor Les Mayhew - Head of Global Research at ILC-UK and a professor of statistics in the Faculty of Actuarial Science and Insurance at Bayes Business School, City University, University of London - identified that just to maintain existing levels of provision as the population grows would require 50,000 homes per year, but this would be insufficient to provide people with greater availability and choice as the population of older people grows. If supply was increased to 1.5m by 2032 provision would rise to 2.4 homes per ten households. This would require an additional 820,000 homes, hence a target of 82,000 per year. In the longer-run the ambition should be to increase provision to at least 3 homes per ten households.



Actions for Local Planning Authorities

Adopt policies in-line with national policy and guidance.

Proactively plan to ensure needs are met.

In considering policy options for the delivery to meet the local annual target for housing for older people, consider to what extent development might be facilitated by positive non site-specific spatial and thematic policies and whether specific allocations are required.

Smaller-scale developments may not require specific site allocations, but in some areas, larger scale forms of development, in particular housing with care in the form of Integrated Retirement Communities which are often between 100 and 250 homes, may be best facilitated through allocation of sites.

Seek to engage with specialist developers and operators of housing for older people to understand what forms of development can be delivered within the plan period.

Development and operation of housing for older people is a specialist endeavour including private sector, charitable and registered landlords. Feasibility and viability are subject to local market and operational considerations which need to be understood if plans are to be deliverable.

In policies and in setting CIL rates distinguish between forms of development by typology rather than by use class.

This would ensure policies enable the appropriate range of development to be delivered, including retirement/sheltered

housing and housing with care, and reflect the characteristics of each without imposing unnecessary and complex limitations.

Take into account the specific characteristics of older people's housing development in framing policies and making decisions.

Housing for older people requires less parking, generates less traffic (particularly in peak hours) and creates daytime footfall to support local economies. Its residents generally move a limited distance in order to maintain their existing social contacts. Being more appropriately housed improves health and wellbeing thereby easing impact on healthcare services. These factors are all relevant planning considerations and should be taken into account.



Image credit: Audley Villages.



Appropriate Policy Responses

Different typologies of housing for older people have different locational requirements, whilst the policy action required to enable development will vary between areas and according to the wider spatial strategy adopted.

Retirement and Sheltered Housing

Smaller format developments may be best located in existing urban and suburban areas and often come forward as windfall development of previously developed land. An over-arching policy together with flexible and positively-framed development management policies may be sufficient to enable development. Achieving critical mass and viability can require a degree of intensification of existing urban areas. Decision makers should ensure that appropriate account is taken of the need

for and benefits of such development in reaching balanced decisions.

Housing with Care

Housing with care development can vary considerably in scale but includes larger Integrated Retirement Communities. These may be appropriate in a range of locations ranging from town centres to urban edge and are often of sufficient scale to provide a wide range of amenities and facilities whilst creating a vibrant community.

Particularly in more constrained areas, larger Integrated Retirement Communities may only be possible on edge-of-settlement greenfield sites or as part of planned regeneration and the most appropriate policy approach may therefore require site-specific allocations. When looking to allocate sites, local

planning authorities should look for evidence of operator interest in the location and form of the development proposed. Appropriate locations will be close to areas with a sizeable population of older people and connected to existing communities.

Planned Communities

In some areas, strategic scale brownfield sites, urban extensions and new communities form a key part of spatial strategies. How these developments respond to the needs of existing and future populations of older people is a key planning and design challenge.

Lifetime homes and accessible neighbourhoods including public and community transport and local services are important in ensuring many older people can live independently in general

housing. Specialist housing also plays a role in meeting the full range of needs.

To be viable, older people's housing development requires a sizeable local market of existing older people. Where a site is located within or at the edge of an existing urban area, a master plan might incorporate older people's housing from the outset.

A large-scale retirement community at the heart of the new community with extensive amenities which could be made available to the public could anchor a master plan.

Alternatively, there may not be a significant demand for older people's housing until later in the phasing of the development once the community has become more established.

Image credit: Retirement Villages Group.



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Key contacts



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