

Bristol Retirement Living

Questions and Comments raised at Launch event on 27 February 2013

Could you tell us what evidence you have that more of this type of housing for older people is needed in Bristol?

In Bristol, we now have a waiting list of people with social care needs, who want to rent an extra care flat in the city. We also know that when the latest ECH scheme opened in south Bristol, the flats for shared ownership were so popular that they could have sold them 'two-three times over'. Our current ECH providers who have flats for people to buy, have absolutely no problem in selling them whatsoever.

Clive Parker, Chief Executive of Extracare Solutions works across the country in this sector and he gave examples of the current and growing popularity of this type of housing amongst older people nationally. The development of more extra care housing is very much a priority for the Council, but as always developers and providers are urged to do their own soft-market testing on location and model.

Is there potential demand for private renting, by people who do not necessarily have social care needs?

Research undertaken by the Housing Local Improvement Network (Housing LIN) shows that there is potential for private rent. While in its infancy nationally, demand for private renting is predicted to grow. However, locally we know that over 75% of older people own their own homes and there is also evidence that people want to protect their equity when moving home. We believe there could be a need for private rent amongst people who want to 'try before they buy' and also amongst people in crisis who may need to move quickly and can't wait for their home to be sold.

Have you considered making it a requirement that new build flats in the City Centre, e.g. the Harbourside, are developed to 'lifetime standards'?

The Council has a range of standards relating to the development of sustainable housing and when our Planners consider applications, they do look at whether the proposed developments meet 'lifetime standards'. We think that developments in the City Centre could well be attractive to some older people who would like to be close to all the cultural and leisure amenities the City has to offer in their retirement. However, this is again something that developers and providers are urged to do their own soft-market testing on. The Council will continue to encourage developers to use lifetime standards for new housing developments.

It was good to see the potential development of extra care housing linked to the development of care homes. Will you be taking a joined-up approach to future developments?

Yes we will. We had hoped to be able to outline the Council's plans in relation to care homes for people with dementia today too, but our thinking is not quite as advanced as it is in relation to extra care housing at the moment. As many of you will know, we are closing two care homes for people with dementia and will be looking for a Strategic Partner to work with us in developing two new care homes to replace them. We will be holding an event in the next couple of months, similar to the BRL event, to provide further detail. Today is part of a wider vision and if there is potential for a third care home to be built for people with dementia, linked to a larger development of extra care housing, we would be interested in hearing your proposals.

There is a sensitive balance to be achieved between offering people choice in who provides their care and support, and ensuring that the on-site care provider remains financially stable.

We want to offer people choice in who provides their care and support and this is very much supported and facilitated by the Providers we work with in our current ECH schemes. However, we also share the view that an arrangement needs to be put in place that achieves the balance between choice and control and the long-term sustainability of ECH. BCC will continue to work on this with Providers throughout 2013. In practice even where there is choice, virtually everyone selects the on-site provider.

Are you talking with local NHS commissioners about supporting the development of Extra Care Housing? This sort of housing helps keep people independent and supports them more than living on their own, so there are likely to be health benefits too.

This is part of a programme of change in the Council and we have a NHS commissioning colleague on our Programme Board so they are aware of this work. We are also in discussions with local NHS commissioners about the development of new care homes in the City and hope we will be able to jointly commission some of those. The NHS is going through a period of major change at the moment and the Clinical Commissioning Groups are being organised – the Council is working closely with GP commissioners via those groups too. In spite of much change, we will be exploring the potential for closer joint working with our NHS colleagues, in the development of retirement living options for older people. We are very keen to join up the 'health and social care system' especially around the quality of services.

It is good to see an approach that doesn't require people to move home yet again if their needs increase. There is a need to be mindful of the number of people with high levels of need, particularly those with dementia, who live in an extra care housing scheme. If not carefully balanced, a scheme can start to feel more like a care home and the vibrancy of the scheme as a community can be adversely affected.

We are mindful of the potential impact on ECH schemes as we deal with the consequences of people living for longer and of more people developing dementia in their old age. We know there needs to be a balance of needs in a development in order to keep the vibrancy and evidence from ECH schemes in Bristol over the last few years has clearly demonstrated the benefits of getting this balance correct. BCC has also recognised the problems when this balance is not achieved, which can be caused by the level of care needs of the residents, but is also affected by the extent to which residents want to get involved in the scheme and specific conditions or behaviours that can create a difficult and possibly anti-social environment if not managed. BCC is currently reviewing the role it plays in achieving this mix with a view to reaching a formal agreement with current Providers on the features of the optimum mix and what each party needs to do to achieve this. This will of course be different for different size and types of schemes. If we need to change our current model of commissioning to get this right, we will and this will inform arrangements with Providers of new ECH schemes. In the new, larger schemes, 80% of people living there will be purchasers most of whom have made a lifestyle choice to live there. As a consequence in larger schemes, we don't think this will be a significant issue.

Currently, the Council funds care hours under a block contract and people can purchase care using their Direct Payment as a 'spot contract' on top. Will the Council continue to fund care hours in return for nomination rights to the flats? Or will the future offer be a blend of nomination rights, no nomination rights and mix of tenure?

The new programme will differ to the existing approach, where we have 100% nomination rights and people who are nominated all have social care needs. As part of the new programme, we are keen to see some larger schemes where we will only want nomination rights to *some* of the flats. The specific split will depend on the model proposed by the developer/provider and the emphasis for this new programme is on developers/providers coming forwards with ideas and proposals, leading the way. The offering will be partner-led with sustainable approaches coming via the ability to sell homes privately. However, a mixed tenure approach is important to us and we know we need more homes for people to buy. We also want to ensure the right balance of residents to ensure that schemes are vibrant and sustainable communities where people can help each other and play a part in developing the community they live in. One option is that the Council could fund a smaller 'core' contract with people purchasing additional hours. So we welcome discussions around the amount of care hours the Council might fund and the amount that people might buy in addition.

Given that you want to see housing schemes, which accommodate people with varying levels of need for support, what are you anticipating in terms of design principles?

You are right that good design principles will be of paramount importance. The Housing LIN has a lot of information to offer and you have heard today from PRP about our desire to see developers follow the guidance in publications such as “Housing our Ageing Population: Plan for Implementation” (HAPPI and HAPPI₂).

In any development like this, would it be best to have care staff on site?

We are definitely looking for models where care and support is available on site 24/7. This is a key principle and sets extra care housing apart from sheltered housing. We are keen to explore the potential for extra care housing schemes to be a ‘hub’ for home care services in their local neighbourhoods too.

Large-scale developments don’t appeal to me – will you look at clusters of smaller schemes too?

We are also interested in more schemes of the size we currently have (50-60 homes), but they would have to be in the right location. This isn’t a ‘one product’ offer, but we have to bear in mind that the cost of smaller schemes is an issue for developers/providers – the non-residential space in a scheme (the communal areas) are often not sustainable in smaller schemes. Larger schemes do not always feel large – it’s about good design – and there are schemes nationally that look and feel like clusters of smaller schemes. We are keen for any developments to be outward facing and to be part of the neighbourhood, bringing benefits to the local community and tapping into its assets, making the most of intergenerational approaches too. Extra care housing can offer better lifestyle opportunities for socialisation and engagement with the wider community than other types of housing. People can become very isolated behind their own front door, good extra care housing has communal facilities and a community of people who encourage and enable others to join in. We know that larger schemes find some of those leisure opportunities easier to sustain and nationally, sales are higher in larger schemes reflecting that people find what they offer attractive.

Good to hear that this will not be a ‘one size suits all’ approach. Urban living is desirable to some older people and it would be good to see intergenerational interaction

People need to be a part of their local community and there are opportunities for developments in central locations in Bristol. If there were older people in the centre of the City, would a smaller scheme of around 60 flats be something the Council would support? Will Planners be supportive of changing some developments from commercial to housing use to facilitate this?

We are keen on City centre urban developments too so if you have sites that meet our criteria then we'll consider it. The Council's Planners will be supportive of new developments that meet the Retirement Living vision. There are a range of scenarios in the Information Pack you've been given today, and we'll work with you to bring things forward including smaller schemes.

Often when people retire, they want to remain living in the area they have known all their lives. It would be good if the Council could encourage people to make adaptations to their own home (e.g. adapted bathrooms and kitchens) by perhaps taking a bit of the owner's equity in return for paying for suitable alterations to the property.

The Council does support people to make adaptations to their homes (although not through taking equity unless that is how they choose to fund the work) and also funds organisations (Care & Repair) that provide help to homeowners. We appreciate that not everyone will want to move into an extra care flat and we are not talking about building an extra care home for every older person in Bristol. There needs to be a range of choices and we are responding to a desire for extra care housing expressed by our older people. In fact the majority of older people will probably choose to stay where they are and we will enable them to do so. We would also like to ensure that we help people to remain living in their home for as long as possible and to support them if they do have to move. We are aware for example that people need interim models, perhaps a temporary ECH flat to move into while they sell their home or to try before they buy.

Would you be willing to take the best principles of your vision for Retirement Living, and apply them retrospectively to your current extra care housing schemes?

Yes. Some of our current partners may want to modify or expand their scheme and we are happy to talk about this with them. As mentioned before, we are also currently looking at how we commission the care and support into a scheme.