

Northern Architecture HOME project

'Housing is much more than just the bricks and mortar. It determines people's identity, their privacy, space and the place where they express their individuality. It is one of the determining factors in promoting the independence of older people, wherever they choose to live.'

(Quality and Choice, Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions and Department of Health 2001)



Discussing housing layouts with some of the Home project participants.

Background

The HOME project evolved from a commitment by the partners to consider the views and requirements of older people for the design and setting of their homes. This grew from interagency working within the Housing for Older People research group (HOPE) at Newcastle University.

The project is a partnership of organisations in Newcastle involved in the welfare and development of and research into housing for older people; Northern Architecture, Bluespace environments, the Elder's Council supported through the Quality of Life Partnership and the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape, University of Newcastle. Northern Architecture and Bluespace environments facilitated the project, Newcastle City Council supported the project and assisted in its development. Research and development in this area has evolved through the House for Life project, the Housing group of the Elder's Council of Newcastle, supported

by the Quality of Life Partnership, Newcastle University and Newcastle City Council.

The philosophy behind the project was to establish, through a process of highly participatory consultation, the positive factors and the concerns which older people express for their homes and the local environment which supports their lives.

The aim is to provide a vision to form the basis of a forward-thinking policy development and good practice in planning, design and housing support services, to encourage all those involved in housing provision for older people to work together for in an inclusive society.

This is in line with the UK government's overall housing objectives for older people as stated in the quote above.

A major objective of the project is to provide a vision and to disseminate the findings to a wide audience. This will assist in improving the knowledge and understanding of the needs of older people and stimulate debate on the qualities of housing for older people.

Introduction

The global population is ageing. United Kingdom government policy and strategy promotes older people's independent living by prioritising issues of health, quality of life and social interaction. One of the major influences on well being is where we live.

These factors are all important and interlinked in considering housing needs and choices.

Choice has become a key word in thinking about older people.

"The freedom to make - and continue making - choices is perhaps the greatest single index of well being" (Kirkwood, 2001, p.1).

Older people, by virtue of retirement, infirmity, or a combination of lifestyle factors will on average spend a greater proportion of their time in and around their homes, compared to younger, more economically active people and their well being may be affected to a greater extent by the design of their homes, local environment, social interactions or the views of the outer world from their windows.

The focus of this project is older people in their own homes and considered:

1. The physical features and access to facilities.
2. The cultural resonance attached to home through its association with family, identity, memory, environment, psychological well being and independence, all of which are believed to increase among older people.

The process

Northern Architecture invited members of the Elder's Council, through contact with the Quality of Life Partnership, to take part in a series of four half-day events to elicit their views on different aspects of their housing, its setting and their reflections of home.

To gain the greatest insight into the thoughts and feelings of house and home to older people and to stimulate wide-ranging intra-group debate open questions and participatory consultation methods were used by the facilitators. Emphasis was placed on the positive to illicit in a highly interactive way, both values and deficiencies and to provide principles and processes for consultation with older people.

The four half day sessions were themed to provide focus and encourage contributions rich in qualitative detail.

Older people were also asked to take part in a photo-diary project, in which the participants, using a disposable camera and notebook provided to them, recorded images and feelings which are important to them in their homes and local environment. This formed the basis for the poster display for Architecture week which publicised the project and allowed feedback for the public in the form of a questionnaire.

As a parallel to this event an invited audience of older people and professionals involved in the themes of housing provision and home for older people developed ideas through a workshop entitled 'How do we create the homes that meet the needs of an ageing population'

The results from all the activities were recorded and can be found in the appendices.

The workshops for older people

Four workshops considered through highly interactive participatory consultation considering the participants as experts in their communities, the concerns and requirements of older people for their home and its setting. These are detailed below in sessions 1-4.

The results from these were then disseminated, debated, developed and verified by the Architecture week display and debate among older people and a range of professionals involved in housing and the housing environments for older people.

Session 1: The values of home

What is home?

What aspects of home are valued most?

House maps

The group was asked to create a map or plan of their own home showed the layout and function of the rooms and outdoor spaces and how the spaces are arranged.

The group was then asked to annotate and mark the maps with their answers to the following questions:

1. What is the most important place in your home?
2. Why is this the most important place?
3. Where in your home do you spend most time?
4. Why do you spend most time here?
5. How have you arranged or changed this space to suit you?
6. Mark any views you have from your home, what do you see from here?
7. Do the views make any difference to where you spend your time?
8. Are there parts of their home you would change if you could?
9. If so, how would you change it?

Session 2: Your home

The group worked in pairs or threes to discuss the following:

History

Each person's home history

When did you move into your home?

Why did you move?

Design

The design of their home

What sort of house or flat is it?

What words would you use to describe your home?

Who do you think it was designed for originally?

How could the design work better for you?

Location

The location of each person's home

Is the area mainly residential?

Are there gardens or public spaces close by?

What does it feel like to live there?

Is there traffic?

Is it easy to get to transport and amenities?

Is it a quiet or noisy place?

Can you have privacy and socialise?

After this, the groups identified some key features for the design and location of their ideal home based on some of the following questions:

What would it look like?

What would it feel like?

How would it be accessed?

How would the rooms and the space be arranged?

Would it use new technologies?

What are the sounds and smells?

Where would it be?
Who else would live in the neighbourhood?
What would be in the immediate area?

Session 3: The process and problems of moving

A dilemma exists in moving out of a family home which is too big for older people living there all the time, but needed for family visits. There is apprehension that if older people give up having this space they lose the position as a focus for the family.

The process of moving is difficult and involves a sense of loss, but one person felt relief at having made the decision as their life was easier in a smaller place.

It is a hard decision to make, but important that it is done while you can and can have some control over the process of change/moving.

There exists recognition among older people, that there is pressure to downsize, not have so much money tied up in a house and to consider equity release schemes to pay for maintenance etc. This session considered what is important to older people when they move.

There is a recognition of changing patterns of ageing - 75+ is the 'go-go stage'; 85+ is the 'slow-go' stage and 90+ is the 'no-go stage'!!

Older people acknowledge that expectations have changed enormously – in the 1960's people were delighted to have running water and heating – nowadays that is a given and people are looking for other things. There is considered to be a lack of rented accommodation at affordable prices which affects choice.

There was a general consensus on the importance of flexible space e.g. space to make into computer room and of inclusive design in access to buses, shops etc.

The design of sheltered housing/housing for older people often means it is 'designed downwards' e.g. a double bedroom will just accommodate a double bed – some people might prefer two single beds.

There is the requirement for rooms to be spacious and for plenty of storage space to be provided.

There should not be the assumption that older people want to move to a bungalow, because living in a bungalow results in less exercise, euphemistically known as 'bungalow legs'. If however a house is on 2 stories, houses need space so that you can move downstairs if you need to and the comment was made that new town houses are not built in a way which would provide that flexibility.

Session 4: Housing environments and the setting of home

It is recognized that the outdoor environment contributes to the ability of older people to live in the neighbourhood of their choice (Kirkwood, 2000).

This session considered the external environment in greater detail. Various participatory tools enabled the group to express their individual views and act cooperatively to reach conclusions on the positives and negatives in their external surroundings. These were then prioritized.

The first activity was a mapping exercise where individuals were asked to map their local home environment using drawing equipment and paper with the option, if they preferred, to make a 3D map.

There were no other stipulations other than to mark on it 3 good and 3 not so things about their environment.

Following the mapping, the groups were then asked collectively to rank all the good and not-so-good comments.

There were many common themes that emerged through the mapping process and these were picked up listed and ranked. Individual maps however showed very personal and distinct differences.

One participant was inspired to write a poem on her map.....

'When I step out of my house
-what do I like to see?
A level path in front of me
A friendly face to welcome me
And a bird perched in my tree
...THESE ARE THE THINGS
THAT MATTER TO ME
--When I step out of my house'

Vera Bolter

Photo diaries

Photo-diaries were submitted by 17 older people and analysis of these formed the basis for a powerpoint feedback to and discussion with the older people's group. Prioritising the most important factors for the group led to the development of twelve posters for an exhibition in Architecture Week 2006.

Architecture week exhibition

The exhibition in the Newcastle City library was manned for the ten day period of Architecture week by older people and representatives from the steering group. This enriched the experience for the viewers and allowed for further dissemination of information and completion of survey questionnaires, which further developed the participatory theme. The results of the survey are found in appendix 5.

Dissemination and verification workshop

To verify and extend this study, a workshop took place on 11th July 2006 at Rutherford Hall, University of Northumbria to an invited group of older people, policy makers, architects and designers and housing providers.

The workshop was introduced on behalf of the Elder's Council and Quality of Life Partnership, and it was explained why the workshop was important for older people and the continuing interest that the Elder's Council have in housing through their well established Housing Group.

A short introduction to the project on behalf of Northern Architecture, detailed the purpose of the project, the highly participatory methods employed throughout and its achievements so far.

Older people from the Elder's Council set the scene by providing reflections on home and its meanings focusing on information from the four participatory older people's workshop sessions and the photo-diary exercise.

The workshop breakout sessions

There were key points to consider in smaller groups allowing for interactive discussion:

Key features which need to be in place to make an ideal home

Inside my Home

Outside my Home

In my neighbourhood

What can we do (individually or collectively) to ensure we have more "ideal homes" for older people?

What is possible now

What will take longer

What are the barriers

Provide three key messages

Discussion

The wealth of information gained from all the workshops, is detailed in the appendices and is focused below for specific groups influential in older people's housing and the home environment, into the key points.

For all groups two definitive messages prevail:

‘Nothing for us without us’

Communication is key! Talk to people, make sure you listen to their views as well as giving them opportunities to feedback early in scheme and policy development.

‘Independent living is crucial’

There needs to be a ‘whole systems ‘approach to individuals’ needs with organisations working together across boundaries (Sure Start for > 60’s)

Policy makers and planners

The main features warranting consideration and action are:

1. The development of good practice guidelines. The standard of all housing needed to be rethought and enforced by regulation and guidance from the regional planning and housing strategies. Issues of lifetime homes are quite well known but seem very hard to assimilate into mainstream policy and practice (although all social housing in London is built to these standards). This development should include additional consultation with older people.
2. Flexible layouts to facilitate changing needs, which are sustainable over the years, by allowing adaptation for different ages
3. Setting of home should prioritise safety and inclusive access to a wide range of facilities.

Housing providers

1. It is acknowledged that we cannot build our way out of the housing problems we have and there is a need for better information and well thought out equity release schemes since it must be the case that in order to fund work people will have to dig into the wealth locked into their home.
2. Create more opportunities for variety of people in the community to meet (so that in turn it creates a community spirit, more interdependency between the various members of the community.

Designers

Architects

1. Adaptability is key to good housing design for older people allowing ease of use and maintenance and opportunities to entertain family and friends.
2. The results of this work suggest that particular attention should be paid to details and the limitations of physical mobility over time. This is especially important in bathrooms, kitchens and areas for storage.

3. There should be good light in the house, both windows that allow people to view out when seated and also good levels of natural and artificial light.

Landscape architects

1. To provide designs which support community development and access to local facilities, by the provision of quality paving, seating and lighting.
2. To promote schemes which can be easily maintained to high levels of cleanliness.
3. To consider the views out from house windows, which is particularly important for older people who are more likely to spend longer in their homes.

Housing and social support agencies

1. There needs to be, wherever possible, easily available signposting/information sharing facilities to enable/empower residents and carers to access appropriate support from a range of agencies to maintain their independent living arrangements.
2. The sheer hassle of seeking a move was the subject of intense discussion. There is a need for some facilitation service that could help people really think out the possibilities of making change within their home.
3. There is a real need for a service that could talk through the moving options, seek out a range of possibilities, organise the move and support people through the emotional pain of leaving a much loved but no longer fitting home.

Project conclusions

This work has generated much interest and debate and it is essential that notice is taken of older people's aspirational views and the vision for more inclusive housing and home if they are to remain healthily and happily independent in their own homes for the maximum possible time, which is the wish of older people and reiterated in government policy.

Suggestions for change are pertinent to the problems older people face when negotiating their urban environments. It is essential that the opportunity for further discussion between older people and those who have responsibilities for housing policy, design and implementation would be a mutually educative process and is vital in setting policy for a sustainable and healthy society in the 21st century.

Appendices

Appendix 1

The values of home

What is home?

'Somewhere you live and feel safe and happy.'

'A place where you feel comfortable and have your things around you.'

'The place where you are able to do what you want, when you want and how you want.'

'A retreat.'

What aspects of home are valued most?

Comfort

Warmth

Security

House maps

Important places in the home

The toilet (under the stairs).

The kitchen

'It's not where I spend most of my time but the room that is very important to me and to the functioning of the household.'

'I redesigned the kitchen based on the way I was working. The result is a fairly compact working area with fridge, cooker, sink, dishwasher and cupboards in a U-shape.'

'The position of the cooker and bench can be awkward as there is nowhere to place hot dishes as they are taken out of the oven. To compensate I have a trolley that can be wheeled over to the oven when required.'

The living room.

'I am happy with the set-up. I spend time here reading and watching TV.'

The glass-fronted sun lounge.

'I spend time here reading and watching the birds.'

A floored loft

'It is over the whole bungalow in which I have my books and junk.'

The dining room

'It is the most social room in the house. Not the most time but quality time is spent here.'

Where you spend most time?

The back room

There's a restful outlook

Beautiful sunsets

A lilac bush

I can watch the birds in the trees from there

The office

'But it's not an attractive spot!'

Views

'My views are limited, blocked by the backs of other houses very nearby. These are masked by the season in summer and I have planted the garden to minimize the impact of over-looking buildings. It's a quality space with a screen of trees but this and the other houses limit the light.'

'The kitchen window overlooks my garden.'

Recurring common words and themes

'Books', 'birds', 'my chair' and 'the morning sun'.

Appendix 2

Your home

There was description provided to some of the questions and positive and negative comments on others. A summary is given below:

Descriptions of home

Doris has lived in the same house for 65 years. 'It's a 2 bedroom semi detached built in 1935. It's very compact, nice high ceilings, they were designed as starter homes for couples. The area is residential but the bus company must think it's industrial.'

Keith moved in to his home 20 years ago when he came to work in Newcastle. 'It's a four story house, very similar to a lighthouse without the light. The house is impractical for an older person because there are too many stairs. It was built 180 years ago, designed for an affluent working person. The vertical access is a real problem. This can't be changed due to 'listed' walls and the other walls are up against other people's walls so it's virtually impossible to make changes. It's a residential area and has open spaces nearby. It's a sunny and attractive pleasant house but it's very overshadowed by houses built more recently which makes it darker than it could be. It's very close to the motorway so there is 24-hour traffic noise. Other than that it is reasonably quiet.'

Mary moved 11 years ago and moved because she was threatened where she was. 'It is a ground floor flat, an old two-bedroom place designed for people that wanted to get into better rented accommodation.'

Positives from group discussions

'Here it is easy to mix with neighbours but also retain your privacy.'

'It's a nice neighbourhood with a recreation ground and football pitch.'

'Privacy – you can have that. People don't socialise here people are very private.'

'I do have two good neighbours.'

Negatives from group discussions

'There are problems with traffic.'

'There are three schools on the same road therefore there's lots of traffic but the bus services have recently been taken off. I feel more isolated living here.'

'It's noisy.'

'I wish the bathroom and toilet in the flat above were in a better position, I hear noises all through the night!'

'It's a bus ride to the local amenities but the transport is ok if it can be used.'

'Amenities are not as accessible as you would think. It's close to the Metro and you could walk into town but the public transport is not so good.'

'The area is residential but there are no gardens or public spaces nearby.'

'Community centres and other facilities are too far away and Asda is my corner shop!'

Preferences

'I'd like a joint downstairs toilet and bathroom.'

'I'd like a downstairs toilet.'

'I'd like a front door on the front of my house – not on the side!'

'Ideal Homes'

Aesthetics

'It would be a modern building but one that was designed in sympathy with it's environment and landscape.'

'It would be out in the country, I love mountains and trees.'

'It would be 'welcoming.'

'I would like it to be brick built but with lots of windows – views are important if you can't get out.'

'I would live on my own but in a residential area. It would be a bungalow built of old yellow stone with rambling roses.'

'The materials used would be old stone and wood.'

'I would like light colours and smooth textures.'

'It would smell of lavender and be very colourful.'

'I like planting.'

Setting

'Landscape would be important but balanced by having facilities nearby.'

'It would be in Rowlands Gill, it's the country but near enough to town.'

'There would be garden all around.'

'There would be country sounds like bird song.'

'It would be close to family and friends.'

'It would be a mixed residential area not too close to any industry.'

'I would like family living there and it would be mixed residential.'

'Most people felt safer in a mixed community (provided children behave themselves – noisy students; kids with footballs!)

Safety and sense of community

'Safety – as you get older you become more aware of this.'

'There would be as few stairs as possible, one or two stories would be safe.'
'The place would have a sense of security and plenty of social contact.'
'There would be more of a sense of togetherness where people were a part of the community.'
'People should do things as a community.'
'Security and attitude of mind, to trust our neighbours, these are the things we need.'
'There would be low-key community projects that allowed people to get to know their neighbours.'

'There would be plenty of good lighting, the use of lots of light colours and secure windows that could be opened easily.'

'There would also be police patrols around the streets.'

'There would be trees but some way off not having too many leaves blocking the drains!'

Facilities

To cater for the range of requirements, the immediate area would include shops, a convenience store, post office, doctors, library, a church and more seating.

There would be a community hall where people could get together for social gatherings. There would be attractive public spaces, maybe a park nearby with seats that would give people the opportunity to meet and on a summer's evening you could sit and look at the flowers and brass bands would play there.

The locality would benefit from good transport links but not necessarily from right outside the house

Appendix 3

The process and problems of moving

Preference for 'own front door' and not shared entrances.

The room people used most was the living room or the kitchen if it had eating/sitting space.

Considering each room separately and reflecting some of the posters in the exhibition:

Kitchen

There were some interesting observations and propositions for kitchen design. Kitchens for many people often double as a dining room.

Plenty of work surface is needed for gadgets (toaster, microwave, sandwich maker) as well as for putting dishes, working etc. Surfaces need to be near cookers so that you can put hot dishes down easily. Collapsible surfaces and ironing boards to be pulled out when needed.

Cupboards with baskets allow easy access.

The cooker should be high enough to avoid too much bending down.

A Sheila Maid for washing is a useful addition and an airing cupboard preferably with source of heat (this doesn't need to be in the kitchen).

Bedroom

Good storage (e.g. walk-in closet)

Big enough to take double or 2 single beds

Good soundproofing

Proximity to bathroom

Stairs

These should be wide enough for stair lift

Design a ski-lift style stair lift which takes up less space. There should be banisters.

Living Room

Attention must be paid to the height of sockets and light switches. Good lighting is essential.

There should be space for bookcase and a dining area if not provided elsewhere.

The room would benefit from rounded corners and.

Bathroom

There were mixed opinions about bathrooms; some people like showers, others prefer baths.

There is often difficulty of getting in and out of the bath.

The provision of a footbath is considered desirable if only shower provided so that you can soak your feet.

Nice examples of easy clean showers etc. One member wants a shower which blows hot air after the water goes off to dry you!

Gardens

Importance of low maintenance garden, but the solution to this should not always mean paving over the garden!

Conclusion

It seems as though everyone wants something different – a one size fits all approach doesn't work.

Appreciation exists of the difficulty of pleasing everyone; an example given was of a sheltered housing built overlooking a railway line, which the manager thought it was dreadful, but the tenant who had worked on the railways all his life was delighted to have a view of the trains!

There was the proposal that modular housing might provide some solutions. It was accepted that decisions are not always very rational, for example people in all age brackets may buy houses because they 'feel right' and 'you know you can live there' rather than the physical features of the house and its setting.

Appendix 4: Housing environments and the setting of home

Ranking

The participants worked together in two groups and the criteria chosen and weighting show both similarities and differences between the two groups. The criteria chosen had greater affinity in the positives than in the negatives.

It was observed that within the group discussion, one specific criterion (this occurred predominantly with the negatives) a suggestion was led by one person to which others had less direct experience, but the democratic nature of the exercise allowed all views to be heard. Examples include, communication masts, lifts that don't work (although others voiced that they could imagine the negative effects of this) and shopmobility schemes. However, the nature of this investigation is to throw up all the issues and this was seen to be enacted within the groups.

Positives which assist older people in living in their home localities:

Selected criterion	Group 1 rating	Group 2 rating
Near to bus stop	10	8
Near to health services	10	
Near to shops	10	9 (and Post Office)
Feeling safe		10
Parking regulations –controlled and enforced		10
Good neighbours	7	10
Well kept personal space	7	
Public planting	7	
Post office, library, swimming pool, churches,	7	8 (chemist)
Seats in the streets		7
Open/green space - parks and gardens	5	6
Shopmobility		5
Pub nearby	4	
Near to relatives	3	

Negatives which detract from localities

Selected criterion	Group 1 rating	Group 2 rating
Dog mess	10	
Poor public transport	10	

Lifts that work	10	
Vandalism	10	(and graffiti) 8
Car parking issues	10	
Closure of Post Office		10+
Drop kerbs on pavements		10
Wheelie bins and recycling bins on pavements		10
Cycling and no bells on pavement		10
Litter bins overflowing		10
Poor footpaths	8	10
Noisy neighbours	7	10
Insecurity on streets		9
Clearance of fallen leaves and drains	7	9
Chewing gum on pavements		8
Communication masts	8	
Seating (if seats) and type of seat		7
Speed of traffic and unclear signs		7
Appropriate provision of public toilets	6	

There was a range of detailed and well debated comment that emerged from each of the two groups. Within this short exercise there is shown to be a greater commonality in the selection of positive aspects of the home locality (36%) than negative (21%), although neither percentage illustrated that there is a strong core of opinion, but rather experiences and difficulties in the outdoor environment vary and this is expressed in diverse criteria. The major features of importance are:

Proximity and accessibility to transport routes

Public transport rates highly in both sets of criteria.

It should be considered that as individuals age there is an increased likelihood, for a variety of reasons, that public transport is increasingly likely to be used and is a key to independent living particularly in terms of accessing services and maintaining touch with interests and friends.

To be near to a bus stop is not just considered as the distance 'the crow flies' to the bus or metro stop, but the route the individual must take in order to reach that point. For example, if the safe road crossing points are in the opposite direction to the bus stop this will considerably add to the inconvenience and distance an individual has to walk. It was noted that one individual reported the movement of the location of a bus stop from a situation convenient for her, to a new location which, owing to the crossing points makes it almost impossible for her to use the bus.

Pavements

The condition and maintenance of and obstructions along pavements are of great concern and in particular group 2 detailed the variety of problems which

occur to pose hazards to older people by the lack of opportunity to move freely along the pavement.

There are issues, well documented in other surveys and confirmed in this arena, which show that dog fouling is a highly prioritized negative for most people.

In this study, fallen leaves are identified as a hazard for both groups, as these leave pavements slippery and put individuals at greater risk of falling. As well as the positive effects of the enforcement of parking regulations in preventing the partial blocking of pavements, there are problems of obstruction when emptied wheelie and recycling bins are returned to the pavement outside houses which are vacated all day.

Appendix 5: Architecture week exhibition

Total number of questionnaires completed: 67

1. *What changes need to be made to help you stay living comfortably in your home? Or tell us about the solutions you have found to make life easier.*

Access – lift installed, ramp, automatic door, grab rails, wider doors,

Stairs and steps – Good tread, grab rails, good maintenance, sturdy banister, stair lift, not too high or steep, gates to prevent falling a long way

Security – Warden, spy hole, door chain, intercom system, alarm, easy locking windows, more police, good locks, good lighting, local advice, cctv

Kitchen – Larger, lower more accessible cupboards, larder style storage, better height for oven, taps more user friendly, edges rounded on worktops

Bathroom – Shower to replace bath, walk in type shower, grab rails over bath, easy to turn shower control and taps, downstairs bathroom, non-slip flooring, sit-in bath, emergency call button, water temperature gauge, good ventilation

Services – Communal areas are neglected, reliable workmen to do small repair jobs at a reasonable cost, grass cutting, moving wheelie bins, help with gardening,

2. *What are the three most important things which make you feel happy and comfortable in your home and neighbourhood?*

Local to shops, transport, library, attractive building, not expensive to keep warm, spacious, windows easy to open, good neighbours, nice view, quiet, good air quality, well lit streets, feeling safe

3. *What facilities do you have or would like to see in your neighbourhood?*

	Have	Would Like
Library	32	9
Post Office	36	7
Bank	25	13
Community/Leisure Centre	21	14
Decent food shops	20	17
GP	30	11
Dentist	27	9
Pharmacy	31	9
Optician	19	14
Park/Open Space	28	9

Other: metro station, bus stop, café, housing offices, police station

4. *How do you usually get further afield?*

Car	20
Bus	30
Metro	17
Care Bus	0

Comments: - walk, no metro to the west end

5. *Please tell us your age group and post code*

Under 25 - 6	NE1 - 3
26 – 49 - 17	NE2 - 7
50 – 64 - 11	NE3 - 4
65+ - 11	NE4 - 8
	NE5 - 2
	NE6 - 4
	NE7 - 2
NE8 - 1	
NE9 - 1	
NE12 - 1	
NE15 - 1	
NE21 - 1	
NE22 - 1	
NE30 - 1	

Visitors Book Comments:

Useful display,
makes people aware,
lovely photos
interesting conversation,
informative,
wonderful reception
positive outlook,
involving local people,
hope ideas are acted upon.

Appendix 6: Workshop

Introduction

The Introduction by Elder Council members was a distillation of all the previous workshops, the photo-diaries and the exhibition.

A home is:

- Somewhere you live and feel safe and happy
- A place where you feel comfortable and have your things around you.
- The place where you are able to do what you want, when you want and how you want.

The important places in the home are:

- The toilet under the stairs.
- The kitchen – it's not where I spend most of my time but it is very important to me and to the functioning of the household.
- The living room – I'm happy with the set-up. I spend time here reading and watching TV.
- A floored loft – It's over the whole bungalow in which I have my books and junk.
- The dining room – It's the most social room in the house. Not the most time but quality time is spent here.
- The back room – there's a restful outlook, beautiful sunsets, a lilac bush, I can watch the birds in the trees from there.
- The office – but it's not an attractive spot!

Our ideal homes would be:

- a modern building but one that was designed in sympathy with its environment and landscape.
- brick built but with lots of windows – views are important if you can't get out.
- Living on my own but in a residential area. It would be a bungalow built of old yellow stone with rambling roses.
- Landscape would be important but balanced by having facilities nearby.
- Most people feel safer in a mixed community (provided children behave themselves – noisy students; kids with footballs).
- There would be more of a sense of togetherness where people were a part of the community.
- There would be low-key community projects that allowed people to get to know their neighbours.
- To cater for the range of requirements, the immediate area would include shops, a convenience store, post office, doctors, library a church and more seating. There would be a community hall where people could get together for social gatherings. There would be attractive public spaces, maybe a park nearby with seats that would give people the opportunity to meet on a summer's evening.

- A place with good transport links.

Changing needs, changing expectations, changing places:

- It's a dilemma – whether to move out of a family home which is getting too big, but is needed for family visits. The grandchildren may not come if there is nowhere for them to stay or play.
- It's a hard decision to make, but it's important to do it while you can and you have some control over the process.
- I'd like to be able to talk to someone knowledgeable who can help me to think through my options.
- It was a relief to have made the decision – life is easier in a smaller place.
- I would move to a smaller place, but there is so little choice, there's nowhere for me to move to!

If I move to smaller place, I would like:

- My own front door
- Flexible space – two decent sized bedrooms, good storage space, a living area with enough space for a dining table; a well-designed kitchen with plenty of work surface; a sitting room with good natural light; a bathroom with a shower; an easy-to-maintain garden or a balcony.
- Good public transport connections and a range of local facilities.
- We may be of a similar age, but we're all different – one size won't fit all.

Workshop findings

Inside my home

The following characteristics of an ideal home were identified by the groups as:

- 2 bedrooms
- Adaptable kitchen space to include a seat
- Easily reached windows and not too small to make it feel like a prison
- Easily moved furniture for cleaning
- Provision of walk-in showers/wet room
- Storage space
- Level access to house (front + back)
- Wider doorways
- Good circulation space
- Ergonomic kitchen layouts
- Low level support for minor repairs service
- Noise insulation
- Eco-friendly appliances
- Lifetime homes design
- Window sills at height low enough to see out from chair

- Window openings easily reached

Kitchen

Good adaptable working spaces essential, consider the designs inside mobile homes and caravans.

- Accessible work surfaces
- Good storage
- Flexibility e.g. benches which can move up and down
- Non-slip surface for floor
- Well lit – preferably natural light
- Space for a seat

Bathroom

- Large space adaptable for equipment e.g. hoist and seat
- Mixer/lever taps as standard in all houses
- Shower with level access
- Non-slip floor covering
- Good natural light

In addition, a downstairs toilet that could in time be fitted with a shower

Sitting/Dining Area

- Space to move around
- Windows at a height to see out of
- Space to entertain friends and family
- Space to sit at a table
- Flexibility in layout e.g. in case you want to study

Steps and stairs

- Space for a ramp or to have a handrail
- Stairs wide enough to have a stairlift

Storage

Accessible and fit for purpose and not in the loft!

Outside my Home

- Low maintenance private garden – window boxes, raised containers
- Variety of seating areas to allow for movement of the sun
- Space for recharging/storing scooters
- Front doors need to have level or ramp access rather than stairs
- Storage space for wheelie bins/garden tools etc
- Low maintenance garden areas / outdoor seating areas /private space
- Garden mtce services

- Arrangements for bulk refuse disposal (currently resident has to cart bulk refuse to front gate ...difficult from upstairs flat etc) and recycling facility from home
- Arrangements for delivery of household items

In my neighbourhood

Most people want to be located in the heart of neighbourhoods where there is life and facilities.

Good general housing would ease a lot of problems and importantly provide a balance of appropriately designed housing located in multi generational communities.

Mixed communities

A mixed community (ideal would be to build a street of houses where people can spend all their lives), with purpose built older people's accommodation to be fully integrated within estates rather than on outskirts to remove feelings of isolation /segregation and with a variety of activities including a community space (somewhere large enough for community to meet) where can talk and have a cup of tea (not necessarily where bingo is organised as it's not to everyone's taste!) Opportunities to share interests with different ages (e.g. hairdressing students coming to help elderly)

Ability for interaction between all age groups within local neighbourhood

Potential for older residents to work with local schools as 'mentors'/ sharing of life experiences to enable young people to understand the needs/aspirations of the elderly and conversely for young people to explain their current interests/challenges etc ...develop mutual

Respect for each other's space.

Information

Information dissemination-somewhere to find out about things happening (especially for people who live on their own)

Facilities

Short distances to public transport to provide access to community facilities (e.g. Post Office, Library, GPs ,shops etc)

It's not just about the house – there need to be good local services such as shops, library, post office, leisure centres etc.

Access to services

1. Post office
2. Local shops
3. Public transport
4. Community facility

Safety

Safe secure environment to encourage residents to walk within neighbourhood

Noise

Reduction in noise and levels of anti-social behaviour.

Transport

Transport: needs to be affordable and good! Older people want to get out and about, choose whatever's out there.

Wider environment (older person friendly streets)

1. Quality of paving
2. Seating
3. Lighting
4. Cleanliness

What can we do (individually or collectively) to ensure we have more "ideal homes" for older people?

What is possible now

- Talk to older people using respectful interactive consultation
- Elders Council acting on behalf of the elderly, collecting their views, advocating on their behalf, giving public talks, write articles, letters, etc (in short, lobbying)
- Surveying opinions of Older people of future needs by acting as a 'client body' [...done with rather than done to]
- Provision of single point access " One-stop shop" with rapid response and signposting of facilities/advice
- Adapt existing space and/or add new units
- Ask Council for more benches
- Start a resident's association
- Feed in to Committee or Council meetings
- Identifying best practice , good models , what is provided elsewhere

What will take longer

Talk to those who hold the purse strings so that allow budget to fit with designer and client's requirements

Join up funding arrangements between internal and external agencies

Better communication/ advertisement of opportunities to feedback

Set up local dialogues between all age groups

Change configuration of inside space e.g. open plan kitchen/living room/dining room would make it feel more spacious (although doors would be required with kitchen to prevent cooking smells from spreading)

Appropriate domiciliary care and support

Expanding handy-man, garden maintenance, Trades register service via Anchor 'Staying Put.

What are the barriers

Cost issues (designer/architect restricted by available budget). Ring fenced budgets between/within agencies.

Organisational differences and competing priorities for funding/targets

Variety of policies and procedures between organisations/agencies.

No building regs/ standards for minimum space! (problem particularly with new-built housing

Entrenched opinions (i.e. lack of understanding/trust between the range of age groups)

Appendix 7: Selection of comments from the photo-diaries

"View from my chair. It's not breathtakingly beautiful but provides interesting people watching."

"I designed the bungalow myself - back to front so that I would have a lovely countryside view from my lounge."

"Fortunately, we were able to make some adaptations during construction, including removing a wall to make a large living/dining room and having a walk-in shower built"

"I enjoy the calm and colours of this room; relaxing textures, interesting pictures, TV and radio, welcoming I hope!"

"The dining area is still an important focal point for entertaining friends and family."

"The hatch we had put in is very useful for passing food and crockery to and from the kitchen - saves accidents en route!"

"The computer table is a new addition - ready for our new computer with broadband!"

"Not really a conservatory more a glass potting shed we always say! It has a stainless steel sink, invaluable for seeing to the indoor plants and garden. It's very functional and I love it!"

"We are keen gardeners but are finding it progressively difficult to keep up - a big problem!"

"The small flower garden is packed with flowering plants round the miniscule lawn and is a real joy in the summer"

"A small sheltered terrace at the side provides an outdoor eating and seating space. We are trying to make it easier to maintain"

"I spend a lot of time in the kitchen. I thought out the arrangement of equipment and storage to avoid undue movement - everything is easily accessible. I enjoy cooking"

"The black tiles are the ones we chose in 1973. They have been very effective and survived!"

"The kitchen garden's my husband's favourite, he grows lots of fruit and veg in it."

"In the summer it's full of bean frames, raspberries, outdoor tomatoes and of course herbs, all to hand"

"Lots of birds come and eat the lettuce so there's always something to see from the kitchen sink. It's important to have distractions from routine"

"The bedroom is peaceful and calm. White with blue grey but touches of bright primaries stop it being dull"

"It serves well to let us have friends and family to stay. There is a wash basin and shaver point to ease the pressure on the bathroom"

"We deliberately didn't have a glass door on the shower. They can be intimidating to older people. What if I can't get out or fall in there?"

"This small south-facing room is where I keep all my hobbies gear - sewing machine, paints etc."

"The derelict shopping area and filling station immediately opposite our

house, my least favourite view.”

“No Post Office or Chemist now, there are no services on this estate”

“Older people accumulate all kinds of things which may be important - bedding, clothing, household objects used only occasionally, papers, files, magazines, a collapsible ladder in case of fire, Christmas decorations. Very few flats/care homes have enough storage space”

“Stairs can be hazardous, especially when carrying teapots or hot water bottles, but you also get exercise on a daily basis - I'm not sure about moving to a bungalow”

“ We organised built in wardrobes that are used as cupboards too, in every room and it has been a boon - everything can be put away out of sight, keeps down clutter, all still 1970's wood finish!”

“Door openings are improved now by electric roll up on the front and secure, sliding patio door to the side”

“I don't use it much now. I'd like to switch its use with the spare room and have an en suite built in but..... I'm not sure we can stand the upheaval, or are up to moving furniture and redecoration. Probably a problem for many older home owners”

“It's less draughty since we had all out windows double glazed and insulation improved - cavity wall and loft”

“My horrid, tiny bathroom, no window, no space, a bath I can't use and the noisiest extractor in the world. One good point, the vista from the toilet!”

“I'm 5'8” but I can only just reach the handles to open the kitchen window”

“It's the brightest room. It's my office, the place I put my make-up on and where I open my post”

“The window has been open for some time but it is still streaming with condensation”

“I use mirrors to brighten up the flat. In this room the window south has been bricked in”

“There are big walls in the lounge so I can have an art gallery but I have to straighten the paintings every few days because of the vibration from traffic outside!”

“The bin store would make an ideal washhouse, none of us have space in the flats for a washing machine. No, there isn't a laundrette in Jesmond”

“I feel very insecure when I'm in the back yard. Why was the wall lowered and why are we not able to lock the gates?”

“It's looked like this for some time, flaking paint - an eyesore. It might be painted this year”

“It's a a soulless hall with foul pink doors and nothing allowed on the walls, the cheapest carpet for maximum noise and no heat”

“The library is the nearest thing we've got to a community centre, 3 minutes from my front door. Location!”

“Yes, ice on the inside of the windows. Single glazing just isn't fair.”

“Maybe we need a handrail? A ramp spoils the appearance and takes up a lot of the path”

“It's important to have something green and something colourful at all

seasons”

“I've been thinking about moving to a low maintenance design but don't want to reduce the green area and go for paving”

“For me the kitchen is the centre of the household operations - cooking, washing. I need to be able to do these things effectively to keep the show on the road.”

“The door entry phone enables me to find out who is at the door without leaving the comfort of my flat”

“Normally there is plenty of foliage but in the bleak mid winter there is none.”

“The alarm bell, when pressed, shows a picture of the caller on a screen in the lounge”

“We often play cards and scrabble here. It's also pleasant to sit and read and listen to the birds”