

Lifetime Homes Workshop Report Gosforth Civic Hall, Newcastle upon Tyne 19th November 2007

Background

Lifetime Homes are ordinary homes designed to provide accessible and convenient homes for a large segment of the population from young children to frail older people and those with temporary or permanent physical or sensory impairments. Lifetime Homes have 16 design features that ensure that the home will be flexible enough to meet the existing and changing needs of most households, as set out in the Joseph Rowntree Foundation report 'Meeting Part M and Designing Lifetime Homes'. (www.jrf.org.uk.)

The reason for organizing a Lifetime Homes Workshop was in response to Newcastle City Council's Planning Department's interest in exploring what their policy should be on this issue and a long-held interest of the Elders Council¹ and Quality of Life Partnership² in promoting Lifetime Homes standards.

A range of organizations and individuals from across the North East were invited to participate in the workshop including older people, local authorities, voluntary sector, academics, registered social landlords, architects and developers.

The speakers covered a range of topics including the "National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society", the demographic profile of the North East, the significance of Lifetime Homes for older people and families and how Lifetime Homes work in practice.

¹ The Elders Council is an organisation of older people working for older people. It enables older people to have a voice on policy and service developments which affect their lives. See www.elderscouncil.org.uk.

² The Quality of Life Partnership is a partnership of key organisations working for the benefit of older people in Newcastle upon Tyne.

Presentations

The importance of lifetime homes

Vera Bolter, a member of the Elders Council, opened the session by explaining the value of Lifetime Homes (LTH). She stressed the importance of taking the opportunity to implement LTH in all new build and as well as applying the standards to the refurbishment of existing housing stock. She pointed out that the implementation LTH brings savings to the public purse over the longer term.

A window of opportunity to embed lifetime homes into policy

Colin Percy, Newcastle City Council Planning Department, outlined the current policy context. He highlighted how the workshop provided an opportunity to consider the implications of introducing LTH standards whilst policies are at formative stage.

A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society

Sue Adams is the Director of Care & Repair England and Co-Chair of the government's advisory committee on housing and older people (HOPDEV). Sue gave the background to the development of the forthcoming National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society. She explained that older people account for nearly 30% of all households and ageing is the main reason for the growth in the total number of household over the next decade but that mainstream housing policy and practice has largely neglected these trends, hence the importance of a housing strategy focusing on the agenda on older people. The Strategy's vision will focus on promoting independence, choice and control across the life course and on enabling older people to live where and how they choose. The key target is to engage the wider housing and planning world with the older people's agenda, by making the case through information and evidence. Sue outlined the importance of the development of inclusive design and the future proofing of buildings and neighbourhoods. The National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Population will include a comprehensive evidence section which could be a useful tool for Older People's Housing Champions.

Demographic Change in the North East

Tony Champion from the Centre of Urban and Regional Development Studies (Newcastle University) presented key information on the Demography of Ageing in the North East. The North East of England is currently the second 'oldest' region in

England, based on the percentage of people aged 45+ (though only 5th out of 9 for 75+ in 2004). From 2004 to 2029 the number of people aged 65+ is expected to increase, with the number of people aged 75-84 is set to increase by nearly a half and the numbers of people aged 85+ doubling. Migration is lower than in other parts of the country and there is a net loss of young people. Tony also gave information about demographic variations across the region.

The key drivers of demographic change are increased life expectancy, the ageing of baby boom generations and low levels of migration from outside the UK and the net loss of young adults to the rest of the UK.

Lifetime Homes for Older People and Families

Paul Gamble Deputy Chief Executive from Habinteg Housing Association gave the background to the development of Lifetime Homes. He pointed out that Building Regulations were not an effective way of introducing LTH, and stressed the need for LTH to be part of the early design process. He described how London has successfully adopted LTH for all its new build. This has been accepted by developers and is likely to have a trickle down effect on other areas. Paul pointed out the relevance of LTH to key government targets (e.g. sustainable communities) and highlighted the importance of a platform for sharing knowledge and best practice as well as the need for a robust monitoring system. Paul Gamble showed a Habinteg DVD illustrating how LTH can be applied.

Putting Lifetime Homes into Practice

Tim Robinson, Urban Design Officer with Newcastle City Council, gave an example of how LTH has been implemented. In the east of Newcastle £450m has been provided to regenerate the Walker area and provide up to 1500 new homes. Family housing, which is currently profiled as 80% of the housing programme for Walker, is required to meet LTH Standards. The Walker experience shows that barriers arise in: technical compliance, procurement expertise and understanding the financial implications. Tim reiterated the importance of introducing LTH from the beginning and not as a 'bolt on' to existing designs. He raised the issue of how compliance would be assessed and of different approaches to understanding the cost implications of LTH. Tim also commented on the pace of change and the range of design standards being introduced e.g.

ecohomes, code for sustainable homes, building regulations 2010/2013, disability discrimination act renewable energy requirements, plus design and space standards. He also pointed out that technology is changing quickly which means that some of the LTH requirements are easier to accommodate e.g. stair lifts; showers. Tim suggested that an alternative route to achieving the outcomes of LTH could be through a more integrated approach to design based on the following key principles:

- Long life – durable, less restricted use patterns
- Loose fit – spacious, less restricted layout
- Low energy – efficient and cheaper to run, less reliant on mains supplies.

Discussion Groups

After the presentations the attendees took part in small discussion groups. The following key points arose from the discussions:

- Lifetime Homes Standards (LTHS) and Lifetime Neighbourhoods are a key contributor to creating truly sustainable homes and neighbourhoods.
- There was overall support for LTHS to be made mandatory. It was felt that if local authorities or regions were left to adopt local policies, developers would simply 'go over the border' to an area which does not impose lifetime homes standards.
- There needs to be greater clarity about different design codes and regulations led by one body (e.g. Centre for Architecture Building Environment-CABE). LTHS should not be 'stand alone' but part of a wider set of standards based on principles of good design and sustainability.
- There is a need for more leadership from politicians i.e. Ken Livingstone's example.
- Positive marketing of LTH is required as part of the sustainability agenda.
- There is a need to move forward on promoting better design standards. Developers need incentives to engage with this e.g. public subsidy for good design or fast track through planning process.
- There needs to be more understanding and sharing of expertise on design, financial viability, procurement and monitoring of LTH.

- There is a need to educate housebuyers to demand better standards.
- There is a need for creative thinking around how to adapt existing housing stock to meet higher standards.

Next Steps

The key messages arising from the workshop have been sent to Baroness Andrews OBE and the Rt. Hon. Yvette Cooper MP (Minister for Housing) for consideration.

Newcastle City Council has agreed to do further work on the issue of LTH standards taking account of the findings of this workshop.

The organizers were pleased at by the level of interest in the workshop which was oversubscribed. Participants are encouraged to disseminate this report and the key findings from the workshop through their organisations and networks. Copies of the presentations are also available from nadine.braesick@qualityoflife.org.uk.

For further information please contact:

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Useful websites:

www.communities.gov.uk
www.icn.csip.org.uk/housing
www.hopdev.housingcare.org
www.careandrepair-england.org.uk
www.habinteg.org.uk
www.lifetimehomes.org.uk



www.communities.gov.uk
community, opportunity, prosperity

7 January 2008

Vera Bolter
Elders Council of Newcastle
2nd floor
MEA House
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Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 8XS

Our Ref: LHS/TO
Your Ref:

Dear Vera Bolter,

Lifetime Homes Standards

Thank you for your letter of 3 December to Baroness Andrews and 13 December to Yvette Cooper on Lifetime Homes Standards. I am sorry for the delay in replying. As you can imagine, the Ministers receive an enormous number of letters. I have therefore been asked to reply as I have responsibility for Lifetime Homes.

I am grateful for your feedback following your recent workshop with Newcastle City Council. We are very aware of how important appropriate and adaptable accommodation is to ensure that people can live to the full and enjoy their continued independence. We recognise that the Lifetime Homes Standard can play an important part in ensuring that this is the case.

We recently consulted upon the Code for Sustainable Homes and among the questions asked was whether Lifetime Home Standards should be made a mandatory element in Code assessment and rating, and whether this should be introduced progressively - at Code level 6 in 2008, level 4 in 2010 and level 3 in 2013.

Our proposed approach has taken into consideration a wide range of factors, but you may be interested in some further explanation.

The existing Lifetime Homes Standards have proved useful as a starting point to create sustainable living spaces. However, there is broad agreement that the standards as they currently exist are not sufficiently detailed or specific and do not relate to all possible types of accommodation. Certainly, the current standards are not suitable to form the basis of legislation or regulatory guidance. As a result we have already started the process of making the Lifetime Homes Standards more robust.

I am pleased to tell you that work started some time ago on the production of a British Standard Draft for Development on Lifetime Homes which will be issued in the near future for development into a fully detailed British Standard.

The usual timescale for this process is three years — we are optimistic that the new standard will be issued late in 2009.

The British Standard will provide detailed design guidance on all aspects of the Lifetime Homes Standards. The British Standard will draw on detailed evidence-based research to ensure that the Standards (and homes built to the Standards) are fit for purpose.

Once the Draft for Development is published there will be a period during which the standards can be reviewed and consulted upon before final drafting and publication.

I realise that this may seem to be a lengthy process, but I can assure you that the development of the British Standard will be of great value in ensuring that Lifetime Home Standards deliver a consistent quality of product in the long term.

From 2010 onwards we are aiming for a rapid growth in the number of homes built to the Lifetime Homes Standards. From 2011, all public sector funded housing will be built to Lifetime Standards. We are hopeful that developers in the private sector will follow suit and are working hard to encourage early uptake.

In terms of timescale, it is important to note that large housing schemes take many years of development through impact assessments, public consultation and the planning process to come to the construction phase. There is a need to integrate Lifetime Homes to both the design and procurement process over a reasonable timescale for both public and private developers.

We will keep uptake of the Lifetime Homes Standards under close review, and if sufficient progress is not being made the need for legislation will be reviewed.

It only remains for me to assure you that we will continue to work to address the needs of both an ageing population and those with specific disabilities.

Thank you again for your contribution to the debate.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Richard Harral', written over a horizontal line.

pp Richard Harral

Principal Architect
Sustainable Buildings