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Support



Nature

Collaboration



Community



Community



Well-being



Well-being



Collaboration

Support



Nature

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Housing and Collaborative Spatial Planning: Creating an Inclusive Future Vision for our Ageing Populations - February 2021

Foreword by the Chairs of the Housing and Collaborative Spatial Planning Work Sectors

Challenges and issues associated with an ageing population are shared across the British Irish Council (BIC) Member Administrations. They are also shared across the Planning and Housing professions. This booklet aims to provide key advice for those working in Housing and Spatial Planning and shares some best practice examples of how places and the housing within those places can be developed to meet the needs of our ageing populations.

The publication builds on the recent cooperative working between the two BIC work sectors of Collaborative Spatial Planning & Housing and draws upon the key learning from a BIC Symposium which was held in Belfast in November 2019. That Symposium was the first joint-sectoral event held within the framework of the British-Irish Council and provided a useful forum for Member Administrations and stakeholders to come together to discuss the challenges faced by an ageing population, and how we can develop policy approaches to address these.

The profound demographic changes which are already in train and which lie ahead will greatly affect how we live our lives in years to come, and need to be planned for today. It is incumbent on us to create environments where our people are able to participate fully in the social, economic, cultural and public life of their communities.

We need to look collectively at the challenges which we face in creating an inclusive future vision for our ageing population. The framework provided by the BIC and the synergies which already exist between Housing

and Spatial Planning provide a strong foundation from which we can continue to work in partnership across the BIC Member Administrations.

As the NI Executive chairs the BIC Housing and Collaborative Spatial Planning work sectors, we are pleased to endorse this joint booklet on 'Creating an Inclusive Future Vision for our Ageing Populations', and hope that it will inform relevant policy approaches going forward.



Minister Nichola Mallon MLA, Minister for Infrastructure



Minister Deidre Hargey MLA, Minister for Communities



8 Member Administrations

Overview

The British-Irish Council (BIC) is an intergovernmental Council bringing together Ministers and officials from across all eight administrations. Membership of the Council comprises representatives of the Irish and UK governments, Northern Ireland Executive, Scotland, Wales, Guernsey, the Isle of Man, and Jersey.

The Council provides a forum for members to exchange information and reach agreement on matters of mutual interest. The Council remains responsive to evolving policy priorities and its current work programme prioritises eleven specific work sectors where it can deliver for citizens and stakeholders.

It is in this context that two of these work sectors, Housing and Collaborative Spatial Planning (CSP), both chaired by the Northern Ireland Executive, have been working together to address issues of mutual concern, with a recent focus on the implications of the changing demography of the BIC administrations and the potential impact on the housing and spatial planning sectors.

This collaborative working culminated in a Symposium which was held in Belfast on 29 November 2019, to mark the 20th anniversary of the formation of BIC. The Symposium provided an opportunity to look to the next 20 years, and consider how some of the key spatial planning and housing challenges, associated with an ageing population that might be encountered to 2040, could be addressed. This event was able to

build upon the efforts of a previous BIC work sector, Demography, which issued a detailed report in 2016 mapping demographic changes across all eight Member Administrations until 2037.

The Symposium's message was clear: the profound demographic changes which lie ahead will not only affect how we think about and live our lives in years to come, but need to be planned for today.

This non-statutory booklet has been jointly developed by officials in the CSP and Housing work sectors to capture some of the key thinking of those experts who participated and shared their personal experience at the Symposium and to provide a number of key principles to challenge the thinking of stakeholders in the spatial planning and housing fields.

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Demographic context

The age profiles of the BIC jurisdictions demonstrate the challenge that policymakers and decision takers face. These profiles are represented below and show the distribution by age and sex of the population with each bar in the pyramid representing a single year of age and the length of the bar relating to the number

of people of that age in the population. These population profiles indicate a mature population with an ageing profile. Population projections to 2037 demonstrate the need to consider how our future populations will both support and place demand on the spatial planning and housing spheres.



An ageing population

The World Health Organisation suggests that “the ageing of the world’s populations is the result of the continued decline in fertility rates and increased life expectancy. This demographic change has resulted in increasing numbers and proportions of people who are over 60.”*



Population ageing is of relevance both in the policy development space and in the delivery of public services both of which will need to adapt and be flexible.

An ageing population will alter the requirements placed on the welfare, pension and healthcare systems with a potential impact on economic growth and wider society if we do not plan for the future in a sustainable and realistic way.

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*www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/population-ageing



Housing and Spatial Planning Policies should be developed through an ageing lens



In Ireland, the Older People's Councils are representative groups of older people who work together, and with key state and voluntary agencies, to make Ireland a better place in which to grow old.

Photo: National Network of Older People's Council, ©Age Friendly Ireland

Policy development needs to be age aware or age attuned if it is to address the challenges presented by our changing demography. Good policy approaches can make a real difference in this space, but poor policy approaches can have a detrimental impact.

Housing and spatial planning policy should not only seek to enhance the quality of life of older people but should be developed in an integrated way to make it accessible and responsive to the specific needs of an ageing population.

Older people should be directly involved in the development of policies that impact on them in order to give them a real say in what happens in their own lives and what happens in the areas in which they live.

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Design places for people

Public spaces designed with an ageing population in mind can have a positive impact on how people feel; they create opportunities for health and encourage participation. They provide a sense of security and enhance quality of life.

As people age, physical and cognitive changes can impact on mobility. The ability to interpret the built environment can also be impacted. The way in which places and buildings are configured, patterns of movement through and within space, and the ability to easily access useable open space therefore becomes more important.

A well designed public realm will promote ease of access and be inclusive regardless of age or ability. It will also support healthy ageing by offering opportunities for an active and interactive lifestyle. Attractive, useable spaces

that are perceived as safe encourage use, enhance the confidence and motivation of older people in using them, and promote active and connected living. Incorporating age friendly accessible design and adaptability into new developments will also have a positive impact.

Practically, this means integrating key design principles into our urban areas such as passive surveillance; frequent crossing points; reduced clutter from street furniture; and areas to rest.

A well designed public realm will promote ease of access and be inclusive regardless of age or ability.



Dundalk Town Centre, County Louth, Ireland – An existing central urban space was redeveloped by the Local Authority using high quality materials. The space can be used by a range of age groups, is a focus for community events and improves the sense of place in the heart of the large town. The space is also close to a number of specific age friendly developments which have been constructed in the town centre.

Photo: Dundalk Town Centre



Living Alloa



Clackmannanshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Chlach Mhanann
www.clacks.gov.uk



A **partnership** project using the redevelopment of a vacant town centre site to create an **intergenerational living** environment within the heart of **Alloa** and act as a catalyst for regeneration.

A **multi-agency** design process transformed unremarkable plans for a flatted development into a high quality scheme based on **dementia friendly design** and **place making principles**, extending beyond the site boundaries.

An **A&DS** led design review exercise brought together a variety of stakeholders, from planners and architects to dementia and social care professionals, ensuring the highest standard of living environment, inside and out. The resulting proposals are fully informed by principles of **Town Centre Living: A Caring Place**.

The **Your Town Audit** helped identify priority areas for action around the development. Using the **Place Standard** tool and stakeholder workshops. We were able to identify town centre actions that were tailored to support town centre living and contribute to vitality and viability.

The **Town Centre Capital Fund** grant will allow us to deliver 5 projects identified through this exercise in time for completion of the new residential development. These include a new active travel hub and series of access and streetscape improvements making the town safer, more legible and more enjoyable to move through and spend time in.

“ We want our town centres to be sustainable and thriving places and this funding is an important step towards making improvements to Alloa.

Councillor Craig Holden, Place Convener, Clackmannanshire Council

Working together, we used the place-standard tool to identify what was important to older people.

Anthea Coulter, Chief Executive (CTS) Clackmannanshire Third Sector Interface

“ The collaboration between the Council, CTSI and Alloa First has ensured the projects truly reflect the priorities of residents, visitors and businesses.

Hugh McMichael, Chairman Alloa First

The Primrose Street development will provide intergenerational apartments in the heart of Alloa, and along with these projects, will redefine the Town Centre area.

Jo Aitken, Kingdom Housing Association

1

Active Travel Hub

Re-purposing of former public toilet to active travel hub and visitor information centre.

2

King Street

Enhance safe crossing opportunities on desire lines and environmental improvements

3

Shillinghill

Re-model social space and improve connections to college

4

Link to High Street

Make key pedestrian route safe and legible.

5

Bank Street

Re-model poorly functioning space and improve connectivity.

“ The proposed improvements to the town centre - identified through the Council's use of the Place Standard and through engagement with A&DS and other partners - form a significant positive step in the development of the Council's strategy for ongoing transformational change in Alloa town centre.

Dermaid Lawlor (Director of Place) A&DS

This innovative development will ensure that care can be delivered in the right place by the right people at the right time.

Paula Shiels, Clackmannanshire and Stirling Health & Social Care Partnership



Living Alloa, Scotland - Clackmannanshire Council and their partners applied the Place Standard tool to the redevelopment of a vacant town centre site to create an intergenerational living environment to act as a catalyst for regeneration. The engagement and design process resulted in a high quality scheme based on dementia friendly design and place making principles.

Source: Clackmannanshire Council / Alloa First. Further information available at www.placestandard.scot and www.ads.org.uk/place_standard_case_study_alloa

Where you live impacts how you live

The ability to access services and facilities can affect the quality of life in an area.

As people age, they become more reliant on their immediate environment for support and assistance. The type of services required changes and the frequency with which medical and community based services are used can also increase. The development of a supportive urban environment which promotes opportunities for participation is therefore key.

Participation is enhanced where services can be accessed with ease via a short walk; where residential

developments are located along existing transport corridors, or in proximity to urban centres or local neighbourhood centres; and where a range of dwelling types are incorporated to maximise social inclusion and minimise social isolation. It is important that the transport needs of local communities are met as accessibility to connected public transport can help to improve mobility.

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The Convent Court low-rise project in Jersey is a plan to construct 21 new social rented units of accommodation for households over-55s due for completion in mid-2021. It will include a bespoke facility for Age Concern on the ground floor. The location of the flats as part of the Age Concern headquarters will provide residents with the opportunity to make use of the facilities provided by the charity and increase their opportunities for social and community interaction.

The development's location in Jersey also benefits from being within close walking proximity to the centre of St. Helier, communal facilities such as the Millennium Park, and link to the island's bus network with a bus stop located directly outside the building.

Photo: Convent Court, © Government of Jersey



Social isolation / loneliness

Public policy concerning loneliness and social isolation appears to be shifting towards viewing loneliness as a public health problem, with older people at risk of experiencing protracted periods of isolation.

Whether in general needs housing, or in purpose-built accommodation, such as sheltered/retirement housing or extra care, it is more important than ever to deploy safe and appropriate systems that enable connectedness; from the landline to digital, to the internal design and layout of schemes, and to building more resilient care and support networks.

It has been argued that older people know loneliness is a looming part of retirement and should take steps

to offset it. This argument has many similarities with providing housing for older people. Insufficient preparation during periods of good health in later years might translate to an increased risk of a crisis movement during later life, in which options are more limited and where older people are more likely to live in poor accommodation.

Research shows that half a million older people regularly experience protracted periods of isolation...



Le Vieux Jardin is a housing development in Guernsey with flexibility of tenure across a range of needs, which is within easy walking distance of the extra care facility, La Nouvelle Maritaine. The full mobility standards of the ground-floor flats allow residents to remain in their home in spite of any mobility issues they may develop. Research has shown that enabling individuals to remain in their homes as they age, with suitable adaptations made as needed, has significant health benefits. The design of the general needs flats at Le Vieux Jardin facilitates this and enables residents to live there independently for longer.

Photo: Le Vieux Jardin, ©Awaiting credit



Flexibility of tenure

Offering older people a better choice of accommodation to suit their changing needs can help them live independently for longer, feel more connected to their communities and help reduce costs to the social care and health systems. Older people want to stay in their homes as much as possible, or if this is not possible, remain within their existing community. There are therefore implications for the general needs housing being built as they will need to be easily adaptable. This is something to be considered from the early stages of policy-making through to decision-taking.

The housing needs of specific groups, such as older people and people with disabilities with particular requirements, should be addressed through the development of clear policies.

There are different types of specialist housing designed to meet the diverse needs of older people. Plans will need to provide for specialist housing where a need exists and seek to be innovative and diverse.

Many older people, however, may not want or need specialist accommodation or care, and policy-makers will therefore need to identify the role that general housing may play, and linked to this, will need to consider the size, location and quality of dwellings needed.

Older people want to stay in their homes as much as possible, or if not possible, remain within their existing community.



The Ava Housing Model in Ireland is an innovative model designed to support older homeowners to reconfigure their family-sized homes by creating an independent living area suitable for the older homeowner, eliminating the need to use the stairs, while also creating an affordable one bedroomed rental accommodation upstairs. Using a Universal Design approach, this promotes an efficient way to use existing housing stock by carving much needed new one bedroomed rental capacity from existing dwellings in mature urban areas, allowing the homeowner to live securely and independently downstairs, whilst promoting interaction with the person living upstairs, thereby reducing isolation.

Photo: Ava Housing Model, ©Ava Housing

