POLICY BRIEFING

HAPPI 2 - Housing our Ageing Population: Plan for Implementation

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Summary

The HAPPI 2 Housing our Ageing Population: Plan for Implementation by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Housing and Care for Older People recommends that:

• policy-makers and practitioners recognise bespoke housing for older people as a win-win policy, fostering their wellbeing and independence while releasing family homes and reducing health care costs

• the Cabinet Office establish an external task force to review policy co-ordination across the DCLG, DoH and the Homes and Community Agency to progress implementing the Plan

• Local Planning authorities ensure that every Local Plan contains a targeted strategy for housing older people, and, where necessary, bring forward appropriate sites to fill any identified shortfall in market provision.

This briefing will be useful to those working in Local Planning and Housing Departments and Adult Care Services.

Briefing in full

There are more 65-year olds in the UK today than at any point in history, according to the Office of National Statistics, due to a dramatic improvement in life expectancy. In 2009, on behalf of DCLG and DoH, the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) commissioned the first landmark HAPPI report, Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation. The HAPPI 2 report, published in November 2012, proposes a plan for providing quality housing for older people, designed to foster independence and social interaction.
POLICY BRIEFING

The original HAPPI report looked at how to meet the needs and aspirations of older people. HCA gathered a team of designers, architects, planners, housing providers and older citizens. It also organised site visits to exemplars of innovation in England and Europe.

The HAPPI 2 report re-iterates the extensive short- and long-term benefits arising from good quality housing for older people: improving their well-being, reducing health and social care costs, and freeing up housing for families and younger people.

The original HAPPI design criteria

The first HAPPI report recommended a nationwide effort to provide desirable, purpose-built homes fulfilling the needs of older people. This housing should become an exemplar for all housing, bringing in higher standards for design and space. The report singled out the crucial role of Local Planning Authorities in enabling desirable housing provision at appropriate locations near amenities.

HAPPI highlighted the determining role of design in making age-inclusive housing a reality. It identified the following ten critical design elements:

1. generous internal space standards
2. circulation spaces avoiding an ‘institutional’ feel and facilitating interaction
3. lots of natural light – not only in the home but in ‘circulation’ spaces
4. shared facilities, and ‘community hubs’ in neighbourhoods without a hub
5. balconies and outdoor space, doing away with internal corridors
6. ‘care aware’ design for emerging telecare and telehealthcare technologies
7. high energy efficiency and ventilation standards avoiding overheating
8. ‘home zones’ with priority to pedestrians
9. extra storage for belongings, and for bicycles
10. plants and trees.

Exemplar homes for older people to date

To date, high quality housing schemes for older people have been built to Extra Care Standards for several housing associations, for example. These are available for rent, shared ownership or purchase. Extra Care standards feature communal space which can absorb up to 40% of total floor space because of their generously sized communal rooms and dining facilities, as well as offices, and assisted bathing rooms on all floors.

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Extra Care standards will not become the norm at a time of economic downturn; in most new developments for affordable housing, the communal space footprint is reduced in size.

The report provides useful photographs of Extra Care standard housing schemes. In Merseyside, Heald Farm Court, under St Helen’s Housing Association, provides Extra Care standard homes for independent living for the over 55s with communal and leisure facilities, with medical help at hand at all times. These are for rent, shared ownership or purchase. The Trees Housing scheme in Highgate, North London, was conceived before the publication of the first HAPPI report. It provides forty affordable Extra Care flats in an attractive setting.

**Innovative Councils**

Since the publication of the first HAPPI report, local authorities such as Sunderland City Council have been credited with taking the initiative. The Council has developed a vision for housing with care for older people, to help them achieve greater independence; their vision also covers housing for people with dementia. The Council sees provision of better alternative accommodation for older people as a way of resolving under-occupation.

Sunderland CC published the ground-breaking *Enabling Independence Design Guide* drawing on HAPPI design principles. The Council aims to keep couples together in their own homes for longer. It wants to give people a choice of tenure best suited to their financial circumstances, and to provide energy-efficient, warm homes.

In addition, Sunderland CC aims for a higher level of personalised care, with more care staff and peer support available to carers to stem ‘carer fatigue’. To prevent hospital bed-blocking, it seeks to provide accommodation to help re-skill discharged patients in a domestic setting, before returning home.

More generally, the likely development of co-operative forms of housing for older people, such as co-housing and co-operatives, was also put forward during the 2012 APPG inquiry. Such collaborative solutions are already emerging. At least two co-housing projects for older people have come to the fore in London, one having recently obtained planning permission. However, these schemes have encountered obstacles within their Local Planning Departments.

**The impact of the downturn**

Since the publication of the first HAPPI report, the worsening economy and the austerity programme have generally dampened the public and private sectors’ enthusiasm for innovation. This has resulted in limited take-up of HAPPI’s recommendations.
At least these recommendations are beginning to be acknowledged at policy level the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Laying the Foundations: a Housing Strategy for England (2012) both highlight the importance of housing for older people, along the lines of HAPPI’s principles. In addition, the DoH Care and Support Housing Fund is providing capital funding of £300 million for housing which will be delivered by HCA and the Greater London Authority. The APPG expects that this funding will encourage social and private sector providers and local commissioners to put forward more innovative specialist housing for older and disabled people. If that is the case, one of HAPPI 2’s principal recommendations will be met.

Can design standards be compromised?

The HAPPI 2 inquiry Members heard that “upwards from 80% of older people choose to stay put in their homes”. However, the HAPPI 2 report stresses that older people are extremely reluctant to downsize, despite the cost of energy and home maintenance, and the difficulty of hazardous steps and stairs. The report therefore cautions against compromising its recommended standards:

“Only if the alternative is of sufficient size and attractiveness will, with all the HAPPI components, will this drive for meeting the housing standards of young and old be realised.” p12

HAPPI 2’s improved design criteria go further than the Lifetime Home standards assembled by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation some fifteen years ago. Lifetime Homes are designed for households to adapt to different stages of life - from childrearing to retirement. However, HAPPI 2 is clear that a return to these former standards would compromise the quality required to persuade older people to move.

The list below outlines the refined HAPPI 2 criteria:

• “Provide accessibility to wheelchair standards, in excess of Lifetime Home Standards, with lift access to all apartments

• Offer a mix of space standards that exceed ‘minimum’ requirements … dictated by meeting the accessibility requirements (two bed flats at least 70m sq. and one bed flats at least 58m sq.)

• Concentrate on…apartments or single-storey dwellings (or dwellings which provide self-contained accommodation on one level)

• Notwithstanding proposed housing benefit reform, provide predominantly two-bed apartments because of the greater flexibility that they offer

• Incorporate communal facilities to promote social interaction. This could be limited to a single, multi-functional space with ancillary accommodation
POLICY BRIEFING

• Provide for high levels of energy efficiency to minimise energy costs and reduce fuel poverty

• Locate in an area which constitutes a Lifetime Neighbourhood, in terms of accessibility to transport, retail and other amenities and facilities that older people need

• Set …a minimum age requirement that will require a lower level of parking provision

• Offer a housing tenure and management regime that will ensure that some control is retained by the residents, and

• Provide the ability to incorporate ‘care aware’ smart technology to help with future personal care and support.”

Obstacles to progress

A government Partial Regulatory Impact Assessment by CLG had already concluded that there are considerable health and social care benefits to implementing the Lifetime Homes Standard such as reduced demand for both temporary and permanent longer-term residential care. The Assessment strengthens therefore the case for implementing the recent HAPPI design criteria.

However, there are financial insecurities in the current climate which make it more difficult to obtain private or public sector funding for older people’s housing. Capital finance is generally difficult to secure. Prices need to reflect the extra cost of additional space, communal areas and proximity to amenities which younger households do not require - will this be reflected in market prices? For social housing, an 80% market rent is already hard to achieve: extra service charges for communal services make it that much harder. Supporting People grants are harder to secure. Welfare reform only fuels uncertainty - for younger people more so than for their elders.

A number of Councils are increasingly moving to personal care budgets, and re-negotiating block contracts for care and housing-related support. The report notes:

“despite other advantages, these can threaten the viability of providers’ arrangements for delivering housing-related support and domiciliary care to older residents. It was noted that some providers have already withdrawn from delivering care in the absence of any security around long-term funding.”p15

Finally, the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) adds charges of up to £10,000 per dwelling in some areas; the extra costs of housing for older people risk further raising the charge.

HAPPI 2 recommendations

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The secretary to the APPG Inquiry, Jeremy Porteous, is also director of The Housing Learning and Improvement Network (LIN). This is his snapshot of the HAPPI 2 recommendations:

1. “A Cabinet Office Task Force should bring together the DoH and for DCLG to take forward the nationwide drive to build the homes needed by an ageing population

2. DCLG should encourage and incentivise the private sector and registered social landlords to meet the rising demand of those seeking to move to elegant, functional, sustainable and manageable homes for later life” (note: the APPG recommends specifically a higher rate of New Homes Bonus and extension of the Right Buy/New Buy support with mortgages helping first time buyers to purchase the homes of older people moving to retirement housing)

3. “The Department of Health should tailor its £300m Health, Care and Support Housing Fund to ensure more schemes are designed to HAPPI principles

4. Private sector and registered social landlords, with government support, should develop a HAPPI kite mark to raise HAPPI’s market profile

5. Working alongside local authorities, HCA should lead in championing HAPPI to ensure that a clear targeted strategy for housing older people forms part of every local plan and that, where necessary, appropriate sites are brought forward specifically to fill any identified shortfall in market provision

6. Planners should recognise the special nature of high-quality retirement housing in their requirements for affordable housing and for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charges

7. Local housing and social care departments should give strategic priority to assessing and investing in older people’s housing; and maintain accessible housing registers.”

Comment

England’s population is now over 53 million people; 8.7 million are over 65, 1.2 million are over 85. As these figures increase, institutional care will have to become a solution of last resort. With unprecedented longevity becoming the norm, the
wellbeing of older people calls for sweeping institutional change. Housing solutions need to strike the right balance between independence and social interaction.

Who will provide most of the right kind of adaptable housing for older people is the question. Secure long-term funding streams hold the key to provision. Given budget constraints and uncertainty about levels of care provision by English local authorities, secure funding cannot be guaranteed. As a result, not-for-profit housing associations cannot fulfil the potential role played by associations in countries such as the Netherlands. The Netherlands have direct person-based, long-term care and social health insurance.

As the Draft Care and Support Bill progresses through Parliament, there is concern that the opportunity for a more holistic system could be lost. If that is the case, a win-win housing solution for older and younger generations may be missed, at the cost of greater individual and collective wellbeing. The House of Lords and Commons joint committee on the draft bill has just published its report and included in its recommendations are ones to improve both the impact and the reach of the reform by recognising housing as a key partner of adult care and support. The draft bill has been widely welcomed, but as the joint committee emphasises, it can be improved - this is a critical area for that improvement.

For more information about this, or any other LGiU member briefing, please contact Janet Sillett, Briefings Manager, on janet.sillett@lgiu.org.uk