

LEE LIMING
PROGRAMME IN
AGEING URBANISM

Housing for Older Population¹

Lifetime Homes and Lifetime Neighbourhoods, UK

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1. Lifetime Homes

Lifetime home is a concept introduced in the UK to build more inclusive and flexible housing to meet future demand of an ageing society. In particular, to build homes that will be adaptable enough to match a lifetime's changing needs.

The concept was initially developed in 1991 by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Habinteg Housing Association. Lifetime Homes are ordinary homes designed as per the Lifetime Home Standards, incorporating 16 Design Criteria that can be universally applied to new homes at minimal cost.

¹ This is an evolving database. We will be adding more

examples and cases over time.

What are Lifetime Homes Standards?

Lifetime Homes Standards are inexpensive, simple features designed to make homes more flexible and functional for everyone including families, disabled and older people. They include future-proofing features that enable adaptations to be made when needed. The sixteen criteria include:

1. Parking (width or widening capability)
2. Approach to dwelling from parking (distance, gradients and widths)
3. Approach to all entrances
4. Entrances
5. Communal stairs and lifts
6. Internal doorways and hallways
7. Circulation space
8. Entrance level living space
9. Potential for entrance level bed space
10. Entrance level WC and shower drainage
11. WC and bathroom walls
12. Stairs and potential through-floor lift in dwellings
13. Potential for fitting of hoists and bedroom / bathroom relationship
14. Bathrooms
15. Glazing and window handle
16. Location of service controls.

The concept of Lifetime Homes is proposed as a more inclusive, less stigmatising approach

that has the potential to render the concept of 'special needs' otiose.

Implementation

On 25 February 2008, the UK Government announced its intention to work towards all new homes being built to Lifetime Homes Standards by 2013. The Department of Communities and Local Government has made Lifetime Homes Standards a mandatory part of the Code for Sustainable Homes to encourage progressively increased take-up in new build projects. These homes are based on the standard two- (or more) storey family house that people in the UK have grown up with. Homes built this way look normal and a casual passer-by on the street will likely not notice that the house has a wider door and more generous interior design than the average older family home. Adopting the Lifetime Homes standard could yield several benefits,

- It could substantially enhance the capacity of ordinary, mainstream homes to accommodate the majority of risks which ordinary people face in their lives that expose them to architectural disability. Residents should find these houses more flexible and spacious than a normal family house. Many of the problems that confront older people should be easier to address in a Lifetime Home than in

- an old-fashioned family house (Hanson, 2001);
- The costs associated with its introduction are arguably small in relation to both the capital building costs and the lifetime costs of the home (Cobbold, 1997).

Box 1: Lifetime Home Case study

Darwin Court, Southwark, London

Architect: Jestico and Whiles

Developer: Walter Llewellyn & Sons

Client: Peabody Trust Local authority: Southwark

Size: 76 units

Tenure: General needs and supported housing for 50+

Located in Southwark, Darwin Court was designed to the Lifetime Homes Standard to be a contemporary housing scheme and community centre. The housing stock was aimed to promote independent living for ageing population of over 50 years in the surrounding area. The development provides a cluster of general needs and supported housing, around a central community 'hub'. This community centre includes amenities like a swimming pool, café, etc.

The objective of the Darwin Court scheme:

- to enhance the quality of life of the older residents
- change society's thinking of accommodation provision for older people

By adhering to the Lifetime homes standards, this development has succeeded in making all flats flexible and easily convertible if/when the future needs of the tenant changed. The design of flats caters to both non-disabled and disabled older tenants.

This project has received an Honourable Mention in the Civic Trust Awards in 2004 and a European Wel_hops (Welfare Housing Policies for Older People) Housing Design Award in January 2007.

Source:

http://www.lifetimehomes.org.uk/data/files/Reports/lifetimehomes1_casestudies.pdf, Accessed on 30 October 2015.

But, challenges remain,

- A main challenge is that, if its implementation is confined to the social housing sector, it may simply perpetuate the existing distinction between mainstream and secondary housing in a new form. However, if it

is more widely adopted, the Lifetime Homes paradigm has the potential to widen choice and provide a firm foundation for integrated housing, support and care for people of all ages;

- Another relates to the cost of lifetime homes. There are cases of some developers perceiving them to be expensive and to require additional space. *The Future of the Code for Sustainable Homes* has estimated that the compliance with the Lifetime Homes Standards could result in modest additional costs of around £547 per new home. The cost of adapting standard designs to meet Lifetime Homes Standards may be greater than £550 per home. English Partnerships found in its 'lessons learned' study that additional costs can be avoided if they are designed-out early enough. That is, the Lifetime Homes Standards could be incorporated economically in new build homes if this is done at the same time as existing designs are revised to meet changes to legislation (such as improved energy performance requirement).

Evidence suggests that developers will be able to achieve densities of over 60 homes per hectare. The Department of Communities and Local Government is constantly trying to work

with stakeholders to identify the most economical way to achieve the flexibility that Lifetime Homes require.

2. *Lifetime Neighbourhoods*

The concept of the Lifetime Neighbourhood is linked to the concept of the Lifetime Home. It is designed to be sustainable in terms of changing climatic conditions, transport services, housing, public services, civic space and amenities, and to be welcoming, accessible and inclusive in terms of all that it takes for people, regardless of age, or health, or disability to take part in the life of the community around them. That is, Lifetime Neighbourhood is underpinned by the principles of inclusive design, sustainability and participation. As the Department of Communities and Local Government explained, it is important to note that lifetime neighbourhoods should be viewed as sustainable communities that offer a good quality of life to all generations. More specifically, they should aim to be:

“Accessible and inclusive

- Aesthetically pleasing and safe (in terms of both traffic and crime), and easy and pleasant to access; and
- A community that offers plenty of services, facilities and open space.

Furthermore, we can add that lifetime neighbourhoods are likely to foster:

- A strong social and civic fabric, including volunteering, informal networks, and a culture of consultation and user empowerment amongst decision-makers; and
- A strong local identity and sense of place.”

The main components of a Lifetime Neighbourhood would, thus, include,

- Supporting residents to develop lifetime neighbourhoods, especially resident empowerment;
- Access;
- Services and amenities;
- Built and natural environments;
- Social networks/well-being;
- Housing.

It is a neighbourhood that works for everyone including older people. Older people are not just beneficiaries of Lifetime Neighbourhoods; they also have a key role to play in their creation. Older people play a major social, economic and civic role alongside other generations.

Implementation

The Department of Communities and Local Government has begun to work with volunteer local authorities and their partners, with the Chartered Association of Building Engineers and the Academy for Sustainable Communities, to further identify and share good practice in turning existing neighbourhoods into Lifetime Neighbourhoods for the future. The intent is to work together to develop the Lifetime Neighbourhood concept and to publish practical guidance - planning and implementation guidance about the design of Lifetime Neighbourhoods, for example,

- Paving and kerb design;
- Access to public amenities;
- Public toilets;
- Street lighting;
- Accessible public transport;
- Appropriately located bus stops;
- Disabled parking bays;
- Green spaces; and
- City design including information, finding one’s way and obtaining services.

Residents remain at the centre of achieving change within the neighbourhoods. The overarching principle is that of resident empowerment. This involves public sector, private sector, voluntary and community organisations working in such a way that the residents, of any age, are enabled to:

- Set out their needs and concerns;
- Identify priorities for action within their own areas;
- Work towards bringing about change and delivery themselves; and/or
- Make the case for the range of services that they want others to deliver into their communities.

Box 2: Examples of Resident Led approaches to establishing Lifetime Neighbourhoods

- *London Tenants' Federation (LTF)*: Development of resident-led definition of lifetime neighbourhoods.
- *Action for Communities in Rural England (ACRE)*: set out a step by step guide for communities to involve all sections of the community and covers all matters that affect their quality of life in a local area, particularly those that need most support

- *Development of an 'age-friendly' action plan – Eastleigh Southern Parishes Older People's Forum:*

A resident/ community group/ voluntary sector partnership; a method for focusing thinking at local level about the range and type of issues that go into making up an 'age-friendly neighbourhood' and that could be incorporated into community-led planning approaches such as parish plans.

Source:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6248/2044122.pdf, Accessed on 30 October 2015.

The key role for practitioners is in facilitating a consideration of the responses necessary within neighbourhoods to address the role of neighbourhood spaces in the lives of the ageing population. Planning for Lifetime Neighbourhood will involve place-based design of neighbourhoods and services.

Sources: J. Hanson (2001) From Sheltered Housing to Lifetime Homes: an inclusive approach to housing, Discovery, UCL, <http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/3854/1/3854.pdf> Accessed 28 October 2015; Department for Communities and Local Government (2008) Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods: A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society, London, Communities and Local Government Publications; C. Cobbold (1997) Cost-benefit analysis of Lifetime Homes, York, JRF; <http://www.lifetimehomes.org.uk/> Accessed on 28 October 2015; M. Roys (2012) Assessing the health benefits of Lifetime Homes, London, Department for Communities and Local Government; E. Harding (2007) Towards Lifetime Neighbourhoods: Designing Sustainable Communities for All - A Discussion Paper, London, Department for Communities and Local Government and International Longevity Centre UK, Accessed on 30 October 2015 ; M. Bevan and K. Croucher (2011) *Lifetime Neighbourhoods*, London, Department for Communities and Local Government, Accessed on 30 October 2015 at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6248/2044122.pdf