Extra-care Housing: Brief development

DWELL Working Document July 2015 DRAFT

Purpose of this brief development document

In recent years, the development of specialised sheltered and ‘extra-care housing’ has attracted significant attention as a means of providing an independent and supportive environment for later life.

Although this form of accommodation offers a range of potential benefits to residents (as one of a number of housing options in later life), the complexities around housing tenure, capital and revenue funding, design quality, care provision, and building management pose a number of challenges for providers, commissioners, planners, and designers.

A wide range of agencies - from national policy-makers, local government, care providers, housing associations, private developers, architects and researchers - have examined the challenges of briefing, designing, procuring and managing a viable and sustainable specialised housing offer.

This DWELL working document draws together this existing policy and practice, with the aim of developing a set of clear briefing and design principles for new-build extra-care housing.

Unless stated otherwise all images and text are © DWELL / University of Sheffield. Reproduction by permission of DWELL only.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing a generic design brief for extra-care housing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site selection + context</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form and massing</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thresholds and privacy</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual dwellings</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Definitions

The term ‘Extra-care housing’ is used to describe a range of housing for older people who can no longer (or no longer want to) live in general-needs housing but do not need 24-hour or complex medical supervision. This housing model typically offers groups of independently accessed apartments (or other clusters of dwellings) with additional communal facilities and flexible on-site care/support services attached such as support from a scheme manager.

The above diagram (adapted from the HAPPI 2 report) sets out the complex landscape of housing options in later life. Sheltered and extra-care housing falls between Planning Use Class C2 and C3, which may cause a number of issues for Local Authorities and developers (eg. affordable housing provision or CIL). A number of discussion documents on the Housing LIN network have covered these issues in greater detail.

---

1. DCLG (2008), Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods, P. 133
   Retirement Housing Group (2013) ‘Community Infrastructure Levy and Sheltered Housing/Extra Care Developments’
**Downsizing and the preventative agenda**

Extra-care housing has also been identified as offering potential cost savings to Local Authorities (compared to expensive residential care). This is in part because the ‘housing’ and ‘care’ elements are paid for separately. It has been suggested that a greater supply of specialist housing might offer a ‘win-win’ situation for local authorities by accommodating older residents in more appropriate housing, mitigating the cost and distress of ‘crisis’ moves, and at the same time freeing up larger ‘under-occupied’ family homes by encouraging downsizing.

For residents, well-designed and managed extra-care housing can offer a range of benefits. However the competing ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors behind any decision to move are complex and different in each individual case. In most cases there are also a number competing motivations for ‘staying put’. The diagram below, adapted from the report ‘Integrated by Design’ by PRP Architects, broadly outlines the common move motivators and housing options in later life. Extra-care Housing is identified by category 4.

Some difficulties persist in the level of public awareness of new forms of extra-care housing (compared to the established residential care model). Recent research has also indicated that older people can actually be put off by specialist ‘retirement’ or ‘sheltered’ housing if it is named or marketed as specifically ‘for older people’.

---

4 Weis and Tuck, (2013)  
6 PRP Architects (2014), 'Integrated by Design', p.11  
7 Bailey (2014) 'HousingLIN Case Study 78'
Extra-care Housing: Definitions

Development models

**Private Sector**
The largest private specialist housing provider is McCarthy and Stone, with a reported 70% share of the private market of specialist retirement housing. They have adopted the terms ‘Retirement Living’ and ‘Assisted Living’, promoting the benefits as:

> "companionship, privacy on your terms and all the help you need to enjoy life and maintain your independence." \(^8\)

Private development of extra-care housing tends to be currently focussed on the higher end of the market, and therefore concentrated in areas of the country with higher housing wealth.\(^9\)

**Social housing sector**
In areas outside of high housing wealth, registered providers (RPs) are the largest provider of extra-care housing. A number of other voluntary, community, and faith sector organisations are also active in developing and managing extra-care accommodation. Dwellings can be a mix of affordable rent, leasehold purchase, or shared ownership. As in all development models, care and support may be provided by the organisation owning the building or by an external agency.

**Local Authority**
Local authorities (LAs) have been active in developing a portfolio of extra-care housing, often to replace LA-run residential care homes.

Councils may also act as development partners alongside private or RSLs contributing capital funding, land and/or be a source of revenue funding through the Housing Revenue Account.

**Cooperative models**
An emerging alternative to private or RSL extra-care housing is the so-called ‘Elderflowers’ model. This model has similarities to co-housing, with communal facilities and care services owned and managed by residents themselves.\(^10\)

---

\(^8\) McCarthy and Stone [http://www.mccarthyandstone.co.uk/assisted-living/](http://www.mccarthyandstone.co.uk/assisted-living/)

\(^9\) Hartley (2014) HousingLIN Viewpoint 61

\(^10\) Barac (2013) Elderflowers Project
Key principles of extra-care housing

- Independently accessed (and metered) apartments or other dwellings clustered together on one site.
- Developments include a range of communal facilities typically paid for by an additional service charge (see programme section).
- The housing element of the scheme is not registered by the Care Quality Commission.
- Care and support required by the residents is provided by a separately registered domiciliary care agency (often based on site) and bought in by residents on an ‘as needed’ basis.
- Extra-care housing caters for a range of care and support needs. A key aspect of long-term sustainability is the ongoing balance of care and support needs within each development.
- The preventative agenda often associated with extra-care housing requires a focus on ‘HAPPI’ design quality principles (attractive, accessible, good daylighting + thermal comfort) and links to local infrastructure (facilities, services + social opportunities)
- Extra-care housing can fall between planning use classes C2 and C3, and therefore often requires local policies / enabling to ensure viability of developments.

Research question(s):

How well do older people understand the different forms of extra-care housing?

What are older people’s preconceptions around terms such as ‘sheltered’ or ‘extra-care’ housing?

Is a ‘rebranding’ of these housing types required for the 21st century?

Does the discourse around housing ‘choice’ in later life reflect the experience of older people?

What are the processes that inform older people’s decision-making around their future housing situation?

‘Brunswick Gardens’ extra-care housing in Sheffield developed in 2008 by the Extra Care Charitable Trust in partnership with Sheffield City Council.
Extra-care Housing: Site context

Site development drivers and constraints

The following list illustrates the broad constraints and drivers that impact on site availability and selection for extra care housing. The italicised text denotes key statutory frameworks, data or guidance related to each driver.

- National/ local political priorities
- Land availability (current / future)
  Strategic housing land availability assessment (SHLAA)
- Land ownership (council / private) and land disposal policy
  Section 123 of Local Government Act
- Local developers - level of activity and type (private / RSL)
- Finance availability
- Planning constraints and allocations
  Local plan, green belt, planning gain (CIL) + affordable housing provision
- Land values
- Local housing market (tenure / housetype mix + house prices)
- Existing specialist / retirement housing provision in the area
  Council housing / Housing Association / Private sector
- Housing market and demand (current / predicted)
  Strategic Housing Market Analysis (SHMA), census data, HCA SIGnet tool, Housing LIN SHOPS tool
- Topography, urban form and neighbourhood characteristics
  Local planning policy, urban design appraisal
- Accessibility of local health services
  GIS mapping (GP surgery, pharmacy, optician, dentist), future healthcare planning (CCGs + health and wellbeing boards)
- Accessibility and range of local facilities
  GIS mapping (parks + green space, shops, cafes, pubs, community centres, libraries), consultation with residents, urban design appraisal
- Transport links + public transport accessibility
  GIS mapping (public transport stops + routes), future transport planning (local council + private transport operators)

The detailed analysis of many of these drivers falls outside of the scope of a design brief, and requires coordination with a range of agencies. This might include local councils (planning / development / housing / property services), the HCA, national government (Secretary of State) and developers (RSLs / private).

Research question(s):

What tools are available to aid local policy-makers and planners to appraise specific sites?

How are different (or competing) priorities weighed up against one another? (eg. land values and demand for specialist housing)

What role can participatory mapping / engagement processes feasibly play within the complex development models associated with extra-care housing?
Mapping site constraints and drivers

Selecting and acquiring a suitable site is a fundamental stage in developing and designing a successful extra-care housing scheme. As the list on the opposite page illustrates, this process is highly complex and involves coordination across a number of agencies.

Within these processes mapping can play an important role in informing the selection of site and development of a detailed brief / programme. Maps can be powerful tools to convey a range of information - from precise quantitative data to more subjective, sensitive, and propositional forms of site analysis.

Quantitative spatial analysis tools (GIS)

Based on the availability of up to date (and reliable) spatial data, mapping tools can be used to display and analyse a range of spatial characteristics of a site and neighbourhood. This might include:

- Local demographics (existing and projected)
- Local housing mix and tenures
- Crime + health data
- Topography
- Travel distances (and exclusion zones) for different types of facilities

Participatory mapping tools

Developing a good understanding of local constraints and drivers requires more than just desktop-based analysis. As experts of their own neighbourhood, local residents can identify issues unseen to external professionals. For example: a pub or community centre near to a development site would appear to be ‘easily accessible’, but may not be well-used or valued by the local community.

A participatory process involves local residents in helping to map local needs, aspirations, priorities, and future visions for a neighbourhood. It is also a way of keeping local people informed and getting ‘buy-in’ to any new housing development.

Hybrid mapping tools

Hybrid approaches to mapping local facilities can be used to overlay more nuanced forms of information onto spatial data. Much of this information will be collected by spending time within a neighbourhood - walking and talking to people at different times of the day and week.

- Routes + movement, including desire lines, key views, and barriers
- Local facilities - including accessibility, barriers and value
- Local history and heritage
- Usage patterns (and tensions) by different types of users
- Social spaces / meeting places (and spatial tension between groups)
A defining feature of extra-care housing is the provision of communal spaces and facilities. These facilities underpin many of the health and well-being benefits associated with this model, particularly in terms of sociability, physical and mental activity, and developing informal support networks.¹

The table below sets out the range of options for communal spaces within an extra-care housing brief. The categories across the top (essential / desirable / premium) are illustrative only and are dependent on the local context and funding model of specific developments.

### Feature / Benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ESSENTIAL</th>
<th>DESIRABLE</th>
<th>PREMIUM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social space</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>informal interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with residents,</td>
<td>Common room / lounge</td>
<td>External terrace(s)</td>
<td>Separate function room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>visitors + others</td>
<td>Guest accommodation</td>
<td>Separate games room</td>
<td>(stage, PA system)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eating / drinking</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>provision of on-site</td>
<td>Tea-making facilities</td>
<td>Cafe-bar + kitchenette</td>
<td>Restaurant + kitchen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meals</td>
<td>(in common room)</td>
<td>(sandwiches, toasts etc)</td>
<td>(lunch + evening meals)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activity space</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for adult learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and social interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outdoor space</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for exercise,</td>
<td>Shared private gardens</td>
<td>Balconies</td>
<td>Range of gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relaxation and</td>
<td>(with seating / walking paths)</td>
<td>Growing space</td>
<td>Golf course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td>(greenhouse, allotments)</td>
<td>Tennis courts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health + fitness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>space</td>
<td>Treatment rooms</td>
<td>Gym</td>
<td>Swimming pool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for exercise,</td>
<td>(physio, )</td>
<td></td>
<td>Health club / spa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relaxation and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>treatment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other communal</strong></td>
<td>Laundry facilities / sluice room</td>
<td>Visiting greengrocer</td>
<td>Convenience store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>facilities</td>
<td>Scooter store / charging</td>
<td>Hairdresser</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Management</strong></td>
<td>Staff room / changing</td>
<td>Staffed reception desk</td>
<td>On-site staff accommodati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>facilities</strong></td>
<td>Refuse + plant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: an approximate schedule of areas for some of these facilities is provided in the extra-care design guidance published by PRP architects.²

---

¹ Weis and Tuck (2013) The Business Case for Extra Care Housing in Adult Social Care
² PRP Architects (2008) Design Principles for Extra Care
Extra-care Housing: Programme

Viability

The range of facilities provided is highly dependent on the funding model, location, target market + tenure, and the scale of the development. In recent years, reductions in local authority budgets and central grant funding has squeezed out some of the more generous communal facilities that might have been previously provided in new extra-care housing.\(^3\) There have also been concerns that prospective purchasers may be put off moving into extra-care housing because of the high service charges associated with more generous communal spaces.\(^4\)

Arguably the most important is a viable funding model in terms of both capital and revenue income as well as the sustainability of future service charges. Modelling funding options for extra-care development is beyond the scope of this brief development document, however a comprehensive overview is available in a recent briefing paper published by HousingLIN.\(^5\)

Community access to communal facilities

Models that invite the wider community (particularly older people) to share communal facilities can bring a number of additional benefits, knitting a scheme into the local neighbourhood, further strengthening informal support networks, and securing the economic viability and long-term sustainability of any communal facilities.\(^6\) This is only possible where developments are able to be sited within an established residential neighbourhood.

Experience from managers of extra-care housing suggests that this type of shared usage can also cause tensions between residents and external users. Such reports highlight issues around privacy, the nature of extra-care as a ‘home’, and the ownership of shared spaces. Adopting this approach therefore requires careful consideration of management policies and design - to maintain the privacy and security of residents while welcoming in visitors (progressive privacy).

Additional considerations

- careful analysis of existing local facilities (see site section) to avoid duplication of local provision
- flexible and adaptable spaces that can accommodate a range of future uses (or be expanded in future)
- alternative ‘joined up’ approaches to provide more generous communal facilities (see ‘Hub + Spoke’ in Form and massing section)
- planning to ensure facilities are available as soon as residents move in
- careful consideration of the design of thresholds between public and private spaces (see Thresholds section)
- involvement of building managers / maintenance staff within the design process

Scale and location

Scale is a particularly important part of the briefing process, as this underpins much of the financial viability, location, and ethos of a development.

For example, a large extra-care ‘village’ of 100 or more dwellings may be able to provide a much greater range of communal facilities on site, but the land requirements may push it out of town and disconnect it from other residential communities.

Alternatively, a development of 30-dwellings might only be able to provide minimal communal spaces within the scheme, but if located at the centre of an existing residential neighbourhood, could be better linked in to existing community-based activities and services.

Research question(s):

What tools are available for commissioners and developers to determine which programme elements are essential / desirable for individual sites?

5 Head et al (2013) Funding Extra Care Housing.
Extra-care Housing: Form and massing

Site layout and relationship to urban context

As indicated in both the Site and Programme sections, an important characteristics of successful extra-care housing is a positive relationship to the existing physical and social fabric of the neighbourhood.

This pair of diagrams explores some of broad philosophies urban design in relation to whether a development is primarily ‘inward’ or ‘outward’ facing:

‘INWARD LOOKING’ SITE LAYOUT

development set back from site boundary

development is out of scale with the existing housing adjacent

main entrance within the centre of the site

communal facilities (blue) less publicly accessible

unclear public / private threshold

limited relationship between development and adjacent district centre

extensive boundary treatment (e.g. fencing) required for site security

D I S T R I C T  C E N T R E

DISTRICT CENTRE

Housing & neighbourhoods for later life (55+)

Spa

Ɵ

Ɵal studies series based on recent design guidance / prac

ƫ

designing for wellbeing in environments for later life
Additional considerations that underpin the approaches to site layout / massing include:

- project budget + affordability (development costs / profit / risk)
- sustainability + ecology (BREEAM, Code for sustainable homes, planning reqs.)
- planning + conservation (development heights, massing, open space reqs.)
- car parking requirements (planning reqs., local travel plan)
- security (Secured by design)
- overall design quality + ambition (Building for Life 12, CABE, Housing Quality Indicators)
- specific guidance for older people’s housing (HAPPI, EVOLVE, Lifetime Homes + Neighbourhoods)
Extra-care Housing: Form and massing

Analysis of common typologies of extra-care housing

The following set of diagrams explores some of the common typologies of extra-care housing.

For the sake of comparison each of the typologies is shown at the comparable scale in terms of number of dwellings, storey heights, parking provision and external space. This allows certain generic characteristics of each layout (such as spatial efficiency, privacy, and daylighting) to be broadly illustrated and analysed / compared.

It should be noted that the design of all of the following typologies would be impacted on by a range of other specific programme and site conditions including:

- urban context,
- boundary conditions,
- planning policy,
- topography,
- scale (number of dwellings),
- programme (range of communal facilities).

Assumptions

- all layouts based on a 90 dwelling extra-care development
- 3 storeys maximum development height
- a mix of 1 bed and 2 bed dwellings
- a minimum of 1000 sq m. of communal space + plant
- all dwellings to be ground floor or accessible by lift
- parking ratio of approx. 1 space per dwelling
- each site has at least one side fronting onto a street (primary access) plus a potential secondary / vehicular access

NOTE:

All layouts / floor plans are indicative only and subject to all relevant statutory approvals. Development scale and mix of dwellings, required parking levels and open space requirements would be subject to local planning and housing policies.

Research question(s):

How do designers and developers of extra-care housing evaluate fiscal measures (e.g. spatial efficiency) against the other advantages and disadvantages of these common typologies?
LINEAR

Advantages
- linear massing can be cranked to follow site contours / site boundary
- simple form to plan / construct
- most efficient option in terms of floor area + number of cores

Disadvantages
- ‘institutional’ / private in nature - may feel closed to external users
- long corridors with limited natural light / poor wayfinding
- single aspect apartments provide poor daylighting
- difficult to break up long ‘monolithic’ block
- issues of differentiating ‘front’ and ‘back’ in relation to street access
- building form limits opportunities for semi-private encounters
- gardens + parking separated from building (boundary treatment required)
BRANCH

Advantages
+ most efficient option in terms of floor area + circulation space
+ flexible form can be adapted for different shaped sites
+ different 'branches' of the plan can have different identities to ease wayfinding

Disadvantages
- 'institutional' / private in nature - may feel closed off to external users
- issues of differentiating 'front' and 'back' in relation to street access
- form may cause difficulties with levels on sloping sites
- long corridors with limited natural light
- single aspect apartments provide poor daylighting
- building form limits opportunities for semi-private encounters
- gardens + parking separated from building (boundary treatment required)
Extra-care Housing: Form and massing

COURTNEYARD

Advantages
+ potential for dual aspect apartments with better daylighting
+ views / wayfinding / daylighting within corridors
+ circulation spaces can extend into semi-private communal areas
+ private courtyard gardens integrated into building form
+ floor area efficiency comparative with single aspect options (linear / branch)
+ clear differentiation between public ‘front’ and private ‘back’

Disadvantages
- ‘institutional’ / private in nature - may feel closed off to external users
- more circulation space
- form may cause difficulties with levels on sloping sites
- courtyard gardens may lack sunlight?
- difficult to break up large ‘monolithic’ block
- parking separated from building (boundary treatment required)
**FINGERS**

**Advantages**

- Potential for dual aspect apartments with better daylighting
- Potential for most apartments to share favourable aspect (south)
- Views / wayfinding / daylighting within corridors
- Flexible form can be adapted / cranked for different shaped sites
- Circulation spaces can extend into semi-private communal areas
- Semi-private courtyard gardens + parking courts can be integrated into building form

**Disadvantages**

- ‘Institutional’ / private in nature - may feel closed off to external users
- Potential difficulties with levels on sloping sites (albeit less than linear / branch / courtyard)
- Floor area efficiency less than single aspect options (linear / branch)
- More circulation space
- Fewer dwellings / hectare than other options (linear / branch / courtyard)
**VILLAGE**

1st / 2nd floor plan (apartments)
- 13 2 bed (26)
- 7 1 bed (14)
- max travel distance to 80m

Ground floor / site plan
- 6 2 bed apartments
- 4 1 bed apartments
- 20 2 bed bungalows
- 20 1 bed bungalows
- communal total 1012 sq m
- circulation total 880 sq m
- floor area total (gross) 10650 sq m
- circulation ratio (approx.) 8%

---

**Advantages**

+ mix of units provides choice for different individuals
+ provision of popular bungalow typology
+ could include other housetypes + apartment blocks
+ semi-private gardens + parking courts integrated into site layout
+ dispersed layout may be suitable to address levels on sloping sites
+ dispersed layout breaks up massing + institutional feel
+ village layout potentially easier to integrate with surrounding context

**Disadvantages**

- potentially private / gated in nature - may feel closed off to external users
- fewer dwellings / hectare than other options (linear / branch / courtyard)
- less suitable for denser urban sites
- longer walking distances from bungalows to communal spaces
- careful planning of road ways + paths required to avoid car dominance
HUB + SPOKE

Advantages
+ most suitable for denser urban sites
+ most flexible option (suitable for expansion)
+ could include other housetypes + apartment blocks
+ most efficient in terms of site density and floor planning
+ smaller blocks offer views / wayfinding / daylighting within corridors
+ dispersed layout breaks up massing + institutional feel
+ most open in terms of external users of communal facilities

Disadvantages
- each block requires its own service core, plant and maintenance strategy
- walking distances between sites + communal facilities may be a barrier
- limited private outdoor space
- residents may not feel ownership over remote communal facilities
- careful planning of management strategy (and calculation of service charges) required

HUB + SPOKE

Advantages
+ most suitable for denser urban sites
+ most flexible option (suitable for expansion)
+ could include other housetypes + apartment blocks
+ most efficient in terms of site density and floor planning
+ smaller blocks offer views / wayfinding / daylighting within corridors
+ dispersed layout breaks up massing + institutional feel
+ most open in terms of external users of communal facilities

Disadvantages
- each block requires its own service core, plant and maintenance strategy
- walking distances between sites + communal facilities may be a barrier
- limited private outdoor space
- residents may not feel ownership over remote communal facilities
- careful planning of management strategy (and calculation of service charges) required
Public-private threshold

Moving to an extra-care housing scheme can have a significant impact on the way that residents interact within domestic spaces and with one another. For example, it is likely to be the first time in many years (or ever) that residents interact with others while undertaking previously private domestic chores - such as laundry or taking out the rubbish. Poorly considered spatial design or management can build stress, anxiety and discomfort into these daily activities.

Particular attention should be paid to parts of the building might be shared with private guests (including friends and family), staff members or the wider community. The quality, atmosphere, and ‘progressive privacy’ at the heart of the building (including the main lobby, cafe and/or the resident’s lounge) are vital to the success of a well-used communal area.

The security of such spaces is often a key consideration, but where possible the need for extensive signage, locked doors or resident’s key fobs should be designed out - helping to avoid the feeling of institutionalised residential care.
Private / semi-private threshold

The social dimension of extra-care housing a key aspect of the model. Alongside events and activities in a central residents lounge or cafe, the design of circulation spaces can encourage or support interactions between residents.

Designing corridors and other circulation spaces for incidental interaction requires the creation of places that attract people out of their apartments to linger or meet. In order to provide this function, such spaces need to provide thermal comfort, provide sun/daylight and views, as well as being comfortable, convenient and accessible.

The feeling of privacy and security is also important in semi-private circulation areas, and good practice involves separating residential corridors from public spaces and avoiding crossover of staff and resident’s circulation routes.

There is also the possibility of creating residential ‘clusters’, where a number of apartments (5-10) share a smaller communal lounge or terrace.

Double-loaded corridors suffer from poor daylighting, are severely limited in other uses and can become foreboding spaces to navigate through (image: White Willows extra-care, Sheffield).
Indoor-outdoor threshold

The ability to easily access a good quality outdoor space is another important design consideration of extra-care housing. Outdoor spaces to undertake regular exercise (such as a daily walk) or to sit outside in privacy or semi-privacy are vital to support people’s physical and mental well-being - at any stage of life.

Within the dwelling, increasingly limited mobility places an additional significance on views and daylighting - including being able to sit somewhere sheltered in the fresh air.

New-build specialist housing schemes for older people have been identified as being at risk of overheating in summer. Overheating has been linked to a lack of ventilation, which is particularly an issue in single-aspect apartments with restricted window opening. Measures such as large openable door / windows and shaded balcony spaces might therefore play an important role in ensuring adequate flow of air and thermal comfort.
Extra-care Housing: Individual dwellings

Dwelling types

As indicated on the typologies section, extra-care housing can consist of both communally accessed apartments and separately-accessed dwellings (bungalows or houses) near to a central hub. Dwellings are either owned or rented by residents, but individual schemes have different arrangements over the responsibility for the furnishing and decoration of the dwelling.

The majority of extra-care housing consists of private/ self-contained apartments accessed from a shared circulation space. While shared gardens are typically provided for use by residents, some provision of private external spaces (a balcony or terrace) is also generally recommended as good practice.

Key features

Extra-care apartments share many features found in general self-contained apartments. However, apartments are often designed to higher accessibility standards (Lifetime Homes or Wheelchair Homes) to make the apartment easier to use. Examples of these standards include wider doors, more space inside certain rooms, level-access showers, and service/window controls that are easier to reach.

Other specific design features that are common to extra-care apartments include:

- A shelf or ‘nook’ outside the front door to personalise the apartment.
- Additional storage space allocated for a wheelchair or mobility aid.
- A ‘Jack and Jill’ arrangement with direct access to the bathroom from the hall and bedroom.
- District heating systems (although apartments may be individually metered).
- High-level ovens for ease of use.
- Optional plumbing for a washing machine (a launderette is also typically available for residents)
- Level thresholds between indoor and outdoor spaces.

Interior design and specification

While the interior design strategy will vary from scheme to scheme, new extra-care apartments tend to be finished in materials, fittings, and finishes that are modern, bright easy to use, and easy to clean. The specification of colour contrasting finishes has been highlighted as important for residents who are visually impaired and/or suffer dementia. This includes contrast between doors/walls, walls/floors, and sanitary facilities/walls.
Extra-care Housing: Individual dwellings

The diagram below attempts to visualise a range of the recent design guidelines and research into purpose-built housing for later life (including extra-care housing):

Research question(s):

How is the amount of private space provided in individual dwellings balanced against the provision of shared/communal spaces?
**Apartment layouts**

The majority of extra-care schemes comprise of a mix of 1-bedroom and 2-bedroom apartments. Some schemes also offer ‘1 bedroom plus’ layouts (a double bedroom with a small second room intended for hobbies or storage).

**2 bedroom apartment layout (62 m sq.)**

The apartment plan below is common to many recently-constructed extra-care schemes in the UK. Notes in black highlight Lifetime Homes design guidelines. Additional notes (in red) draw attention to a range of further design considerations that have either been highlighted in recent best practice guidance and/or site visits to existing extra-care schemes.
Existing design guidance, codes, and regulations

A wealth of best practice design guidance, research and regulation exists for the sizing and detailed design of individual extra-care dwellings. It is important to note that many of the HAPPI recommendations for older people’s dwellings (such as good daylighting, thermal comfort, higher space standards etc.) reflect universal good practice for housing design but are often not provided by general-needs market housing.

Specific guidance for housing for older people
- HAPPI report
- Lifetime Homes standard
- ‘Building Comfort for Older Age’ (Guy et al, 2014)

Specific guidance for the design of accessible housing
- Wheelchair housing standard (London Housing Design Guide)
- BS 9266:2013 (Design of accessible + adaptable general needs housing)
- Building regulations Part M

Extra-care specific design guidance
- EVOLVE toolkit
- PRP Architects - Design Principles for Extra Care

General housing design guidance
- Design Council / CABE (2010 review of housing design standards)
- London Housing Design Guide
- Building for Life 12
- HCA - ‘Quality Counts’ reports (National Affordable Housing Programme)
- Levitt Bernstein - The Housing Design Handbook
- Secured by Design
- Code for Sustainable Homes

Research question(s):
Is the ‘typical’ extra-care apartment layout adequate in terms of utility, storage, daylighting, ventilation, and thermal comfort?

Barac, Carol, 'Elderflowers Projects - Promoting Active Living for Independent Older People', 2013 <http://www.elderflowers-projects.co.uk/>


Netten, Ann, Robin Darton, Theresia Baumker, and Lisa Callaghan, Improving Housing with Care Choices for Older People: An Evaluation of Extra Care Housing (Kent: PSSRU (University of Kent), December 2011) <http://www.housinglin.org.uk/_library/Resources/Housing/Research_evaluation/PSSRUsummary.pdf>


Pannell, Jenny, Hannah Aldridge, and Peter Kenway, Market Assessment of Housing Options for Older People (New Policy Institute, April 2012) <http://npi.org.uk/files/5213/7485/1289/Market_Assessment_of_Housing_Options_for_Older_People.pdf>

PRP Architects, Integrated by Design : Housing and Care for Older People in the UK (London: PRP Architects, 2014)
