

Partnership with Older People Networking Forum

Report of Joint Discussions held with Suffolk Coastal District Council

October 2007



PARTNERSHIP WITH OLDER PEOPLE NETWORKING FORUM

Report of joint discussions held with Suffolk Coastal District Council Planning Section – October 2007.

At the request of Suffolk Coastal District Council, two joint sessions were held with the POPs networking forum and members of Coastal District Council's planning policy team to discuss a range of issues relevant both to the way older people live and experience life today and how to apply these lessons to the future development planning of the area.

Sessions were held at Kesgrave (17th October) and Leiston (31st October) in order to get a spread of views from across the district. Around 30 people attended each session, most of the participants being in the 70 plus age group. Delegates were split into groups each with a facilitator and scribe and feedback was provided by each table at the end of each session. The topics discussed included the following:

- **Housing**
- **Health & Safety**
- **Recreation**
- **Supporting Others**

The following report is divided into two sections. Firstly an executive summary of the discussions that took place at both events with proposed actions and then a more detailed section including information extracted from Post-It notes and verbal contributions at each event.

Whilst the sessions represented only a small fraction of the older section of the population living within the district, it is considered likely that the majority of the points raised will be common to the majority of older people, to a greater or lesser extent.

Most participants rated the sessions very highly, some of the comments included:

- *'Yes, very interesting and thought provoking, thank you for listening'*
- *'Enjoyed very much, never done something like this before'*
- *'The whole event was very well organised'*
- *'First timer and very helpful'*
- *'We were able to put forward and exchange views, thank you'*

Both Coastal District Council and Partnership with Older People would wish to extend its thanks to all of those who participated on the days.

Hilary Hanslip
Principal Planning Officer – Policy
Suffolk Coastal District Council

Jill Stewart
Development Manager
Partnership with Older People
Suffolk County Council

Section One Executive Summary

HOUSING

	Question	Response	Action
Q1	What prompts people to move or downsize?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closer to family • Garden (& house) too large or costly to maintain • Closer to wider range of facilities • Lack of suitable accommodation in villages • Affordability 	Ensure policies provide for a range of house types suitable to meet the needs of older people at the larger towns and villages.
Q2	What criteria do people use when deciding to move?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordability • Location • Provision of services • Level of care required • Local support network • Community mix <p>Note there was a perceived lack of information on options for rent; lease etc</p>	As above. Responses to be fed back to LSP for wider dissemination
Q3	What would be the ideal property to move to?	<p>2- bed bungalow or sheltered flat incorporating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wet rooms or showers not baths • Small individual or communal gardens • Increased storage provision within the dwelling and outside to store electric scooters 	Raising awareness amongst development control and housing staff when considering the design of new schemes. Disseminating information to Housing Associations and larger development companies working within the local area who may be responsible for new

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disabled parking close to dwelling • Workshop type space to undertake hobbies; • Visitor facilities including guest rooms and communal facilities if sheltered accommodation 	build units and or management of existing facilities.
Q4	Is there sufficient of this type of property?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bungalows and larger flats more difficult to get hold of. Sometimes this is down to poor management of housing stock by housing association providers, resulting in bungalows being allocated to individuals who neither want or need them. • Bedsits more readily available but considered too small especially when downsizing from larger property • Few facilities in the more rural areas 	Ensure policies provide for a range of house types suitable to meet the needs of older people across the district at the larger towns and villages.
Q5	Is affordability and issue?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varied amongst individuals • Cost of care considered very expensive if provided in own home • Owning own home was not seen as barrier to moving to sheltered/retirement accommodation run by Housing Association 	Noted. Copy findings to LSP and partners.
Q6	What kind of information do people need and how best is it provided?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater advice about types of sheltered/retirement properties available including details on renting leasing and buying; • Practical information about the local area – bus routes; shops, facilities, societies etc. Very important if moving into an area from 	<p>Refer to other relevant organisations/individuals eg Voluntary sector; site managers; other relevant sections within the Local Authority.</p> <p>Provision by means of leaflets;internet; libraries; a dedicated officer within the Council</p>

		<p>outside.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noticeboards within complexes good; • Local newsletters such as that at Kesgrave 	
--	--	---	--

HEALTH AND SAFETY

	Question	Response	Action
Q1	How accessible is your doctors surgery?	<p>Response depended very much on surgery attended.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of suitable parking; Difficulties in getting an appointment. • Doctors and hospitals not keeping up with population increases 	Disseminate findings to LSP and relevant partners
Q2	How accessible are other health specialists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No NHS dentist in Leiston • Cost of treatment expensive other than for NHS dentist • Sheltered accommodation chiropodist and dentist come to them 	<p>Disseminate findings to LSP and relevant partners</p> <p>Note requirements for suitable space for treatment rooms in relation to planning applications.</p>
Q3	<p>Would people use outreach facilities or home visits?</p> <p>Any suggestions as to how best to provide these facilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variety of facilities used. • Home visits good for those who don't drive – helps prevent people becoming isolated • Walk in facility at Aldeburgh Hospital • More help with transport to hospital etc. <p>Note: The availability of volunteer drivers was not widely known about.</p>	Disseminate findings to LSP and relevant partners, including voluntary sector.
Q4	What could be done to ensure independence?	<p>General agreement this was very much a product of the individual concerned. Suggestions included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to facilities i.e. walking, scooters or 	Ensure properties designed specifically for older people are well related and accessible to local facilities;

		<p>driving (could include provision of seating on footpaths etc).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grants etc to help properties to be adapted eg stair rails; etc • Outreach facilities and home visits. • Individual's support network was critical – ie family or neighbours to help out. • Opening up restaurant facilities (ie kitchens within sheltered accommodation to non - residents <p>Note Agreed handy person scheme good idea once they had been told about it at the sessions.</p>	<p>Look at providing seating alongside of footpaths</p> <p>Disseminate comments to relevant sections within the Council and LSP</p>
Q5	Do people worry about their personal safety?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Majority felt very safe within their own local environments; • Vandalism a minor problem • Leiston – greater visible police presence sought; possibly CCTV • More interaction between the generations thought to be beneficial; • Greater concern in relation to highway safety; uneven pavements – not good for walking or scooters. Insufficient pedestrian crossings on busy roads; • Improved street lighting outside of town centres 	Disseminate comments to police and highway authorities; and to relevant sections within the council and LSP re interaction between generations.
Q6	What could be done to make people feel more secure?	Addressing the issues highlighted under Q5; Ensuring communities and local neighbourhoods contain a mix of ages.	<p>As above.</p> <p>Ensuring new developments comprise a mix of dwellings suitable to meet the needs of all household groups.</p>

			Encouraging housing providers to manage their housing stock to facilitate a mix of household types where possible. Encourage any new dwellings targeted to meet the needs of older people to be built with the option of accessing smart technology.(Care Call system or similar)
Q7	What improvements could be made to the physical environment to improve personal safety	See earlier suggestions re lighting; highways etc	See earlier response
Q8	Is it important to live where there is a mix of ages present, particularly if living alone or in non-sheltered accommodation?	Yes. Opportunity to watch life go on round and about you with option to join in or not considered very important. Helps prevent feelings of isolation. Recognition also that age groups need some smaller areas they can call their own.	Disseminate information to development control officers and larger house builders re siting and layouts

RECREATION

	Question	Response	Action
Q1	What do people do for recreation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical activity – swimming, golf, fishing, bowls, walking etc • Cultural – theatre, music, books • Educational – U3A • Other – bingo, lunch clubs; organised mystery tours; bird watching, model making; knitting/sewing; allotment 	<p>Disseminate information to relevant sections within the Council; LSP partners</p> <p>Ensure planning policies encourage provision and retention of community facilities to support a wide range of activities</p>
Q2	What prevents people from enjoying or partaking in different activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of classes as no teachers or lack of classes at times suitable for older people (do not want evening/night) • Classes not targeted sufficiently towards the participants eg gentle exercise; painting for those who enjoy it but may not be particularly gifted; • Lack of volunteers to run activities or no suitable venues locally; • Lack of transport to get there • Lack of information as to what activities/societies/clubs operate in the local area. • Cost – for those on benefits annual joining fee (eg WI) can be difficult to find Activities involving coach journeys getting too expensive • Physical health – e.g. hearing and sight can pose difficulties • Other responsibilities e.g. child minding 	<p>Disseminate findings to LSP and other relevant organisations</p>

Q3	What can the Council do if anything to help cater for their needs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve dissemination of relevant information – Coastline does not currently do this • Kesgrave newsletter quoted as good example • Increase the number of allotments at Kesgrave • Encourage the expansion of the “befriending” services to give people the confidence to socialise and participate-especially after bereavement. • Encourage wider public use of private clubs eg swimming facilities. 	As above
-----------	--	--	----------

SUPPORTING OTHERS

	Question	Response	Action
Q1	Do people have a good social support network?	<p>Experience varied between individuals and between those in sheltered accommodation and those remaining in their own homes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheltered housing good – other residents and warden keeping an eye out for one another. Allowed individuals the opportunity to join in or have time to themselves. • Own home – strong reliance on neighbours and family therefore support generally more fragile despite good intentions. Exacerbated to some extent by fear or wariness of strangers/new people. 	Dissemination of findings to relevant organisations eg LSP and partners

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of carers for those people that need them 	
Q2	Do people provide support to others eg caring for a partner or other relative/ child minding?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few had current responsibilities. Of those that did looking after partner or other older relative e.g. aunt were quoted. • Child minding (although this appeared to be on a more informal rather than regular basis) 	Noted
Q3	Do people continue to work? Do they need to work to supplement their pension?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally no unless lifestyle choice. • Recognition that others may need to carry on working for financial reasons 	Disseminate information to relevant organisations eg LSP and partners. Ensuring full take up of benefits may be an issue.
Q4	Does anyone undertake volunteer work and if so what?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few active volunteers – driving; befriending – enjoyable but hard work. • Older people suddenly left on own need time to adjust and learn to re-socialise therefore not the time to volunteer. They are the ones needing the activities and services the volunteers provide • More had volunteered earlier in life e.g. supporting football groups etc. 	Disseminate information to relevant organisations eg LSP and partners and relevant voluntary organisations
Q5	Do people provide financial support for their children eg help buying a house; do they have children still living at home?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Out of choice financial support provided to children as and when they can. • General view that there appears to be more pressure and expectation from society now for parents to provide continuing support to children. 	Noted

Section Two – More Detail

HOUSING

- Most participants had already downsized to bungalows or sheltered accommodation
- Reasons for re-location included:
 - being closer to family and because the garden was too large to maintain
 - moving to a more disabled friendly property
 - closer proximity to services and affordability
- The ideal type of accommodation included:
 - A bungalow with a small garden
 - Sheltered accommodation with help and support if needed and Wardens available to give assistance if required. Ogilvie was mentioned as an excellent model.
 - The disadvantage with such accommodation is there is no room for visitors
 - For all types of accommodation there should be space for buggies and storage facilities
- It is felt there is a need for a mix of housing types
- Properties should be in a safe environment and have good access to facilities and adapted for disabilities e.g. handrails, no stairs
- There is not enough variety of accommodation to cope with special needs
- There are preconceived ideas of residential homes
- Bed sits are less popular as they are too cramped
- In terms of affordability maintenance is an issue
- More information on different types of accommodation is needed
- It should also cover details on renting, leasing and buying
- There should be some place where all the information is available
- It was suggested that the Council should have dedicated officers to help.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Health:

- Access to doctors is a big issue with difficulty in getting appointments
- It is felt that GP surgeries and hospitals are not keeping pace with an increasing population (Kesgrave)
- There were also comments about physical access to local surgeries and the lack of parking spaces
- Access to pharmacies and prescriptions also viewed as a problem (Leiston)
- Availability to other health specialists varied - there are dentists based at Grange Farm, Kesgrave and chiropodists are privately available
- Dentists and chiropodists come by appointment to some sheltered accommodation
- The cost of other treatments, other than the NHS, is an issue
- Concern was raised that there is no NHS dentist in Leiston
- When asked about the idea of outreach facilities it was suggested that there should be a walk in facility at Aldeburgh hospital
- Help with transport to hospital is often required due to lack of public transport (except at Kesgrave as a certain amount of transport is provided through the Help Centre)

Safety:

- Concerns over personal safety was felt to be over done, as people feel safe within their own environment
- Vandalism is only considered to be a minor problem. However it would be beneficial to see more police and more interaction between generations
- Concerns about personal safety were in relation to highway safety and certain roads being used as speed tracks by youths at certain times
- Pavements are in need of repair especially for buggies
- It was also felt there are not enough pedestrian crossings on busy roads
- There were also comments about particular road junctions in both Kesgrave and Leiston not being pedestrian friendly
- Street lighting is considered to be good in Leiston town centre but not on the edges of town - CCTV was suggested as a method to improve safety if required
- In terms of the living environment it is felt that having a mix of ages is preferable to separate areas

RECREATION

- People participate in a wide range of recreational activities including: swimming (including disabled), golf, fishing, model making, bowls, art, walking, wildlife watching, knitting/sewing, allotments, bingo, WI, U3A, music lessons and being in church choirs
- Many of these activities are run as part of clubs and groups eg. in Leiston there is a swimming group for older people
- There are also events that are run by community centres/halls including mystery tours
- Obstacles to participating relate to a lack of provision and inflexibility; there are not enough classes and spaces
- Where classes do exist, it was felt they needed to be targeted better e.g. 'gentle' exercise groups. It may be that such classes exist but they are difficult to find out about
- One problem for lack of facilities it was thought was the lack of volunteers to organise the activities (local volunteer bureau has just closed).
- It is felt that libraries should be more flexible in their approach
- Physical activity sessions can be seen as a hindrance due to fear of looking silly
- For those on incapacity benefits there is no funding to pay for participation in such activities
- The University for the Third Age (U3A) is a good resource but not always available in the rural areas
- Child minding duties for families can also prevent people from participating
- The Council could help provide information on what is available. The existing District Council's '*Coastline*' publication could be better utilised for this purpose
- There should be more information in local newsletters (the Kesgrave newsletter is very good)
- Facilities should be better located and there should be transport available especially for people with mobility problems
- There should be more daytime activities e.g. Pilates, arts/crafts. It is suggested that private clubs be used for swimming with subsidised costs
- More specific activities would be useful eg lack of allotments in Kesgrave.
- There should be more effort to publicise and promote the benefits of joining leisure clubs - attitude of mind often stops people from using existing facilities.

SUPPORTING OTHERS

- There is a good social network available in Kesgrave, particularly at the Heritage Housing complex. People help each other e.g. do their shopping
- In Kesgrave there is the Help Centre but there is generally a lack of carers for those who need them.
- Elsewhere, family and neighbours play an important role
- Many older people support their families by child minding
- They also help provide financial support
- Some are also carers for their spouse
- As grandparents they provide back up when needed
- For people who continue to work some do it as a lifestyle choice
- Most older people do not work but they recognise that there are also people who might want/ need to work for financial reasons
- Volunteer work involves work as part of groups such as the British Legion and Age Concern
- For those who volunteer, they find it an enjoyable experience but hard work
- It is mostly older people who are involved in volunteering
- Financial support is often provided for children with university education and mortgages
- There appears to be pressure and expectations on parents to provide financial support to their children