

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

STIMULATING THE MARKET PROMOTING DOWNSIZING AND HOUSING DIVERSITY THROUGH DIVERSE AND INNOVATIVE HOUSING MODELS

Birmingham City Council has an ambitious plan. It will have 150,000 additional people and 89,000 additional households by 2031. Birmingham is a city of growth. New homes are needed to accommodate a growing population and to help drive and support the economic development of the city and the city region. The council estimates that 89,000 new homes are needed from 2011 to 2031, including a growing the market for housing for older people.

The Birmingham Development Plan³² seeks to encourage housing growth. The council uses planning powers positively to enable and accelerate delivery. The council plans to build at least 51,000 new homes in the city by 2031. Including completions to date, it has identified sites with capacity for 46,247 new homes.

However new homes completions in Birmingham have fallen from 4,000 in 2005/6 to 1,809 in 2014/15. As a result of a focus on increasing the delivery of new homes, Birmingham City Council (BCC) now builds over 25 per cent of all new homes across the city – for social and affordable rent, sale, and now private rented sector housing.

Housing and older people context

At the last census there were just under 50,000 people aged 75 and over within Birmingham. Aligned to the national trend, Birmingham's older population will see a sizeable increase. By the year 2030 one in 10 of the city's predicted population of 1.23 million residents is likely to be aged 75 or older (123,000 people).

In this context, the council recognised the pressing need to plan ahead, refresh and refocus what the market offers with regards to supplying and managing specialist housing.

Some key features of the local factors that have influenced the council's response to addressing the housing needs of older people include:

- Life expectancy in Birmingham is 76 for males and 81 for females – both below the average for England, with the gap greater for the local male population.
- The number of people with dementia is expected to double over the next 30 years. Appropriate new housing solutions are sought to meet demand for quality, joined up housing and care, not only for residents diagnosed but for those who will be live-in carers.
- Tenure of older households:
 - 68 per cent social rented
 - Seven per cent private rented
 - 25 per cent owner occupied.

³² www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20054/planning_strategies_and_policies/78/birmingham_development_plan



Radnor Road bungalows

- Over half of older people who would benefit from living in specialist housing will need some form of financial support with their housing costs.
- The vast majority of both the affordable and market supply is sheltered housing. There are relatively small amounts of other types of specialist older person's housing, and this is especially true for the council's own stock.
- Under-occupation in older people's housing is a growing issue across all tenures. Of those older people currently renting homes from the council, 56 per cent are registered as having excess bedroom space, or are under occupying. Affordable housing providers at present only have a limited supply of properties that are appealing to these under occupied households.

The council's market position statement for housing in later life³³ summarises key requirements in the city in terms of improving older people's housing choices that are reflected in this case study:

- addressing under occupation – help find innovative and affordable solutions to tackle the issues associated with the high numbers of older people occupying homes not suitable to their needs
- increasing the supply of specialist housing for older people. In particular, to help meet the demand for enhanced sheltered housing and housing with care.

How is it innovative? The council's approach

To address the need for additional housing in the city, both for older people and other groups, the council has intervened directly and established its own housing trust. Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust (BMHT) is Birmingham City Council's brand name for building new homes across Birmingham, by working in partnership with private developers. With over 2,500 homes already delivered or under construction, BMHT is providing high quality new homes across Birmingham. In recent years Birmingham has led the way amongst large councils to build new council owned homes for affordable rent, through BMHT.

Addressing the requirement to develop and deliver an attractive 'rightsizer' housing offer has been a core component of the council's approach:

- around 41 per cent of BCC stock is under occupied, mainly by older tenants (38 per cent)
- up until now, the housing offer has been poor and/or limited to flats or one bedroom bungalows. Some older stock has been inappropriately converted
- there needed to be a better quality offer to incentivise older residents to 'rightsizer'.

³³ www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/download/41/market_position_statement_housing_in_later_life



The council has developed its own unique specification for this older person's housing model through research and consultation with older people in the city. Feedback from older people identified a desire for bungalow accommodation, of which there was a very limited supply, but this needed to incorporate design features that provided maximum flexibility as well as making it a build model that could make the most efficient use of available development site opportunities.

Research with older people identified the following requirements:

- two bedrooms: either through household need or quality of life requirements
- decent space standards and storage
- economic to run and easy to maintain
- flexible to cater for changing needs
- manageable outside space
- rightsizing needs to be an aspirational move.

The housing solution in response to this is a two-bedroom 'dormer style bungalows', each with a ground floor bedroom and shower room, a lounge and kitchen and also a second bedroom and bathroom upstairs. The design is in summary:

- based on HAPPI principles.
- dormer style bungalow – category 1 on ground floor with second bedroom and bathroom upstairs – equivalent to former Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4
- bespoke design with good space standards including the ability to dry clothes in vented spaces or outside
- Lifetime Homes standard enabling adaptation as needs change
- smaller gardens or balconies provide manageable outside space.
- The council has used some of its own sites to develop this downsizer housing model.



The design is intended to make it possible for people to use the property like a traditional smaller house, but if their mobility becomes restricted, they can simply live downstairs, leaving the upstairs accommodation for visitors or a live-in carer. The design of the dormer bungalow helps people to stay as independent as they can and each home also has plenty of storage and access to its own private garden. The design of these new homes is intended to be attractive and aspirational in order to encourage people who currently under occupy larger houses to move to a smaller home, releasing their house for a family. In addition, the council has developed downsizer apartments for people aged 55 plus.

Modelling of future need for specialist housing by the council indicates a requirement for an increase of 2,457 housing with care and 515 enhanced sheltered units by 2029.

Housing choices for older citizens have been greatly enhanced through the development of a number of extra-care villages in the city. These provide an attractive offer that encourages people to down-size from their current home. As well as providing an attractive housing option, the ability to access care and the ethos of keeping mentally and physically active deliver wider health and wellbeing outcomes.

To support the delivery of this specialist housing, the council has worked closely with other housing providers, particularly the Extra Care Charitable Trust, to deliver five extra care 'villages' each with approximately, 250 units, across all tenures (social rented, shared ownership and full leasehold sale), across the city. This size and scale of retirement village development is the largest of any city in the UK.

Outcomes

To address the requirement to develop attractive housing that will encourage older people to downsize, to date, BMHT have built 16 dormer bungalows across two sites with more being planned. So far this has been successful at encouraging older people to relinquish tenancies of large, family size homes, another housing resource greatly in demand within the city.

The feedback from people who have downsized to this new housing model has been overwhelmingly positive. From a survey of people who have downsized to this new housing, most people rated it with an overall score of 10/10. When asked what were the best features of the properties, the reasons given were:

- "the amount of natural light and accessibility around the home"
- "the look of the property from the outside"
- "the way the patio doors open onto the back garden"
- "the properties are spacious, light, and in an excellent location."

The villages are large enough developments to act as community hubs for older people within their vicinity and Birmingham has five villages currently in operation. There are currently an additional 1,224 units of older people's specialist accommodation in the pipeline, with four schemes going through planning and a further four currently on site. These developments offer both market and affordable accommodation.

An independent evaluation of the extra care villages provided Extra Care Charitable Trust by Aston University³⁴ demonstrated the benefits that housing with care bring:

- The Extra Care model is likely to offer significant potential savings in the cost of social care for local authority commissioners.
- The cost of providing lower level social care using the Extra Care model was £1,222 less per person (17.8 per cent less) per year than providing the same level of care in the wider community (on average, with variation by local authority) and the cost of higher level social care was £4,556 less (26 per cent less) per person per year).

The Extra Care Charitable Trust model can result in significant savings for NHS budgets – over a 12-month period costs total NHS costs (including GP visits, practice and district nurse visits and hospital appointments and admissions) reduced by 38 per cent.

- The Extra Care Charitable Trust model seems to ‘level the playing field’ by successfully removing differences in self-perceived health differences which are initially related to social class.

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³⁴ [file:///C:/Users/housi/Downloads/final%20report1%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/housi/Downloads/final%20report1%20(1).pdf)