

# Integrating Retirement Villages with the Local Community at Painswick

This case study describes Painswick Retirement Village, a private development in the Cotswolds. It profiles the models of housing and care provided and explores integration of the village with the local community.

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## Introduction

One of the main challenges for developers who want to build retirement villages in the UK is finding somewhere to do so. The high price of land and the complexities of planning regulations have meant that many developments are either on the edge of a town or in the middle of the countryside. This raises questions about potential social isolation within retirement housing settings, particularly when residents grow older and tend to become less mobile. These issues are particularly important in terms of the Government's strategy for housing in an ageing society, *Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods* (CLG, 2008). This has a focus on creating sustainable communities that provide enabling environments for older people, afford opportunities for social interaction and promote integration with local communities. Rural locations can create specific challenges for residents, particularly those who need higher levels of care and support, including access to social networks, amenities and transport. This case study profiles a retirement village that has aimed to address these issues through being situated within an existing community and fostering local links.

## Background

Richmond Villages have opened four 'luxury' retirement villages in England during the past 10 years and have several more in development. All provide a range of accommodation and care options for people aged 55 and over.

The need for retirement housing in Painswick was identified by 4 villagers who felt that older people were having to leave the area if they wanted specialist accommodation, thereby losing contact with local social and support networks. They carried out a survey of villagers to see what they wanted and then identified the potential site. Several developers were asked to express an interest and Richmond Villages were chosen as the most appropriate. It took several years to obtain planning permission, largely because the land was a greenfield site. The first part of the village to open was the independent living apartments in 2005 and the rest of the village followed in 2007. The village is based on a philosophy of continuing care, whereby residents do not need to move except where admission to hospital is necessary. Most residents are self-funders and anyone applying is required to undergo risk and health assessments. The village aims for a population with mixed levels of care.

The retirement village is situated on the edge of the picturesque village of Painswick, Gloucestershire, in the heart of the Cotswolds area of England. The village of Painswick has just over 4,000 residents with a mean age of 47. 27% of the population are aged 65 or over, compared with the national average of 18%, and 96% are white British. The village amenities include hotels, pubs, tea rooms and craft shops, library, GP surgery, private dentist and pharmacy. Access to other amenities means travelling to a nearby town. For example, the nearest supermarket is 3 miles away, a cinema 5.5 miles and a bookshop 3 miles.



Development costs were high, largely due to building on a slope and incorporating features to blend with the local style, including the use of Cotswold stone on all outdoor walls and building below ground to conform with height restrictions. These

costs are reflected in the price of apartments, which are at the high end of the market. Accessibility is compromised to some extent on a sloping site and is described as 'easy, but less so for less mobile people'.

The village was designed by local architects Batterton Tyack and received a Highly Commended award in the Assisted Living category at the Daily Telegraph Your New Home Awards.

### **Accommodation**

The village provides 3 types of accommodation for residents: independent living apartments; assisted living apartments; and a nursing care centre.

The 18 independent living apartments have 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, a kitchen and a parking space. Some also have a private balcony or patio.

The 38 assisted living apartments have a living room, galley kitchen and bedroom with en suite shower room. There is a weekly suite fee of £345 for those living in the assisted living apartments. This price includes on site food and soft beverages, laundry, a daily maid service and utilities (gas, electricity, water). Flexible care packages can be purchased as needed.



All apartments are leasehold, although some of the assisted living apartments can be on a short term rental agreement. In 2008, prices started at about £285,000 for a 1 bed apartment and £365,000 for a 2 bed. There is also a service charge of about £400 per month, which includes external property maintenance, use of community facilities, gardens and estate management, CCTV and 24hour security, social events and activities management, transport, village administration and basic support services.

The nursing care centre has 24 beds and offers long term care and post operative care but not dementia care. The CSCI inspection carried out in January 2008 resulted in a 1 star rating, which means that the people who use this service experience adequate quality outcomes. Fees for the care centre range from £750 to £1000 per week dependent on residents' needs.

The village is very popular and in mid 2008 there were 71 people on the waiting list for independent living apartments. The developers are preparing to apply for permission to extend the village onto an adjoining area of land.

The village aims to cater for people with a range of care and support needs, including visual impairment, deafness, incontinence and moderate memory problems. Applicants must be 55 or older and undergo health and risk assessments before moving in.

### **Resident Case Study**

Mr & Mrs Scholes were in their 80's and lived in Cheltenham when they decided it was time to move, partly because they were starting to struggle with everyday tasks like shopping . They liked the look of some retirement developments they had seen in the United States but didn't know that sort of thing existed in England until they saw an advertisement for Painswick Retirement Village. It was still at the planning stage, but they put down a deposit. Sadly Mr Scholes died of bone cancer before they could move in but Mrs Scholes decided to go ahead with the purchase. She was particularly attracted by the mixture of care and support and the range of facilities on offer, such as the restaurant and pool, and the fact that many of them are open to the public as well.

But the biggest bonus for Mrs Scholes is that soon after she moved into the village she was joined by her sister. She had been living in a bungalow within a retirement development with a warden, but having had a fall she had to get extra care support to look after her (two carers during the day and one at night). She now lives in an apartment on the floor below Mrs Scholes.

### **Care and support**

Richmond Village's on site domiciliary care team operates 24hours a day. Flexible, tailored care packages are available and residents can buy whatever level of care they require. Most residents are self-funding, although a few are funded by social services for domiciliary care. A wireless nurse call system covers the site. The care service covers its costs but doesn't aim to make a profit. Housing staff are on duty 24/7 and there is a non-resident village manager. Meals are available in the village restaurant or can be delivered to resident's homes if preferred.

### **Facilities**

The village incorporates a wide range of facilities, including communal lounge, dining room, restaurant, laundry, guest facilities, garden, conservatory, community centre, hobby room, cafe, shop, hairdressing salon, library with internet access, wellness suite (includes gym, swimming pool, treatment room and Jacuzzi).

There is a small treatment room and most residents are registered with the local GP and dentist. All communal areas are accessible by wheelchair users and there are several area of communal garden around the site.



## Social Interaction and links with the local community

There is a lively social life within the village, and residents feel that the comprehensive programme of organised activities is crucial to getting to know people. A range of activities are organised every day, including shopping trips, crossword sessions, bridge and other games, computer lessons, a music club and a range of outings.



The retirement village has strong links with the local community. 40% of those in the assisted living apartments are from Painswick and 40% from the wider local area. Many of the village facilities are open to local residents, including the Spa and restaurant, and there is a liaison group that includes local representation. There are also good links with the local school, including a recent memories project. There are more than 60 clubs and societies in

Painswick, many of which the retirement village residents belong to. Similarly, local people are able to take part in activities organised in the village.

Walking access to Painswick village itself is about 100 yards along a fairly steeply sloping pavement. This has some very narrow points, making it challenging to negotiate using a wheelchair or mobility scooter. The retirement village do provide a regular shuttle bus to and from the village, the cost of which is included in the service charge. A private car can also be booked at a cost of £1 each way.

## Learning Points

Locating a retirement village within an existing community has many potential benefits for residents of the retirement village and those living locally. These include:

- *For the retirement village residents:*
  - ease of maintaining existing social networks and opportunities for wider social interaction;
  - access to a far greater range of services, facilities and leisure activities than can be provided within the village itself;
  - opportunities for inter-generational contact e.g. with local schools.
  
- *For the local community:*
  - having retirement accommodation nearby provides the opportunity to remain near to family and friends rather than leaving the area;
  - the retirement village provides jobs for the local community;
  - the retirement village residents can make local shops and services financially viable;
  - access to facilities and specialist health services in the retirement village;

Physical proximity alone is not sufficient to achieve these potential advantages. It is also important that links with the local community are fostered and that physical access is suitable for people with mobility problems. However, local circumstances and the challenges of finding suitable land may lead to an element of compromise, such as building on a sloping site. It is also worth noting the challenges of building retirement villages within or close to existing communities, particularly in terms of gaining planning permission. In this example, the support of the local community for the development was crucial. Even with this support, the costs of developing within an existing community were high and meant that apartments were at the high end of the market and therefore less affordable.

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