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To: _WEB_Local Plan
Subject: comment on local plan

Stroud District Local Plan review

I write in a personal capacity but my interest arises from being a member of CPRE and from being the Founding Chairman of Woodchester Valley Village (WVV). The latter in the past two weeks has had a Sunday Times 2 pages feature article and the Express last week also did a 2 page spread., which looks at the social/companionship needs of those in retirement

Given my recent background I write to you about aspects of the plan and so in part this e mail include is a response to questions 2.3 a and b.

In part the Plan makes reference to:

‘homes for older people, including sheltered, enhanced sheltered, extra care, registered care provision on Local Plan housing sites, designed to standards allowing people to live for longer in their own homes’

Whilst the concept of encouraging people to live longer in their own homes the problem is that for some elderly persons especially those living on their own staying in their family home can have two problems which adversely affect the quality of their life:

isolation leading to loneliness
insecurity.

In both cases the cause is the same., which is their neighbours depart for work and return later afternoon when they are focused on their family needs. My sister for her last ten years complained of isolation and was dependent upon people coming to see her. By contrast at the wake for a recently deceased member of this village his daughter, a respected local doctor, spoke of the added value live in a community of over 60's had given her father. He could walk around the village feeling secure and whenever he went out into the village gardens there was always someone he would meet for a chat.

Of course retirement villages are not the answer for all but the local; district housing plan I hope will provide for more retirement villages. This village has a waiting list.

The elderly fall into two broad grounds:

1. renting
2. private owning their own home

To address those renting the fall into two groups

1. In council and housing association property
2. In private rented accommodation

Unless those renting occupy larger than 2 bedroomed properties down-sizing is an unlikely option and if it is they are living in larger properties they may well need financial inducement /help to move. There may come a time when whatever the size of their home they cannot cope and their needs can be more effectively and economically be met in purpose designed groups of homes where they can sustain a measure of independence and importantly find companionship as well as security and support. It may seem attractive to support people in their current homes, scattered amongst housing estates, but that can often lead to isolation as their neighbours go out to work and have

their own families to care for when they are at home. Grouped housing with adjacent, common social facilities, can be one answer the great scourge of old age, isolation and the lack of companionship.

In the main those in rented homes are likely to have limited financial means and yet are likely to have extra needs when they become disabled mentally and physically through age. It will fall upon social care services to address their needs with domiciliary care in the home or care home or in supported living units. Therefore it is suggested that the Stroud Plan should address the need is to provide within the community groups of houses where assistance in living can be more easily and economically provided so as to sustain their independence and reduce the demand on Care homes. Isolation leads to deteriorating health. Companionship to a happier life with attendant health benefits. In rural Gloucestershire with declining bus services the elderly can be becoming more isolated.

Those over 65 living in their own homes often have the capital means and often the level of income to fund their own needs in their declining years. Therefore they will be less of a cost to the local community but they are more likely also to occupy larger houses and to be even more reluctant to down size from beloved family homes so releasing them for younger people with young families. Tax inducements may encourage them to move but the need here, if they are to down-size before they have to, is to spell out the alternative life style which comes from living in communities such as Woodchester Valley Village, a unique development in the Stroud District. But there is no benefit in spelling out the benefits of moving early in retirement , see the Sunday Times Home Section, on 28.10.18, and the Daily Express, on 12.11.18, unless the Housing plan specifically shows a willingness to make sites available. Brownfield sites, as Woodchester demonstrates, are ideal for this purpose. Experience shows the importance of providing those are used to owning their own homes with their own front door to the outside world. Blocks of flats with corridors can create isolation. They do not want to move into complexes where their lives are controlled by others. Such villages need to empower their residents to decide what is provided and how best to meet their needs and so safeguard their highly valued independence. Independence is also promoted by encouraging residents to organise their own social activities, and therefore good communal areas are vital which they can best do if living in close proximity to each other whilst maintaining involvement in the wider community.

In conclusion

1. Isolation (the lack of companionship) is a major issue in old age which for some it is best addressed by providing open but adjacent dedicated housing for the over 65's and with more properties having their occupation status protected to the over 60's, or perhaps today over 67's, just as it was for farm workers in the past.
2. Brown fields could be suitable for this need. It is not enough to say in the plan that 12,000 houses are need. The (alternative) housing needs of the over 67's with in-built features for declining mobility should be quantified and specifically planned for. However, dare I say, providing for companionship is equally important as internal fittings in designing homes for the elderly

Footnote

Housing for the elderly

PTW 14.11.18

We can soon expect 25% of the population to be over 65

Assumptions – 60% of those over 67 own their own homes. 40% do not so two categories to be addressed.

1. Home owners
2. Those renting

This paper looks at Home owners

1. They can be categorised by

living alone or living with partner
by wealth/ and/or income
by state of physical or mental health

2. Whatever category they fall into there will be a reluctant to move for a variety of reasons:

Attachment to present home

Wish to stay in locality close to friends and family

Cost of moving

Effort and disruption of moving

Problem of releasing capital – easiest way can be a lifetime loan rather than moving

3. Therefore they will not move from their present home unless:

forced to usually by aging/health considerations

they can see a better longer term life style can be achieved by moving

4. What kind of housing would attract them to move?

Availability of support to meet their age/health needs

Smaller attractive property in the right placed offering life style change

The demand is for 3 roomed properties = large living room ensuite bedroom with walk-in shower, medium sized third room, good kitchen, guest loo and shower

Vetted housekeepers, gardeners, social areas with bar...and staff on duty 24 x 7

5. Retirement is often seen as a chance to change life style by moving to the countryside or to the seaside or abroad but those who do often move again looking for support in terms of moving closer to the family. A change of life style can be achieved by downsizing and choosing a village where future long terms needs are provided for so avoiding a later second move.

6. What can be learnt from WVV is that almost all whop have come to live in this unique Gloucestershire retirement village are downsizers, releasing larger properties and have chosen to move because support will be available when needed, and want to stay in their local community or join family living locally

7. What do they want above all?

Not to lose their independence

Privacy

Companionship

Security

Knowing support is available if needed

Freedom from property maintenance and garden worries

But most importantly they do not wish to lose their independence, especially over their life style and living costs.

I hope that these thoughts are of help to you

8. Housing response

Own front door to outside

Outside

Gardens with some they could look after – terrace with pots/sunroom Social
Social area ranging from a room with kitchenette to bar, restaurant, spa
and more

Inside the Home

A good size bedroom on suite but often want two if partnered

A smaller room as a bedroom/hobby room/ junk room
Visitor loo and shower
Large living room
Good size kitchen but not kitchen diner
Fitted to suit aging
Support from Warden to 24 x7 STAFFING TO ON SITE Domiciliary carers

9. However what they buy into is what they can afford for the property and what they then see they need and are willing/able to pay for through a Service Charge

10. So the need is variable:

Sheltered community – Care Home
Blocks of flats with wardens
Village style community for retired
Luxury homes in Spa style complexes with very extensive services

11. The resulted provision in the private sector is:

Luxury of a Richmond Village
to
The economy of a McCarthy and Stone Village
and
with something in between offering best it can at a value for money price
but with the fall back of
A care home

12. At WWV what encourages strong interesting the village dedicated housing for the over 60's are the gardens, the landscape setting and a range of property to meet whatever level people can afford to buy into. This matters. The other attraction is that the wide range houses in size, design etc. makes feels like a village and not a retirement complex. Therefore sites need to be identified to meet the various market demands.

Conclusion

WWV experience suggests that part of the District Housing Plan should explore how to fund such developments, creating opportunities then Leaseholders to collectively own the Freehold when all units sold and for the members run it how they wish. Today's economics dictate sites with a minimum 100 independent living units plus whatever facilities members want. wished. There is no essential need for Care home on site but maybe for Domiciliary care. In making this suggestion it is recognised that the need is less than 5% of the total housing need but support for suitable developments will enhance the quality of life in declining years and cut costs falling on the NHS and Social Services. However it is not just about house and site design the designing in of the social aspects is equally important.