

*ARCHITECTURAL
REFLECTIONS
ON HOUSING
OLDER PEOPLE
Nine Stories of
Retirement-Living*

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For Nina

I dedicate this thesis to my partner; may the shared struggle be a worthwhile investment toward ageing in an architecturally delightful place.

Also in memory of my late friend 'Rose' (31 August 1922 – 22 January 2018).

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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents and interprets the stories of nine actors involved in the design, construction, management and inhabitation of third-age housing in the UK. It comprises a PhD by Creative Practice, integrating original storytelling with architectural survey, analysis and design techniques; bringing together the social science practice of participant observation with architectural post-occupancy evaluation. The research foregrounds ‘designerly’ modes of inquiry, resulting in design-relevant feedback for those involved in the production of retirement-living environments. Specifically, the study benefits from the researcher’s unique position in and in-between architectural sectors – design, research and teaching – enabling an expanded field of practice and reflection. This dynamic researcher positionality, involving multiple personas, has resulted in unexpected interactions between sectors, making connections between unrelated actors.

Aspects of this research were commissioned by a UK property developer, providing ‘independent’ retirement-living apartments, and are necessarily applied in scope and approach. The underlying research context is the major societal challenge of housing a ‘super-aged’ UK population, and the particular needs and aspirations of active third-agers. The research contributes to the field through (i) a synthesis of design research and social science research methodologies, with examples of techniques applied in new contexts; (ii) an original study resulting from a unique situation and shifting research positionality; and (iii) new knowledge on a little-studied building typology. A diverse range of tactics were used, including short residencies at retirement developments; staying overnight and engaging in the social life of the shared lounge, as well as recording show-and-tell home visits, contingent on the hospitality of informants. Furthermore, the researcher made creative use of a befriending programme, leading to rich observations of an older person at home.

Altogether the research stories make up a multi-sited ethnographic study; each story presents the position of an actor (or actors) encountered within the field. The *Baby Boomers* story indicates a resistance to developer housing products, partly based on misconceptions of retirement housing and inappropriate associations with residential

institutions. *The Befriended* gives insight to the benefits of ageing in place and long-term relational meanings of home. *Developer Director* questions the popular stereotype of developer as ‘villain’, revealing work undertaken at risk and uncertain challenges within the planning system. *Resident Owner* shows how older UK consumers lack exposure to high quality housing and are committed to making their purchases work; reporting an enthusiasm for the social architecture, over-and-above the physical environment. *Chalet Manager* portrays the central role staff play in the promotion and maintenance of this social architecture; ‘untapped’ experts in the lived-experiences of the products they share with customers. *Architecture Student* shows how undergraduates had a role within a situated research practice, involving dialogic work with emerging products of architecture shared with professionals. *Company Architect* found the developer’s staff to be shaped by a strong business context, with multi-layered management and production-oriented processes designed to maximise profit. Similarly, *Town Planner* considered a disempowered actor, lacking ‘voice’ and the necessary resources to play a more central role in the delivery of housing choices for older people. Lastly, the *Creative Practitioner* story highlights how an interdisciplinary position can contribute to the advancement of research-informed design propositions, helping to evolve housing for older people.

Keywords: ageing; housing design; retirement living; multi-sited ethnography.

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* Vignettes I and XI reference material that is published outside the thesis; graphics bound by crop marks indicate pages from work package reports and an industry report respectively. Figures, tables and page numbers within crop-marked areas do not co-ordinate with those presented within the thesis. Some information has been redacted to protect the identity and/or commercial interests of the sponsor.

RESEARCH AIMS

- To explore a dynamic researcher positionality, involving multiple personas, in and in-between architectural sectors – design, research and teaching – enabling an expanded field of practice and reflection on the theoretical and applied aspects of housing older people in the UK.
- To deploy a synthesis of design research and social science research methodologies, including techniques applied in new contexts; promoting a grounded and interdisciplinary approach to design, highlighting how architectural thinking can contribute to other disciplines, and vice-versa.
- Through a multi-sited ethnographic study, enable different stakeholders and/or disciplines within the UK retirement housing sector, including divisions within the sponsor organisation, to better relate to each other's positions, knowledge and everyday practices.
- Through a practice-led approach, involving engagement with the sponsor organisation, generate new knowledge on a little-studied building typology – private, sheltered apartments for independent retirement-living in the UK – and seek to influence the design evolution of an established product.

THESIS OBJECTIVES

- To present research stories that capture the relative positions of key actors – or actor types – within the research field(s).
- To document older peoples' aspirations for, and analyses of, retirement housing, through interviewing a population sample of the sponsor's resident owners, as well as those outside its target market.
- To undertake design review and post-occupancy evaluation of an established retirement-living product, using a sample of the sponsor's development portfolio.
- To document the business practices of the sponsor organisation, through participant observation and documentary analysis, including planning applications and appeals.
- To undertake and direct design studies for an adopted development site, and gather industry feedback with regards alternative design approaches.

WORK PACKAGE OBJECTIVES

(as agreed with the research sponsor)

1. To conduct a desktop review, auditing the national need for older people's housing, using six case study locations in England.
[WP1: *The Older Persons Context*]
2. To conduct a desktop study tracking the evolution of specialist housing in the UK through historic built precedent (pre-Welfare State), identifying design lessons.
[WP2: *Specialist Housing*]
3. a) To document older peoples' viewpoints on retirement housing, through focus groups with the sponsor's customers, as well as with 'others'.
b) To undertake a Product Review, through case study analysis of three retirement schemes developed by the sponsor.
[WP3: *Fieldwork Report*]
4. To conduct a desktop review of current UK planning policy in support of older people's housing, including analysis of local plans in three English regions.
[WP4: *Planning Perspectives*]
5. To co-produce an industry guide explaining the sponsor's retirement-living product, highlighting the benefits of retirement housing and documenting common challenges experienced by the property developer.
[WP5: *Retirement-Living Explained*]

INTRODUCTION

Super-Aged UK

This thesis was initiated at a time when developed nations around the world were becoming conscious of significant demographic change in the structure of their populations, as highlighted in a United Nations report on global issues:

“The world is in the midst of a unique and irreversible process of demographic transition that will result in older populations everywhere. As fertility rates decline, the proportion of persons aged 60 and over is expected to double between 2007 and 2050, and their actual number will more than triple, reaching 2 billion by 2050. In most countries, the number of those over 80 is likely to quadruple to nearly 400 million by then”.¹

In the UK scientific evidence suggests that there have been linear increases in life expectancy since 1840, such that population ‘pyramids’ are now looking more like ‘columns’; there are fewer younger people at the base and increasing numbers and proportions of older people at the top. The United Nations classified the UK as an ‘ageing’ society as early as 1930 and ‘aged’ during the late 1970s. We are currently heading towards a ‘super-aged’ category, whereby 20 percent of the population will be aged 65 and over by the year 2025. The fastest growing section of the UK population is that occupied by the ‘old old’ – those who are 85 years and older. The Guardian newspaper reports,

“Older people are going to make up a much larger proportion of the UK population in the future. The number of over 80s is set to more than double from 3m in 2012 to 6.1m in 2037”.²

Statistics such as these have become commonplace within mainstream media, such that ‘population ageing’ is now an established national conversation. Academics at a British

¹ *Global Issues / Ageing* (United Nations, 2014) <<http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/ageing/>> [accessed 22 January 2014]

² George Arnett, *UK Population: How Will it Change Over the Next Few Decades?* (London: The Guardian Datablog, 6 November 2013) <<http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2013/nov/06/uk-population-increase-births-migration>> [accessed 22 January 2014]

Academy debate in 2014 drew public attention to centenarians, reporting that one hundred years ago there were fewer than 100 centenarians in the UK, whereas, in 2014 there were 10,000 centenarians, and in 20 years' time we can expect around 50,000.³

The Local Government Association (LGA), the national voice of local government, recently reported that a 'residential revolution' is needed to provide more homes that support the UK ageing population. The LGA reports that,

*“With an ageing [UK] population, older people are now key players in the wider housing market. They live in a third of all homes and population ageing will account for around 60 per cent of household growth, with the highest levels of increase amongst those over 85 years... The suitability of the housing stock is of critical importance to the health and wellbeing of individuals and the capacity of public services to sustainably support healthy ageing over the long term, delivering both improved outcomes and huge efficiencies”.*⁴

There is a significant research base demonstrating that housing plays a large part in maintaining older people's quality of life, and growing opinion that moving to specialist or more age-appropriate housing has a positive impact on the wellbeing of older people. In 2009 a seminal report was published by HAPPI (Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation) that asserted the UK was failing to build sufficient new homes specifically to meet the needs and aspirations of our ageing population, warning,

*“...[that] without a 'sufficiently attractive offer', most of us will stay put in homes that may gradually become harder to manage, maintain and keep warm, increasingly inaccessible and, sometimes, insecure and lonely places to spend a large part of every day”.*⁵

³ Alan Walker, 'Towards a New Vision of Later Life', in *Benefit or Burden? Coming to terms with Ageing Britain*, chaired by Evan Davis (London: British Academy, 26 February 2014) <http://www.britac.ac.uk/events/2014/Benefit_or_Burden.cfm> [accessed 14 March 2014]

⁴ Ian Copeman and Jeremy Porteus, *Housing Our Ageing Population: Learning from Councils Meeting the Housing Need of our Ageing Population* (London: Local Government Association, 2017)

⁵ Housing and Communities Agency, *HAPPI / Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation*, (London: Housing and Communities Agency, 2009)

In particular the HAPPI report showed the UK lagging behind other European countries in the provision of well-designed homes for older people or those enjoying an ‘extended middle age’.⁶ The HAPPI report proved influential in raising awareness of the design features that can make retirement housing a product to be desired not dismissed, and the HAPPI category in the annual Housing Design Awards, organised by Design for Homes, has been attributed to ‘raising standards’⁷ in the UK. Building on this success, HAPPI produced two more reports – *Plan for Implementation*⁸ and *Making Retirement Living a Positive Choice*⁹ – further asserting its brand, as well as its currency of ideas and provocations to the housing industry, associated policy makers and legislators. Many actors working within the sector are now aware of the HAPPI design recommendations and its case study projects. Indeed, HAPPI has become something of a benchmark; to the annoyance of some property developers who argue they were not consulted on the detail, nor represented by the panel. Regardless, the report’s baseline message that older people matter – and that there is a need for age-friendly accommodation – supports many business models. Furthermore, research from cross-party thinktank, Demos, presents a robust socio-economic argument in favour of development.

In 2013 Demos found that retirement properties made-up just two percent of the UK housing stock, or 533,000 homes, with just over 100,000 to buy.¹⁰ Its research shows that demand outstrips supply – reputedly one in four persons aged over 60 would be interested in buying a retirement property, equating to 3.5 million people nationally. The evidence states that more than half (58%) of people over 60 were interested in moving, with half (57%) of those wanting to downsize by at least one bedroom (rising to 76% among older people currently occupying three-, four- and five-bedroom homes).

⁶ Richard Best, *Accommodating Our Extended Middle Age* (London: Hanover Housing Association, 2013) <<http://www.hanover.org.uk/media/6735106/Lord-Best-Our-Extended-Middle-Age.pdf>> [accessed September 2017]

⁷ Richard Best and Jeremy Porteus, *HAPPI 3: Making Retirement Living a Positive Choice* (London: All Party Parliamentary Group on Housing and Care for Older People, 2016), p.3.

⁸ Richard Best and Jeremy Porteus, *HAPPI2: Plan for Implementation* (London: All Party Parliamentary Group on Housing and Care for Older People, 2009)

⁹ Best and Porteus, 2016

¹⁰ Claudia Wood, *The Top of the Ladder* (London: DEMOS, 2013). This work was revisited in: Claudia Wood and Simone Vibert, *Unlocking the Housing Market: Helping First Time Buyers by Helping Later Life Buyers* (London: DEMOS, 2017) <<https://www.demos.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Unlocking-the-Market-Demos-Report.pdf>> [accessed 08 March 2018]

Demos' figures suggest that 33% of persons aged over 60 want to downsize, equating to 4.6 million nationally. It estimated that if all those interested in buying retirement property could do so, 3.5 million older people would be able to move, freeing up 3.29 million properties, including nearly two million three-bedroom homes. Put simply, the research tells us that so-called 'last-time' buyers are 'trapped' at the top of the housing ladder and a growing older population under-occupying family homes is exacerbating the housing crisis by limiting movement up the ladder. Simpler still, and in press-worthy terms, older people have a 'stranglehold'¹¹ on family homes. No matter what terms we use, the problem of undesirable retirement housing is plain to see, but what of the solutions?

This research examines the mid-market older consumer and the accommodation types available to them – now, and in the future. The research is grounded by a professional anxiety for knowledge, part influenced by the presence of a UK property developer as sponsor; a desire for relevant information and resources that may help to shape architectural responses to the accommodation needs of other older people, or 'people' in general. Indeed, a research project team at the University of Sheffield, DWELL (Designing for Wellbeing in Environments for Later Life), has concluded that the need to expand housing delivery and choice requires a fundamental shift in mentality, away from increasingly specialist products targeting market segments:

*“...rather than seeing our ageing population as a ‘problem’ to be solved through solutions such as specialist housing, the aspirations and knowledge (and spending power) of third-agers should be viewed as an opportunity to deliver the next generation of high quality and sustainable homes – to regenerate and densify our neighbourhood and urban centres”.*¹²

The DWELL project (2013-16) worked with a range of stakeholders and residents in Sheffield to develop a working definition for 'downsizer' homes, and to co-design a

¹¹ Patrick Collinson, 'Older People Have a Stranglehold on Family Homes', *The Guardian*, 19 October 2011 <<https://www.theguardian.com/money/blog/2011/oct/19/older-people-stranglehold-family-homes>> [accessed September 2017]

¹² Adam Park, Friederike Ziegler and Sarah Wigglesworth, *Designing with Downsizers* (Sheffield: University of Sheffield, 2016), p. 87.

range of typologies that respond to third-agers' aspirations, representing an alternative approach to age-friendly 'general-needs' housing. The work was design-led and prototypical by nature, and funded through the EPSRC Lifelong Health and Wellbeing cross-council ageing research programme. Whereas the work presented here was funded by a private-sector property developer, and is therefore closely connected to the commercial and operational concerns of an established provider that offers specialist housing for older people. In these terms, the research is practice-led; a practice that stems from the author's membership of the UK architectural profession.

Architectural Practice Context

The researcher – a practicing architect – believes that change within the UK architectural profession was part stimulated by a design competition in 2013, commissioned by McCarthy & Stone in partnership with the RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects), which invited designers to 're-imagine ageing' and propose alternative models for retirement housing. The competition was predicated on an emerging population of older people that would rather not change or sacrifice their lifestyles. The 'active third age' were said to understand the benefits of downsizing – namely to release equity – but still required space to entertain, welcome visitors or enjoy interests and hobbies.¹³ About the same time another developer, Pegasus, established for over 30 years, rebranded itself PegasusLife, in line with a "complete re-definition and re-positioning"¹⁴ of its product to meet older people as 'consumers' that demand higher quality housing. PegasusLife became highly visible to the architecture profession following a high-profile and ticketed breakfast meeting in Central London, promoted by Archiboo, an architect platform for sharing knowledge and expertise.¹⁵ As a result, PegasusLife became widely considered as a desirable and architect-friendly client that recognised the importance of design quality. At the event PegasusLife creative director, Roger Black, went on record saying that retirement housing was outdated and exploitative, 'ripping off' older people by "pedalling unsophisticated,

¹³ RIBA, *Re-imagine Ageing Design Competition* (London: RIBA, 2013) <<https://www.mccarthyandstone.co.uk/about-us/re-imagine-ageing/how-to-register/>> [accessed September 2017]

¹⁴ PegasusLife (Winchester: PegasusLife, 2014) <<http://www.pegasuslife.co.uk/corporate/>> [accessed 01 April 2014]

¹⁵ Roger Black, *Designing for the Baby-Boom Generation*, The Old Operating Theatre Museum, London, 11th April 2014

outdated buildings” that have a very poor re-sale value. Black attacked household name McCarthy & Stone, calling its product a ‘museum piece’, representing the worst of British housebuilding industry from 30 years ago.¹⁶

The RIBA further helped to raise levels of awareness and invention within the profession by choosing to focus on the relationship between the built environment and ‘growing older’ as its overarching research topic for 2014. RIBA initiatives included the Building Futures publication *Silver Linings*;¹⁷ the Research & Innovation Group’s call for evidence on ageing research; and the research symposium entitled *Design for Ageing*. The *Silver Linings* report presented six illustrated future scenarios whereby ‘active third-agers’ had made a significant impact on UK towns and cities. These helped to capture the imagination of the architectural design community, as well as planners and urban designers. A review of the RIBA *Design for Ageing* Symposium was published by RIBA Journal, which reiterated the call to arms for architects to “engage in the wider debate about ageing and social change”.¹⁸ Meanwhile, the call for evidence produced some 450 items, which are now archived online¹⁹ and analysis of the Knowledge Base is available on the RIBA website.²⁰ Unfortunately, items have not been formally graded for quality and there is no plan for ongoing content management or renewal. Instead researchers are directed to the Housing LIN, which has become the ‘go-to’ sharing network for anyone working in specialist housing and care in England and Wales.

Four years on from Roger Black’s address, and PegasusLife is beginning to yield a portfolio of developments. A recent building study in the *Architects’ Journal* presented

¹⁶ *Designing for the Baby-Boom Generation* (London: Archiboo, 2014)

<<http://archiboo.com/event/creative-director-of-pegasus-on-designing-for-the-baby-boom-generation/>> [accessed September 2017]

¹⁷ Matthew Barac, Will Hunter and James Parkinson, *Silver Linings: The Active Third Age and the City*, (London: RIBA / Building Futures, 2013)

¹⁸ Matthew Barac, ‘When We’re 65’, *RIBA Journal*, 18 March 2015

<<https://www.ribaj.com/intelligence/riba-symposium-2014-report-design-for-ageing>> [accessed September 2017]

¹⁹ *2014 Ageing Research* [Knowledge Base], (London: RIBA, 2014)

<https://www.zotero.org/groups/234052/riba_research/items/collectionKey/ITFIKCH2> [accessed September 2017]

²⁰ *Design for an Ageing Population* (London: RIBA, 2017)

<<https://www.architecture.com/knowledge-and-resources/resources-landing-page/design-for-an-ageing-population>> [accessed September 2017]

PegasusLife's so-called 'debut' project, Chapter House in Lichfield. Here journalist Jon Astbury reiterates how McCarthy & Stone controls some 70 percent of the market, "churning out the generic sort of buildings one would usually associate with the type".

²¹ In his view housing for older people has "an image problem in the UK – not to mention problems with quality and quantity". Astbury likens the PegasusLife approach to what Maggie Centres have done for cancer treatment environments in the UK; a comparison he qualifies as being,

"relevant due to the canny choice of sites and architects – an investment, as it were, in architecture as a force not only for wellbeing, but also as a powerful tool in transforming the image of later life housing."

Astbury admits that PegasusLife has its work cut out if its 'retirement revolution' is to succeed in a country where holding onto one's own home has such a significant grip, and where there remains a stigma around retirement housing. We need only compare our situation to the USA where retirement villages proliferate and are recognised as positive places offering an attractive change of lifestyle.²² If architecture is the answer, then PegasusLife stand a good chance with its growing band of high-profile architects: Coffey Architects; Duggan Morris; Glen Howells; Proctor & Matthews; Purcell; RCKa; Sarah Wigglesworth; Sergison Bates; Woods Bagot, and so on. No doubt we will see more beautifully designed and crafted projects furnish the pages of the architectural press soon. It all makes for pleasurable viewing, but just how affordable will these homes be? What proportion of the 'trapped' older person market will have access to sufficient funds to purchase, and then pay for ongoing service charges? Does anyone else feel a growing anxiety for those in the middle that may fall between the best offers of the private sector and the genuinely affordable public sector?

²¹ Jon Astbury, 'Building Study: PegasusLife Makes its Debut', *Architects' Journal*, 244/13 (2017), 28-42

²² To some extent this may also be explained by differences in scale; the UK being a small country, compared with the USA's footprint. UK citizens also have strong views about protecting green space, such that the ability to develop retirement villages is heavily constrained. Whereas these issues do not arise in the USA and the proliferation of retirement villages makes them more visible – mainstream even – and therefore an attractive choice.

Industry Sponsor

The research sponsor, referred to here as Pink & Knight,²³ is a UK national property developer that offers a retirement-living product to customers that are “driven by need rather than aspiration”.²⁴ Its age-exclusive developments are made up of privately owned one and two-bedroom apartments grouped around communal facilities and services. A typical development consists of 40 apartments in one building, or ‘Chalet’, with the following features:

- Concierge reception (staffed by a Chalet Manager)
- Shared Lounge, coffee bar and accessible toilet
- Guest suite (for use by friends and family)
- Intruder alarm and CCTV entry system
- A central lift serving all floors
- 24-hour care and support system
- Landscaped gardens (with raised planters and potting sheds)
- Free parking (including electric vehicles, cycles and mobility scooters)

All Chalets are managed by an independent company, referred to here as Chalet Management Services (CMS), which is owned by Pink & Knight. The management company collects the monthly service charge and is responsible for all maintenance, service and ongoing management of the Chalets. This accommodation model has developed over decades, and is now becoming more widely recognised as a ‘lifestyle’ offer.

When the research was initiated, Pink & Knight’s development portfolio centred on the Southern counties of England. It was assumed that the business’ five-year growth plan sought to consolidate this position, with future expansion into the Midlands and the North of England, and maybe Wales. There were no known business intentions to

²³ Pseudonyms have been adopted to give anonymity to individuals, as well as protect confidentiality and the corporate image of the sponsor organisation.

²⁴ *Annual Report & Accounts* (Pink & Knight, 2017)

specifically target Scotland or Northern Ireland. The research scope was therefore limited to England, though includes references to international precedent.²⁵

Furthermore, Pink & Knight's product is always located on urban sites, within 0.5 miles of town or local centres, and typically on brownfield land associated with former light-industrial or commercial uses. The research therefore focused on English towns and cities and assumes continued retiree migration from rural to urban and suburban environments for better access to local amenities, such as supermarkets, healthcare facilities and public transport nodes.²⁶ Coupled with this consumer-led migratory trend, Pink & Knight is beginning to develop in more urban, higher-density locations due to land availability. In short, this thesis considers an urban context for housing targeted at older people in England.

Central London was not considered, in part because it is outside Pink & Knight's operational area – it being an altogether unique property market – and the company's market research indicates its customers are more likely to migrate away from the capital upon retirement. Furthermore, Central London was considered inappropriate when thinking about ideas of community, scale, pace of life and romantic notions around 'Englishness' or wider cultural nostalgia for rural ways of life in Britain.²⁷ An initial scoping study was conducted – mapping place characteristics – with a view to selecting case study towns and cities within England.²⁸ Logistical considerations were critical, particularly with regards to the various locations of the author, sponsor and university, and relative ease of access. That said, the chosen locations became less important after the initial research phase, with fieldwork using a sample of Pink & Knight developments. Three chalets were studied in detail – in Bristol, Kent and Sussex – and

²⁵ There are many interesting examples of retirement-living products within Northern Europe, USA and Australia, albeit their local contingencies do not necessarily map onto an English context.

²⁶ Historically, developments were almost exclusively to be found within coastal and inland market towns, whereas today – on the back of widespread urban renaissance – cities are equally attractive.

²⁷ Pink & Knight's product appears to uphold archetypal qualities of the traditional English home and garden: clay bricks, tiles and chimney pots, bay windows and dormers, as well as grass lawns and herbaceous borders.

²⁸ The locations were Berwick-Upon Tweed, Northumbria; Bishop's Stortford; East Hertfordshire; Christchurch, Bournemouth; Filton, Bristol; Frome, Somerset; and Richmond upon Thames, Greater London.

contrasted with the home environments of other older people living in non-specialist accommodation in the same regions.

For the avoidance of doubt, Pink & Knight's developments target older people looking for an independent lifestyle; its product is *not* a designed care environment, nor are staff trained care workers. Some resident owners make private arrangements for care when they need it, but the Chalet is otherwise a domestic environment. Furthermore, Pink & Knight does not plan to expand its offer to include other accommodation models such as assisted-living or extra-care housing/villages that provide a range of accommodation types (the latter often requiring 'greenfield' sites). Pink & Knight developments are not specifically designed for residents with dementia. It is assumed that resident owners will need to seek alternative accommodation as and when significant physical and/or sensory setbacks inhibit independent living. The research therefore focused on so-called 'active third agers', though some of the informants were found to be outside this category and/or moving towards a state of dependence.

Practice-led Working

From the outset, the research sponsor was keen to structure the project, anticipating a process based on defined work packages, milestone reports and accompanying presentations, as well as regular 'placements' within its offices. Indeed, an indicative 'plan of study' was written into the research agreement, which was further defined within the research proposal. Five work packages were determined, though in practice packages were scoped in turn, with the latter two changing in character to reflect preceding work and an alternative direction for the project. The following is a summative account of the resulting work packages and respective reports.

Work packages one and two primarily involved desktop research, including literature review and case study analysis. Work package one, *The Older Persons Context*, involved a scoping study exploring the socio-economic trends associated with demographic change in the UK. Six case study locations were used for benchmarking and the report identified general themes and issues that were flagged for further study and/or discussion with the sponsor. Work package two, *Specialist Housing*, involved historical study and analysis of built precedent; tracking the evolution of provisions and policies for older people in England, from almsgiving and parochial relief, through the

Poor Laws and poor relief, to the establishment of a Welfare State and beyond. The research traced the roots of specialist housing and care facilities for older people, from monastic farmeries, almshouses, royal hospitals, cottage homes, and the workhouses of the eighteenth century, through to Public Assistance Institutions and National Health Service of the twentieth century.

Work packages three and four were necessarily more applied, involving primary data collection and the instigation of creative practice(s). Work package three, *Fieldwork Report*, pulls together research findings and design ideas that emerged from a two-year period examining Pink & Knight retirement chalets, and engaging with staff and resident owners. The report was framed as a ‘toolkit’ with the express intention of sustaining a reflexive spirit within the sponsor organisation in respect of design and customer insight; increasing market share through embrace of innovation; and enhancing relationships with existing customers by inviting them into design and product review processes. Work package four, *Planning Perspectives*, investigated the planning context for older person housing, with an emphasis on delivering private retirement living products. The report presents project specific findings from three case study schemes selected by the sponsor; policy positions of three regions thought to represent distinct types of ‘destination’ for moving retirees; and national-level challenges to delivering retirement housing, including issues of classification, land availability, affordable housing and community infrastructure levy. It also reflects on key points of reference for planning professionals, as well as definitions and qualifying features of retirement housing.

Content from work package four fed directly into a co-produced industry guide that was designed to explain Pink & Knight’s product, highlighting the benefits of retirement housing and documenting common challenges experienced by the property developer. The guide was directed towards planning professionals and has ongoing utility for the sponsor as an independent point of reference in consultations, planning applications and planning inquiries. Furthermore, the collaborative practice that supported these research outputs – guide and work package reports – is considered foundational to the thesis, with fragments being re-voiced and appropriated for a different audience. It is also acknowledged that research can be messy and not easily contained within work packages, and cannot be confined by the intentions and expectations of its sponsor.

Indeed, by the end of this introduction the reader will be aware that a significant volume of research was conducted outside the framework of the work packages; drawing as much from alternative informants and settings, and in some cases reporting to other audiences.

Research Methodology

The primary research activity was framed as a ‘generic qualitative inquiry’,²⁹ being defined in the negative, as research not “guided by an explicit or established set of philosophic assumptions in the form of one of the known [or longer established] qualitative methodologies”³⁰ (i.e. the assumed ‘big three’ –phenomenology, grounded theory, and ethnography³¹). Yet, as the research progressed and opportunities for creative practice became realised, the approach took on design research methods in combination with the qualitative. Since the distinctiveness of each methodology was retained – with design largely following the qualitative, rather than a new single or blended methodology emerging – the research fits better under the category of ‘mixed’ or ‘multiple method’ study.³² Furthermore, through the consideration and preparation of the thesis – as opposed to work package reports that spoke to the sponsor – the work became framed as a multi-sited ethnography³³. The research has therefore journeyed from a ‘generic qualitative’ approach through to ‘mixed methods’, involving elements of creative practice, toward developing a form of reporting that speaks to one of the big three qualitative methodologies. Specific methods are identified within each ethnographic site or thesis section, and a summary of these is provided at the end of this introduction.

An important dimension to the research is the underlying modus of a PhD by Creative Practice. Here the creative practice has involved a multi-sited ethnography through an architect’s lens; using mixed qualitative research methods, including visual and design

²⁹ Renate Kahlke, ‘Generic Qualitative Approaches: Pitfalls and Benefits of Methodological Mixology’, *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 13 (2014) 37-52.

³⁰ Kate Caelli, Lynne Ray and Judy Mill, ‘Clear as Mud: Toward Greater Clarity in Generic Qualitative Research’, *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 2(2), (2003), 1-24.

³¹ Lyn Richards and Janice Morse, *Readme First for a User’s Guide to Qualitative Methods*, (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2007)

³² Kahlke, p.39.

³³ See Story 9: Creative Practitioner, p.332; Conclusion, p. 386

methods, particularly sketch design proposals. The researcher has also adopted a creative attitude to research positionality by choosing to operate within an expanded interdisciplinary field – reaching into anthropology, environmental gerontology and planning – and moving between different research fields and audiences, ranging from the developer’s boardroom, through spaces of production and debate, to the private living spaces of older people. This PhD study may claim originality through the translocation of a social science practice – namely participant observation used in anthropology and sociology – to an architectural practice of post-occupancy evaluation that foregrounds ‘designerly’ forms of inquiry, resulting in design-relevant feedback to architectural designers working on the production of private, independent-living retirement apartments (a new research context). Creativity has also been expressed through the aforementioned work package reports and this thesis; the latter being a space where alternative modes of representation were explored, and research stories developed.

Research Stories

The decision to story the research was inspired by the work of environmental gerontologist Graham Rowles and his book, *Prisoners of Space?*, which emerged from his doctoral study that explored inner-city geographical experiences of older Americans in the 1970’s, and includes compelling case studies that are rich in biographical detail.³⁴ A more contemporary touchstone for research writing that honours singular lives and storytelling is Yasmin Gunaratnam’s work, *Death and the Migrant*; a sociological account of transnational dying and care in British cities that includes chapters of oral history and close ethnographic observation that takes the reader into hidden worlds of end-of-life care in hospices, hospitals and homes.³⁵ This text is a useful model for blending narrative accounts from different actors – in Gunaratnam’s case these were dying people, care professionals and scholars – and valuable case study in recognising and utilising a variety of field materials and references respectively.

³⁴ Graham Rowles, *Prisoners of Space? Exploring the Geographical Experience of Older People* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1978)

³⁵ Yasmin Gunaratnam, *Death and the Migrant: Bodies, Borders and Care* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015)

There is a strong tradition of storytelling within architectural practice. Architect, educator and theorist Marco Frascari claimed that “architecture is embedded storytelling”, reasoning that “for a building to exist, someone has to tell its facture in a formative storytelling”.³⁶ Frascari saw stories as a critical tool for architects, key to creating ‘non-trivial’ architecture. He believed that:

*“Powerful narrative techniques help architects to introduce new designs, strategies for conceiving buildings and changes in plans. They can also comprise a very useful tool to present and achieve details for a future building, to motivate the builders and to communicate with customers and other key external audiences”.*³⁷

Stories are thus fundamental to the architectural project, particularly through design/production processes resulting in a ‘completed’ or revised building. But stories are also said to emanate *from* works of architecture. Writers have argued that while buildings do not themselves tell stories, “they provide the conditions of possibility for these stories [that is to say...] Buildings make stories possible”.³⁸ Every building provides a setting, and architecture at its best makes life more pleasurable or differentiated for people. Storytelling, therefore, provides a means “for making sense of both individual experience of architecture and social interactions that take place in it”,³⁹ and may be recognised as an alternative mode of ‘post-occupancy evaluation’ that helps to inform or provide feedback to designers. In these terms, stories relating to the inhabitation of architecture can feed into future stories in support of making architecture. Indeed, followers of Frascari claim dedication to “exploring architecture as a ‘narrative art’, and seeking in the narrative arts an expansion of architectural potential,

³⁶ Marco Frascari, *Eleven Exercises in the Art of Architectural Drawing: Slow Food for the Architect’s Imagination* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), p. 68.

³⁷ Marco Frascari, ‘An Architectural Good-Life Can Be Built’, in *Reading Architecture and Culture: Researching Buildings, Spaces and Documents*, ed. by Adam Sharr (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), p.225.

³⁸ Paul Emmons and Luc Phinney, ‘Introduction: Homo Fabula’, in *Confabulation: Storytelling in Architecture*, ed. by Paul Emmons, Marcia Feuerstein and Carolina Dayer (Abingdon: Ashgate, 2017), p.4.

³⁹ Marco Frascari (2012), p.228.

integrating poetry and technique so as to engender, it may be hoped, fabulous buildings".⁴⁰

Another key reference work is Donald Schön's *The Reflective Practitioner*, which includes a seminal chapter that explores the teaching and learning practices for architectural design. Here Schön analysed a design review involving 'Quist' and 'Petra' – fictitious names given to master and student respectively – engaging in a 'reflective conversation with the situation', rich in tacit knowledge gained through practice.⁴¹ A more contemporary reference for this reflection-in-action is Atul Gawande's book, *Being Mortal*, which stories the surgeon's professional and personal experiences of ageing and death, and includes eye-opening revelations that have transcended disciplinary boundaries.⁴² Indeed, Gawande's book is a model for accessible research writing that offers high levels of perception and sensitivity – this is research that affects the reader and causes him or her to think differently.

Gawande raises a fundamental question that resonates with the research presented here; not how might we live a long life, but how might we live a good life – all the way to the very end? The work that led Gawande to ask this question involved a kind of cross examination of research actors, ranging from co-professionals and patients to loved ones; a cast that emerged from the researcher's reflections on his individual situation and practice.

The author's storytelling practice takes cues from the abovementioned precedents, particularly Gawande, Gunaratnam and Rowles. One aspect these writers share is their integration of theory within narrative accounts. These storytellers also share empathic approaches toward their informants, and inclusive attitudes regarding representation of tacit knowledge and lived-experience. Both these qualities are taken forward in this thesis. Furthermore, Gawande's book is a useful precedent in terms of his positionality,

⁴⁰ Paul Emmons and Luc Phinney, p.2.

⁴¹ Donald Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (London: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1994).

⁴² Atul Gawande, *Being Mortal: Illness, Medicine and What Matters in the End* (London: Profile Books, 2014)

as a professional reflecting upon his practice, while paying attention to a cast of stakeholders involved in his everyday work.

Thesis Structure

This thesis presents and interprets the stories of nine actors – or actor types – encountered within the research field(s); reflecting the multivariate positions of actors engaged in the design, construction, management and inhabitation of third-age housing in England. In-depth methodological discussion is located within each story, highlighting specific methods deployed in response to: the unique characteristics of the actor type, and their respective setting; the researcher’s position in relation to the informant(s), be it distant or close; as well as the type and reliability of research data available. Each story is necessarily unique in terms of perspective, writing style and ‘voice’, and to some extent survive as standalone pieces that report from different cultures. However, the author has applied a common structure inasmuch that each story is accompanied by a ‘synopsis’ and ‘methods’ section, as well as a ‘conclusion’. Furthermore, the work is organised into four sections of research stories, to help map and make sense of the research field(s), as well as facilitate common architectural reflections.

The thesis also presents several *Vignettes* – brief evocative descriptions – that act as visual interstices between the stories. In some respects, the vignettes act as counterpoints to the text; a different media commenting on different, but related subjects. While the stories broadly represent ‘thick descriptions’⁴³ of actors in their respective cultural settings, the vignettes are architectural representations of physical ‘products’ and environments, and are more propositional in nature. They range from photographic and measured surveys through to design diagrams, patterns, drawings and models. The vignettes are included as alternative ‘real truths’ with power to open a door or ignite sparks of curiosity, but also literal fragments of a creative practice that operated in-between different fields. In these terms, it is hoped that the reader finds interesting and different insights into later life and the design of age-friendly environments. Indeed, it is the author’s ambition to destabilise preconceptions around

⁴³ Joseph Ponterotto, ‘Brief Note on the Origins, Evolution, and Meaning of the Qualitative Research Concept Thick Description’, *The Qualitative Report*, 11.3 (2006), 538-549

accommodating older ‘others’, particularly within architecture school, where so much of the discourse is invested in the new and the young.

Section one introduces actors from the English older person context, giving voice to two consumers/end-users of mainstream, or ‘general-needs’ housing, and their respective lived-experiences. *Baby Boomers* reflects on the situated experiences, attitudes and opinions of a recently retired couple, the ‘Cees’, who split their time between Northern Ireland and Sussex. The story focuses on two research-framed events: a semi-structured interview in the informants’ home, and a guided tour or ‘walking interview’⁴⁴ conducted in a local Pink & Knight development. This is a narrative account involving biographical references, interview extracts and conversation notes. *The Befriended*, meanwhile, is a narrative account of the researcher’s experience befriending ‘Rose’, a former nurse and legal aid worker; she is representative of the fastest growing section of the UK population – the so called ‘old old’ or those aged 85 years and older. The story portrays something of the changing state of home for a vulnerable older person, with Rose experiencing degradations of dignity/privacy due to increasing loss of control over who has access, and what actions are performed in her home. This story is a longitudinal qualitative study, involving observation and ‘active listening’⁴⁵ in the field, supported by architectural diagrams and drawings.

Section two groups three actors associated with Pink & Knight’s product, albeit from contrasting positions of end-user, consumer and provider. *Developer Director* presents ‘George’, a fictional director at Pink & Knight, and composite character based on members of the board of directors. It is a fictional narrative based on documentary analysis and real events, with data collected from everyday interactions and observations within the headquarters of the sponsor company. The author draws upon meeting notes made during research presentations to company directors; field notes made while observing internal meetings where directors were present; ‘headnotes’⁴⁶

⁴⁴ James Evans and Phil Jones, ‘The Walking Interview: Methodology, Mobility and Place’, *Applied Geography*, 31 (2011), 849-858

⁴⁵ Carl Rogers and Richard Farson, ‘Active Listening’, in *Communicating in Business Today*, ed. by Ruth Newman et al (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987)

⁴⁶ Roger Sanjek, ‘A Vocabulary for Fieldnotes’, in *Fieldnotes: The Makings of Anthropology*, ed. by Roger Sanjek (New York: Cornell University Press, 1990) p.93-94.

from interactions with directors in-between meetings, including conversations while travelling to and from developments, and a 300-mile car journey shared with a director while travelling to a planning inquiry. *Resident Owner*, meanwhile, examines the lived-experiences of ‘mid-market’ consumers – those that have moved from familial homes to a Pink & Knight retirement apartment. The story represents multiple informants ‘found’ within the field during short residencies, involving the researcher staying overnight at retirement chalets and engaging in the social life of the shared lounge, as a form of ‘cultural immersion’⁴⁷ and way of meeting a diversity of informants. The story is founded on data captured through participant observation, focus groups, and semi-structured and in-depth interviews. It presents a series of home visits in which apartments provided a script or room-by-room structure for interviews conducted whilst on the move – a kind of contextual walking interview – that is a parallel method to ‘wardrobe interviews’⁴⁸ used in dementia research. Furthermore, this story is supported by ‘place-centred’⁴⁹ behavioural mapping techniques and photographic surveys that capture ‘trace measures’⁵⁰ of inhabitation within the shared lounge. Three part-fictional characters are presented as touchstones for thinking about the characteristics of resident owners. Similarly, *Chalet Manager* is a part-fictional ‘day in the life’ that examines the chalet manager’s responsibilities for the building and its occupants, as well as their role in the promotion and maintenance of the social architecture of the chalet. This story is the result of a sense-making process, piecing together episodic events and activities that were focused on others – namely resident owners – that foregrounded the manager. In these terms, the possibility of storying of the chalet manager is a by-product of a

Fieldnotes – formal data sets or records – result from the interaction of scratch notes and headnotes; stored memories and interpretations arising from direct participant observation, as filtered by the ethnographer’s theoretical/disciplinary position. Headnotes are used to make sense of one’s fieldnotes when later reread for ethnographic writing projects. The value of headnotes becomes most apparent when a writer attempts to make use of another ethnographer’s fieldnotes.

⁴⁷ Brian Canfield, Lori Low and Alan Hovestadt, ‘Cultural Immersion as a Learning Method for Expanding Intercultural Competencies’, *The Family Journal: Counselling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 17.4 (2009), 318-322

⁴⁸ Christina Buse and Julia Twigg, Materialising Memories: Exploring the Stories of People with Dementia Through Dress, *Ageing and Society*, 36.6 (2016), 1115-1135

⁴⁹ Barbara Sommer and Robert Sommer, *A Practical Guide to Behavioral Research/ Tools and Techniques* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002)

⁵⁰ Pamela Davies, ‘Trace Measures’, in *The SAGE Dictionary of Social Research Methods*, ed. by Victor Jupp (London: SAGE Publications, c.2013) p. 303-305

broader contextual inquiry, dependent on the research methods deployed during residencies.

Section three focuses on professional actors, presenting contrasting positions of the architecture student (or prospective professional), the inhouse architect working for Pink & Knight, and the local authority town planner. *Architecture Student* reports from the academic design studio and reflects upon student approaches to developing designs for a Pink & Knight development site. The story presents design teaching as a situated research practice, involving dialogic work – ‘a kind of exchange’⁵¹ – with emerging products of architecture and their respective authors. It posits that the academic design studio can provide a space to explore research methodologies, involving short-term ‘cultural immersion’,⁵² ‘empathic modelling’⁵³ and other fast ethnographic techniques, resulting in meaningful engagements, with potential to generate knowledge *for* and *from* design. In particular, the story references ‘semantic ethnography’⁵⁴ as a potential methodology available to design students. Whereas, *Company Architect* reports on interactions with architectural staff at Pink & Knight’s head office, including observations made in-between scheduled activities – meetings, presentations and site visits. This research story takes a more fragmented form, adopting poetic verse rather than narrative prose; short poems being a particularly effective means to re-present ‘epiphanous moments’⁵⁵ in lived experience. Here poetic representation afforded retrospective sense-making of episodic encounters, including a design review where students presented work to a Pink & Knight company architect. Whereas, *Town Planner*, centres on a two-day event observed while ‘shadowing’⁵⁶ a planning director

⁵¹ Alison Shreeve, Ellen Sims and Paul Trowler, ‘A Kind of Exchange: Learning from Art and Design Teaching’, *Higher Education Research & Development*, 29.2 (2010), 125-138

⁵² Brian Canfield, Lori Low and Alan Hovestadt, ‘Cultural Immersion as a Learning Method for Expanding Intercultural Competencies’, *The Family Journal: Counselling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 17.4 (2009), 318-322

⁵³ Colette Nicolle and Martin Maguire, *Empathic Modelling in Teaching Design for All* (Loughborough: Ergonomics and Safety Research Institute, c. 2003)

⁵⁴ Galen Cranz, *Ethnography for Designers* (New York: Routledge, 2016)

⁵⁵ Laurel Richardson, ‘Poetic Representations of Interviews’, in *Postmodern Interviewing*, ed. by Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2003), 187-201

⁵⁶ Seonaidh McDonald, ‘Studying Actions in Context: A Qualitative Shadowing Method for Organizational Research’, in *Qualitative Research*, 5.4 (2005), 455-473

Barbara Czarniawska, *Shadowing: And Other Techniques for Doing Fieldwork in Modern Societies* (Herndon, VA: Copenhagen Business School Press, 2007)

at the sponsor organisation. It presents the local authority planner as an apparently hard-to-reach, yet critical actor, mediating the commercial interests of developers with those of the wider public. The research story is a part-fictionalised account of a ‘close’ encounter – a planning inquiry where two planners provided evidence for refusing permission to Pink & Knight on grounds of poor design – supplemented by more piecemeal exchanges and reference to planning practice literature.

Section four presents the researcher as an agent situated in-between the other actors, and operating within an expanded field of creative practice. The *Creative Practitioner* story contains a reflective account that acknowledges the author’s shifting positionality and agency as researcher; it is the meta narrative that relates to and connects all the others. The story draws upon methods of ‘auto-ethnography’⁵⁷ and ‘reflective practice’,⁵⁸ and develops a ‘self-interview’⁵⁹ technique used in the social sciences. The author therefore presents prose in the form of questions and answers, supported by diagrams and references to literature on the themes of ‘designerly’⁶⁰ ways of knowing and ‘practice-led’⁶¹ research, as well as the limits of ‘architectural agency’.⁶² The story also weighs up the limitations of the research and its respective methods, and moves towards ‘narrative inquiry’,⁶³ reflecting upon writing challenges and the representation of the ‘cast’ of actors. The conclusion provides further space for drawing together the stories and their respective findings; highlighting aspects of originality within the research, as well as evidencing early research impact; and presenting opportunities for further work.

⁵⁷ Nicholas Holt, ‘Representation, Legitimation, and Auto-ethnography: An Auto-ethnographic Writing Story’, *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 2.1 (2003), 18-28

Mariza Méndez, ‘Auto-ethnography as a Research Method: Advantages, Limitations and Criticisms’, *Applied Linguistics Journal*, 15.2, (2013)

⁵⁸ Donald Schön (1994)

⁵⁹ Emily Keightley, Michael Pickering and Nicola Allett, ‘The Self-interview: A New Method in Social Science Research’, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 15.6 (2012), 507-21.

⁶⁰ Nigel Cross, ‘Designerly Ways of Knowing: Design Discipline Versus Design Science’, *Design Issues*, 17.3 (2001), 49–55.

⁶¹ Murray Fraser, *Design Research in Architecture: An Overview* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2013); Linda Candy, *Practice Based Research: A Guide* (Sydney: University of Technology, 2006)

⁶² Jeremy Till, *Architecture Depends* (London: The MIT Press, 2009)

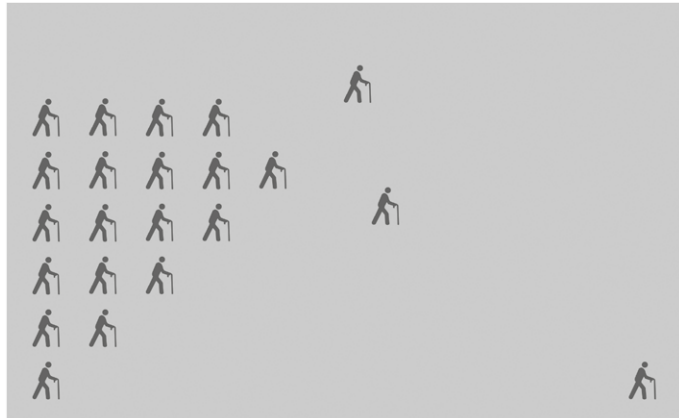
⁶³ Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly, *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research* (San Francisco: Jossey-bass, 2000), p.182.

Vignette I **Work Packages**

This vignette presents a visual synopsis of the contractual Work Packages prepared for the sponsor, and is to be read in conjunction with the thesis Introduction. It includes sample representations of demographic data from work package one; case study notes from work package two; research methods and product review cover pages from work package three; and planning professional feedback on the design of case study retirement-living developments.

Toward a New Design Approach to Housing Choices in Later Life

The Older Persons Context



Work Package One | April 2014

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Supervisors: Rose Gilroy & Professor Adam Sharr



This document is the result of a scoping study exploring the socio-economic trends associated with demographic change leading to the UK becoming a super-aged society. The study was conducted through the lens of an architectural researcher, working in collaboration with specialist housing provider, [REDACTED]. The author has sought to limit the scope of study to England, where possible, and at an early stage identified six case study locations that are used for benchmarking. Due to time constraints the study does not provide in-depth analysis of each location i.e. there are not fine grain results on every contextual issue identified. A number of areas have been flagged up for further study and / or discussion with [REDACTED].

A large volume of data was analysed in the production of this work, including documents of many kinds within an ever-expanding field of 'grey literature'. Indeed one of the challenges going forward in this field will be tracking the periodic publication of relevant datasets and baseline reports, as well as more frequent and irregular release of research papers, and other live (constantly updating) online resources, of which there are many.

Vignette I **Work Packages** **~ No.1 ~**

Case study locations used to narrow the study of UK retirement destinations. 'Size' refers to population, with bracketed figures referring to the respective town or city.

Vignette I
Work Packages
 ~ No.1 ~

	BERWICK-UPON-TWEED (Northumbria)	BISHOP'S STORTFORD (East Hertfordshire)	CHRISTCHURCH (BOURNEMOUTH)	FILTON (BRISTOL)	FROME (Bath & NE Somerset)	RICHMOND (LONDON)
TYPE	COASTAL Northern Market Town	RURBAN Inland Market Town	COASTAL Harbour Town Conurbation	URBAN City Suburb	RURAL Inland Market Town	SUBURBAN Town & City Borough
SIZE	SMALL 13,000	MEDIUM 38,500	MEDIUM 48,000 (183,500)	LARGE 10,000 (430,000)	SMALL 26,000	LARGE 21,500 (8,500,000)
STATUS	REGIONALLY ESTABLISHED	NONE (rooted retirees)	NATIONALLY ESTABLISHED	EMERGING (developments)	NONE (rooted retirees)	NONE (rooted retirees)
ACCOLADES	'Top place to DOWNSIZE' (Telegraph, 2013) 'Best for walkers' (Telegraph, 2008)	Proximity to LONDON and STANSTED AIRPORT. Five GOLF clubs within 10 miles.	'UK RETIREMENT CAPITAL' (Nearly 1 in 3 residents are retired, ONS 2013)	GREEN CAPITAL (EUROPE, 2015) & 2013 'Best City' (Money-SuperMarket)	MOST POPULAR REGION (one fifth of South West population of pension age, 2013)	London is LEAST POPULAR place to retire. Richmond is highly desirable, albeit expensive.
FEATURES	HISTORIC walled town by England-Scotland BORDER	HISTORIC & CONNECTED national transport infrastructures	SOUTHERN CLIMATE and long established retirement communities	SMALL CONNECTED CITY within reach of countryside	ALTERNATIVE scene characterised by artist community and rural setting	CAPITAL CITY suburb with large number of parks / open spaces. Close to international transport hubs.

Fig 1: Place Characteristics of Case Study Locations

Case study locations used to narrow the study of UK retirement destinations. 'Size' refers to population, with bracketed figures referring to the respective town or city.

Vignette I
Work Packages
 ~ No.1 ~

NATURAL RESOURCES	SEA NORTHUMBERLAND NATIONAL PARK	LEE VALLEY PARK River Stort Hatfield Forest	SEA / HARBOUR Avon & Stour Rivers NEW FOREST	FLOATING HARBOUR Avon Gorge Ashton Court	RIVER FROME Agricultural landscape MENDIP HILLS	RICHMOND PARK Royal Botanic Gardens River Thames
CULTURAL ASSETS	LOCAL Independent galleries and theatre. 60 miles to Edinburgh / NATIONAL institutions.	LOCAL / NATIONAL Independent galleries, theatre and museum. International quality institutions in London.	LOCAL Independent galleries and theatre. REGIONAL FESTIVALS for food and music.	REGIONAL Museums, galleries, theatre and festivals SS GREAT BRITAIN & SUSPENSION BRIDGE	LOCAL Independent galleries, theatre and annual Frome festival. 15 miles to Glastonbury.	LOCAL / NATIONAL Independent galleries, theatre and museum. WEST END / CENTRAL LONDON (9.5 miles).
SHOPPING FACILITIES	MODERATE Local shops. Larger retail in EDINBURGH (60 miles)	GOOD Local shops. Jackson Square recently regenerated. LONDON (40 miles)	GOOD Local shops. Larger retail in BOURNEMOUTH (11 miles)	EXCELLENT Local independent and chain shops. Cribbs Causeway & Cabot Circus.	MODERATE Local shops. Larger retail in BATH (14 miles). Farmers Market.	EXCELLENT Local independent and chain shops. Oxford Street (9 miles) & Westfield (6 miles)
HEALTH-CARE	MODERATE General hospital. National hospitals in EDINBURGH.	GOOD Regional hospital. Specialist hospitals in Cambridge / LONDON.	GOOD Bournemouth & Christchurch Hospitals.	EXCELLENT Regional and University Hospitals.	MODERATE Community hospital. Regional hospital in BATH.	EXCELLENT National specialist / University Hospitals in CENTRAL LONDON.
RETIREMENT LIVING HOMES	NONE Closest developments in Cheshire	ONE South Street (planning approval)	TWO Bridge Street & Osborne Lodge (Bournemouth)	FOUR Southmead Road & Fishponds, Portishead & Westbury on Trym	NONE One development in North Somerset (Portishead)	ONE Gifford Lodge in Twickenham (Borough of Richmond)
	BERWICK-UPON-TWEED (Northumbria)	BISHOP'S STORTFORD (East Hertfordshire)	CHRISTCHURCH (BOURNEMOUTH)	FILTON (BRISTOL)	FROME (Bath & NE Somerset)	RICHMOND (LONDON)

Fig 1: Place Characteristics of Case Study Locations

Case study locations used to narrow the study of UK demographic data (ONS 2011 Census data).

Vignette I
Work Packages
 ~ No.1 ~

men

Regional Ranking (LE, 1-9)

Regional Ranking (HLE, 1-9)

Life Expectancy (LE)

Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE)

Proportion of Life in 'Good' Health

Local Authority Ranking (LE, 1-152)

Local Authority Ranking (HLE, 1-152)

	Berwick-Upon-Tweed	Bishop's Stortford	Christchurch (Bournemouth)	Filton (Bristol)	Frome (Somerset)	Richmond-Upon-Thames
Regional Ranking (LE, 1-9)	8 North East	2 East	3 South West	3 South West	3 South West	4 London
Regional Ranking (HLE, 1-9)	9 North East	3 East	2 South West	2 South West	2 South West	5 London
Life Expectancy (LE)	78.7	80.2	78.6	78.0	80.0	81.5
Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE)	62.1	65.4	63.0	63.1	65.1	70.3
Proportion of Life in 'Good' Health	78.9 %	81.5 %	80.1 %	80.9 %	81.3 %	86.2 %
Local Authority Ranking (LE, 1-152)	73 North East	24 Hertfordshire	78 Bournemouth	92 Bristol	31 Somerset	5 Richmond
Local Authority Ranking (HLE, 1-152)	77 North East	33 Hertfordshire	67 Bournemouth	63 Bristol	39 Somerset	1 Richmond

Comment

The figures illustrate a North-South divide, with men living longer in the South of England. The North East region ranks the lowest for health life expectancy. Men are not living as long as women but enjoy a higher proportion of their life in good health.

Fig 3: Life & Healthy Life Expectancies for Men in the Case Study Locations (Source: ONS)

Case study locations used to narrow the study of UK demographic data (ONS 2011 Census data).

Vignette I
Work Packages
 ~ No.1 ~

women

Regional Ranking (LE, 1-9)
 Regional Ranking (HLE, 1-9)
 Life Expectancy (LE)
 Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE)
 Proportion of Life in 'Good' Health
 Local Authority Ranking (LE, 1-152)
 Local Authority Ranking (HLE, 1-152)

	Berwick-Upon-Tweed	Bishop's Stortford	Christchurch (Bournemouth)	Filton (Bristol)	Frome (Somerset)	Richmond-Upon-Thames
Regional Ranking (LE, 1-9)	9 North East	4 East	2 South West	2 South West	2 South West	3 London
Regional Ranking (HLE, 1-9)	9 North East	3 East	2 South West	2 South West	2 South West	4 London
Life Expectancy (LE)	82.4	83.8	83.3	82.6	83.8	86.0
Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE)	64.0	66.6	63.9	63.2	66.3	72.1
Proportion of Life in 'Good' Health	75.3 %	79.5 %	76.8 %	76.4 %	79.0 %	83.8 %
Local Authority Ranking (LE, 1-152)	87 North East	38 Hertfordshire	55 Bournemouth	78 Bristol	35 Somerset	2 Richmond
Local Authority Ranking (HLE, 1-152)	96 North East	31 Hertfordshire	69 Bournemouth	79 Bristol	37 Somerset	1 Richmond

Comment

The figures illustrate a North-South divide, with women living longer in the South of England. The North East region ranks the lowest for life/health life expectancy. Women are living longer than men but spend a higher proportion of their life in less than good health.

Fig 4: Life & Healthy Life Expectancies for Women in the Case Study Locations (Source: ONS)

Toward a New Design Approach to Housing Choices in Later Life

Specialist Housing



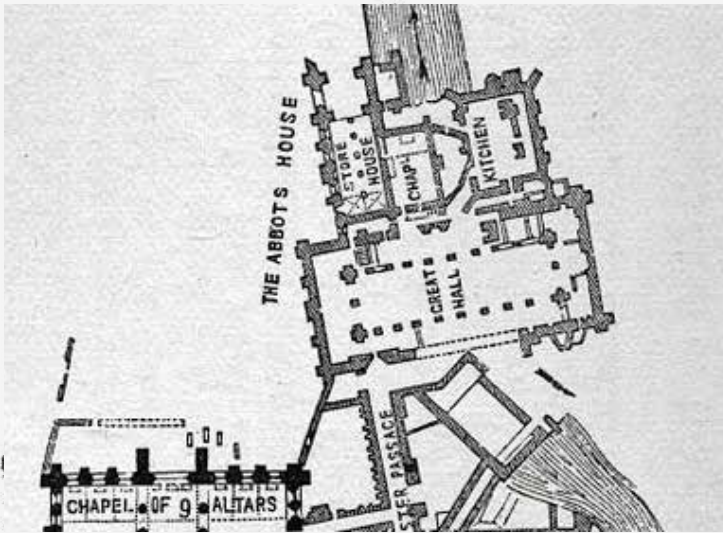
Work Package Two | July 2014

Sam Clark
PhD Candidate (by Creative Practice), Architecture & Planning
Supervisors: Rose Gilroy & Professor Adam Sharr



A study conducted through the lens of an architectural researcher, working in collaboration with specialist housing provider, [REDACTED]; tracking the evolution of provisions and policies for older people in England, from alms-giving and parochial relief, through the Poor Laws and poor relief, to the establishment of a Welfare State and beyond. The study traces the roots of specialist housing and care facilities for older people, from monastic farmeries, almshouses, royal hospitals, cottage homes, and the workhouses of the eighteenth century, through to 'Public Assistance Institutions' and National Health Service of the twentieth century. The author takes a look at contemporary challenges to delivering specialist housing for older people, including issues of classification and the current planning system. A range of benefits are identified with regards to private sheltered housing and the wider community. In addition 'meanings of home' are explored and set the scene for further research into how older people think about home; what they value and what motivates them to move.

Vignette I
Work Packages
~ No.2 ~



Redacted Image

Above: St Richard dying in the Maison Dieu in Dover (1253)

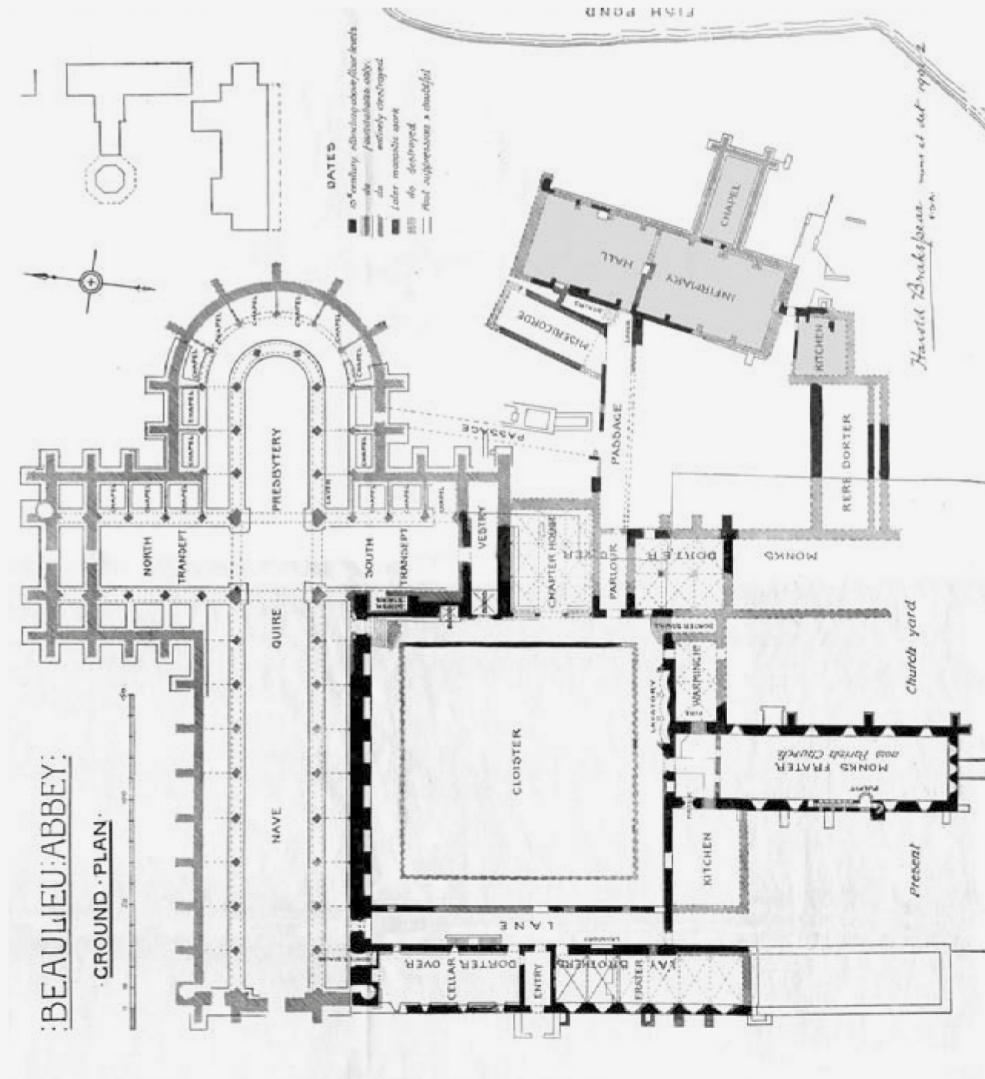
Above, Left: Plan of Farmery, Fountains Abbey, North Yorkshire (c. 1240).

The great hall measuring some 180 feet by 78 feet was one of the largest in mediaeval Britain and originally had bed spaces round the walls, with fireplaces in the northern and southern gables. To the east lay chambers thought to have been occupied by retired abbots, the chapel and kitchen of the latter separated from the hall by passages and yards as a fire precaution.

CASE STUDY 1: MONASTIC FARMERY

Case study exploring historic accommodation of/for older people.

Vignette I
Work Packages
~ No.2 ~



Lessons

1. Setting – Private, but within close proximity to public life (short walk to cloister)
2. Planning – Shared, flexible space within hall (efficient circulation, albeit at expense of privacy)
3. Reference – Residents have common reference point in chapel (shared beliefs, rituals and visual connection)

Comment

The farmery (later named 'infirmary') was one of the extra-claustral buildings in the outer court of a monastery, usually on the quiet side of the precinct away from the hustle and bustle of public life. In its simplest form the farmery would be an oblong, aisle-less hall similar in plan to a modern hospital pavilion, with a chapel projecting eastward from the end or side according to the position of the hall

Right: Ground Plan of Beaulieu Abbey, Hampshire.

Case study exploring historic accommodation of/for older people.

Vignette I
Work Packages
 ~ No.2 ~

Lessons

1. Intentional – A planned residential community designed from the start to have a high degree of social cohesion and teamwork (military comradeship)
2. Typology – Borrowing from almshouses, hostels, barracks and Oxbridge colleges
Hierarchy – Separation, and deliberate expression, of public and private blocks
3. Planning – Relationship between private and communal residential spaces, with small berths compensated by generous communal areas and extensive gardens
4. Life-course Accommodation – From 'berths' within Long Wards to Infirmary
5. Environment – Provision of seating areas about fireplaces and under the loggia

Redacted Images
[Copyright of
Royal Hospital Chelsea]

Above: A Long Ward (c.1920). Pensioners sitting close to the fire or looking out of the large windows

Left: Pensioners seated in the loggia of Figure Court (1920). Wren designed the loggia so that, when the sun is low in the sky, light reaches the benches at the back.

Case study exploring historic accommodation of/for older people.

Vignette I
Work Packages
~ No.2 ~

Comment

An interesting parallel to – and potential built precedent for – the Cottage Homes Bill, Blaise Hamlet was built some 87 years earlier to accommodate retired staff of John Hartford and his estate in Henbury (Blaise Castle, Bristol). According to the current owners, The National Trust, John Nash's designs for the hamlet has provided inspiration for a good number of other projects, including Selworthy Green and Hampstead Garden Suburb.

Lessons

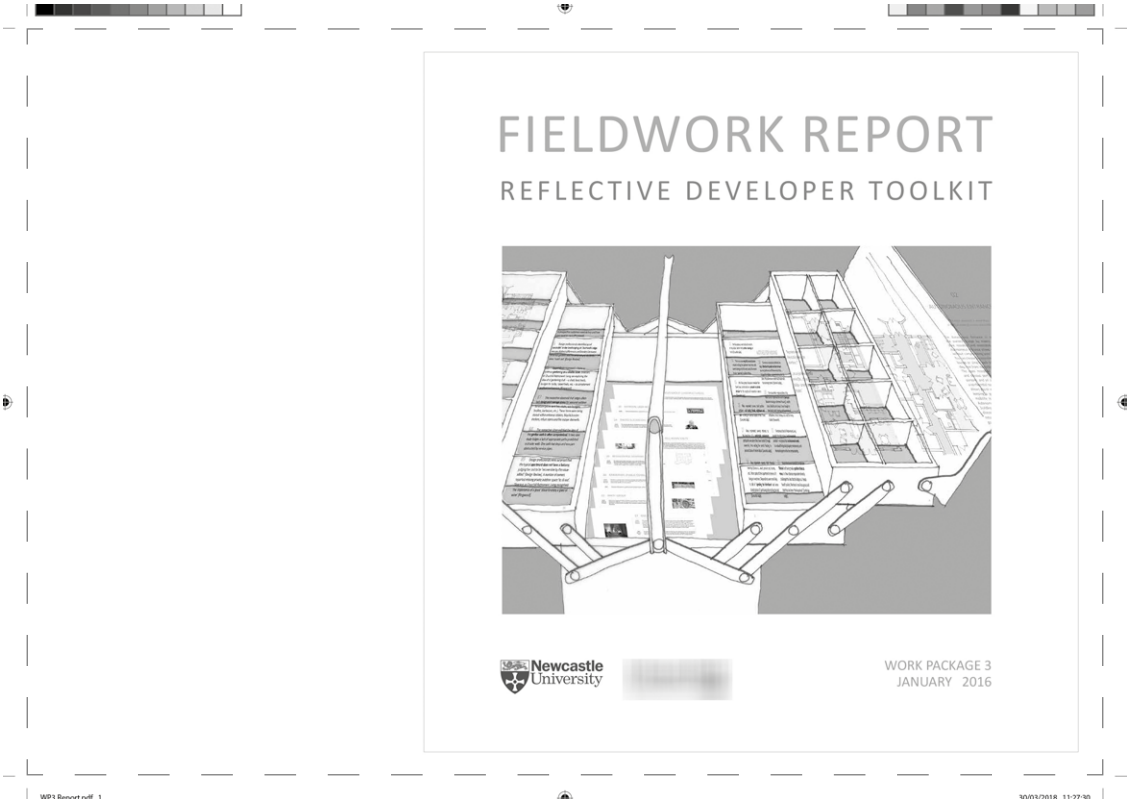
1. Identity – small scale and individual home identities
2. Landscape – informal planning around a common, characterised by an undulating topography, feature trees, sundial/pump and a dovecote
3. Entrances – porches with integral benches are orientated for privacy but equally allow for interactions with neighbours



CASE STUDY 4: BLAISE HAMLET

Case study exploring historic accommodation of/for older people. Blaise Hamlet built c.1811, 88 years before the Cottage Homes Bill (HC Deb 22 February 1899 vol 67 cc185-258)

Vignette I
Work Packages
~ No.2 ~



Fieldwork Report *presents research findings and design ideas that have emerged from a two year period examining the retirement developments by [REDACTED]. The report is presented as a toolkit with the express intention of sustaining a reflexive spirit in the organisation in respect of design and customer insight; increasing market share through embrace of innovation; enhancing relationships with existing customers by inviting them into design and product review processes.*

The toolkit adopts a multi-layered structure similar to a trade-person's cantilever toolbox. The reader – as would the carpenter – can see all the tools at once and is free to select multiple tools from different compartments. The interior contains 35 research methods, categorised by seven approaches; 111 research findings, separated into ten thematic sectors; 10 design ideas and 6 initiative scenarios, borne out of wider design dialogues and conference proceedings.

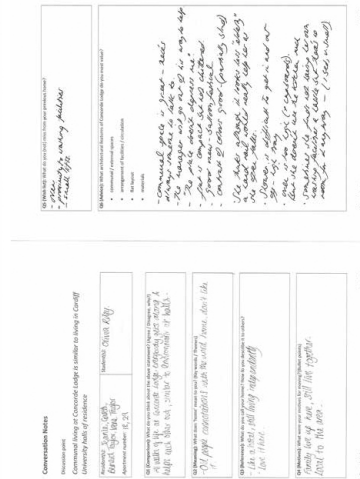
Vignette I
Work Packages
~ No.3 ~

Example research method from the *Reflective Developer Toolkit* and deployed within the thesis.

Vignette I
Work Packages
 ~ No.3 ~

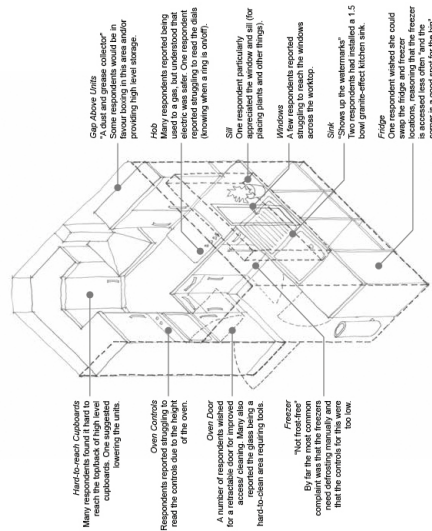
23 MINI FOCUS GROUPS (SEMI-STRUCTURED)

WHAT Method Protocol	The researcher sets up a specific time and place for the focus group event. Each mini focus group has 3-7 participants, which may be self-selecting i.e. a naturalistic group in which the participants know each other prior to the interview and so have more natural conversations. The researcher or research assistant acts as moderator bringing the discussion back to a prescribed set of questions or topic areas.
WHY Benefits Data	Interaction between participants can uncover broader insights. Extremely useful for generating qualitative data for testing/triangulating through other methods e.g. in-depth interviews. Using a familiar setting and social event provides easy reference material for discussion e.g. design review of the owner's lounge. A mini focus group facilitates more in-depth discussion.
RESOURCES Facilities People	A focus group typically has 8-12 participants. A mini-focus group has 3-7 participants and is therefore easier to recruit and facilitate/moderate. A smaller group is also easier for older participants that may have trouble hearing. Focus groups are a very time and cost efficient method for the volume of data generated (quicker than 8-12 in-depth interviews).
CHALLENGES	Participants can influence each other and moderate responses. Familiarity of participants within a naturalistic group can lead to 'groupthink'. Data is not quantifiable.
REFERENCES	Sam Clark, <i>Product Review</i> / [REDACTED] (Unpublished, January 2015) David E. Gray, <i>Doing Research in the Real World</i> (London: SAGE, 2014) Joe Langford & Deana McDonagh, <i>Focus Groups: Supporting Effective Product Development</i> (London: Taylor & Francis, 2003)
DEPLOYED	Product Review: [REDACTED]



25 SHOW & TELL HOME VISITS

<p>WHAT Method Protocol</p>	<p>A form of contextual interview in which the designer/researcher is invited into the resident's home. The resident provides a kind of guided tour which provides a structure for an interview conducted whilst on the move. Contextual laddering, an iterative interview technique, can be used to uncover root causes or core values. The interviewer asks a series of probing questions that seek to fill in the rungs of a ladder, developing concrete or product-based answers into more abstract concepts and values.</p>
<p>WHY Benefits Data</p>	<p>Contextual interviews uncover tacit knowledge about people's context that the people may not be consciously aware of. Personal visits facilitate candid discussion around and about the home. Findings range from general reflections on retirement living, through designer observations of occupancy, to detailed feedback on 'niggles' and 'snags'.</p>
<p>RESOURCES Facilities People</p>	<p>Dependent on gaining access to reasonably mobile residents in their homes. Each visit last 15-45 minutes.</p>
<p>CHALLENGES</p>	<p>Keeping control of the interview. Requires a skilled interviewer who can keep the participants engaged in the research. Capturing data (verbal and visual) can be a challenge whilst on the move (photographs may be a useful aide-memoire, though the participant's privacy should be respected at all times).</p>
<p>REFERENCES</p>	<p>Sam Clark, <i>Product Review</i> / [redacted] <i>Worthing</i> (Unpublished, July 2015) David E. Gray, <i>Doing Research in the Real World</i> (London: SAGE, 2014) Joe Langford & Deana McDonagh, <i>Focus Groups: Supporting Effective Product Development</i> (London: Taylor & Francis, 2003)</p>
<p>DEPLOYED</p>	<p>Product Review: [redacted]</p>



Example research method from the *Reflective Developer Toolkit* and deployed within the thesis.

Vignette I Work Packages ~ No.3 ~

Example research method from the *Reflective Developer Toolkit* and deployed within the thesis.

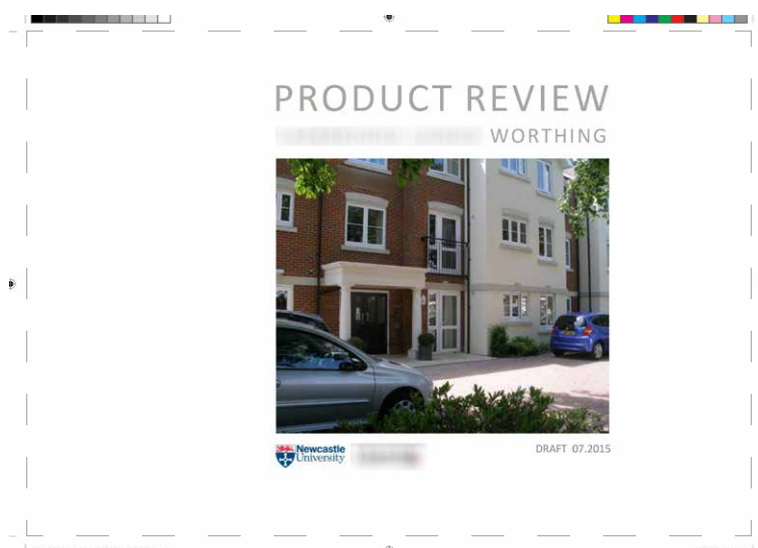
Vignette I
Work Packages
 ~ No.3 ~

28 PHOTOGRAPHIC SURVEY

<p>WHAT Method Protocol</p>	<p>Photographic surveys in this context may be used to directly represent the physical condition of the built environment (building details) or as an alternative form of behavioural mapping, recording 'trace measures' of inhabitation i.e. evidence of particular activities and home/place-making. The latter will involve observing the physical evidence of activities, typically as erosion (e.g. wear patterns or 'desire trails' on a lawn) or accretion (e.g. use of recycling bins).</p>
<p>WHY Benefits Data</p>	<p>'Trace measures' can be useful for offering hints about human activity and may confirm information gained from other sources. The photographic survey is a visually potent method.</p>
<p>RESOURCES Facilities People</p>	<p>Few required other than a camera. Human interaction is not necessary, though limits the reliability of interpretations.</p>
<p>CHALLENGES</p>	<p>Most social scientists prefer to study live interaction rather than carpets and lawns. The information can be misleading. For example, deterioration of certain library books may reflect the activities of a single individual rather than indicate heavy circulation. In a building or neighbourhood, the absence of graffiti may reveal more about cleaning policies than social attitudes.</p>
<p>REFERENCES</p>	<p>Sam Clark, <i>Product Review</i> / [redacted] <i>Worthing</i> (Unpublished, July 2015) Pamela Davies, 'Trace Measures', in <i>The SAGE Dictionary of Social Research Methods</i>, Victor Jupp Ed. (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, c.2013) pp. 303-305 http://srmo.sagepub.com/view/the-sage-dictionary-of-social-research-methods/n209.xml Michael Freeman, <i>The Photographer's Story: The Art of Visual Narrative</i> (Lewes: Ilex Press, 2012)</p>
<p>DEPLOYED</p>	<p>Product Review: [redacted]</p>

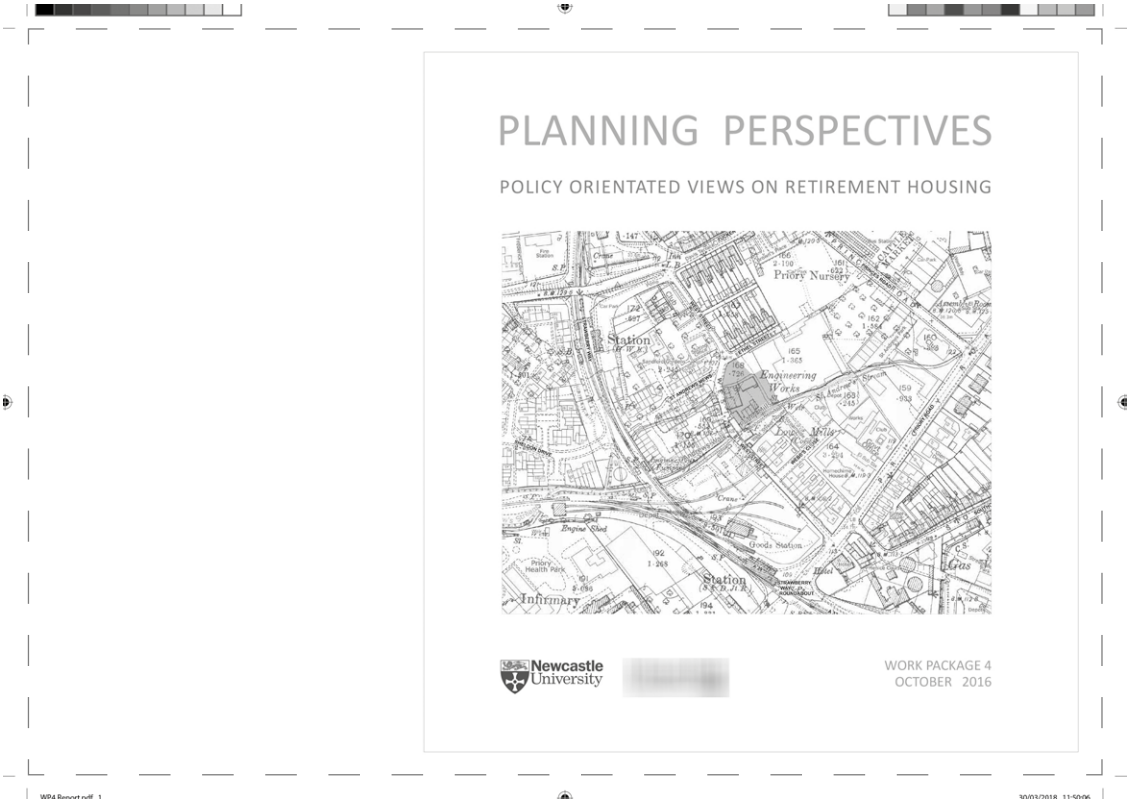


Figure 28.10: Examples of various photographic surveys in the residential and public environments. The door mats are a popular form of self-expression, bringing life to otherwise homogeneous spaces. The photograph captures the physical evidence of activities, typically as erosion (e.g. wear patterns or 'desire trails' on a lawn) or accretion (e.g. use of recycling bins). The images are arranged in a 3x6 grid. The top row shows door mats and a recycling bin. The middle row shows a worn carpet, a recycling bin, and a cluttered room. The bottom row shows a recycling bin, a cluttered room, and a cluttered room.



Reports prepared for the research sponsor, reviewing three case study developments.

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~ No.3 ~



[Historic Map: Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Limited (2014)]

Planning Perspectives presents research findings from an investigation into the planning context for older person housing, with a particular emphasis on private retirement-living products by [REDACTED] and others. A mixed-method approach was adopted with data captured through semi-structured interviews and correspondence with planning professionals; analysis of project-specific documents, including decision notices and planning inquiry reports; and a desktop review of planning policy at both national and local levels.

The report is split into three review sections: local, regional and national. The local review presents project specific findings from three case study schemes selected by [REDACTED]. The regional review focuses on three regions of England thought to represent distinct types of 'destination' for migrating retirees. The national review brings together higher-level challenges to delivering retirement housing, including issues of classification, land availability, affordable housing and CIL. It also reflects on key points of reference for planning professionals, as well as definitions and qualifying features of retirement housing. The report also identifies key areas of common ground, including the wider benefits of retirement housing.

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Comparative Analysis

Feedback comments from the three case studies, particularly points of contention, have been collated and organised into ten categories and thirty one descriptors. Specific instances are charted and represented as coloured cells; yellow where one instance is evident, orange where there are two, and red where there are three instances within the same field. Similarly the main category areas and case studies are colour-coded according to intensity of evidence. In this way the chart provides a graphic representation of 'convergence' in planning professional feedback; indicating areas of 'heat' that warrant further investigation. Design – character and appearance – is clearly a significant area.

Planning Issues Raised by officer reports and notices		A Eastleigh	B Swindon	C Wetherby
01	Development Principles			
	1.1 Demolition / preservation of historic assets			
	1.2 Scale / density of development			
	1.3 Use Class / scheme identity (naming)			
02	Section 106 Contributions			
	2.1 Affordable Housing (determination)			
	2.2 CIL (determination)			
	2.3 Open Space			
	2.4 Accessible Housing			
03	Building Typology			
	3.1 Single building approach			
	3.2 Double-loaded and/or long corridors			
	3.3 Single-aspect apartments			
04	Parking			
	4.1 Number of car parking spaces			
	4.2 Size / accessibility of car parking bays			
	4.3 Scooter store location			
05	Private Amenity			
	5.1 Amount			
	5.2 Distribution / layout			
	5.3 Quality			

Table 1 - Comparative analysis of planning issues presented by the case studies

Analysis of local authority ‘planning’ (Development Control) feedback on P&K developments.

Vignette I
Work Packages
 ~ No.4 ~

Planning Issues Raised by officer reports and notices		A Eastleigh	B Swindon	C Wetherby
06	Design: Strategic Siting			
	6.1 Building (location / orientation)			
	6.2 Parking (location / distribution)			
	6.3 Main Garden (location / orientation)			
07	Design: Character/Appearance			
	7.1 Relation to context / street scene			
	7.2 Massing (distribution and form)			
	7.3 Elevations (composition and materials)			
08	Design: Building Entrance			
	8.1 Number			
	8.2 Location			
	8.3 Appearance			
09	Design: Internal Environment			
	9.1 Sun/light, ventilation, noise			
	9.2 Apartment outlook			
	9.3 Travel distances (for older people)			
10	Landscape Design			
	10.1 Site entrance / approach (quality)			
	10.2 Vehicle drop-off			
	10.3 Garden paving / features			

Before unpacking the data further it is worth reflecting on how the projects themselves have been presented, in as much, how they have been described. In all cases the planning application form and design and access statements refer to the ‘elderly’. This is now considered out-dated as contemporary research and policy documents refer to ‘older people’, thereby avoiding cultural stereotypes and the act of ‘othering’. In two cases the application form also describes the accommodation as “category II Type” (Eastleigh & Wetherby), which is unhelpful. Planning barrister Neil Cameron QC recently advised ██████████ to desist in using these definitions as they are both ‘out of date’ and ‘hard to find’¹. Planners working within the organisation reported frequent misinterpretation arising from shortened/ colloquial references e.g. ‘C2’ (Category 2 Housing) within ‘C2’ and ‘C3’ (Planning Use Classes)². There are also numerous non-authoritative systems of classification, variously three and four tiered, including references to Category 2.5 or 2Plus (and with them implicit models of later life as a kind of conveyor belt along which older persons travel from one class to another). Indeed one planning inspector twice refers to a project as a ‘care home’ within the appeal decision report (Wetherby). This serves to remind providers that the image of retirement housing products is somewhat confused.

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Scope

Local Review presents the research findings from a desktop study of *Planning Issues* project documentation submitted for planning, and local authority correspondence, including decision notices and planning inquiry reports on [redacted] developments. Three developments were identified by [redacted] as being representative of the everyday challenges posed; each has had a live planning application within the study period, 2013-16, and together they represent a range of contexts, involving three different authorities. They are presented in reverse chronological order; being built, under construction and subject to planning, respectively:

- [redacted], Eastleigh (Eastleigh Borough Council),
- [redacted], Wetherby (Leeds City Council),
- [redacted], Swindon (Swindon Borough Council).

A synopsis of each development provides an outline case history with regards to planning process, key issues and challenges, as well as detailed feedback from planning professionals. A comparative analysis identifies common themes and areas of convergence, which are mapped in table form. 'Design', explicitly stated, or referred to in terms of 'character' or 'appearance', was identified

as the main area of contestation. Extracts from online planning documents are brought together to provide a greater level of detail in four areas of design: context, massing, elevations and internal environment. A study of elevation drawings then demonstrates how designers have responded to feedback and enhanced schemes such that they are permitted for development. The report also brings together areas of common ground, illustrating where [redacted] developments meet local authority agendas and policies.

Images

- Top: As-built photograph of [redacted], Eastleigh
- Middle: CGI image of [redacted], Wetherby
- Bottom: Perspective Study, [redacted], Swindon

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Work Packages
 ~ No.4 ~

Design

The planning inspector's summary in the Wetherby dismissal references the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which emphasises the importance that Government attaches to the design of the built environment, stating that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. In particular the dismissal hung on article 64 of NPPF, which recommends that "permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions"¹. In this instance critique was largely directed at the material and formal presence of the proposed building within a visible setting on the edge of a conservation area; aspects that are reflected in the comments of planning professionals for the other two projects.

"There is an obligation on architects and developers of this type of accommodation to provide the best possible environment in which the older generations can live. It is important therefore that economic imperatives are tempered by qualitative environmental considerations, such as in the public areas, which contribute much to the quality of residents' day to day life".

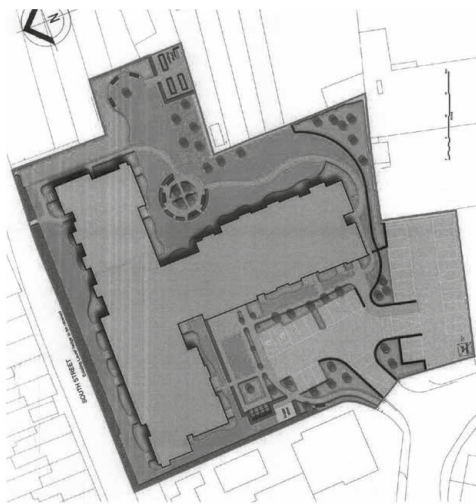
The Winchester with Eastleigh Design Review Panel

Four specific areas of design have been identified as needing further attention: context, massing, elevations and internal environment. For ease of reference a finer grain of feedback has been collated under these headings below. It should be noted that while these comments are largely critical they are intended to provide clear direction for a provider that strives to be a market leader of independent-living retirement housing.

Context (including street scene)

- "cause substantial harm to the character and appearance of the street scene" (Eastleigh)
- "fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area" (Swindon)
- "a confused and overly complex appearance to the development which would be incongruous and would fail to integrate into the surrounding area" (Swindon)
- "the proposal, by virtue of its siting, fails to preserve the distinct open character and appearance [of the site]" (Swindon)
- "stands out from the fine grain inherent of the existing urban context" (Swindon)
- "a dominant appearance at odds with that of the [adjacent] conservation area and its surroundings" (Wetherby)
- "a large jumbled building mass, poorly related to its surroundings" (Wetherby)

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 ~ No.4 ~



"Many of the concerns I raise about the internal environment of the building and the external environment created by the building footprint can only be addressed by radically altering the layout of the building from one that is characteristic of a motel to one that reflects the fact that this building is the principal residence of the occupants. Doing this should create the diverse and intimate external spaces that I would expect to see associated with sheltered housing."

Landscape officer, Swindon

Internal Environment (sun/light, ventilation, noise)

- "a number of shortcomings affecting the living conditions of future residents as a result of poor design and layout" (Eastleigh)
- "the need for such deep plan forms...is unclear; some of the living and bedrooms within it would be extremely long and narrow, some with possibly poor daylight distribution" (Wetherby)
- "It is important therefore that economic imperatives are tempered by qualitative environmental considerations... which contribute much to the quality of residents' day to day life." (Eastleigh)
- "the siting of the building together with the orientation of the building and open areas of the site would fail to provide an acceptable environment and outlook for the proposed occupants" (Swindon)
- "...poor quality internal environment... that lacks any natural cross-ventilation throughout and a loss of direct sunlight to 16 of the units which have only a north-facing aspect" (Swindon)

Review Summary

A review of local level project documentation revealed twelve areas of common ground and an overriding impression of support for the development of specialist accommodation for older people. Comparative analysis of the three case studies led to the identification of 10 areas where contestation was experienced. In particular feedback from multiple planning professionals, including inspectors and consultees, converged in two areas of design: character and appearance, and the internal environment. These findings alongside detailed feedback suggest there is merit in further investing in the design evolution of the company's product. Indeed precedent demonstrates that where further resource is given to the design process a better and crucially permissible developments are delivered. On a purely graphic level this can be evidenced through the evolution of elevation drawings, particularly in the case of Wetherby where there is a demonstrable uplift in the quality and clarity of the design proposal.

(Endnotes)

- 1 National Planning Policy Framework, (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012) <https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/60777/2116950.pdf> [Accessed 21 September 2016] p.16
- 2 The Winchester with Eastleigh Design Review Panel, [Review Notes] 25 August 2011

SECTION 1: AGEING CONTEXT

This section introduces actors from the older person landscape in England, giving voice to two consumers/end-users of mainstream, or ‘general-needs’ housing, and their respective lived-experiences. They are outwith the target market for the retirement chalet – the research sponsor’s product – which is explored later in the thesis. In *Baby Boomers*, Matthew and Eileen represent the ‘active third-ager’ segment of the older person landscape, and as such may be considered too young or ‘not ready’ for a retirement chalet. In *The Befriended*, Rose represents the fastest growing section of the UK population – the so called ‘old old’ or those aged 85 years and older. Rose has successfully aged in place, within a local authority supplied apartment, and is resisting a move to residential care.

CONTEXT

To help situate the stories it is necessary to review literature around key terms used within gerontology to describe later life. American academic Bernice Neugarten first introduced the idea of ‘Young-Old’ (broadly those aged 55 to 75) and ‘Old-Old’ (those aged 75 and over) to acknowledge the breadth of circumstances presented by older persons in the 1980s, and to challenge the uncritical adoption of a set of stereotypes of “older persons as sick, poor, enfeebled, isolated”.¹ Then in 1989 British social historian Peter Laslett sought to recognise what he regarded a societal shift from three traditional life phases – childhood, adulthood and old age – towards a four-phase schema in which old age covers two life phases with distinct attributes. His seminal work, *A Fresh Map for Life*, outlined a quadripartite division:

*“First comes an era of dependence, socialisation, immaturity and education; second an era of independence, maturity and responsibility, of earning and of saving; third an era of personal fulfilment; and fourth an era of final dependence, decrepitude and death”.*²

Laslett helped to import the University of the Third Age (U3A) from America to Britain in the early 1980s and is credited with writing the objects and principles of the organisation.³ Curiously ‘third age’ has not been adopted into common parlance, despite U3A’s relative success and continued expansion in the UK and overseas. Only in recent years has the concept been brought to an architectural audience through RIBA publication, *Silver Linings*, which presented an urban ‘Active Third Age’.⁴ Members of this ‘increased cohort’ were described as,

¹ Bernice Neugarten, ‘The Young-Old and the Age-Irrelevant Society’, in *The Meanings of Age: Selected Papers of Bernice L. Neugarten*, ed. by Dail Neugarten (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), (p.37-38).

² Peter Laslett, *A Fresh Map of Life: The Emergence of the Third Age* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989)

³ Francis Beckett, *The U3A Story* (The University of the Third Age, 2014)

<<http://u3a.org.uk/the-u3a-story.html>> [accessed 27 June 2017]

⁴ See Introduction: Architectural Practice Context, p.6-8.

*“60-74 years old, and still very much engaged in leisure and cultural pursuits. They can expect a significant period – maybe a decade or more – between the end of their formal working lives and old age (the point at which they may require assistance or care”.*⁵

Meanwhile gerontologists have been expanding conceptions of the third age and reflecting upon its possible underlying structures, including class, birth cohort and generation. Chris Gilleard and Paul Higgs concluded that the third age is a “resolutely contemporary phenomenon, a mark of our times... We cannot use class as its defining element”.⁶ They regard the third age to be a ‘generational transformation’ resulting from historically-located cultural changes; not simply a “blip characterising one particular cohort... deviating from the pattern exhibited by all other birth cohorts”.⁷

Regarding the fourth age, Gilleard and Higgs have questioned its ‘rough formulation’ as a “social space marking the end or collapse of the ‘third-age project’ where power, status, and citizenship can no longer be enacted”, highlighting that its structural boundaries are cast “through a process of antagonistic reciprocity” with those that define the third age.⁸ Furthermore, Gilleard and Higgs refer to the fourth age as a ‘social imaginary’ (a largely unstructured and inarticulate understanding of a social situation), and liken it to a metaphorical ‘black hole’. They suggest,

*“The fear of the fourth age is a fear of passing beyond any possibility of agency, human intimacy, or social exchange, of becoming impacted within the death of the social, a hyper-reality from which there is no reality to return”.*⁹

⁵ Matthew Barac, Will Hunter and James Parkinson, *Silver Linings: The Active Third Age and the City*, (London: RIBA / Building Futures, 2013)

⁶ Chris Gilleard and Paul Higgs, ‘The Third Age: Class, Cohort or Generation’, *Ageing & Society*, 22.3 (2002), 369-382, (p.374).

⁷ *Ibid.*, (p.379).

⁸ Chris Gilleard and Paul Higgs, ‘Aging Without Agency: Theorizing the Fourth Age’, *Journal of Aging and Mental Health*, 14.2 (2010), 121-128, (p.121-2). Arguments rehearsed in this article were taken forward in their book: Chris Gilleard and Paul Higgs, *Rethinking Old Age: Theorising the Fourth Age* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015)

⁹ *Ibid.*, (p.125).

Gerontologists are calling time on lazy conceptions of the fourth age, suggesting that there is a lack of criticality around ‘stage-based’ thinking; the idea that the third age represents a ‘successful’ lifestyle, while the fourth age is a social position marked by decline. For instance, those studying dementia suggest we “develop new cultural narratives of deep old age,” which might “involve a willingness to normalise late life and frailties that occur over time, and recognition that communication and agency may look different in later life”.¹⁰ Dementia, they argue, defies chronological ageing and blurs the boundaries of third and fourth ages.

Lastly, there is an awareness that demographic ageing and the expanding cultures of the third age have “undermined the [historic] homogeneity of retirement,”¹¹ and that corporality – the fitness of our bodies, rather than wealth – now constitutes a major social division in later life. Gilleard and Higgs suggest that,

*“The corporeality of age divide... those who are capable (still) of performing as agentic subjects and embodied consumers from those who, constrained by their lack of health or physical capital, are exposed to the limitations of their body that not only confine and constrain but also potentially render the person ‘alien’ to his- or herself”.*¹²

They posit that this division “prefigures a return to the nineteenth century categorisation” of those deemed ‘impotent through age’, suggesting that today’s nursing home has “replaced the workhouse as the institutional representation” of age associated fears and “health, rather than income, provides the main protection from its realisation”.¹³ For them, the nursing home has become a new space – “a new void”¹⁴ – to be feared within society. Unlike the workhouses and infirmaries of the past, these

¹⁰ Amanda Grenier, Liz Lloyd and Chris Phillipson, ‘Precarity in Late Life: Rethinking Dementia as a ‘Frailled’ Old Age’, *Sociology*, 39.2 (2017), 318-330, (p.327).

¹¹ Chris Gilleard and Paul Higgs, ‘Ageing, Corporeality and Social Dimensions in Later Life’, *Ageing & Society*, 37.8 (2017), 1681-1702, (p.1681).

¹² *Ibid.*, (p.1696).

¹³ *Ibid.*, (p.1696).

¹⁴ Chris Gilleard and Paul Higgs, ‘Aging Without Agency: Theorizing the Fourth Age’, *Journal of Aging and Mental Health*, 14.2 (2010), 121-128, (p.126).

contemporary institutions represent a universal risk (determined by corporeal luck) and entering them marks the beginning of an irreversible process.

Tuning to the stories presented here, the reader is first invited to reflect upon Rose's situation, as she negotiated the boundaries of third and fourth ages, and secondly, recently retired couple, Eileen and Matthew, who were coming to terms with new, age-related identities. Rose was experiencing corporeal decline and expressed fear of entering the nursing home, all the while demonstrating agency and spirit through social interactions that exercised the depths of her memory and sharp sense of humour. Rose lived alone, and thus belonged to a group of two million people aged over 75 that occupy single person households in the UK; 1.5 million of which are women.¹⁵ As tenant of a local authority flat, Rose also represented the 20 per cent of individuals aged 50 or older in England that have no housing wealth at all.¹⁶ Her situation is contrasted by that of Matthew and Eileen, who represent 22 per cent of older households in England living in detached homes, compared to 15 per cent that live in flats.¹⁷ Matthew and Eileen also belong to a two-thirds majority (71%) of English householders aged 65 plus that own their homes outright, without a mortgage.¹⁸

One final note – before unpacking Matthew and Eileen's story – concerning how this couple have been cast as baby boomers. While the term is popular in the UK – and much used by mainstream media – commentators suggest it can be less clearly applied. David Sinclair, director of the International Longevity Centre (UK), explains:

“The term ‘baby boomers’ emerged in the US to describe the group of the population born between the end of the second world war and the early 1960s.

¹⁵ Figures presented in *Later Life in the United Kingdom* (London: AgeUK, 2018) <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/later_life_uk_factsheet.pdf?dtrk=true> [accessed 03 August 2018]; primary source cited as *Labour Force Survey*, ONS, 2016.

¹⁶ *Retirement Income and Assets: How Can Housing Support Retirement?* (London: Pensions Policy Institute, 2009).

¹⁷ *English Housing Survey: Housing for Older People Report, 2014-15* (London: Department for Communities and Local Government, 2016) <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/539002/Housing_for_Older_People_Full_Report.pdf> [accessed 03 August 2018]

¹⁸ *English Housing Survey: Housing for Older People Report, 2010-11* (London: Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012)

*There has been less consensus in the UK as to who the baby boomers actually are. There is some debate about the accuracy and relevance of the term in the UK, partly because we had two not one post war baby booms”.*¹⁹

Gilleard and Higgs resist adopting the ‘restrictive framework’ of a baby boom cohort; promoting instead an understanding of the “role of the sixties’ cultural revolution for the emergence of the third age”. They state,

*“That many people, particularly in the USA, self identify with the term ‘baby boomer’ reflects not so much the power of cohorts as structuring influences on the ‘conscience collective’ as the role of the market and the media in shaping their social identities”.*²⁰

Sociologist Chris Phillipson and others have cast further doubt on the baby boomer label, as well as offer analysis of the construction of “boomers as problem generation”.²¹ Readers are advised to exercise caution around popular books that reflect a growing trend to make scapegoats of those that belong to the so-called lucky ‘baby boom generation’,²² attributing its perceived wealth to a mixture of fortunate and unique historic events.²³ We might also look beyond the current position of baby boomers, such as Matthew and Eileen, and consider what degree of corporeal luck lies ahead.

¹⁹ David Sinclair, *The Myth of the Baby Boomer* (London: ILCUK/Ready for Ageing Alliance, 2015)

<http://www.ilcuk.org.uk/index.php/publications/publication_details/the_myth_of_the_baby_boomer> [accessed 02 June 2017] (p.2).

²⁰ Chris Gilleard and Paul Higgs, ‘The Third Age and the Baby Boomers: Two approaches to the Social Structuring of Later Life’, *International Journal of Aging and Later Life*, 2.2 (2007), 13-30.

²¹ Chris Phillipson, Rebecca Leach, Annemarie Money and Simon Biggs, ‘Social and Cultural Constructions of Ageing: The Case of the Baby Boomers’, *Sociological Research Online*, 13.3.5 (2008) <<http://www.socresonline.org.uk/13/3/5.html>> [accessed 09 August 2018]

²² For example: David Willetts, *The Pinch: How the Baby Boomers Took Their Children's Future - And Why They Should Give It Back*, (Atlantic Books, 2011); Ed Howker, *Jilted Generation: How Britain Has Bankrupted Its Youth*, (Icon Books Ltd, 2013).

²³ These events are methodically analysed by Chris Gilleard and Paul Higgs (2007).

STORY 1: BABY BOOMERS

Synopsis

This research story reflects on the situated experiences, attitudes and opinions of one UK ‘baby boomer’ couple; referred to here as Matthew and Eileen, or the Cees. The ‘informants’²⁴ are also my parents. In some respects, therefore, this is an autobiographical or ‘close’ account, since we once shared a home context, as well as formative life experiences. We have also sustained positive relationships into adult life. Furthermore, the dialogues that are examined here refer to family relations, including my siblings, grandparents, aunts and uncles, as well as family friends. While the research draws upon a deep and part situated relationship with the informants, the ‘story’ focuses on two research-framed events: a semi-structured interview in the informants’ home, and a guided tour or ‘walking interview’²⁵ conducted in a local Pink & Knight development. The resulting data – ‘clean’ verbatim transcript and field notes – were cross-examined in relation to a desktop contextual review and literature review undertaken for Pink & Knight, as part of the contracted work packages. In these terms, the individual story of my parents and their retirement lifestyle is situated within a wider cultural and theoretical context. The story recounts two recent property purchases, in Northern Ireland and Sussex, and reflects on the couple’s preparedness for retirement-living over the longer term. The Cees do not envisage moving for at least another ten years, and – not untypically – the idea of moving into retirement housing has not featured in their thinking.

Methods

The interview took place on 27th December 2014, following a busy Christmas spent in the Cees’ new Sussex home; a festive period that was considered to have ‘put the house to the test’ by three generations of family members. The interview was conducted in the kitchen-diner, and while conversational in nature, was structured around six questions:

²⁴ Informant defined as "knowledgeable participants, who observe and articulate social relationships for the researcher..." (Whereas 'respondents' are simply reacting participants, selected in large numbers). John Seidler, 'On Using Informants: A Technique for Collecting Quantitative Data and Controlling Measurement Error in Organization Analysis', *American Sociological Review*, 39.6 (1974), 816-831.

²⁵ James Evans and Phil Jones, 'The Walking Interview: Methodology, Mobility and Place', *Applied Geography*, 31 (2011), 849-858.

Section 1

1. What does retirement mean to you?
2. What do you think 'old age' means?
3. What does home mean to you? (past/present/future)
4. What might motivate you to move?
5. What are your impressions of housing options for older people?
6. What does 'retirement housing' mean to you?

I also referred to visual material including promotional literature, architectural drawings and computer-generated images relating to Pink & Knight's Avon Chalet, as well as my photographs of the same. These were used to elicit first impressions and feedback on a retirement-living product and setting that were unfamiliar to the Cees. The range of materials meant that feedback did not depend upon the interpretation of architectural drawings alone. For example, a sales brochure provided photographic material that allowed the Cees to compare the 'lifestyle offer' with their own situation. That said, architectural plans were integral to understanding the distribution of apartments, particularly in relation to common facilities, as well as apartment layouts. These drawings helped to elicit qualitative responses regarding matters of everyday life at home.

The interview discussion drew upon familial shared points of reference; namely the lifestyle, location and home settings and setups of friends and family members. Indeed, this is one way in which the research benefited from a close and lifelong relationship between the interviewer and the informants. The other obvious benefit is the ease of interpreting responses and arriving at reliable interview findings. For instance, I could resolve gaps or misinterpretations of speech contained within the professional transcript. Furthermore, the interview discussion drew upon the Cees' local knowledge of residential care settings, and a shared awareness of a recently completed retirement housing development that is within walking distance. Both interviewees had equal opportunity to speak and to expand on one another's responses. The discussion lasted approximately one hour, and a multi-speaker verbatim transcript was generated from an audio recording captured on my smartphone.

The tour took place on Wednesday 18th March 2015 at Wealden Chalet, the closest operational Pink & Knight development to the Cees. The chalet was fully occupied at

the time of visiting, and therefore no for-sale or show apartments were available to visit. The tour lasted about an hour and included all the common areas of the development – the garden and grounds, shared lounge, and laundry – and the guest suite where I was staying. Whilst touring the chalet I explained the building’s design rationale and shared my experiences of staying overnight, plus generally reflecting on the post-occupancy feedback and attitudes presented by residents met during my stay. There were no meaningful interactions with residents or staff during the tour.



Figure 1: Wealden Chalet, approach and shared lounge (Clark, 2015)

The tour was a kind of ‘walking interview’²⁶ in which the setting was both subject and interview schedule. The development provided a spatial structure for an interview conducted whilst on the move. There were no formal questions as such; the idea of visiting ‘to have a look’ was implicit, and so were unspoken questions such as ‘how does it feel’, ‘could you imagine living here’ and ‘could this suit you in the future’? This ‘quiet’ or unstructured interview approach appeared to suit the informants, given their unfamiliarity with retirement-living products ‘in the flesh’.²⁷ Certainly, the Cees had not previously visited or discussed this kind of development as being a viable option for themselves. In these terms the ‘interview’ situated the Cees within a physical environment and lifestyle scenario they did not anticipate. I then followed up the tour with a telephone call one month later and asked the Cees what they remembered about the chalet i.e. lasting impressions and stand-out attractive features. I also asked if the

²⁶ James Evans and Phil Jones, ‘The Walking Interview: Methodology, Mobility and Place’, *Applied Geography*, 31 (2011), 849-858.

²⁷ Eileen has experience visiting vulnerable parishioners, though these tended to be living within traditional models of ‘assisted’ sheltered housing, as opposed to ‘independent living’.

Cees could imagine living in a place like Wealden Chalet. Summary notes were made following the telephone conversation and are explored within the concluding passage of this story.

Reinventing Retirement

Research suggests that we are beginning to see persons with an increasing diversity of life experiences reach retirement. The generation now entering retirement have experience redefining lifestyles – leaving adolescence in the late 1950s, they were arguably the first generation to take up ‘teenage’ identities in the UK. The same generation, often referred to as ‘baby boomers’, are rejecting established labels, such as ‘Old Age Pensioner’, by extending – or hanging onto – identities and lifestyles created in their middle years.²⁸ Baby boomers do not associate with old age; considering it far removed and burdensome. Anecdotal evidence suggests that few are prepared to self-identify as ‘old’, ever, with many actively rejecting retirement destinations as places ‘not for them’ or ‘not yet’. Few people are prepared for the end of their healthy life, with growing numbers actively denying ageing processes through surgical procedures and pro-euthanasia debate (and in some cases action, through outward migration to contexts where it is permitted). There is a pressing need for society, including design and planning professionals, to talk about positive routes to accommodating age – what ‘home’ might look and feel like as we age, and how we get there?

Identity

Before unpacking their story it is worth reflecting on the identities of Matthew and Eileen. Certainly, their situation appears to map onto popular narratives around ‘lucky baby boomers.’²⁹ The Cees are enjoying an apparent era of personal fulfilment in which they have a surplus of free time; enjoy good health and the ability to engage in leisure and cultural pursuits, and exert purchasing power, supported by good pension schemes and financial security afforded by property ownership. Nonetheless it would be remiss to proceed based on typecasting, assuming close fits with the categories described in the

²⁸ Richard Best, *The Hanover@50 Debate: Accommodating Our Extended Middle Age* (London: Hanover Housing Association, 2013)
<<http://www.hanover.org.uk/media/6735106/Lord-Best-Our-Extended-Middle-Age.pdf>>
[accessed 23 June 2017]

²⁹ See Section 1: Context, p.51.

previous section: Young-Old, (Active) Third-Agers and Baby Boomers.³⁰ If nothing else, such labelling denies the expression of individual characters and life histories.

Matthew is a former project manager for a national insurance company, though his career started in computing and local government. He grew up in Essex and was one of five children. Matthew's father worked for a London brewery company and enjoyed a career-for-life, before retiring and moving to Norfolk with his wife. Matthew enjoys badminton and has been an active club member and competitive player for many years. Since retiring he has started running and walking more regularly (the latter was always a feature of family holidays). Matthew also enjoys reading crime fiction, listening to rock and folk music and supporting his local football team. He is a relatively keen gardener.

Eileen is a former nurse and had a career spanning intensive care, midwifery and school nursing, as well as care in the community through her church (visiting vulnerable parishioners and undertaking Eucharistic ministry). Eileen grew up in County Londonderry, Northern Ireland, and trained in Belfast during The Troubles. She was one of eleven children, and her parents owned a second-hand furniture shop that specialised in upholstery. Eileen enjoys spending time with friends and family, and has an active role within the local Catholic church. She plays badminton, though prefers gentler forms of activity now. Eileen is also part of a singing group.

Since getting married in the 1970s the Cees have lived in several homes within South East England, ranging from a council maisonette through to semi-detached properties in Essex and detached family houses in Sussex. The Cees have also helped their children move in and out of university halls of residences, and subsequent shared and rented accommodation, as well as 'first-time' homes in different parts of England. In these terms the Cees have a depth of knowledge of different home environments, including vicarious experiences of communal living through their children. These experiences may have a bearing on how they relate to the places where they live in later life. Indeed, academics reporting on older person 'housing histories' have remarked that,

³⁰ See Section 1: Context, p.47-51.

“...[housing] histories mattered both because past housing opportunities had a material influence on the housing that was realistically available to individuals now and because they formed an essential part of the context within which respondents evaluated their current circumstances”.³¹

The Cees originally moved to Sussex for Matthew’s work and, later to a bigger house in the same town, to suit their growing family and specific need to accommodate Matthew’s widowed mother. Twenty years later, the household had dispersed and the Cees’ status shifted to that of ‘empty-nesters’, living in what felt like a ‘museum’ to them; every room containing reminders of their former phase of life. Matthew retired four years ago, as soon as his pension became available at age sixty. Matthew’s situation then prompted Eileen to take early retirement a year later. In her words,

“I probably would’ve worked a couple more years, but I was beginning to feel a bit guilty that we needed to move on as a couple. Dad wanted to move house really, I suppose. I felt I was stopping us from getting out and about; travelling – but then of course my mother’s illness took over, really, and all that. The travelling bit we didn’t do, really, because we were a bit apprehensive in case we needed to get back [to Northern Ireland].”

At the time of interview, the Cees, being one and two years into their retirement, had downsized from a six-bed, three storey house to a four-bed, two storey house. In truth, they are not ‘downsizers’ since they have also bought a three-bed house in the seaside town where Eileen’s family originates. Indeed, the move was in part reasoned by regular visits to Eileen’s widowed mother, who was suffering from dementia and required daily care and support (involving Eileen’s siblings). The purchase of this second home was afforded by a depressed housing market in Northern Ireland and the release of capital from the Cee’s six-bed home. The Cees are thus asset rich, having two family sized homes, with potential to release equity to meet future needs. In the meantime, they enjoy a good degree of choice and flexibility in their retirement, splitting their time between Sussex and Northern Ireland.

³¹ Sheila Peace, Caroline Holland and Leonie Kellaher, *Environment and Identity in Later Life* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2006), p.54.

Thinking About Moving

A key part of the interview discussion was the Cees' reasoning for and retrospective sense-making of their recent house moves. Matthew referred to their experience of living in the six-bed familial home in Sussex as like living in the past:

"I got to the point with the old house where it had served its purpose; been round and decorated it a couple of times. It needed some stuff doing again and I just couldn't see the point of decorating rooms that were never going to get used. It was just way too big – I mean, I used to wander round it thinking, "Oh, this used to be this, and this used to be that." It was all in the past. There was nothing exciting about it, moving forward".

Being retired and spending more time at home led to Matthew having a heightened awareness of the house they occupied; its size as well as recurring decorative works and maintenance needs. Retirement offered time to reflect on the home arrived at for historic circumstances and purposes (proximity to work and schools; accommodating a large, multigenerational family, and so on), and to assess its ongoing suitability. Being retired meant there was more time to look around and consider alternative locations and property types, not such much *for* retirement, but in response to a situation that had changed in recent years. These tentative searches – a 'work' of sorts – became a motivation for Eileen to retire:

"...the thought of having to search for a house while you're working full time, and you know. Be thinking about a change, because it wasn't just another house – it was trying to think of a house that would suit us later in life, too... Because we felt it was quite a big decision – you know, the houses we'd bought were kind of very quick. You just thought you need a bigger house because you've got more kids, or relocation of jobs was all – but we felt this house, we'd need to put a bit more – well, I felt that – we needed to put more thought into it."

And so, there was a recognition on both sides that a move needed to happen, or at least was highly desirable, and that a different kind of thought process was required. At the same time, it was clear that neither person thought of this being the 'last' home. Eileen explained,

“We didn’t think about it as a forever home... Don’t think you can do that, can you? I don’t think you can honestly buy a house and think – well, people used to, many, many years ago. You would say, “I’m going out carried out of this in a box.” But- Maybe that’s because you weren’t having such high expectation – you know, of a long life. Whereas for us now, you’d think, well I could live until...”

This statement further underlines how the Cees do not consider themselves ‘old’ or at least not ‘old-old’. Matthew described a kind of tipping point, whereby they found themselves the next side of the ‘curve’; a graphical metaphor from a former project manager, portraying the journey that he and his wife were on:

“I think you spend your life trying to get bigger and bigger houses, to actually get some investment income that you can cash in on, then you get to a point where you don’t need those bigger houses any more, and it actually just seems a bit difficult living in a big house that’s way bigger than you need. So the natural thing is to start going smaller and smaller. I just thought we were on the next side of the curve, really, that this was smaller than what we had before, and there could well be another one that’s smaller again, that’s my thinking. But I haven’t really thought when or why or where”.

Of course, we should remember that in real terms the Cees have not downsized, but gained an additional bedroom – from six to seven, between two properties. In fact, the primary motive for moving out of the six-bed home was having bought the house in Northern Ireland and needing to pay off a mortgage quickly. In their words, they did it the ‘wrong way around’, having intended to sell the house and then decide what to do with the money. While lifestyle and circumstance played a significant part in their decision making there was an undercurrent of financial logic to their moves: weighing up the value of property, and potential investment income and interest rates for savings; assessing running costs and relative returns on decorative and maintenance works, and considering the potential for equity release to meet future care needs.

In the UK home ownership has become synonymous with asset protection; homes as items of property regarded as having value, and available to meet debts, commitments,

or legacies. Research by the Equity Release Council highlights the logic in considering housing wealth alongside other types of retirement funding; for over the past 20 years, the average pensioner's house has increased in value by 148% in real terms, compared to a 66% increase in their overall retirement incomes.³² Without doubt the equity release sector is on course to become a more mainstream part of the mortgage finance and later life financial planning landscape. In these terms, residential property is as much a pension pot or giant rainy-day fund, as it is a place to live. And yet, when asked to reflect on how they think about home, Eileen's instinctive response was: "surely a home is just somewhere where you feel safe and relaxed, isn't it?" This raises the question of what home means to people in later life.

Meanings of Home

There is a vast range of literature exploring meanings of 'home' based on research from the social sciences – led by anthropologists, gerontologists, psychologists and sociologists – but also within the built and natural environment, by architects, geographers and planners. Several authors have even moved between disciplines and/or engaged in multidisciplinary work to better tackle the complex question of 'home'. Clearly there is no single answer or viewpoint that can be applied universally to all people and all stages of life. Indeed, gerontologists Frank Oswald and Hans-Werner Wahl specifically remark on the complexity of the meaning of home in the context of personal challenges, such as declining health and reduced competence, and environmental change in the form of housing alterations or relocation.³³ In the words of Heywood et al, home is a myriad of things;

*“it is a set of relationships with others, it is a statement about self-image and identity, it is a place of privacy and refuge, it is a set of memories, it is social and physical space and so on...”*³⁴

³² *Equity Release Market Report: Spring 2017*, (London: Equity Release Council, 2017) <<http://www.equityreleasecouncil.com/document-library/equity-release-market-report-spring-2017/>> [accessed 19 June 2017]

³³ Frank Oswald and Hans-Werner Wahl, 'Dimensions of the Meaning of Home in Later Life', in *Home and Identity in Late Life: International Perspectives*, ed. by Habib Chaudhury and Graham Rowles (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2005), pp.21-45 (p.38)

³⁴ Frances Heywood, Christine Oldman and Robin Means, *Housing and Home in Later Life* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2002), p.4

Some researchers maintain that home has a special significance in the lives of older people due to meanings resulting from length of stay in a single residence, reduced mobility, and the existence of established social networks.³⁵ Meanwhile commentators such as Professor David Clapham remind us that older people are ‘not a meaningful category in lifestyle terms’,³⁶ and we should be wary of generalising. To classify by age alone is problematic, particularly if an ‘older person’ is deemed to be ‘post-retirement’ i.e. anywhere between aged 65 and 105, or older.

In 1991 architectural researcher Carole Després prepared an authoritative review of literature on the meaning of ‘home’ between 1974 and 1989 within disciplines investigating person-environment relationships. Després’ categorisations are still a common starting point for theorists examining the meanings of home for the ‘general population’:

- *as security and control*
- *as a refuge from the outside world*
- *as a permanence and continuity*
- *as a reflection of one’s ideas and values*
- *as something ‘acted upon’ by the person*
- *an indication of personal status*
- *as a place to own*
- *as relationships with family and friends*
- *as a centre of activities (a base for life)*
- *as material structure.*

I have adopted the view that older adults are the same as younger adults – both groups subscribing to a range of meanings and lifestyle choices – and yet there are features that

³⁵ Fereshteh Ahmandi Lewin, ‘Elderly Migrants and the Concept of Home: A Swedish Perspective’, in *Home and Identity in Late Life: International Perspectives*, ed. by Habib Chaudhury and Graham Rowles (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2005), pp.21-45 (p.143)

³⁶ David Clapham, ‘Evaluating Supported Housing Options for Older People in Britain and Sweden’, in *European Network for Housing Research (ENHR) Conference*, (Edinburgh: Heriot-Watt University, 1-4 July 2014)

are distinctive to being older. Perhaps individual meanings of home could be said to ‘mature’ as people travel through the life course. With regards to meanings of home specifically for older people, I consulted a wide range of literature (books, articles, and conference papers published between 1994 and 2014) and arrived at the four categories – physical, experiential, financial and ideational – which were used as the basis for discussion with the Cees. Table 1 was used for this purpose.

PHYSICAL	EXPERIENTIAL	FINANCIAL
Environment	Lived	Home as Asset
Home Connected to Place	Home as Autobiography	Home as Pension Pot
Home as Centre	Home as Expression of self	Home as Income
Home is User-friendly	Home of Memories	Home as Treasure Trove
Home as Refuge	Home-Made/Sweat Equity	Home as Legacy
Home and Hearth	Emplaced within Home	
Home as Nest	Occupational	
Home as Glove	Home for Pottering	
Surrounding Home	Home is ‘Done’	IDEATIONAL
Home is a Cage	Home, a set of Problems	The Ideal Home
Material / Curatic	Social / Lifestyle	The Dream Home
Home of Objects	Home Connected to People	The Engraved Home
Home of Things	Home as Lifestyle Enabler	Home of Dream-Memory
Home as Ecology of the Self	Home for a Season	Home as a Friend
The Inhabited Home	Home, a Tool for living	Home as Anchor

Table 1: Older Person Meanings of Home

The Cees attribute different meanings to their two homes: reporting the Sussex home is their base – “the one to live in, more” – whereas their home in Northern Ireland is “a place for getting away”. Of course, the geographic and cultural settings of the houses have significant resonance, particularly for Eileen; Northern Ireland being her ‘homeland’ (and home for much of her extended family), and Sussex being the place where her children grew up and long-term friendships were formed. It is also clear that the Cees enjoy the contrasting locations of their homes, and take pleasure in going back

and forth at leisure. A distinct draw to Northern Ireland is being by the sea – falling asleep to the sound of the waves, opening the curtains to a sea view, and enjoying a leisurely walk along the beach or promenade. It is to all intents and purposes a ‘holiday home’.

For a short time the Cees had considered setting up their home in Northern Ireland to provide an additional income. However, they decided it was too much trouble in terms of management and financial arrangements. Plus, they like the freedom of being able to visit at their convenience. The Cees acknowledged that the house could offer investment income, though recognise that in Northern Ireland the value is not likely to increase by much, and certainly not compared to Sussex. Nonetheless the purchase represented a ‘safe place’ to invest their savings, particularly at a time when interest rates were around 1% on savings accounts.

Home & Future-Proofing

The interview uncovered several criteria applied when choosing their new homes. These are:

- In town, preferably nearer town centre
- Local shops within walking distance
- Nearby bus stop(s)
- Quiet road (not too much traffic)
- Detached property
- 3-4 bedrooms (downsize from six)
- Fewer stairs (two floors instead of three)
- Fewer bathrooms to keep clean (two toilets min.)
- Smaller garden; easier to maintain
- Private back garden; not overlooked

Size and ‘spare’ capacity to accommodate visiting family members were key. The Cees’ houses act as family hubs, helping to sustain a centre of gravity for the dispersed extended family, particularly while ‘the children’ occupy smaller, more affordable properties. The houses needed to be ‘big enough’ to host a party at Christmas and

Easter, as well as occasional celebrations, but also to facilitate comfortable and affordable holidays for the younger generations (with or without the parents/grandparents).

Reflecting on their search and property purchase, Matthew remarked that there was not that much choice, because of the money they had available and what they wanted to buy. Also, by staying in the same town, they restricted the scope of what the market could offer. Whereas had they “gone somewhere else like Eastbourne... there probably would have been more choice”. Certainly, retirement housing and care institutions are known to cluster within towns along the South coast. That said, there is sheltered housing behind the Cee’s Sussex home. Matthew joked that “the next home’s just through the hedge”, underlining the fact that this is a ‘home for now’. The Cees had considered at the time of purchase how future proof their home might be, albeit this was not at the forefront of their thinking and decision making. The following section of interview transcript demonstrates how this background or ‘back-of-mind’ thinking was foregrounded by the lived experiences of family members; namely Matthew’s sister-in-law and Eileen’s oldest sister and late mother.

Eileen: Yes. I mean, we didn’t really discuss it much, but there is that possibility that if you weren’t able to get up and down the stairs, you could convert the [ground floor] study into a bedroom. You’ve got a cloakroom there [next to the study], so there are possibilities.

Me: It could be the ultimate home...

Eileen: Yes. It could.

Me: It’s not something you want to face up to, particularly, is it?

*Eileen: No, but you have slightly those thoughts going on in your head that they [the houses] could be modified if needed. You can’t get everything you want. It’s very, very hard to think that far ahead, isn’t it? But then having watched people like * [a sister-in-law],*

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you know, having to get her up the stairs and things like that. It does make you kind of think, it's nicer if you have got a room that you could alter if...

*Matthew: Yes, we didn't get quite as far as * [a sister] – she's designed the bathroom so she can get in and out with a Zimmer frame.*

Eileen: Yes.

Matthew: She's getting a disabled ramp put up to her front door.

Eileen: But she's 70, you know.

Me: Is she?

Matthew: She turned 70. But she watched her mother...

*Matthew: And all the things that she needed adapted and changed to carry on living as she got older, and when * [a sister] moved into the bungalow, she said, "Right, I'm going to get that sorted now." So she got stone floors, so she didn't have to clean carpets [thinking ahead to possible future incontinency] and all that kind of stuff. "I'm getting a disabled ramp put up the front door, the bathrooms raised so I can get in and out of the shower on my Zimmer if I need to."*

Eileen: Well, she was having the bathroom done anyway, so she thought, "Well, I might as well think ahead." Because when you were in the bathroom, the airing cupboard was coming out to... it was narrowing the entrance, so she had the airing cupboard taken back, thinking ahead if she ever needed a Zimmer or a wheelchair or whatever. She was having her patio done anyway, so she thought, "I might as well. Instead of having these steps, I might as well have a ramp."

Matthew: So we haven't done that, but we've got in the back of our minds. We're not far from town; there's little handy shops you can walk to, there are buses very nearby. You can walk to the bus stops. You can walk to the paper shop; you can walk to a letterbox. Phones don't count so much, now. You can walk to church.

Retirement Housing Explained

When shown material on Pink & Knight's Avon Chalet, it became apparent that the Cees had little knowledge of this kind of retirement product. This has been a common finding during the research; many people in the UK have limited knowledge and/or carry misconceptions of private retirement-living developments. The industry guide, co-produced by myself and the research sponsor, states that,

“The range of accommodation offers for older people is bewildering to say the least, particularly when comparing associated service options – some with care, some without, and levels in-between. Indeed, it has been said that the waters are ‘muddied’ by increasingly specialist products that serve very particular segments of the ‘downsizer’ market...

“Commentators on retirement housing have remarked on its precarious status and position; occupying an ‘uneasy space’ between general needs housing and residential care, and suffering from association with both.”

In the UK, private-sector retirement housing evolved from the late 1970s when McCarthy & Stone established its first model for sheltered accommodation for the over 55s, which was later adopted and adapted by competitors over a forty-year period. McCarthy & Stone's market presence and model has dominated the sector, particularly in terms of volume. Even so, the product and concept it created has evolved to ‘retirement-living’ – a lifestyle choice, not just a building. Developers have learnt what makes a successful development, in terms of attracting purchasers, sustaining customer satisfaction over the long term, and maintaining properties in perpetuity. Some of these characteristics are taken from Northern Europe, America and Australia, where retirement-living is more established. Indeed, one touchstone for the Cees is their

relatives in New Zealand. Matthew tried to explain, though realised he could offer little detail:

“I’ve got two cousins in New Zealand. Both of whom have moved into – I don’t know if it’s something like this, but their address now is ‘Unit such-and-such’ on so-and-so road. ...I think theirs is some kind of a thing like this [Avon Chalet]”.

The Cees offered two local points of reference, known to them. One was the retirement community at Holy Cross Priory in Sussex, which is well marketed locally and specifically targets the more aspirational end of the downsizer market. A sales video on the company’s website declares its product “country living, without the price tag”.³⁷ All the apartments include housekeeping; luxury fixtures, fittings and accessible bathrooms; in a setting that offers bowls, croquet, daily entertainment, social clubs, a hairdresser, bar, restaurant, and chapel. Eileen visited on one occasion and explained:

“That – The Priory. I’ve mentioned to you in the past, that’s another one that’s worth looking at if you are researching any of them. Lovely settings. It did have [a show room] but I don’t know if it has now. I think actually they were advertising quite recently in The Courier...There’s beautiful grounds and there’s old buildings as well as the old priory, which have got flats – they’ve done the flats all up and they’re very expensive because they’re – well, just being in an older building, they’re quite spacious rooms – but the new flats that they’ve built are designed that a wheelchair can go into the bathrooms, and into all the rooms. Well worth looking at...And there’s a nursing home on the site as well.”

The second point of reference was a local care home. Eileen offered a description,

“Well the one – Heather View – you go inside your front door and there’s a square. It’s supposed to imitate a village market square and you can just sit there, and they’ve got a letter box and a lamp post and things like that. Sometimes use it – that’s where we sometimes host our singing group...They have got a cinema room. They’ve got a little sweet shop with jars of sweets, and

³⁷ *Retirement Apartments for Sale - Holy Cross Priory in Sussex* (Cross-in-Hand: Holy Cross Priory, 2013) <<http://www.holycrosspriory.co.uk/>> [accessed 20 June 2017]

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it sells shampoos and things like that. It's got a café where you can take your visitors to. There's a café on each floor, actually, where you can take your visitors for a cup of tea. It's got a hairdresser."



Figure 2: *The Priory*; building exterior and restaurant (www.holycrosspriory.co.uk)



Figure 3: *Heather View*; courtyard and interior 'village' (www.careuk.com)

These two examples are clearly institutions of a kind; one a retirement community with a nursing home on site (a luxury retirement village model), and the other a contemporary 74-bedroom care home with an award-winning dementia-friendly interior.³⁸ Whereas Avon Chalet is a housing scheme. For the sake of clarity, Pink & Knight's retirement developments are not designed care environments, nor are staff trained care workers. In fact, Matthew was surprised – and perhaps a little assured – to learn that Pink & Knight's developments were “just separate units for people to live”. Perhaps Matthew considered it better that the archetypal model he had in mind; one where “you've got your own room and you have to sit in a circle of chairs”. At times the Cees' comments reflected an imagined setting that comprised of private ‘rooms’ grouped around a day room. The archetypal image of the nursing home appeared dominant and was apparently being imagined in the place of non-care, independent living settings. By the end of the conversation the Cees recognised that Avon Chalet is *not* a nursing home. Matthew remarked,

“This is a way of avoiding that – you've at least got your own private space, if you don't want to go out the front door you don't have to; if you want to talk to some people then you've got like-minded people all around you”.

Of course, there is a danger that sheltered housing – a one-time ‘retirement lifestyle’ offer – becomes, by default, a cheap alternative to a care home. My research has identified ways in which resident owners and their respective family members misunderstand the role of the chalet manager, which extends to ‘customer care’, but stops short of healthcare.³⁹

Furthermore, candid discussion with directors at Pink & Knight revealed a tendency for cohort-wide ageing within developments – residents of a similar age entering together and getting older and frailer together – leading to an inevitable decline in energy within the social life of the chalet, and therefore decreases in the attractiveness of the product, particularly with regards to apartment re-sales. Nonetheless, the Cees gained a kind of

³⁸ Care UK Care Homes, *Award-Winning Design* (Colchester: Residential Care Services, 2017) <<http://www.careuk.com/care-homes/heather-view-crowborough/about-the-home>> [accessed 20 June 2017]

³⁹ See Story 5: Chalet Manager, p.194-196.

appreciation for this type of retirement-living environment. But, would they consider moving into a development like those produced by Pink & Knight? Matthew thought they would move into a smaller house next. Eileen explained how they still very much want their own space and a little ‘plot’. So, when and under what circumstances might they consider a move to a retirement chalet?

Motive for Moving

“I mean, that’s probably a key thing for us – at what point would we think that we’d be ready to move into something like that [Avon Chalet]? I suppose you’d put it off for as long as you could, would you? There’s still a bit of a stigma – ‘We’ve got to go and live in that, now’. Whereas some people just say, ‘Right, I’m ready’...”

In short, the Cees are not ready, nor could they foresee a time when they would be. “Ten years? Twenty years?” Matthew wondered. He would leave it until he absolutely had to. It was clear that the Cees were not likely to make a positive move ‘ahead of time’ (as reported by some residents at Avon Chalet⁴⁰). Some red line would have to be crossed or a crisis arrived at before there was a move in this other direction. The sensitive issue of death was not discussed on this occasion, though I later learnt it could be a motive/push factor for moving to a Chalet. One other theme that emerged from the interview transcript was security. I observed, retrospectively, how the discussion came around to considering security of property and personal wellbeing on three different occasions. These are presented in order of occurrence.

Eileen: Well, some people want that [Avon Chalet]. They maybe use it as two homes – they go off cruising and stay in that when they’re not cruising.

Matthew: Yes, that’s the other thing – it’s secure, isn’t it?

Eileen: It’s secure, yes.

⁴⁰ See Story 4: Resident Owner, p.152 & 163.

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Matthew: You do worry, like with [the house in Northern Ireland] – you go back every couple of months just to make sure it's still there and nobody's messed with it. But it's a bit of a concern, particularly as we get older – we probably won't want to do that, and then it becomes a problem with here [Sussex house] as well, if you want to go anywhere.

[Break]

Matthew: But it does [depend] – society probably – if that changes and everyone becomes even more hostile, something like this [Avon Chalet], you'd feel even more secure.

Eileen: And older people do look for that – security.

Matthew: [parodying an older person] ... The world is getting a bit more complicated, a bit more threatening, 'let's move into one of these' [retirement chalet].

Eileen: They feel more vulnerable, don't they, as they get older? I think about my parents putting chairs up against the back door and-

Me: Really?

Eileen: And the front door. Yes, they were good safe doors but there's that fear of being broken into, because they read the paper or hear on the news about elderly people getting broken into and they know they couldn't fight them off.

Me: That's probably a bigger issue, isn't it? Feeling like you can get out of harm's way.

Eileen: You do worry more as you get older. I see it with people-

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Me: You become less involved in the outside world, don't you?

Eileen: Yes, so you fear it even more. You think it's all bad out there, almost, don't you? And start to mistrust and get a bit paranoid. Yes, I can see how that [Avon Chalet] can offer a lot of security.

[Break]

Eileen: No, I'm just saying, you know how you can see how older people sometimes do want the community around them, but they don't want to be invaded by it, they just want it there; to know it's there.

Matthew: That, to me, would be the perfect answer, if that's how I was feeling. I've got somewhere I can go – a front door I can go and sit behind or there's some public spaces I could go and sit in if I wanted to maybe start a conversation with somebody, and there's some nice secure grounds I can walk around. Not in a public park where I could get attacked.

In these terms 'fear' would be a sufficient motive to force the Cees to move to a retirement development. The Cees identified potential for fear on two fronts: (i) concern for property, be it the second home or an unattended home while on holiday, and (ii) concern for the future self, as a vulnerable older person, unable to defend oneself or get out of harm's way. The latter was thought to contribute to older people's perceptions of increasing hostility 'outside' and the need to retreat into the safety of the home. Furthermore, it was thought that a sense of security could be gained from being part of a smaller community with its own 'public' spaces. These are not particularly positive reasons for moving. We might ask then, how can designers and housing providers develop more appealing housing options for older people? How might couples like the Cees be encouraged to make proactive choices in advance of a crisis, such as loss of a partner, or the onset of a fearful situation?

Gardens & Layouts

Eileen remarked on the social life of the retirement chalet, suggesting that it was a bit like going on “one of these holiday camp things”. The Cees have positive experiences of coach tours and sea cruises, but equally know first-hand of the social perils they may present, such as coinciding and getting stuck with the ‘strange’ couple! The Cees were reassured that chalet residents have their own private space (apartments; not ‘just rooms’) and can elect whether to participate in the social activities. Inevitably a good part of the interview centred on the nature of the shared lounge – the centre of chalet social life. Eileen acknowledged the importance of the lounge, though wondered about its use:

“It’s difficult, isn’t it? It’s not – it is important to have these rooms, but in reality I wonder how many of them actually do use it? Some people do want company, but some older people don’t want to be bothered. They really don’t.”

Here Eileen was speaking from her nursing experience and visiting older people within the community. In fact, once the Cees were aware of social events being organised in the shared lounge, Eileen was reminded of her singing group, which visits residential care environments. Reflecting on this ‘noisy’ activity, Matthew considered possible conflicts of interests in the use of this space, as well as one or two missing ingredients that would suit his older self:

“It would be nice to have a library where you can sit and read a paper and a room like this [shared lounge] where you could actually have a bit of noise, and fuss and bother...I’d be looking to see where the snooker tables were, personally... I’d like to spend some of my time playing snooker when I get older”.

These issues concerning parallel social activities and the need for flexible space were raised later in the fieldwork by design professionals and chalet residents through the product reviews.⁴¹ Indeed, Matthew would make a natural companion for an informant

⁴¹ See Story 4: Resident Owner, p.168-169; Story 5: Chalet Manager, p.197.

met at Wealden Chalet: 'Patrick' was looking for snooker companions to meet around an accessible table.⁴²

The other major area that captured the attention of the Cees was the communal garden. They agreed that garden maintenance becomes more of an issue as one ages and begins to experience reduced strength and stamina, as well as physical setbacks affecting mobility. Nonetheless it was clear that the garden would have continued importance, beyond being a visual amenity to be viewed from the apartment window. The Cees spoke of always wanting their own little plot, and acknowledged pleasures gained from having a place to walk around and sit in, while acknowledging the inevitable 'struggle' with maintenance. Indeed, academics have identified the garden as a potential form of 'environmental press',⁴³ with some older people reporting that an untamed garden could expose them as people 'who could no longer cope'.

The following section of transcript reflects these attitudes, and in part compares the Cees' two home situations. Readers should be aware that the 'garden' in Northern Ireland is predominantly decked, with minimal planting.

Matthew: Well, yes, but as you get older, that becomes a problem, gardening.

Eileen: Yes, but at this stage, I think we would've missed it. If we were living in [Northern Ireland] all the time-

Matthew: Yes, but you're starting to struggle now, in the garden.

Eileen: Only because I...

Matthew: Won't be too many years before I start to struggle with it – it just becomes an issue. You have to get somebody in to do it, or you

⁴² See Story 4: Resident Owner, p.153-155.

⁴³ Sheila Peace, Caroline Holland and Leonie Kellaher, *Environment and Identity in Later Life* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2006), p. 86-89.

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just let it go to rack and ruin, which I wouldn't want to do. The same happened to my parents.

Me: They had an enormous garden.

Matthew: Dad spent years laying it all out beautifully, and then it got to a point where even just to cut the grass was a struggle. So he had to get somebody in to start helping him out. Yes, it can become a problem.

Eileen: A garden can take a lot of work, can't it?

Matthew: It's just nice to have. Nice to have a bit of outdoor space.

Me: Something to look onto.

Matthew: Just to walk around – stroll around looking at things and sitting there. I sit in the corner on the swing seat, not doing anything at all, really.

Commenting on Avon Chalet, Matthew noted the garden and remarked that “it’s not the same as a bit of lawn to walk along... And [having] trees to go and hug”. Their views chimed with some of the residents at Avon Chalet that wished for different kinds of outdoor space – balconies, seating, sun and rain shelters, and so on. Those informants also desired bigger patios and “non-Pink & Knight” areas.⁴⁴ Furthermore, resident owners expressed being ‘embarrassed’ to walk around the shared garden, feeling observed or ‘too close’ to apartment windows.⁴⁵ Of course, many of the residents had moved from houses with gardens, and therefore previously enjoyed higher levels of privacy, as well as relative ease of access to the natural environment. The Cees also

⁴⁴ Anonymous [Resident Owner], pers. comm. [Semi-Structured Mini-Focus Groups], Bristol, September 2014.

⁴⁵ ‘Karen’ and ‘Heather’ [Resident Owners], pers. comm. [Interview], Worthing, 16 June 2015.

commented on connections to the garden. At first Eileen expressed enthusiasm for the development's balconies, but was later disappointed to learn that they were 'Juliets'.⁴⁶



Figure 4: Wealden Chalet, private patio and shared garden (Clark, 2015)

In terms of the apartment layouts, the Cees offered two further points of feedback, largely focussing on kitchen arrangements and sanitary provisions. When reviewing the kitchen situation – at the 'front' of the apartment, looking onto the street – the Cees agreed with the developer's logic in making a separate room, rather than designing an open plan and having the kitchen as part of the living space. The kitchen window was thought to be a positive attribute for older people. Reviewing the interview setting, the Cees acknowledged a preference for kitchen-diners; meaning that they were happy for the dining table to share the same (air) space as the kitchen, but not the sofa. The interview tested the desirability of alternative layouts.

Eileen: *A window to look out at the street and see what's going on, yes. They might not necessarily want to talk to people but they want to see people coming and going.*

Me: *My generation will be happier with this kind of set-up [the interview setting] – where it's an open plan kitchen diner – and from an architectural point of view, putting that [the kitchen*

⁴⁶ A 'Juliet' (balcony) does not protrude from the building. They often involve metal railings placed in front of a tall window or door on an upper floor level. Sometimes they have provision for planters.

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space, referred to on plan] at the back of the development gives you more opportunity. You get more light into the other rooms, and potentially you can have a balcony in that place [pointing to the kitchen on plan]. It gives you more flexibility to take that back here where – because this is going to be dark. It's in the middle of the development. If you're on the first floor, you're onto a corridor where there's no way of getting light in.

Matthew: Yes, I mean kitchen diners are alright. You don't want your living room as part of it, really. I mean, some people do – they have it completely open plan, don't they? I think it's nice to have it separate, even just doors like that [referring to double doors at the interview setting] – but yes, nothing wrong with a kitchen diner. It makes better use of the space, doesn't it?

Eileen: I think a kitchen diner is better than a separate kitchen – thinking of elderly people and how they get about, as well.

Matthew: You tend to sit at a kitchen table as well, when you're old.

Whilst the Cees were apparently othering the residents – thinking of the ‘elderly’ people in a place that they would not choose for themselves – they acknowledged a range of attitudes towards the home and a sliding scale of need/aspiration. This was captured through a fragmented conversation on the kitchen size, whereby the Cees effectively cast residents into two situations: (i) those that still had ambitions to entertain friends and host dinner parties (the young-old?), and (ii) those happy with a small kitchen, since they were not doing much cooking (the old-old?). However, Matthew acknowledged that it was impractical to design two “different sorts of rooms” and to expect people to move as they get older, suggesting “that’s like segregation”.

Pink & Knight provides a one-size-fits-all solution, comprising standardised templates for one and two-bed apartments. Kitchen layouts only differ in developments where frontages are considered premium due to exceptional views or the form of the building dictates an alternative arrangement, such as accommodation within a roof space. The

sanitary facilities are even less varied. Bathrooms (or shower rooms) always assume locations along the back/corridor-side of apartments. Historically there has only ever been one per apartment, regardless of number of bedrooms, as is the case at Avon Chalet. Matthew remarked on the number of toilets, suggesting two would be required for an older couple, and reasoning that one would get “very frustrated waiting for the other partner to come out of the bathroom”.

Furthermore, Eileen acknowledged that some people in their sixties might struggle to access the shower enclosure and referred to her brother’s hip problem. These issues were revisited and somewhat underlined when the Cees visited Wealden Chalet and appraised the product in the flesh.

Concluding Tour

As with the home interview, the Cees proved to be very aware of locational attributes; thinking about proximity to local services, particularly shops and relative variety, as well as leisure facilities, such as open space (‘The Common’) for walking and so on. This level of thinking was apparently strong in their search and decision making when buying houses. Of course, the chalet represents a different kind of building typology that is outside the Cees’ direct lived experience. The communal garden was noted once again as being different from what they have, and Matthew appraised it for its utility, commenting on the lack of opportunities for ‘pottering’. Eileen on the other hand could see the benefits of having an attractive garden they did not need to maintain.

Perhaps the most resounding tour ‘finding’ was the atmosphere of the chalet and the Cees’ response to it. They remarked how the (double-loaded) corridors contributed to an ‘hotel’ atmosphere, which they regarded to be somewhat institutional, rather than home-like. The décor and choice of furnishings within the common areas seemed to further contribute to this perception and lasting mental image of the place and its atmosphere. Somehow being there – more so than looking at marketing literature and plans – brought the feeling of the place to life, and helped the Cees imagine adopting the lifestyle on offer. Similarly, being in-situ made the design more tangible, including making any design shortcomings more obvious and specific details easier to see and comment upon.

The Cees confirmed that this accommodation offer was not for them, yet. Maybe in ten years. Eileen reasoned that ‘hotel-living’ could make her feel disconnected from the community she knows. Moving in might feel like a departure from reality; perhaps signalling a reduced involvement with society at large and a commitment to engage with a smaller, residential community close to home. Eileen was looking very much at the social life and potential lack of diversity. Indeed, retirement communities have been considered ‘unnatural environments’; a product of segregation by age and class, and colloquially described as ‘playpens for the elderly’ and ‘geriatric ghettos’.⁴⁷ With regards to the physical environment – or building typology – the Cees were very much on the same page as one another. Neither felt ready for a flat. Eileen would miss having space for the family to visit. While Matthew expressed concern about sharing a wall with noisy neighbours – “that would be a nightmare for me”.

Conclusion

Baby boomers arguably have a track record of reinventing received conventions. Given their rejection of old-age identities, it follows that they should also reject established accommodation offers for older people, for these are places that directly associate them with age. The Cees, in common with their peers, reported a strong desire to avoid residential institutions, such as care homes; places occupied by the old-old, or those in the fourth-age of life and dependent upon assistance. These places are ‘not for them, at least not yet’. Of course, baby boomers are a demographic group, and in time they too will become old or old-old.

Implicit in the popular group identity of baby boomers is their economic power and critical faculties as informed consumers. And yet there is evidence to suggest that the present generation of recent retirees is not familiar with retirement-living products ‘in-the-flesh’; a situation that led the Cees toward misconceptions of retirement housing and inappropriate associations with residential institutions. Certainly, the Cees regarded the retirement chalet as a ‘final’ destination of last resort; one accommodating the old-old, or those transitioning from third- to fourth-age. For the Cees, it represented

⁴⁷ Judith Phillips, Miriam Bernard, Simon Biggs and Paul Kingston, ‘Retirement Communities in Britain: A “Third Way” for the Third Age?’, in *Inclusive Housing in an Ageing Society*, ed. by Sheila Peace and Caroline Holland (Bristol: The Policy Press, 2001), pp. 189-213 (p.195).

something of a departure from real life and wider society, for good and bad. A fundamental barrier was the accommodation type – a flat, which felt like ‘hotel-living’ without the snooker table, as opposed to a detached house and plot that feels like home.

The Cees demonstrated a broad awareness of age-related issues, gathered from the lived experiences of friends and family members; the problems of others or ‘the elderly’, and what *they* might need or want. When it came to the Cees choosing their new home(s), concerns around future-proofing were very much ‘back-of-mind’; foregrounded were issues of size (smaller, but big enough to act as a family hub), location (familiar towns; well serviced) and price, as well as what the local property market had to offer at the time. Potential motives for moving into a chalet were defined negatively; increased fear of external threats, such as crime, or the sudden loss of a partner. With regards to their retirement story, and housing future, the Cees appear set on a course that commits them to buying progressively smaller detached properties, with a long term likely outcome being consolidation in one location and downsizing, for real, to a bungalow. At present they are comfortable in their choices and remain ‘resistant’ to retirement-living marketing and products.

STORY 2: THE BEFRIENDED

Synopsis

This story presents a narrative account of my experience befriending ‘Rose’, a former nurse and legal aid worker; representative of the fastest growing section of the UK population – the so called ‘old old’ or those aged 85 years and older. In part I chose to become a ‘befriender’ as a way of supplementing my research activities and, somewhat subconsciously, to provide a counterpoint to outlooks gained from working with a property developer and its respective customers. In stark contrast to chalet residents, Rose was an older person with limited financial means and diminished mobility, dependent upon care workers and family members for her everyday needs. Through our relationship I gathered rich insights to multivariate meanings of home and everyday behavioural observations of an older person ageing in place. By Summer 2016 Rose had moved into a purpose-built care home on the outskirts of her city, where she continuously occupied a private room on the first floor, overlooking the road, until her death in January 2018. This story recounts her resistance to moving into the nursing home.

Methods

Prior to meeting Rose, I went through an application process involving an expression of interest, informal interview, training event and criminal records check. I declared my ‘researcher’ status and vested interest upon application, and remained open to talking about my work with Rose and others. I visited Rose on a weekly basis, sharing a pot of tea and chatted for about an hour, or the time it took for the tea to go cold. From the outset, Rose expressed a welcoming and flexible attitude – “come whenever you like, daytime or evening” – rather than insisting on a fixed time, by appointment. This helped to make the arrangement feel more natural by lessening the sense of commitment or expectation. In practice I tended to visit mid to late afternoon and always telephoned ahead. Rose got on well with the phone (she could direct sound into her good ear), but we always saved our chat for when we met face to face.

The role of the visiting befriender is to provide companionship. Befrienders do not assist with personal care, perform domestic tasks or administer medication. That said, I bought the odd pint of milk or loaf of bread, as a friend would. And over time our

relationship developed into a genuine friendship. For a time I saw Rose more frequently than some of my other long-established friends. We established behavioural patterns for saying hello and goodbye and making the small talk in between. Similarly, we established rituals for the ‘tea party’: I boiled the kettle and brought the tea pot, milk jug and mugs to the coffee table; Rose reached for the special biscuit tin she kept away from the carers, and turned the volume down on the television; I took up my seat, to the right of Rose and we shared the view of the TV, sofa and sky opposite. In between my visits I made research-relevant notes and, following a measured survey of Rose’s flat, prepared architectural drawings and diagrams, including a speculative scheme that sought to adapt and enhance the architectural fabric of the building to make an ideal or dream home for Rose.

In 2015 Rose spent a total of seven months living away from home, in a variety of care settings, ranging from an ‘Older Persons Assessment Unit’ within an eighteenth-century hospital building undergoing renovation; an open plan ward in the same hospital, in a bed directly opposite a staff work station; a ward ‘bay’ and private room with ensuite within a newly built community hospital; to a private room within a ‘Re-ablement Care Home’, also known as an ‘Intermediate Care Centre’. For brevity, I have decided to concentrate this story on Rose’s time at home. Over the course of my visits to Rose – at home and away from home – we discussed many topics and issues; some research relevant, though this distinction was rarely made, and a handful of ‘architectural’ conversations. A variety of ‘other’ themes were discussed, which could be categorised as: ‘mortality preparedness’, wishing and planning for the inevitable; ‘fourth age’, reflecting on transitioning from good to poor health, and coming to terms with frailty; ‘body image’, thinking about muscle wastage, swelling, sores and skin discolouration; ‘reduced role’ and coming to terms with increasing dependence, and an increasing sense of redundancy and ‘nuisance’ for others. From time to time Rose remarked that she should write down all these thoughts about growing old: “Nobody tells you these things”. Rose would tell me that she was “not prepared for this”, thinking that “I would die in my sleep a long time ago”. Furthermore, there are personal conversations not included in my story, which I regard confidential. For instance, Rose was experiencing some family difficulties and reported that “these sessions help me to work things out... I use you as a sounding board...tell you things that others don’t know...” Rose remarked on several occasions that “you arrived when I most needed a friend”.

I now think of my friendship with Rose as an ethnographic encounter. Whilst I never formally interviewed Rose, it could be said that I engaged in a longitudinal qualitative study, involving observation and ‘active listening’⁴⁸ in the field over three years. I therefore acknowledge the messy reality of research; a befriending activity that became a research methodology; a home and series of care environments that became the field (or sited micro-cultures); a friend that became an informant, and myself shifting between positions of friend, local, researcher and architect. In addition, there are some limitations to this ‘friendly’ activity conceived as research method. The first being that befriending Rose was never declared as ‘Research’ with a capital ‘r’; being ‘outside’ or extracurricular to the formal research proposal. The second limitation is that Rose was not interested in talking about my work – she was interested in companionship. Thirdly, communication; Rose was partially deaf, meaning that questions and answers were often unheard (or perhaps dismissed?). On occasions, we misunderstood one another’s points of reference, as though wires were ‘crossed’ or struggling to stretch the distance between our different positions, life experiences and cultures – yes, we shared a national identity, but we were two generations apart. Clearly the age gap is what made this unlikely friendship special.

An ‘Old’ Friend

Rose was representative of the fastest growing section of the UK population – the so called ‘old old’ or those aged 85 years and older. Statistically Rose – aged 93 when I met her – was one of 532,100 people aged 90 and over living in England.⁴⁹ In fact Rose was something of a success story; she outlived local statistics by 13 years, having enjoyed an extended period of active retirement. In her city the average life expectancy for an older woman is 82.6, albeit with a corresponding healthy life expectancy of 63.2 years.⁵⁰ Rose self-identified as an older person and could be considered representative of Group L, ‘Elderly Needs’, within the *Experian* classification system, *Mosaic UK* (see table 2). Her socio-economic profile maps onto that of Type L50 Pensioners in Blocks:

⁴⁸ Carl Rogers and Richard Farson, 'Active Listening', in *Communicating in Business Today*, ed. by Ruth Newman et al (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987)

⁴⁹ Source: Projecting Older People Population Information (POPPI) <<http://www.poppi.org.uk/>> [accessed April 2014] (Search Term: ‘English Population Figures by Age’)

⁵⁰ Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS) <<http://www.ons.gov.uk/>> [accessed April 2014]

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	Demography	Environment	Top Postal Areas
Type L50: Pensioners in Blocks	Low income, older singles, renting small flats from the council with poor facilities.	Concentrated in Scotland and Northern England. They were re-housed by the council into their current small flats between 3 and 10 years ago, often following the death of a partner. They don't like where they live, and would like to move, but have little choice in the matter. The area often has problems with alcoholism and vandalism, and so they rarely leave their blocks after dark.	Glasgow Newcastle Motherwell Sheffield Manchester
Type L51: Sheltered Seniors	Elderly people, mostly single who are housed in specially built flats and supported on basic pensions.	Live in small developments of council flats and some bungalows specifically allocated to older people, concentrated in North and South-West England, and in Wales. Many have been there for a long time – up to 10 years, since the council re-housed them there as their needs changed. Many do not like their neighbourhood, which is often located within much council housing. They worry about going out at night, but like their homes.	Birmingham Newcastle Sheffield Nottingham Doncaster
Type L52: Meals on Wheels	Some of the oldest people in society who have reasonable pensions, living in accommodation where they receive appropriate care.	Live mainly in South England or in Wales. The majority moved into their current properties not very long ago, when their partner died, or when health problems meant they needed to find more suitable accommodation. They now live in local authority blocks designed for people in their condition, scattered throughout residential areas. They are often not very keen on their new neighbourhoods, but prefer not to move again.	Brighton Bournemouth Glasgow Portsmouth Edinburgh
Type L53: Low Spending Elders	Low income elders in council bungalows and semis suited to their declining mobility, surviving on modest pensions.	Found on the outskirts of many large cities, particularly in Scotland and South West England, in council-owned bungalows and small semidetached houses designed for people of their age and limited mobility. They were re-housed there by the council when they reached retirement, a decade ago. They are happy where they live, as these are safe areas full of people like them.	Glasgow Sheffield Belfast Birmingham Newcastle

Table 2: Types L50-52 Mosaic UK Consumer Profiles
[Data Source: Mosaic UK, Experian, 2010]

“low income, older singles, renting small flats from the council with poor facilities”; accounting for 1.13% of UK households and 0.89% of the UK population.⁵¹

Rose lived in a two bedroom flat on the ninth floor of an 18-storey block of flats. She lived there for 35 years and got to know the building and its community very well. Her tower block was part of a social housing development built by the council in 1971, replacing former mining cottages in a traditionally working-class area of the city. The scheme was intended for young families, but has since been designated housing for older people (aged 60 and over). It occupies an urban block behind a high street and opposite a park. Shops, services and local/national transport infrastructures are all within easy walking distance. If you can walk. When I first met Rose, she had not been outdoors for well over a year.

First Impressions

Rose’s block was refurbished in 2014 as part of a city-wide programme of improvements through which the council sought to extend the life of their properties; eradicate building defects; lower future maintenance costs; reduce fuel poverty for tenants and improve their comfort levels. Rose’s home was fitted with new uPVC double glazed windows and clad with external insulation and brick-slips. It is reputedly a good deal warmer and drier as a result of the work. The contractor’s website claims that the external wall U-values were reduced to 0.29W/(m²k) from 1.75W/(m²k).

Not all of the council’s initiatives are easily quantifiable or arguably as successful. I learnt how Rose campaigned against the 'clear corridors' policy, which banned tenants from decorating the landings outside their flats. Tenants were told to remove potted plants, pictures and doormats because they were deemed health and safety risks. Tenants regarded the policy a direct assault on home comforts and common sense. Clearly home comforts in this instance fall outside the aforementioned objective ‘comfort levels’. Furthermore, in 2012 Rose received a letter from the council demanding that she remove her mobility scooter from the lobby outside her flat or face

⁵¹ *Mosaic United Kingdom: The consumer classification of the United Kingdom* (Nottingham: Experian Ltd, 2010) <http://www.experian.co.uk/assets/business-strategies/brochures/Mosaic_UK_2009_brochure.pdf> [accessed 04 April 2014]

having it disposed of as a fire hazard. It was later moved voluntarily to a basement lock-up, where it remained inaccessible to Rose.

Accessibility is a critical issue for older people. As an architect, I am aware of the technical and legislative literature that deals with access to space, but as a befriender I now have a heightened awareness of the obstacles to reaching people like Rose. She once explained how it used to take five minutes to walk to the door, meaning that visitors frequently reported “finding no one home”. In particular Rose missed Eucharistic Ministers and receiving consecrated bread and wine from her church. My early visits depended upon Rose’s son answering the intercom and buzzing me through the door at street level; once he moved out, I relied on ‘tailgating’ other tenants and Rose leaving her door unlocked. Subsequently Rose had a key safe installed, on the insistence of her carers, and I was given codes for both entrances. Each time I visited I was reminded of the distance between her and the street. Fortunately there are two lifts serving the tower. Just as well, since my interactions with other older people have highlighted unreliable lifts as a very real concern and motive for moving. Size also matters. Unlike some of the retirement developments I have visited, the tower block lifts can easily accommodate furniture, wheelchairs, stretchers, mobility scooters and coffins.

Home Analysis

Rose’s two-bedroom flat was dual aspect, with views overlooking the city centre and three local landmarks. On my first visit Rose boasted having a good seat for watching hot air balloons and fireworks, and enjoying the morning sun. Clearly the flat’s elevated position afforded a good level of natural light all year round. One lasting disappointment, however, was the lack of private external space. Reputedly this was the tower block’s undoing as a home for young families. A seemingly obvious oversight but no doubt led by economy or concerns over health and safety. Undoubtedly such a space would benefit older residents, particularly those that are home bound or simply spending more time at home. In fact the government-sponsored HAPPI report identifies

good quality amenity space as a key and recommended component for the design of housing for older people.⁵²

Upon entering the flat there was an immediate sense of space, quite apart from entering the one metre square lobby of my own home. There was also a level threshold – the last step was the kerbstone at street level. In Rose’s hall there was space to turn around (wheelchair or otherwise) and to greet people. The hallway proper had a rational plan similar to my Victorian terrace, but crucially 200mm wider, meaning there was space for two people to pass comfortably. Another key difference was the cupboards – four in total, each with its own designation. There was also an alcove near the entrance, designed to accommodate prams, but equally good for mobility aids as well as jackets, shoes, umbrellas, and so on.

The two bedrooms were equally spacious at 13 and 10 square metres. The *Technical Housing Standards* stipulates minimums of 11.5 and 7.5 for double and single rooms respectively.⁵³ Rose’s son lived in the second room for over a decade, describing it as “a workshop with a bed”, due to his hobby making pipe stands for his expanding collection. Rose’s bedroom had two wardrobes, two chests of drawers, one dressing table and a bureau. The latter was a kind of repository containing rent books, pay cheques and photographs that reached back decades. Sadly when I met Rose she could no longer use her bedroom, in part due to her limited mobility and preference for a chair – her leg used to ‘pop out’ in bed and she struggled to turn. Rose was never interested in buying an orthopaedic bed and chose to sleep in a reclining chair in her sitting room; the epicentre of her lifeworld and context for her “little corner” opposite the television. The sitting room was decorated according to her design, right down to the china pots on the window sill, once selected to match the room’s autumnal colour scheme. Rose was proud of her flat and the environment she had created, including the three-seater sofa she had never sat on. She often talked about the sofa as her outlook, since once seated,

⁵² Housing and Communities Agency, *HAPPI / Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation* (London: Housing and Communities Agency, 2009), p.38. <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-our-ageing-population-panel-for-innovation>> [accessed 23 May 2016]

⁵³ Department for Communities and Local Government, *Technical Housing Standards – Nationally Described Space Standard* (London: DCLG, 2015), p.4.

the window revealed little of the city below. Rose regaled how she had trained her carers to straighten up the cushions before leaving! The sofa was also the common resting place for visitors, including a priest that reportedly liked to eat toffees, stretch out and fall asleep. Each piece of furniture had stories attributed to it, arguably of greater import than any practical use or aesthetic value.

In both sitting room and kitchen there were dressers loaded with multiple sets of crockery, tea sets and cut glass to suit any choice of tippie, from whisky to champagne. The kitchen – space and contents – could easily have accommodated a small family. By contrast Rose’s needs were basic and the necessary appliances could be counted on one hand: sink, kettle, fridge-freezer and microwave. It had become a domain used by carers and managed by family members. Late in her occupancy, Rose dreamt of visiting the room, just to be in it. From her sitting room arm chair she caught glimpses of her orchids on the window sill, all lined-up and in bloom.

Environmental Challenges

Perhaps the most surprising aspect of Rose’s flat was the arrangement of sanitary facilities – separate toilet and shower room. From an architectural point of view this design decision led to restricted access, as well as limited floor space within each room. The arrangement was no doubt borne out of the logic of a family home, but wholly inappropriate for Rose’s changing needs. Indeed, it could be said that Rose suffered from ‘architectural disability’,⁵⁴ since the physical design, layout and construction of her home presented hazards and barriers that made the built environment inconvenient, uncomfortable or unsafe, albeit not due to deficiency of space, but poor distribution of space. In these terms, the built environment is thought to be “capable of discrimination as harmful and undermining of people’s self-esteem as the denial of equal opportunities or verbal abuse”.⁵⁵ In this instance, the toilet arrangement led to an early transgression of health, safety and dignity. Firstly, Rose’s dependence on a walking frame and the narrow plan necessitated walking backwards into the space. Secondly, the walking frame preventing her from closing the door – it swung into the room. I recall many

⁵⁴ Julienne Hanson, ‘From “Special Needs” to “Lifestyle Choices”’: Articulating the Demand for “Third Age” Housing’, in *Inclusive Housing in an Ageing Society*, ed. by Sheila Peace and Caroline Holland (Bristol: The Policy Press, 2001), pp.29-53 (p.30)

⁵⁵ Ibid.

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occasions when I studiously looked the other way, the television masking any sound. Thirdly, the sink being in the neighbouring room meant unnecessary walking. In fact Rose once considered the kitchen sink more accessible than the shower room hand basin. She later reduced the effort/risk of walking by carrying wet wipes with her. Lastly, the toilet itself had a low pan. A toilet frame was fitted, which effectively raised the seat and provided Rose with supports to grab when standing up.

The effort of walking from room to room is hard to appreciate. It used to take Rose up to five minutes to walk between her chair and the toilet; such was the commitment that she regulated her intake of fluids and planned trips accordingly. Rose told me how she tied other jobs into her calls of nature, for example, a round trip via the kitchen to wash her hands, drop off crockery, wash and tidy up, and so on. It was the same within the kitchen. Rose deployed leg saving tactics, such as placing a small pot by the kettle to save up used tea bags for a future trip to the bin. Much thought went into the reduction of micro journeys and efficiency of round trips.

Rose described herself walking “like a crab”, her bones clicking and crunching as she went. As an architect, I noted the floor finishes and their relative resistances to Rose’s movements. The carpet often provided too much resistance to her feet, which she dragged as much as stepped. Rose once recalled how, after falling, she was able to slide across the kitchen floor, but could not reach the phone in the sitting room due to the carpet. Similarly, I observed how carpet thresholds had robbed Rose’s wheels of momentum, requiring an additional thrust of the arms to push the trolley or walking aid up and over. One was removed and replaced with tape. Nonetheless the sitting room rug had remained in place, despite presenting an obvious trip hazard at the corners. In this regard I never openly appraised the home environment or advised on alternative furniture layouts. To do so felt like criticising an old friend or life’s work.

In hindsight my first visit to Rose marked the beginning of a sustained period of staying at home. I recall Rose explaining that she had not been outside the flat for three to four weeks. At that time her last significant outing was attending Mass. Rose recalled her former duties in the church and remarked how she could no longer sit still for an hour – “I need to move around...the pain causes me to scream out and swear!” Similarly Rose acknowledged that she could no longer control her scooter due to arthritic hands. Rose’s

limited mobility and dexterity restricted her engagement with the outdoors in another way – opening windows – although for a time she could use her grab stick to push/pull the window, but not turn the handle.

Apparatus

When seated in her home, Rose was surrounded by apparatus: commode, zimmer frame, and hostess trolley. The latter was once adapted for use as a mobility aid, with pipe lagging wrapped around the handles to cushion her hands and arms. For a time it was Rose's work horse, used to travel between rooms and transport goods such as tea, clothes and linen. Some time into our friendship the old trolley was parked beside her chair and used for its intended purpose – serving meals and drinks – as well as hosting everyday artefacts: books, magazines, post, reading glasses, television remote, pills, and so on. Its role as an adhoc walking aid was fulfilled by the zimmer frame, which offered an upright walking posture and better control. Nonetheless I recall Rose remarking how the zimmer frame prevented her from reaching places she could get to with the trolley. For instance, "I used to be able to get into the 'Houses of Parliament' [toilet], push the trolley out and the door to". Rose would use her grab stick to pull the trolley back in when she was ready. In this way the trolley was a more versatile work horse, allowing access to the most private and smallest room, and offering platforms for performing everyday domestic tasks. The trade-off was safety.

Rose used grab sticks to extend her sphere of reach, and level of dexterity. When she was more mobile she used the 'tools' (as she called them) to reach into awkward interiors, such as high/low kitchen cupboards, or to save unnecessary walking when reaching light switches. For a time Rose used the tools to help keep the flat tidy, deploying the magnet to pick up needles or the claw for bits of fluff on the carpet. Rose regularly regaled how she used them to assist her in personal tasks such as putting on her knickers! In fact she took great delight in the acquisition of skill – and no doubt continued sense of independence – relating her reach into distant space to that of an Olympian. On a good day Rose would rise to the occasion. She once reported combining two tools to retrieve the television remote, which the carers had inadvertently left on the coffee table in the centre of the room.

At one time Rose considered the coffee table a useful apparatus. She often retold stories of past falls and how she used the table to get off the floor. She explained how she could only stand from a seated position. Back then she had the upper body strength to throw herself across the top of the table, roll onto her back and shuffle her bottom into a position where she could sit up. When she could no longer reach the table top she would crawl out of the flat, using her walking stick to open doors and ring the doorbell of her neighbour. Her neighbour would then open the self-closing lobby door and help Rose reach the common stairs, where on the third step down she would grab the metal balustrade and pull herself up from a seated position. She could then walk back to her flat with her stick. In these ways Rose used interior furnishings and the building as adhoc tools for getting back on her feet and returning to an upper plane of mobility.

Little Corner

For the best part of our friendship Rose occupied the corner of her sitting room. She called it her ‘little corner’, referencing lyrics to a hymn she sung as a child. The hymn, *Jesus Bids Us Shine*, was an important representation of her Catholic faith. I also had the impression that its lyrics deepened Rose’s sense of having arrived in a rightful place. In mobility terms Rose had succumbed to the “ever-constricting physical orbits”⁵⁶ identified by environmental gerontologist Graham Rowles in his studies of older person environments in the 1970s. Rose was practicing an “age-related tendency for environmental centralization”⁵⁷ within the home and had set up a comfortable place “located close to many necessary and preferred items used in daily life”.⁵⁸ For Rose that place was opposite the television, alongside the electric fire and beside the telephone; a location that was predetermined over sixty years ago when the television and telephone sockets were arranged on an electrical layout. But the design process did not stop there. Rose, with the help of others, had continued to design and construct her environment. In

⁵⁶ Graham Rowles, *Prisoners of Space? Exploring the Geographical Experience of Older People* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1978)

⁵⁷ Frank Oswald and Hans-Werner Wahl, ‘Dimensions of the Meaning of Home in Later Life’, in *Home and Identity in Late Life: International Perspectives*, ed. by Habib Chaudhury and Graham Rowles (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2005), pp.21-45 (p.25).

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 25.

the words of Meiki Loe “elders, like all of us, are interior designers. As their needs shift, they create comfortable, user-friendly spaces and systems to meet their needs”.⁵⁹

In the short time that I knew Rose there had been three ‘interior design’ interventions within Rose’s little corner. By coincidence the first took place on the same day of our introduction: a new reclining chair was installed, displacing Rose’s favourite but static high backed winged armchair, where I later sat during my visits. The intervention was in part an acknowledgement of how much time Rose was spending seated, her difficulty standing up, and preference for a chair at night. Two months later Rose had acknowledged “this is my world now – these two rooms [sitting room and kitchen]”. The second intervention took place nine months later when Rose returned from her a short term in hospital: the commode was installed between the two armchairs and dressed in one of Rose’s autumn coloured towels. The intervention was designed by others to mitigate the risk and pain posed by walking to the toilet, whilst Rose sought to maintain a sense of domesticity and dignity by the application of the towel. The third intervention, an adaptation, took place a year after our first meeting: the table lamp that once sat on top of a shelving unit was relocated behind the telephone on the nest of coffee tables. This downwards migration was because of Rose’s limited upwards reach, though regrettably affected the quality of light needed for reading (older people need three times as much light as people aged 20 to carry out visual tasks⁶⁰). Rose regularly used a magnifying glass or handheld illuminated magnifier, which she kept in a magazine rack close to her chair. It was in these terms that Rose both experienced ever-constricting physical orbits and constructed a place that would be recognised by gerontologists as a “control centre” or “living centre” with all the necessary tools for entertainment, communication and comfort within easy reach. One might also infer that the home as a user-friendly environment had some special meaning for Rose, as could be evidenced by her disquiet when accommodated in ‘other’ corners of hospital wards.

Rose let go of a larger physical orbit – that of the outdoors – prior to our friendship. In the initial visits Rose would register how many weeks it had been since she had been

⁵⁹ Meiki Loe, *Aging Our Way: Lessons for Living from 85 and Beyond* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p.48.

⁶⁰ Judith Torrington, *Upgrading Buildings for Older People* (London: RIBA Enterprises Ltd, 2004), p.28.

outside, whilst remarking “I don’t pine to be outside”. I recall an occasion when we discussed the decorations being undertaken in the common areas of the building, and Rose supposing she might walk out of the flat one day and take a look at the corridor. She never did. Instead Rose alluded to other modes of travel, saying “you live in your memories”, and referring to memories she can recall experiences “like [dipping into] a box of gems”. On a couple of occasions Rose positively remarked how my visits 'agitated' her brain and tested her memory. During the course of our conversations Rose made a few passing references to local places outside her present and previous homes: the church, bingo halls, a former miners’ pub that once had sawdust in the floor, public baths where she taught her grandchildren to swim, and a fabric shop she used to frequent on the high street. The latter was mooted as a place she might like to go if she could get out.

Rose once explored the idea of an electric wheelchair, but was found to be ‘too big’. Even when she had lost weight due to sickness, she could never justify the expense, saying “I might not need it long”. Rose preferred the idea of keeping her money for a good requiem Mass and funeral, and to pass a little on to her children. On another occasion Rose was issued with a manual wheelchair, though awaited for a special cushion to make it more comfortable for her. In practice Rose would still have needed assistance transferring to the chair and travelling around (she did not have the upper body strength to propel herself). We once talked about the possibility of visiting other rooms in her flat and joked about going downstairs to the lobby and chatting to passers-by (“ooh, look at Rose with her young man!”). Similarly, carers suggested organising longer visits to enable walking around the block. But Rose was in no hurry, nor was she prepared to get excited about probable outings. I once invited Rose into her kitchen for tea, but the reply came: “I’m not dressed for it”. And going downstairs: “I need to prepare... Maybe in the springtime... I get tired these days...” It occurred to Rose that she had not worn shoes in over a year. But her real concern maybe lay in the question “What if I get a taste of outdoors and I’m no longer satisfied with this corner?”

Loneliness

Whilst physical set-backs associated with ageing are well known, researchers are just beginning to unpack the challenges brought about by cognitive and psychological set-backs. To some extent these are the new known unknowns. Key areas being explored by

researchers are dementia, loneliness, and obesity linked to depression. The effects of these conditions on physical and mental health are just starting to be mapped, with some arresting parallels being made. For instance, in 2013 Laura Ferguson, director of the *Campaign to End Loneliness*, reported loneliness was more dangerous than many imagined: “the equivalent of smoking 15 cigarettes a day in terms of causes of early death”.⁶¹ Research over the last few decades has consistently shown that around 10 per cent of older people feel always or very lonely.⁶²

Through befriending I now appreciate that the issue of loneliness is contingent on many factors, including recent events, health, mood, weather, time of the day/week, and so on. There were times when Rose declared herself lonely and equally occasions when she felt connected and content. From the start it was obvious that Rose had a television routine, tuning in for particular quiz shows, soaps and the news. Rose reported liking the quiz shows as they helped to keep her brain active: “it’s my brain that’s kept me alive this long... The Chase [quiz show] keeps my brain from becoming ossified!” Rose’s television was generally switched on, though turned down during visits. Rose liked to “keep up-to-date with what’s going on outside”, but equally enjoyed a sense of background, acknowledging that she did not always “register what is going on”. It was a kind of conversational supplement, and occasionally the subject of conversation. I recall several occasions when Rose explicitly stated that she was not lonely, saying “I have the television and my work”, by which she meant word searches. In fact AgeUK reports that nearly half of older people say that television or pets are their main form of company.⁶³ Rose also talked to her plants, encouraging them to grow, and to a teddy bear she clutched when she felt pain.

Occasionally Rose observed that she had lost touch with her neighbours and friends. She was in contact with one or two ‘upstairs’ she knew from church. For a time Rose

⁶¹ ‘A Third of Over-50s are Lonely’, *The Telegraph*, 11 April 2013 <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/9987330/A-third-of-over-50s-are-lonely.html>> [accessed 02 April 2014]

⁶² Sally Cupitt, *Listening to yYu: The Baseline Report from the Campaign to End Loneliness* (London: Campaign to End Loneliness, 2011), p.13.

⁶³ Susan Davidson and Phil Rossall, *Evidence Review: Loneliness in Later Life* (London: AgeUK, 2015) <<http://www.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/For-professionals/Research/Age%20UK%20Evidence%20Review%20on%20Loneliness%20June%202015.pdf?dtrk=true>> [accessed March 2016]

liked to keep her front door open for afternoon visitors. Rose once reasoned, “the trouble is, we’ve never really been in the habit of calling on one another. The new ones take a while to get that – we don’t live in each other’s pockets”. Rose recalled how she used to bump into people at the laundry, and how one “girl took a shining to me” and regularly phoned and visited. This visitor was a little awkward; she often arrived uninvited or at inappropriate times, perhaps overstaying her welcome. Reputedly, her conversational skills were not strong either! Nonetheless Rose adopted her as a friend and was grateful for the many gestures of kindness, including offers to help with washing and shopping.

Rose reported missing her son since he moved out. I encountered Rose on days when she had not had social visitors, and was annoyed by relatives that telephoned and told her about their busy social lives. “They’re always out and about” she would say, and “all I’ve got is these four walls. I don’t want to know what they’re doing!” Whilst Rose missed her son’s presence and companionship, she would not consider sharing with anyone else. For instance, a Homeshare scheme would only provoke anxiety. That said, Rose once offered her bedroom to one of her young care workers who was having relationship difficulties at home. This act of generosity is an illustration of how Rose began to think of her carers as family members.

Home Care

When I first met Rose she was subscribed to an emergency care line and received a low level of home care (help with getting showered and dressed in the mornings). Rose would recount how the carer would get soaked trying to wash her within the small confines of her shower. Also at that time, Rose’s son lived with her and took charge of the shopping, cooking and other daily chores. Later on Rose lived independently, with carers calling five times a day and twice nightly. At first Rose felt overwhelmed by the number and frequency of visitors to her flat. Her home was no longer her own, and she had to be prepared for carers to come at any time. She particularly struggled with the night staff – deeming them unnecessary and somewhat invasive – but over time their relationship improved. Rose reported how “one of them tucks me in my chair at night” and, “she’s Portuguese – I don’t use long words with her”. Meanwhile Rose was offering parental advice and a shoulder to cry on for at least one of the daytime carers. In return, they brought flowers and an occasional curry or fish and chip supper to share.

Perhaps the most challenging aspect for Rose was the relinquishing of domestic tasks. She often said “people take all my jobs from me”. I can only imagine the feelings of redundancy and loss of control. Yes, doing the dishes is a chore, and perhaps a challenging or risky one for an older person with limited mobility. Yet housework provides the home dweller with an occupation; a meaningful structure to the day spent at home (older people spend between 70 and 90 per cent of their time at home⁶⁴), as well as a potential source of gratification. Sociologist Jane Darke observes that “housework may be seen as ‘real work’ and equally oppressive, but most women have some areas of competence in domestic tasks which they exercise with pride and satisfaction”.⁶⁵ Darke suggests housework for some women is a way of defining the self, presenting and representing the home. Other commentators suggest home may have an occupational meaning; home as a place to ‘potter’, a kind of maintenance that helps to locate and “sustain a sense of self-continuity and purpose”⁶⁶. Perhaps the home is no more ‘made’ than it is ‘done’ through actions and rituals.⁶⁷ I offer the following two contrasting accounts of everyday ‘maintenance routines’ *for* and *of* Rose:

‘Housework’: Rose feeling *at* home, sitting at the kitchen table refolding linen returned to her by an outside helper, bagged and folded otherwise. Rose explains how the towels must be folded, stacked and presented within the airing cupboard. Today one can appreciate how Rose’s sense of tidiness survives her ability to do the work. The carer is compelled to keep a tidy sofa; visitors help water and arrange plants, and granddaughters are paid to dust and polish. Participating in or observing the daily upkeep of her home gives Rose a sense of control and comfort. Professional and familial care is received by both the person (Rose) and her home environs (surfaces, objects and ornaments).

⁶⁴ Rita Diaz and David Roberts, *Shelter Factsheet: Older People and Housing* (London: Shelter, 2007)

<http://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0013/41440/factsheet_older_people_and_housing_may_2007.pdf> [accessed 23 May 2016]

⁶⁵ Jane Darke, ‘Women and the Meaning of Home’, in *Housing Women*, ed. by Rose Gilroy and Roberta Woods (London: Routledge, 1994), pp.11-30 (p.23).

⁶⁶ Roger Clough et al, *Housing Decisions in Later Life* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p.104.

⁶⁷ Carole Després, ‘The Meaning of Home: Literature Review and Directions for further Research and Theoretical Development’, in *Journal of Architecture and Planning Research*, 8.2 (1991), 96-115

‘Care time’: Rose describes her morning routine as being like the experiences of the character Little Tramp in Charlie Chaplin’s film, *Modern Times*. Chaplin portrays the factory worker, subjected to the indignities of being forced fed by a feeding machine and an accelerating assembly line where he screws nuts onto pieces of machinery. Rose portrays the ‘changing of horses’ (from chair to commode); an accelerated strip wash; rapid transit back to the chair, and restoration of the area around the commode; clothing passed along an assembly line; the installation of the hostess trolley or feeding platform; a fast-paced delivery of porridge and toast, and imminent retrieval of empty vessels to be washed up, all within thirty minutes!

Away From Home

During 2015 Rose was hospitalised three times due to contracting pneumonia and two falls. During Rose’s time away I noted the importance of her memories of home – its geography, contents and creature comforts – and the positive contribution they made to her feeling rooted, assisting the recovery of her sense of purpose and wellbeing. Graham Rowles and Habib Chaudhury have explored this concept and suggest that “life experience of the self is strongly influenced by interaction with an ‘other’, whether that other is one’s fellow human beings or the residential environment”.⁶⁸ For them, “identity formation in relationship with home experience is a social process irrespective of the level of involvement of others”. For me, Rose demonstrated relational meanings of home, in as much as home could be thought of as an ‘anchor’ or ‘friend’, providing a kind of stimulation or interaction beyond the limits of its physical boundaries. At a very primal level Rose would refuse to think of the hospital ward or care unit as acceptable dwelling places – being in no way equivalent to her ‘little corner’ at home. As she got stronger, and on the premise that she would return home if she did, Rose would relate the distance between hospital bed and toilet to that which needed to be travelled at home.

During our friendship Rose and others considered the prospect of moving into ‘a home’, though the idea often remained abstract. The physical manifestation of this idea was

⁶⁸ Habib Chaudhury and Graham Rowles, *Home and Identity in Late Life: International Perspectives*, (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2005) p.13

unclear. Rose and her family struggled with an alien vocabulary: ‘assisted living’, ‘very sheltered’, ‘Extracare’, and so on. Few could point to relevant destinations and know with certainty which bit of the city; what kind of building; how things could be, what the atmosphere would be like, in terms of care, and any sense of community. Similarly, Rose’s attitude oscillated between positions of positive action and the rhetoric of last resort. In hospital Rose simultaneously wished “not to wake up” and dreamt of a better environment: “a home if necessary”. On a subsequent visit Rose affirmed, “I have decided to go into a home”. Yet the search had just begun and the transition seemed likely to be slow – and it was – resulting in a further period in her flat.

Rose’s first night home from hospital offered little hope. Her carers failed to visit, giving Rose a heightened sense of self-awareness, recognising that she was not as strong as when she was last at home. Feeling alone and helpless that night pushed Rose in her resolve to leave home. Rose thus entered a state of ‘option recognition’⁶⁹ – weighing up circumstances and considering the next best step. She started to talk positively about being in a ‘safe place’, where she would have the option of company and confidence in carer attendance. Her motive at this time was borne out of fear: “I don’t want to go – it’s been my home for 33 years. But I’m terrified of falling”. Rose realised that a fall would lead to another stay in hospital – a place she had spent enough time in already. Rose recalled her most recent hospital experience, saying: “I was slowly dying in that corner [of the hospital ward]... with no-one to talk to”.

A Home

Whilst Rose was coming to terms with a familiar environment – home, albeit experienced differently – her children were exploring alternative types of accommodation. Around this time I encountered Rose’s sons and daughter in passing at hospital and home. On one occasion Rose’s daughter shared some marketing literature for two local ‘very sheltered’ housing schemes. She had visited the schemes and appraised them on behalf of her mum. Later it was acknowledged that Rose needed a greater level of care – “on-site nurses; 24 hours a day” – and these schemes had only one daytime nurse, and were therefore deemed “no good, if mum falls”. Regulation/good practice requires more than one nurse to lift a vulnerable person.

⁶⁹ Sheila Peace et al (2006), p.130

Ultimately the scheme managers advised that these specific ‘very sheltered’ housing schemes were not appropriate for Rose. Indeed, managers were a useful resource for Rose’s family as they got to grips with an unfamiliar vocabulary and range of building types⁷⁰. This new knowledge was relayed to Rose in bitesize pieces, such that she understood something of the complexity of the search, respective waiting lists and ideas about the destination: a flat of sorts.

Rose started to anticipate the move and consider what she would take to her new home. At first she talked about taking her orchids, then later she learnt “they let you take some of your furniture”. Rose enlisted her reclining chair, the kitchen armchair for guests, the nest of coffee tables, and maybe the three-seater settee. She prioritised comfort, for herself and especially her visitors. Rose was a highly sociable person, a characteristic I considered key to her ageing successfully. Nonetheless it was a difficult picture for Rose; she compared her situation with that of her daughter: “she’s just bought a new home, and I’m breaking mine up”. She talked of her strategy, suggesting she would “just leave with a few things and they [the family] can sort the rest out”. In fact Rose had been divesting herself of her belongings for some time; a ‘compulsive’ process referred to anthropologist Jean-Sebastien Marcoux as ‘casser maison’,⁷¹ literally ‘breaking the house’. The process is evidence that “people inhabit their things as much as their place”.⁷² In common with other older people in the process of moving, or indeed those preparing for death, Rose acknowledged that it is the things themselves that make the flat a home. This calls to mind an alternative meaning of home described by Dacher and Sherman: “the home as the fitting place for objects that have been collected and cherished over the course of a lifetime”.⁷³

Rose talked positively about “moving into a home” and “starting a new chapter” in her life. She was bolstered by her faith at this time, deducing that “there’s a reason for

⁷⁰ The role of the scheme manager is explored within Story 5.

⁷¹ Jean-Sebastien Marcoux, ‘The Casser Maison Ritual: Constructing the Self by Emptying the Home’, *Journal of Material Culture*, 6.2 (2001), 213-235 (p.213)

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Edmund Sherman and Joan Dacher, ‘Cherished Objects and the Home: Their Meaning and Roles in Late Life’, in *Home and Identity in Late Life: International Perspectives*, ed. by Habib Chaudhury and Graham Rowles (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2005), pp.63-79 (p.63)

everything”. I made a joke: “there might be a man there waiting for you!” and Rose responded: “ooh, do you think they are mixed sex these places?!” Her retort confirmed a continued lust for (social) life and limited comprehension of her next destination. In some respects, I was regarded another potential information source in her options appraisal. Another, more formal source of information was a visiting housing officer who explained a range of housing options. Rose later relayed to me how “he didn’t call it retirement housing... something fancy... assisted living...” A further two potential schemes were identified, including one managed by a charitable trust. Rose was reassured by the idea that she could take her own furniture, and that a wheelchair would allow her to “mix with the others” if she wanted.

Staying Put

A month later and Rose informed me she had “made a decision” to stay at home. She suspected that her children were unhappy with the choice, but Rose has had the green light from healthcare professionals. Rose reported that she was “happy to stay, whilst I have my independence”. Independence for Rose meant being able to stand up and walk to her 'throne' – the commode. Rose made a joke of her situation, remarking on the convenience of her commode in the sitting room: “the queen has to walk much further to her toilet!” Rose placed a good deal of importance on having her mind and sense of humour. She laughed at herself once again: “my knee is facing backwards, but I can step sideways okay”. We talked for a while about the body and respective loss of mobility and senses. Rose was losing ground on her hearing and sight, but she still enjoyed the senses of smell, taste and touch. She remarked, “the thing you really lose is your dignity”. Yes, she was at home, but carers could walk in at any minute. Rose had identified an early warning system of sorts – “the sitting room door moves [in the draught] when the front door is opened”. For the time being she was happy at home, and grateful that she did not need to pack up and “mix with strangers”. I think for Rose staying at home was like being with an old friend. Rose enjoyed a “temporal legacy of having lived one’s life in the environment... [her home has become] a landscape of

memories, providing a sense of identity”.⁷⁴ Leaving would have engendered a sense of bereavement and loss of identity and grounding.

Conclusion

Rose displayed a determination to age in place and dogged resistance to moving, despite significant evidence of ‘environmental press’ or ‘architectural disability’, and repeated periods of hospitalisation. When asked if I could share her story with architecture students, Rose’s response was most enthusiastic: “you must tell them about the toilet. The door is too narrow for my zimmer... and the shower room needs to be big enough for the carer to help”. Her story, therefore, also portrays something of the changing state of home for a vulnerable older person, experiencing degradations of dignity and privacy due to increasing loss of control over who has access and what actions are performed in the home. And yet, for Rose, her interactions with home were considered as rich and meaningful as a long-term friendship.

On a personal note, I think the practice of befriending has further developed my capacity for design empathy. As an architect, I regard my interactions with Rose as a primary resource; a person to remember when designing for older people, and helping me to mitigate the potential trappings of ‘self-design’⁷⁵ – designing according to one’s own ideas and experiences. Similarly, this grounding experience should help to mitigate potential ‘ethnocentrism’,⁷⁶ calling into question deeply ingrained attitudes that my own (architectural) culture is superior to others, particularly ‘non-experts’. Indeed, Rose asked whether my visits were useful for my work. We agreed at the time that I was ‘gathering attitudes’ on ageing, as well as observing her experiences of limited mobility and negotiating space. I now also feel better prepared for later life.

⁷⁴ Graham Rowles, ‘Geographical Dimensions of Social Support in Rural Appalachia’, in *Aging and Milieu: Environmental Perspectives on Growing Old*, ed. by Graham Rowles and Russell Ohta (New York: Academic Press, 1983), pp.111-130 (p.114).

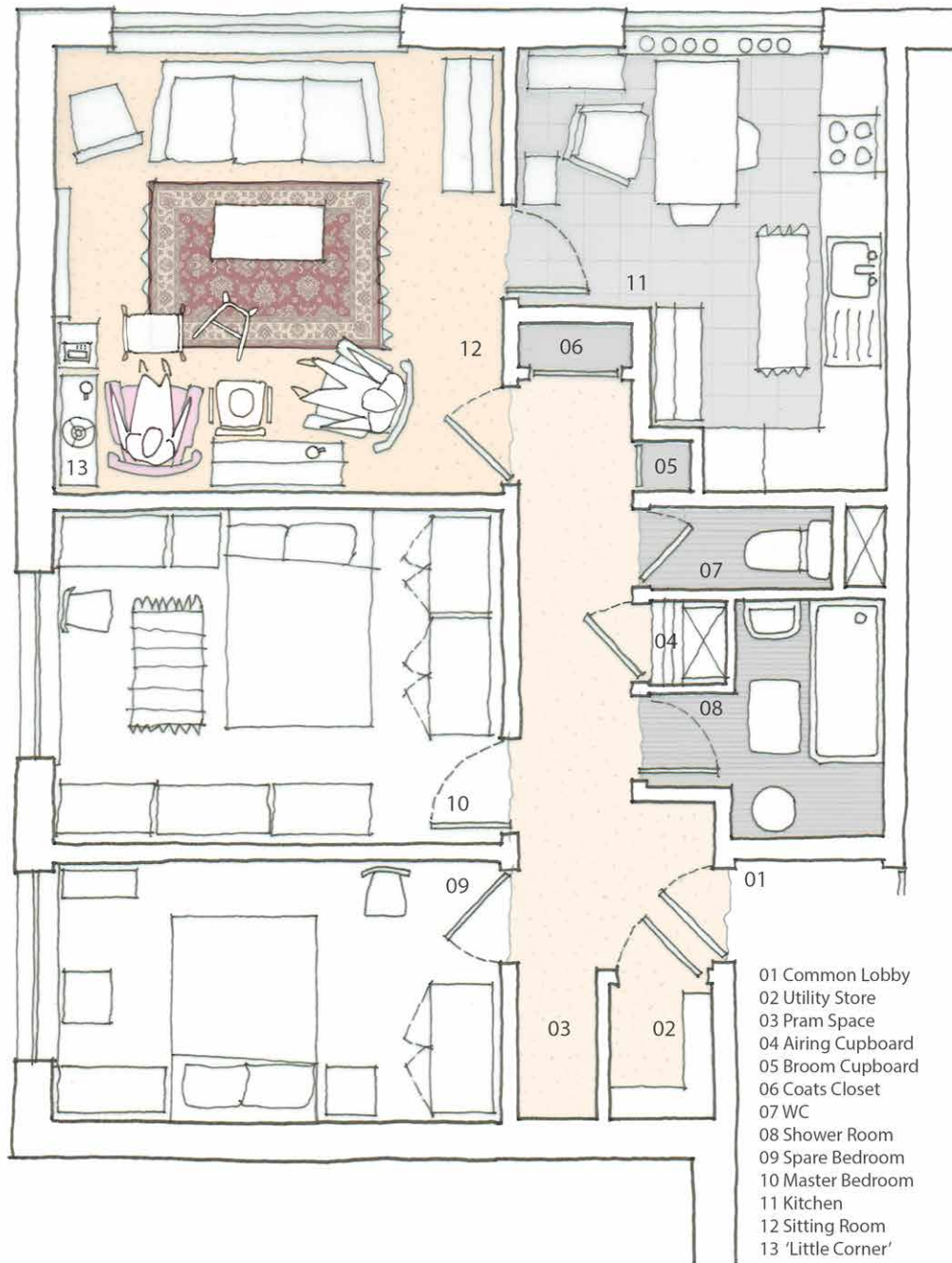
⁷⁵ Galen Cranz, *Ethnography for Designers*, (New York: Routledge, 2016) p.ix

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.20.

Vignette II

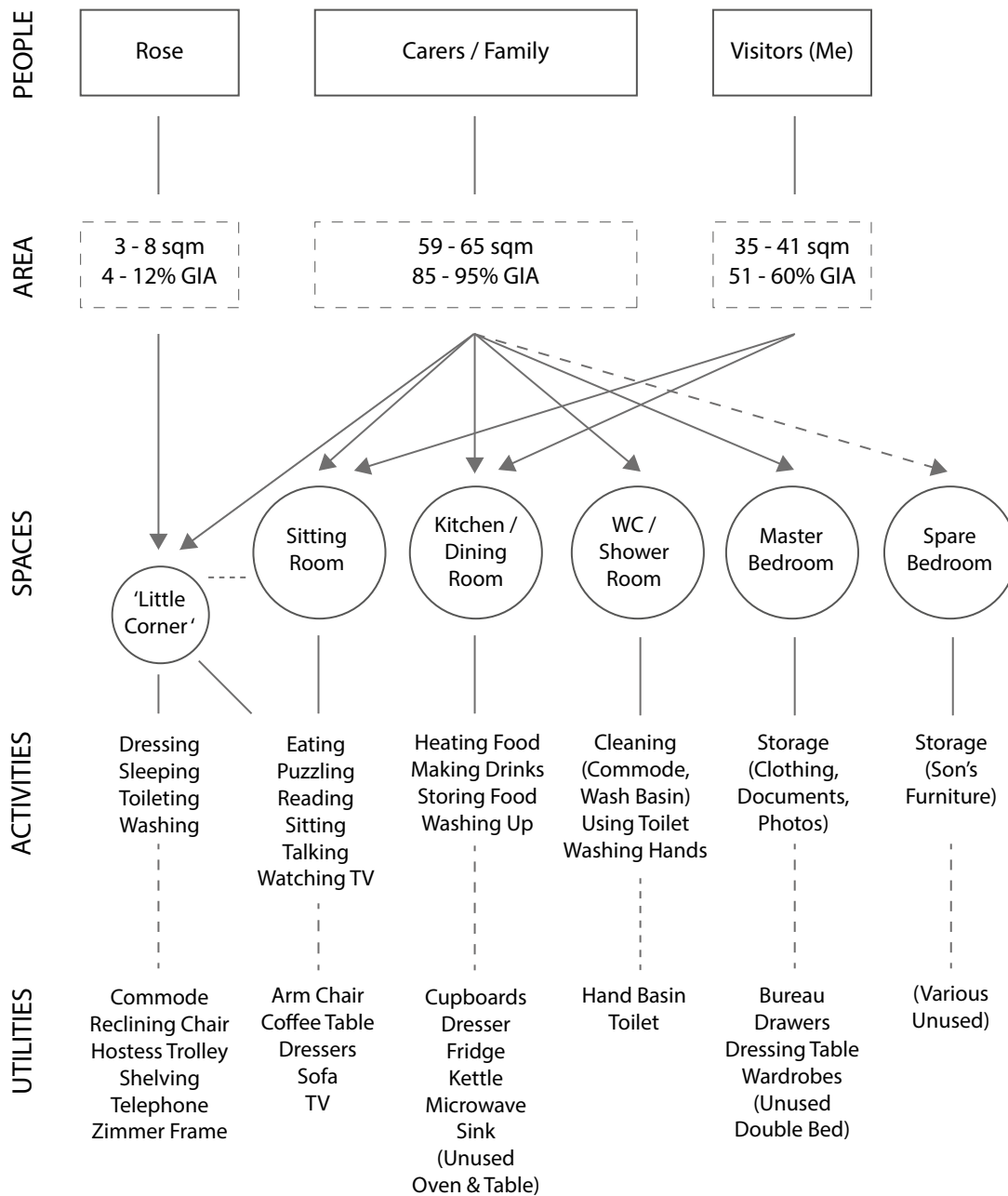
Rose's Home

This vignette presents Rose's home through architectural drawings and diagrams. It includes a survey plan that describes the apartment layout, as visited; an occupancy chart that maps different people and their respective activities within the apartment; an orbits diagram that describes Rose's changing life-world; a study of horizons, representing different aspects from Rose's 'little corner', and a schematic plan that switches from an analytical to propositional mode of representation, describing potential design interventions in support of an enhanced home environment for Rose.



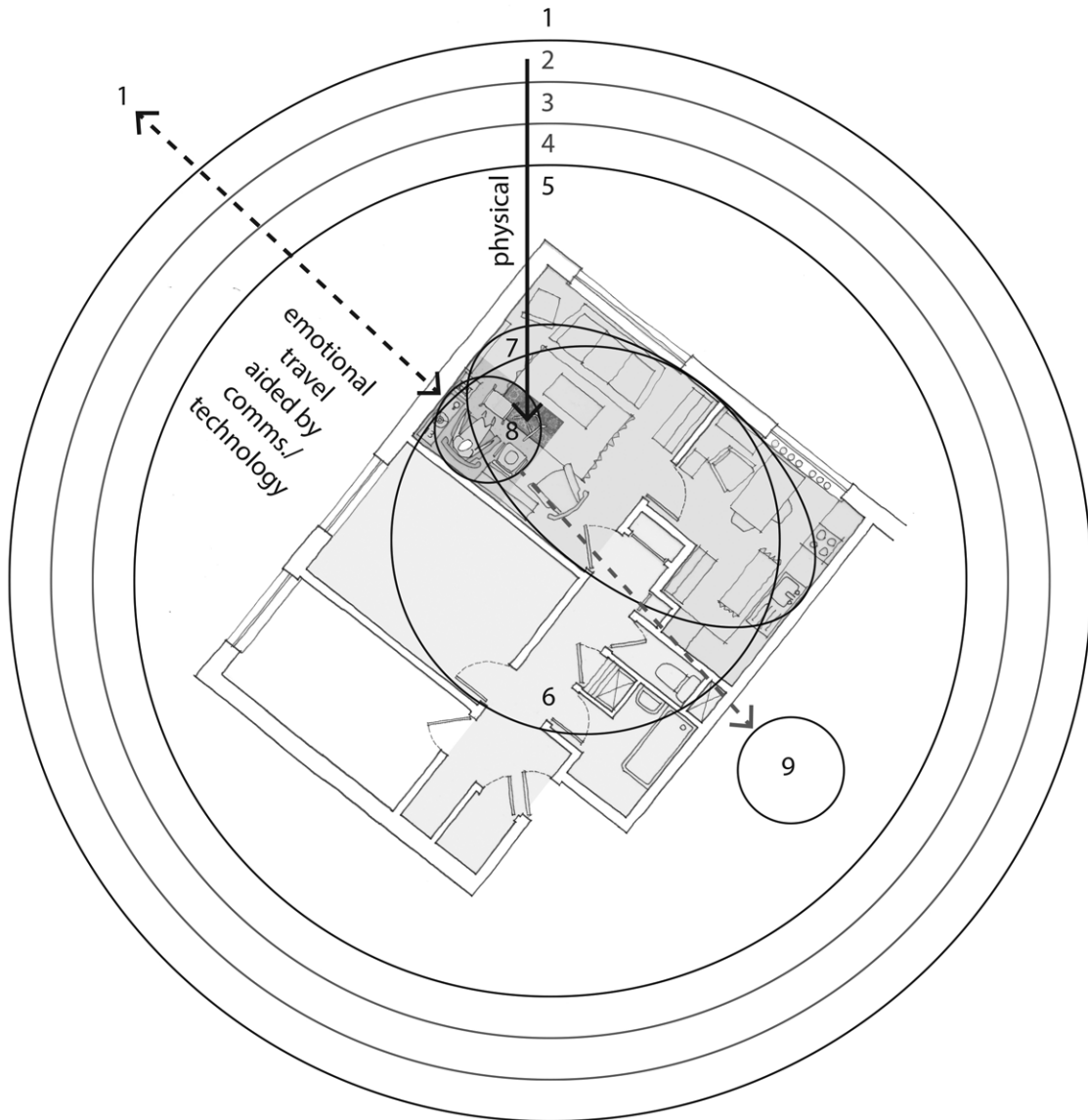
Survey plan of Rose's apartment;
Rose situated in her 'little corner' and chatting over a cup of tea.

Vignette II
Rose's Home
~ Survey Plan ~



Charting the degrees of occupancy of Rose's apartment. (GIA: Gross Internal Area)
 Rose has diminished agency over her home, with family/carers having access to all areas. Family and carers share a level of intimacy, albeit perform different functions.

Vignette II
Rose's Home
 ~ Occupancy Chart ~

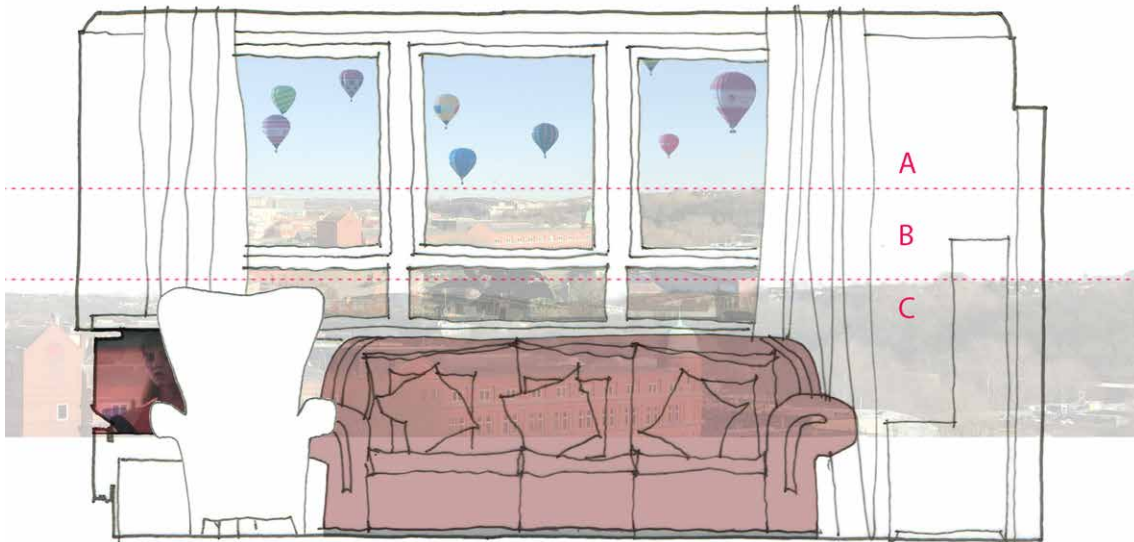


- ORBITS**
- 1 cosmological - psychological - spiritual
 - 2 international
 - 3 national
 - 4 metropolitan
 - 5 neighbourhood
 - 6 flat
 - 7 two rooms
 - 8 'little corner'
 - 9 a home

- MEANS**
- knowledge - memory - faith
 - plane or ship
 - national infrastructures
 - local transport
 - mobility scooter
 - trolley
 - zimmer frame
 - commode
 - wheelchair

Diagram based on the work of Graham Rowles (1978). Situated in the specific environment of Rose's apartment and revised to reflect advances in communication and entertainment technology. It reflects decreasing physical orbits, mitigated by knowledge, memory, faith and the ability to contact the 'outside' world.

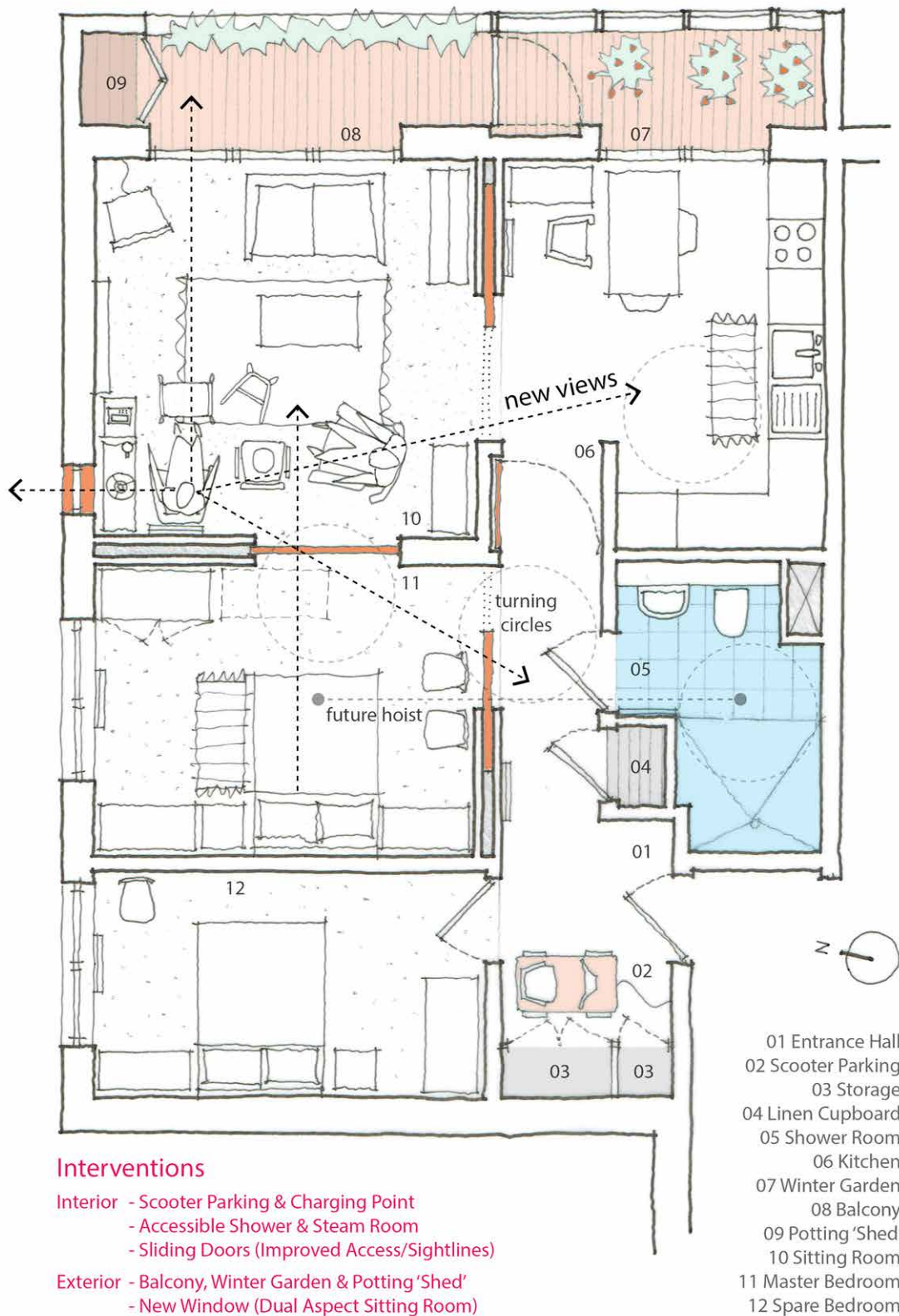
Vignette II
Rose's Home
 ~ Orbits Diagram ~



A: Occasional (Balloons) B: Standing (Cityscape) C: Seated (Sky Sofa TV)

Study exploring the range of aspects from Rose's seat in her 'little corner'. The television, sofa and sky are the primary 'views' on offer. The local landscape disappears when seated.

Vignette II
Rose's Home
 ~ Horizons Study ~



A speculative design scheme prepared to illustrate the potential of relatively small 'interventions' - non-structural adjustments to the physical fabric of Rose's apartment and tower block. A copy of this and the survey drawings were given to Rose, and laminated by her daughter who took them to Rose's bedside in various hospital wards and the nursing home. In these terms they became memento drawings.

Vignette II
Rose's Home
 ~ Design Interventions ~

SECTION REFLECTIONS

In this section stories one and two gave voice to older people with contrasting experiences of later life in England. Matthew and Eileen were enjoying an active ‘third-age’, having recently entered retirement, versus Rose who was journeying through the ‘fourth age’ and becoming ever-more dependent on others. A marked difference of course is their financial means, with Mathew and Eileen owning their homes and having capacity to shape them, while Rose lived within a rented apartment – one that arguably shaped her – and depended upon the local authority for maintenance and repairs. While not wholly representative of the older person landscape, these characters and their respective stories may be used as touchstones for thinking about its diversity, and a wide spectrum of needs and aspirations asked of our homes in later life.

An alternative reading of these stories would be to regard them as an exploration of characters living in so-called ‘mainstream’ or ‘general-needs’ housing, in contrast to ‘specialist’ housing designed for older people. Certainly, the characters could be considered outside of Pink & Knight’s market for its independent, retirement-living product, which is explored within section two of this thesis. In the meantime, Matthew and Eileen may be remembered as ‘not ready’, and Rose ‘too late’. In one case the product lacked appeal, while in the other it did not offer an appropriate level of support (and would likely have been out-of-reach financially). We might also recognise these characters as resisting specialist offers, in favour of ageing in their long-term homes and neighbourhoods. From an architectural perspective, therefore, we might ask how architects can better design ‘age-friendly’ or ‘companion’ homes that allow older people to age in place for as long as possible? And in the shorter term – accepting that the UK has an extensive historic building stock – what design interventions might be made within existing homes? Do we need specialist homes for older people, or simply more flexibility in how our homes respond to individual journeys along the life course?

SECTION 2: RETIREMENT CHALETS

This section groups three actors closely associated with Pink & Knight's retirement-living product, albeit with contrasting positions of provider, consumer, and end-user. In *Developer Director*, a fictional character, George, helps us to explore the business values of Pink & Knight and its delivery of homes for older people, for profit. In *Resident Owner*, we hear from multiple informants, providing feedback on the physical and social attributes of the retirement chalet. Three part-fictional characters are presented as touchstones for thinking about Pink & Knight's customers. In *Chalet Manager*, meanwhile, we follow Lindsey in a part-fictional 'day in the life' that examines her responsibilities for the building and its occupants, as well as her role in the promotion and maintenance of the social architecture of the chalet.

Vignette III

Chalet Thresholds

This vignette presents photographic surveys that together comprise a route from chalet entrances through common/corridor space to apartment front doors. The vignette is bookended by surveys of two contrasting doorways: those serving main entrances and those serving private apartments. The latter offers examples of resident display-making in the corridors. Here door mats were found to be a popular form of self-expression, bringing life to otherwise homogeneous spaces; the recessed door is an important threshold between shared and private environments. Whereas, chalet main entrances appear to have a uniform architectural language - classical portico with Tuscan style columns and entablature - and are devoid of any personal appropriation.



Entrances to Pink & Knight developments, each adorned with a classical portico with Tuscan style columns and entablature - a key architectural element of the product.

Vignette III
Chalet Thresholds
~ Main Entrances ~



Inside the main entrances to Pink & Knight developments.
These examples enter directly into the shared lounge.

Vignette III
Chalet Thresholds
~ Main Entrances ~



Inside a typical Pink & Knight development;
walking the hotel-styled corridors to reach the guest suite.

Vignette III
Chalet Thresholds
~ Corridor Interiors ~



Apartment entrances as viewed from the corridor in one case study development. Here residents are home-making by appropriating pieces of this shared space; owned by Pink & Knight and managed by CMS.

Vignette III
Chalet Thresholds
~ Apartment Entrances ~

STORY 3: DEVELOPER DIRECTOR

Synopsis

This is a three-part story from the position of the property developer director; directing business, through the supply of retirement-living products to customers, for profit. Part one examines common perceptions of property developers within popular culture and the architectural profession. Part two presents ‘George’, a fictional director at Pink & Knight, and composite character based on members of the board of directors. It explores George’s success story – and ways in which it is maintained by himself and others – and Pink & Knight’s headquarters, which provide a seat of power and outward projection to the business community. The story then shifts from a narration of George, as character, to George as narrator. Part three presents George’s thinking around a staff symposium called ‘Back-To-Basics’, which is used by the author to roll call Pink & Knight directors, as well as unpack everyday operational challenges and business decisions.

Methods

Part one is informed by an under-populated field of literature that seeks to bring together the two disciplines of architecture and property development (or real estate in USA), combined with analysis of Hollywood characterisations of property developers and British television footage, including a two-part documentary presented by filmmaker Richard Macer. While the documentary glosses over some major issues – like whether building on green belt is appropriate – Macer’s ‘strength is in finding characters’,¹ and finding empathy for a property developer. I then translate this method of empathetic storytelling to my account of Pink & Knight.

Parts two and three of the research story present a fictional character and narrative, respectively, based on real events, researched through participant observation and documentary analysis. Primary data was collected from everyday interactions and observations within the headquarters of the sponsor company. The author draws upon meeting notes made during research presentations to company directors; field notes made while observing internal meetings where directors were present; headnotes from

¹ Jack Seale, *The New Builds Are Coming: Battle in the Countryside* [Review] (London: Radio Times, 2018) <<http://www.radiotimes.com/tv-programme/e/f6f2pm/the-new-builds-are-coming-battle-in-the-countryside--series-1-episode-2/>> [accessed 02 March 2018]

interactions in-between meetings, including conversations with the planning director while travelling to and from developments, and a 300-mile car journey shared with the design director while travelling to a planning inquiry. Documents analysed include the sponsor's 'Annual Report & Accounts' (2017); design documents, including planning drawings and a Design and Access Statement for the recently extended head office; electronic presentation slides from the 'Back-To-Basics' symposium, which include the managing director's address to staff and significant contributions from the design and planning directors. The content and structure of the presentation slides informed part three of this story.

For ethical reasons, the story presents a composite character, standing-in for members of a real board of directors met while visiting the sponsor organisation. Similarly, a fictional location has been described for the company headquarters, though remains true to the place characteristics of the actual setting. Readers are reminded that Pink & Knight is the author's pseudonym for the sponsor organisation. Furthermore, the author has worked on the image of this text, to reflect the contrasting cultures of academia and business. Readers will note a corresponding change in writing style and form between parts two and three. The language of part three is more direct; borrowing from business-to-business communications, defined as the relaying of information within a business by its people. In this case it is George, writing to himself, as he recalls and reconstructs symposium messages, and prepares for a similar event. Part three is written from George's perspective, using a false first-person narrative that represents a kind of gathering of thoughts, albeit well structured. The writing structure shares the image of an industry report, with short paragraphs that are individually numbered and subtitled. The voices of informants are made explicit using italicised text to highlight comments recorded in the field and paraphrased by the author.

PART ONE

My meetings with the managing director were always congenial. He was positively affable. But popular culture had prepared me for meeting a public hate figure. In the UK, where public opinion is shaped by a sustained housing crisis, compounded by the 2008 financial/banking crisis and lasting austerity measures, developers are said to “rank alongside parking inspectors and bankers as people we love to hate”.² This attitude is not new, nor limited to our shores. The ‘evil’ developer has a distinct history in America, as evidenced by Hollywood film productions. Architect and writer Mark Hogan argues that the trope became established during the 1930s, and cites *You Can’t Take it With You* (Frank Capra, 1938), in which a successful banker – intent on buying-up properties surrounding a competitor munitions factory – instructs his real estate broker to offer a huge sum to a reluctant homeowner, and if that is not accepted, to cause trouble for the family. The same director further honed the evil developer in *It’s a Wonderful Life* (Frank Capra, 1946), albeit its protagonist is also a property developer whose benevolence results in near bankruptcy (apparently signalling his poor business skills).³ Hogan writes,

*“In the wake of It’s a Wonderful Life, Hollywood unleashed a grim parade of evil developers. They’re typically seen in a few basic scenarios: [i] A character is called out as a developer to show the audience that he is unsavoury... [ii] A beloved building/piece of land/town will be destroyed by an evil developer if the heroes can’t come up with a large amount of money. The details are usually sparse. ... [iii] The evil developer has a plot to increase the value of an investment, which needs to be stopped by the heroes”.*⁴

But there are signs that television critics are catching on and tiring of the evil developer, questioning the value of two-dimensional characters and lazy stereotyping:

² *The New Builds Are Coming: Battle in the Countryside*, dir. by Richard Macer (Blast! Films, 2018) Series 1: Episode 2

³ The idea of a building and loans group is closer to our notion of a housing association.

⁴ Mark Hogan, ‘A Brief History of Evil Developers in Movies’ (Washington: CityLab, 2017) <<https://www.citylab.com/life/2017/12/real-estate-tycoons-are-the-ultimate-movie-villains/547433/>> [accessed 21 February 2018]

*“What on earth have our TV scriptwriters got against property developers? It’s starting to look like an obsession. I can only assume that at some point the offices of every channel’s drama department have had their sunlight blocked out by new tower blocks. Maybe that’s why they have sleazy property moguls as go-baddies in series after series... Just think how many times you’ve watched that scene where a smart-suited businessman pitches his new development to a room full of applauding investors...”*⁵

Besides popular culture – or perhaps part substantiated by it – the architecture profession sometimes has an ambivalent relationship with property developers. Professor of Architecture, Jonathan Barnett, writing in *The Architect as Developer*, stated that:

“The people who are drawn to the practice of architecture have quite different temperaments from those who are attracted to real estate [property development], and the two professions are unreceptive to the subtleties of each other’s work. The result is a lack of communication, to put it mildly”.⁶

While historic – written in 1976 – the author believes little has changed to help bridge the gulf between the two disciplines.⁷ Whilst there is a growing trend for architects to explore property development, through self-initiating projects, there are very few academic bases from which architects can learn. At present in the UK there appears to be one institution offering a bespoke degree course, while others may offer the

⁵ ‘We Need Better Baddies’ (London: Radio Times, 2016)
<<http://www.radiotimes.com/news/2016-07-10/we-need-better-baddies/>> [accessed 21 February 2018]

⁶ Jonathan Barnett, ‘Why Jon Portman became an entrepreneur as well as an architect, in *The Architect as Developer*, ed. by John Portman and Jonathan Barnett (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976), p.4.

⁷ Accepting that property development is a discipline that involves experts/professionals. Certainly Pink & Knight staff is in possession of a specific branch of knowledge and set of business practices.

possibility of joint honours.⁸ Within the discipline of architecture there is an acknowledged ‘dearth’⁹ of reading material for architects *and* developers. One might say there is a kind of professional stereotyping and othering at play, which keeps the two disciplines apart. James Petty, architect and developer, and author of a book by the same title, explains that “architects don’t often have the nicest things to say about developers”.¹⁰ Within the UK architectural profession, developers – despite being an important client group – are generally seen as figures that limit architectural agency, accused of dumbing-down design concepts and architectural detailing. But developers are also engaged in creative or ‘visionary’ labour, as Petty explains,

“Developers create a vision to match what the market demands...They are responsible for creating the initial concepts of this vision and the overall objectives of the project before ever approaching an architect in the concept stage”.

*“A common trope is the idea that architects and urban designers create the world in which we live. The more I have practiced, the more I realize it is the developers who are making the real decisions and creating the real impact”.*¹¹

Another architect turned developer, Roger Zogolovitch, writes from London,

*“I want to remake parts of the city and leave them better. I have found this approach more akin to directing a film or creating a restaurant. It is a close and intense engagement employing a team of different disciplines all looking to the developer to lead, to be decisive and to drive the projects on to their realisation”.*¹²

⁸ *Interior Architecture and Property Development* (University of Wolverhampton, 2018) <<http://courses.wlv.ac.uk/Course.asp?code=AT003H31UVD>> [accessed 21 February 2018]; *Joint Honours at the University of Derby* (University of Derby, 2018)

<<https://www.derby.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/jointhonours/>> [accessed 21 February 2018]

⁹ James Petty, *Architect & Developer: A Guide to Self-Initiating Projects* (New York: Post Script, 2018) p.8

¹⁰ Petty, p.23

¹¹ Petty, p.9

¹² Roger Zogolovitch, *Shouldn't we all be developers?* (London: Solidspace, 2017)

The developer – as visionary and project driver – can be seen as an occupational rival to architects, and so it is not surprising that many architects report loss of control and feelings of frustration at not seeing *their* projects realised.¹³ Developers are often the one actor that experiences continuity through the whole building project, from initiation through to design and construction. The developer’s primary role is “an intermediary between the property, business and finance sectors”,¹⁴ which demands sound financial analysis and a grounded understanding of market trends and expectations. Their work involves a “wider responsibility”¹⁵ than architecture; one where money matters. Developers need to use their own, or other people’s, money to acquire, design, construct, manage and market property as an asset that will make a return on investment. Money management is reputedly one of the key areas where architects fall short:

*“Money is not talked about enough in the architectural profession. Academia treats money like a four-letter word, and mentally that carries on into the profession. People become very focused on the artistry or social aspects of the profession and rarely allow for the discussion of profit”.*¹⁶

Within the offices of most property developers, money, and particularly profit, is front and centre. At Pink & Knight every project is designed to deliver a profit margin of between 30 and 50 percent. If projections indicate less than 30, then something is deemed to have gone wrong; a protracted planning appeal and sustained planning refusals, for instance, or escalating construction costs due to an unexpected site problem or mistake. Cost factors that can affect a project’s profitability are the building massing and design detailing. For instance, Development Control (local authority planners) may prohibit building densities needed to offset land costs, and can recommend or condition specific building materials and finishes. Central to Pink & Knight’s costings is a consideration for ‘base prices’ and adopting appropriate development strategies for the

¹³ The issue of authorship in architecture/development is hugely complex due to the inherently collaborative practice of designing and constructing buildings, involving multiple attendant stakeholders. See: Jeremy Till, *Architecture Depends* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009)

¹⁴ David Boyd and Ezekial Chinyio, *Understanding the Construction Client* (Oxford: Backwell Publishing, 2006)

¹⁵ Zogolovitch

¹⁶ Petty, p.24

situation. For instance, in a situation of high base price – typically involving a sensitive context, conservation area and/or demanding local authority – designers are expected to add value where possible, through consideration of aspect and amenity, increased communal facilities and enhanced specification. While in a situation of low base price, designers are expected to keep things simple and cut costs wherever possible.

Furthermore, Pink & Knight’s development model is predicated on a reduced parking footprint, which is calculated on a 1 to 3 ratio (car spaces to residential units) that allows for greater site ‘loading’ than volume housebuilders can achieve. This means Pink & Knight can make use of smaller sites and offer more competitive bids when purchasing land. However, due to its target locations, Pink & Knight is in direct competition with international budget/discount supermarkets, which are not required to make contributions to affordable housing. In these terms, the cost of land and base prices are beyond the control of developers, yet play a significant role in development appraisals and budgets before any design is undertaken. Indeed, design is contingent on these parameters and designers are expected to fine tune the product accordingly. Every product has its margins, including those targeting the top of the market. A former design director at PegasusLife reported that its high-spec products, designed by big-name architects, and offering generous spaces, were only possible within select locations in Southern England.¹⁷

Perhaps the most under-appreciated aspect of professional property development are the risks involved. These are highlighted by academics David Boyd and Ezekial Chinyio:

*“Property development takes place over an extended time in comparison with other financial investments, and there are many external and internal factors of development that make the investment volatile and riskier in the short term”.*¹⁸

In fact, one of the barriers for new competitors entering the retirement housing market is the extended periods of investment before a return is possible. Directors at Pink & Knight explain that very few of their customers are prepared to buy off-plan, preferring

¹⁷ John Norden, pers. comm., at *Fit for Ageing: Applying Design to the Production of Age-Friendly Places*, chaired by Professor Sarah Wigglesworth (Sheffield: Millennium Galleries, 06 October 2016)

¹⁸ Boyd and Chinyio, p.123

to see the finished product or, at very least, a show apartment in the same development. This is part due to the conservative nature of its customer base and inherently high stakes of moving in later life, but also because there is a lack of familiarity with retirement-living products generally. For prospective purchasers there may be one, possibly two, comparative developments in the locality, though chances are apartments are not being presented to market concurrently – there is literally very little to sample. In terms of development timescales, Pink & Knight typically anticipate one year for design and planning; one year to build-out and present to market; and two to five years for a development to sell out. So somewhere between four and seven years for a full return on investment. Besides the usual, and potentially protracted, processes of design, planning and construction, there is the risk that apartments come up for re-sale – through residents changing their minds, moving on to alternative forms of assisted-living, or passing away – before the development has fully sold out. Depending on the circumstances of the sale, this can present a potential problem, since re-sale apartments tend to be presented with a lower price tag, especially when sold privately, through a local estate agent, and in a hurry, without decorative works having been undertaken. In this situation there is a risk that second-time purchases undermine the asking price/value of first-time purchases and therefore profits.

High and protracted risks aside, there are significant rewards to be had within the retirement housing sector, with consumer demand looking set to grow year on year. In 2017 Pink & Knight achieved 527 legal completions, with an average sale price of £308,000 per unit, resulting in £178 million in revenue. Furthermore, this represents growth – up ten percent in volume on the previous year – yet the company achieved a net profit margin of 32.9%, and 29.7% ROCE (Return On Capital Employed). This is a success story by any financial measure. Of course, this level of reward, and the inherently impactful work that developers do, places them firmly in the public eye, particularly in areas where large-scale development is being planned.

In his two-part documentary, *The New Builds Are Coming: Battle in the Countryside*, Richard Macer explored the impact of the UK government's decision to free up the green belt to development, and met developers in Oxfordshire who are literally changing the face of rural Britain. Macer was surprised by some of what he uncovered, saying to camera, "it's not an emotion you expect to feel... sympathy for the property

developer” .¹⁹ Graham Flint, Pye Homes managing director, attracted sympathy as he reported on the challenges of being the change-maker. Flint reflected on vivacious interactions with members of the public, with non-expert audiences ‘pitching up’ to comment on proposals that have evolved over many months:

“... [as] Part of the [planning] application, we have to engage with residents, with the Parish Council, and that generally involves one meeting, where everyone comes together with their pitchforks, and they come and involve themselves in what we’re presenting.

*I was... threatened to be pushed over by... a mature lady, in the car park, one evening. Ten o’clock at night, she was going to push me over. And her husband was going to threaten to smash up my car. But that’s the level of emotion some people get themselves into”.*²⁰

Flint reasons that people “just don’t like change, and unfortunately we [developers] represent change”. In his career Flint has built thousands of homes, including many affordable units, but what unites them all is opposition from local people. Macer argues that within the Oxfordshire green belt these people represent a minority group of self-interested individuals seeking to preserve their little piece of England, protecting visual connections to a pastoral landscape *and* attendant property values. Macer draws attention to what he calls the ‘silent majority’ that includes those struggling to access decent housing in an ever-appreciating UK property market where demand outstrips supply; for every home a developer builds, a dream is created for someone. Indeed, Flint reports of occasions when objectors became purchasers once a development was built, suggesting that,

“If we could magically make a development appear overnight, there wouldn’t be half the problem. People are just afraid of change”.

¹⁹ *The New Builds Are Coming: Battle in the Countryside*, dir. by Richard Macer (Blast! Films, 2018) Series 1: Episode 2

²⁰ *The New Builds Are Coming: Battle in the Countryside*, dir. by Richard Macer (Blast! Films, 2018) Series 1: Episode 2

Section 2

Pink & Knight's developments, while smaller and located within established town centres, are routinely met with opposition from locals, including older people. Concerns typically revolve around potential disruption posed by construction activity and longer-term pressures on local infrastructure ('traffic chaos' and 'parking nightmare' are popular placards). Prospective neighbours of development sites are typically concerned about loss of day/sunlight and loss of privacy due to overlooking, particularly where an increased building volume is proposed. In some cases, there are complaints around the loss of a view, but these are explicitly unregulated by planning law. Objections are regularly voiced through local newspapers and their online comments pages, to which Pink & Knight generally respond. Its replies are professional – being balanced and neutral in tone – and consistently reference the benefits of specialist housing, as well as the relatively low impact of its residents.

PART TWO

A Self-Made Man

George is said to have spent his entire life within the construction industry, having grown up with it in his blood. His dad, Joe, made a heap of money constructing office buildings during the City of London's Big Bang, following Thatcher's deregulation of the stock market. George was reputedly visiting construction sites from age ten, and by sixteen working as a chippy for Joe, making timber formwork for concrete stair and lift cores on the London Dockland developments. George was apparently a dab hand with wood, but also possessed a natural flare for managing concrete subbies [subcontractors]. By age eighteen he was becoming something of an unofficial deputy site foreman and, unsurprisingly, upset a few co-workers for being the boss' boy, or 'boy boss' as they called him. Before long George was being shown the ropes, working through each department of his dad's company. As much as anything Joe thought of his son as a useful pair of eyes, helping him to root out rogue workers. All the same, on the day of his twenty-first birthday he called George into his office and showed him the door. His dad cut him off; so determined was he to see his son build up his own empire as he had. Inevitably George found his way, working with a mate providing building maintenance services in the home counties. Their customers were predominantly older people struggling with the upkeep of their homes; effectively camping in houses that were too big, too old and too cold. George spotted a gap in the market – 'manageable' flats for older people – and started looking for suitable development sites. His lucky break came in the form of two dilapidated Right-to-Buy council houses, which he and his brother bought at auction and developed in the evenings after work, bedding down on site when they ran out of daylight. They split the properties into flats and sold them to retired friends of the family for a modest but rewarding profit. Within months they had a full order book of customers looking for similar solutions. And so, George's story is often paraphrased, "cut off at 21; worked and slept hard on site; and delivered solutions where no one else was looking".

Box 1: George's Story

Academics have found that business leaders often lay claim to legitimacy through stories and self-narratives. Indeed, business elites need success stories to function effectively within their field of power.²¹ Some say elites are 'socially and discursively constructed', by themselves and by others.²²

²¹ Robert Chia, Charles Harvey and Mairi Maclean, 'Sensemaking, Storytelling and the Legitimization of Elite Business Careers', *Human Relations*, 65.1 (2012), 17-40.

²² Mary Woods, 'Rethinking Elites: Networks, Space, and Local Politics. *Environment and Planning*, 30.12 (1998), 2101-2119

George uses his story as a way of relating to subordinates (secretaries, assistants, architects, and so on) and customers; simultaneously asserting his authority while flagging his 'ordinary' roots, subtly adjusting the rhetoric to suit his audience. In the same way, staff own and develop his story. For instance, junior staff remark on how interesting it would be to have a one-to-one with George, tapping into his knowledge and industry insight. Yet, colleagues wish each other luck if they are going into the boardroom or when there is an unexpected call from 'upstairs'. Of course, George does have a fun side. For instance, he recently invited staff, their families and partners to a carnival-themed party at his country home, complete with fairground rides, beer tent and a hog roast, to celebrate completion number 5,000.

Nonetheless staff remark on George's vehemence, particularly in the presence of local authority planners and design review committees. George has little time for obstructive process and policy wonks; even less so for designers, though he recognises that design can add value when properly managed. George prioritises goals like achieving low build costs and high operational efficiency; growing completion numbers; increasing sales, revenue and profit; and sustaining investor-friendly ROCE. He proceeds – always moving forwards – from one position of certainty to another, based on hard facts and figures, mixed with a little of his renowned gut feeling. George is regarded as a maverick by his partners and his reputation as an outspoken and restless businessman precedes him. Office folklore maintains and reinforces the idea that George's sustained success is borne out of 'staying the course' and 'defying the odds' – both recognised modes of legitimizing an elite's circumstances and position.²³

Staff equally help to construct George's presence at work, particularly his availability. Layers of managers and assistants seek to protect George's time, so that he can 'do what he does best' and maintain a healthy work-life balance (George is a familiar face on The Solent, as well as the international offshore and ocean races scene). If you want 'George Time' you must book it through his PA, and at least three weeks in advance. That said, there is every chance he will call upon his staff at a moment's notice. Staff talk of last minute changes of plan, and meetings cancelled to accommodate George's agenda for

²³ Chia et al. (2012)

the day. If necessary, he will throw people out of meeting rooms. In these terms, George and his staff perform and uphold his position of power.

The Business Habitat

The environment that George and his fellow directors have created for themselves has an equally important role to play when it comes to projecting and protecting their success, status and power. Their ‘quarters’ enjoy the highest level of privacy within head office; the director’s suite being located on the top floor and arranged such that the directors’ offices are defended by the desks of their personal assistants and secretaries. Directors also benefit from the best light and aspect; from their elevated position, they enjoy looking out over the local golf course and farmland beyond. Though the best view is from the boardroom.

The boardroom is the company’s most heraldic device; designed to impress – and suppress in equal measure – its formal and material presence has something of a hold over staff and visitors. Most notable is the room’s size. At 50 square meters the boardroom has an equivalent floor area to a Pink & Knight one-bedroom apartment. The room is flooded with light – owing to floor to ceiling glazing – and offers a stadium-quality view of the golf course (celebrations at the eighteenth hole providing occasional amusement). The teak conference table is sized such that every director can be comfortably accommodated, seated on a Charles Eames style leather swivel chair. Indeed, the table is too wide to reach across and shake hands, it being equivalent in size to a professional snooker table. Furthermore, the room is packed full of secret gadgets and state-of-the-art conferencing equipment. A single touch-screen panel operates a plethora of boys’ toys ranging from electric blackout blinds, through to climate control, mood lighting, a concealed digital projector and wide screen. The latter rises from a teak cabinet that houses video conferencing equipment, an amplification system and resident PC. And yet, in stark contrast to the level of investment, the boardroom is rarely used. Access is guarded by the secretaries, and its use for everyday meetings resisted at all costs, unless George is attending.

In some respects the boardroom is an extension of George’s domain; his office being next door, it sometimes gets used as a holding area for visitors, be they business consultants arriving for a meeting or members of his family. George likes to wander as

he works, particularly when talking on the phone. He often stands on the threshold to his office while liaising with his PA, or when ‘chewing the fat’ with his fellow directors. Perhaps the most striking aspect of George’s office is the distinct lack of furniture; he has no need for filing cabinets, printers or copiers, since the secretaries take care of those things. For the most part his floor is as clear as the green outside his window. At 20 square meters, the equivalent floor area accommodates four workers downstairs, or a Pink & Knight living room.

Meeting George in his habitat, and seeing him present his favourite development, one might notice the difference in design attitude toward Pink & Knight buildings; the difference between what it builds for itself, and what it builds for its customers. Evidently there are two distinct and seemingly contradictory architectural languages: the ‘contemporary’ company headquarters, with its Modernist form and minimalist materials palette, versus the company’s ‘traditional’ product that seeks to mimic a twentieth-century English vernacular, favouring brick walling, tiled roofs, bays and dormers. That said, this is a common contradiction within British culture with regards attitudes toward places of production, associated with the city, and pastoral ideals of living in the countryside.²⁴

The architects responsible for the design of Pink & Knight’s headquarters reason that a ‘contemporary, high standard’ working environment, which maximises light and views, helps to ‘generate a sense of well-being and therefore improved productivity’.²⁵ Perhaps the board of directors found common understanding in the business language of productivity and an architectural image that speaks to the city, despite the office’s suburban edge-of-town location. Again, in contrast to its developments, the office is distinctly outside the historic town – away from the chimney pots – and within five minutes’ drive of the motorway (access is essential, as directors spend a lot of time on the road visiting potential development locations). Indeed, the office is somewhat self-referential, due in part to a lack of quality built environment to respond to, and having to mediate golf course on one side and staff parking on the other.

²⁴ Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973)

²⁵ *Design & Access Statement*, 2011

The office car park is another jewel in the crown of the Pink & Knight estate; its capacity having been hard won at planning (92 spaces in total, following a successful planning appeal). When the car park is full there is an impressive array of high-value cars, with an estimated net worth over two million pounds.²⁶ The clear majority are company cars, selected from a prescribed list presented to prospective employees at interview and staff at annual appraisals. It is here – the car park – where the staff pecking order is most evidently displayed, such is the hierarchical nature of Pink & Knight. Indeed, it is something of a privilege to park in this contested space and only those with company cars can do so. Furthermore, staff experience something of a ‘race’ to work in the morning, with those arriving close to eight getting the best spaces (the kind that do not require multiple maneuverers or risk defecation by pigeons perching in the trees). That said, if you are a company director you have an allocated, covered space by the building’s entrance.

PART THREE

Back-To-Basics

The following is a representation of George’s thinking around a BoD (Board of Directors) agenda item that tasked him with planning an Operations staff symposium for the year end. George’s thinking is structured around the notes he made during a previous event, ‘Back-To-Basics’ (B2B), which he thinks has continued utility and scope for targeting current business issues. His intention is to recycle last year’s outline programme and to pull in operational updates from each of the directors. Key themes are: rationalising design, through ‘tweaking’ and remaining focused on ‘needs’ only; retirement-living, as a concept, and the importance of selling lifestyle; going forward, consolidating market positioning and robustly responding to the HAPPI reports;²⁷ keeping it simple, through rigorous cost control and by ‘applying science’ to build costs; and tough negotiating, asserting the company’s product and getting good

²⁶ Figure based on purchase value of 70 company cars (Audi A3, c.£20,000), 20 executive cars (Mercedes E-Class, c.£35,000), plus two prestige cars (Range Rover, c.£80,000; Rolls Royce, c.£230,000).

²⁷ A series of research publications commissioned by the Housing and Communities Agency to explore issues around housing the UK’s ageing population. See bibliography.

outcomes from a planning system under stress. George begins by considering the rationale for the symposium and rehearses his argument for running a repeat of B2B.

Rationale

1.1 Repeat Event

Reasons for repeating B2B: good timing, following the tax year end; the training room is a convenient location, with capacity for up to 50 people; and a tried-and-tested format with a clear message. The symposium should help to address all those repetitive concerns the company faces. I will introduce the day; set the tone for debate and discourage ‘naming and blaming’ of projects or people. Encourage issue-based problem solving and affirm ‘that positive changes can be made with immediate effect’.

1.2 Florida Fieldtrip

B2B 2016 came about because of the Florida Fieldtrip – the week when directors jetted out to Orlando and toured the state’s retirement villages. The main ‘take-home’ had been the burden of ongoing refurbishment works due to the scale of the developments – a scale that dwarfed P&K schemes.²⁸ Since then we resolved to assert the company’s product and its suitability for the UK landscape and market. Our main objectives were to capitalise on land investments and maximise profits by rationalising design and holding true to the mission statement: ‘*to be the UK’s leading retirement housebuilder*’.

Rationalising Design

2.1 MD Piece

At B2B 2016 directors made individual presentations to staff, each followed by Q&A [question and answers]. The MD [managing director] opened with a clear message that all departments involved in pre-sales work should focus on ‘avoiding unnecessary

²⁸ In the UK, Pink & Knight could only hope to locate retirement developments close to golf clubs. In America, they were one and the same thing.

complexity'. He focused attention on '*rationalising design for a consistent approach*' and '*bringing consistency to build costs*'. In a direct appeal to company architects, the MD asserted he was not interested in 'dumbing down design', but was concerned that too much time was being spent thinking from first principles: '*You do not need to reinvent the wheel... realign it maybe, but that's all. We know what the wheel looks like!*' (Architects are obsessed with bespoke. What do they have against standardisation?). The company is interested in exploring easy wins – opportunities for value-added – but on the proviso that exploration is undertaken across departments, and not just in the heads of architects.

2.2 Tweaks Only

The company had sold 5000 apartments; proof that '*we're providing a product that people want*', said the MD, and therefore '*we should be just be fine tuning*'. There will always be an appetite for '*tweaking*', particularly where modest changes lead to value-added on sale prices, or help distinguish the product from competitors. At the same time, it's important to '*maintain the product's image*'. We often hear the architects say how the corridors could be more 'articulated', giving space over to residents to 'make their own'. But there is a risk that '*things start to get too personal and look untidy*', which poses a problem for sales and marketing. The MD explained, '*it's normal and right*' that the product should '*evolve through incremental design changes*' but this should be controlled and '*validated by sales performance*'. The MD plugged his favourite scheme, Edwin Chalet - favoured because it is 'traditional' design, 'Lutyens-inspired'; did not overrun on cost; sold-out quickly.

2.3 Needs Orientated

I reminded staff that the company's product was '*fundamentally needs-orientated*' – customers may wish for more, but ultimately they cannot afford more. Discussion around this point confirmed that P&K is essentially selling the same product as was available 30-40 years ago, albeit with '*a face-lift, and a bit more technology*'. Yet, there is a discernible difference in customers. Increased living standards and lifestyle aspirations have tended towards a more demanding customer. This point was picked up by the PRD [public relations director].

Retirement Living

3.1 Selling Lifestyle

The PRD gave a short ‘history lesson’ on retirement housing in the UK. She reminded staff how for-sale retirement housing evolved from the late 1970s when the first model for sheltered accommodation for the over 55s was established; its model was subsequently adopted and adapted by competitors over 40 years. In this time the product and concept evolved to retirement living – ‘*a lifestyle choice, not just a building*’. The PRD stressed that developers have ‘*learnt what makes a successful development*’, attracting purchasers, sustaining customer satisfaction, and maintaining properties in perpetuity (a key marketing feature). Some characteristics were taken from America and Australia, where retirement living is more established. The PRD underlined the importance of defining and asserting the logic of P&K’s British product.

3.2 Educating Customers

The PRD brought the consumer viewpoint back to staff. She reminded colleagues that the range of accommodation offers for older people is ‘bewildering to say the least’, particularly when comparing associated service options. Researchers have said that ‘the waters are muddied’²⁹ by increasingly specialist products that serve very particular segments of the ‘downsizer’ market. In recent years, within the private sector, we have seen an expansion of developer-providers targeting different lifestyles (e.g. LGBT groups) and/or financial tiers of the market (e.g. former chief-execs). Furthermore, what was once ‘niche’, and for ‘others’, housing for older people is becoming widely recognised as the new centre field, with significant growth and investment potential. We are beginning to see volume housebuilders take an active interest, including household names known for developing ‘general needs’ housing (‘starter’ and ‘family’ homes). From a PR perspective, there has been no greater time to reach out to prospective customers and explain the company’s product. At the same time, P&K needs to understand its customer’s aspirations, while knowing that not all can be met.

²⁹ Friederike Zielger, ‘Developing Age-Friendly Housing: DWELL Findings’, presented at *Fit for Ageing: Applying Design to the Production of Age-Friendly Places*, Sheffield, 6 October 2016

3.3 Popular Product

A lively debate followed the PRD's presentation, with various directors speaking out, including the MD who asserted that *'customers generally love our developments'*. I shared that my parents-in-law live in a P&K development, and *'they've never looked back since'*. My grandma had also lived in sheltered housing, which amounted to a small bedsit at the time. There has been a lot of socioeconomic change within the last decade. The generation before grandma would have been destined for the workhouse. P&K customers often remark, happily, that the retirement chalet does not share the image of the institution; regarding it a means to maintaining independence, with the benefits of a 'like-minded' community of older neighbours. The product is like *'halls of residences for the postgrads of life'*. We should commission research to ratify the product's potential to *'combat loneliness among the elderly'*. In business it pays to be opportunistic; piggyback national conversations and take advantage of the present government's interest in 'social' messages. Practically speaking, research is just another way in which the company can prove its commitment to *'forward thinking'* and demonstrate its product is *'more than just bricks and mortar'*.

Going Forward

4.1 Market Position

The DO [director of operations], true to his no-nonsense approach, raised some thought-provoking points. Firstly, *'the elephant in the room'* he said, is that whilst the market is expanding (more people achieving an active retirement), there is also increased competition from new providers jostling for fewer sites. Not strictly 'operational', the DO was concerned that *'the typical customer age is staying level'*, despite attempts to attract younger people in their late 60's or early 70's. A recent initiative to build a bungalow development intended for younger residents *'went the other way'* – they were snapped up by second-time movers within P&K's existing customer base. The DO was concerned by competitors aggressively targeting the 55 plus market, and wondered whether P&K would continue to get older customers over the longer term. Might other

providers get healthier, more active residents for longer? Will P&K still have an effective business model in ten years?

4.2 Un-HAPPI

The DO also focused on a '*hardening of attitude among LAPs*' [local authority planners]. He was concerned that the recent HAPPI reports had '*gained significant traction*'. In his view, these guidelines had become something of a benchmark '*because there has been nothing else*'. Directors continue to be aggrieved that developers were not part of the committee that wrote the reports – it was full of architects! We think the report's recommendations are unrealistic and fail to take into account the full economic cost of development. We take issue with the recommendation that retirement properties '*should have potential for three habitable rooms*'.³⁰ This would price-out potential buyers. Furthermore, the HAPPI recommendation to '*avoid internal corridors and single-aspect flats*' is woefully naive with regards to understanding the true cost and availability of land. Similarly, the DD [design director] finds the '*Lifetime Homes*'³¹ design guide unsatisfactory; it was written as a family-orientated initiative that '*was stretched into the retirement sector*'. The design criteria fail to support independent living and risk older people becoming isolated in their homes. When it comes to design issues, P&K has the expertise.

Keeping it Simple

5.1 KISS

The DD gave an update on 'drawing board' projects and tweaks to company design policy. He prefaced his presentation with the acronym KISS ('Keep It Simple & Straightforward'). Included in his presentation was a useful chart on development costs, separating 'fixed' from 'flexible' factors; it highlighted detailed design and building massing (density) as areas where the design team could affect significant cost savings

³⁰ Housing and Communities Agency, *HAPPI / Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation*, (London: Housing and Communities Agency, 2009), p.38-39.

³¹ Chris Goodman/Habinteg Housing Association, *The Lifetime Homes Design Guide* (London: IHS BRE Press, 2011)

and value-added. The DD noted that actual build cost ranged from £69,000 to £115,000 per unit; a range he considered to be ‘unacceptably wide’. At that time his analysis showed that the most cost-effective schemes were ‘traditional’ design, on a level site and yielding forty or more units. The DD then went on to share intelligence on build complexity.

5.2 Cost Control

The most cost-effective schemes were those that did not deviate too far from the model product: apartment layouts that complied with standard templates; simple massing that achieved ‘articulation’ through material changes rather than set-backs (steps in plan and/or section); and traditional materials used conventionally. More complex and costly schemes tended to involve split level sites; situations where parking was under-croft, or accessed via an underpass; numerous set-backs, principally in the footprint, but also on top floors; complex roof junctions and eaves arrangements, especially parapet details; and special features such as balconies, dormers or areas of structural glazing (used in some ‘contemporary’ schemes). The following were said to add value in the right circumstances and locations:

- quality aspects e.g. South-facing or elevated views
- additional windows e.g. dual aspect living rooms or ‘side’ windows on kitchens/bathrooms
- balconies, including ‘Juliette’ balconies that provide space for outdoor planting
- ensuite shower e.g. 2-bed apartments with a bathroom and ensuite (Base Price permitting)
- cloakrooms or additional storage space

5.3 Build Cost Science

The DD echoed the MD: ‘*cost control does not mean dumbing down design*’, arguing that some costs were necessary and unavoidable. However, staff were encouraged to identify and reduce unnecessary cost items. The DD encouraged designers to ask the question ‘*can it be simplified?*’ Similarly, he was looking for ‘*appropriate balances*’

that worked for the P&K and LPAs [local planning authorities]. He felt that planners had ‘*no business*’ in making design judgements and specifying materials. Company architects should ‘*negotiate hard*’ on this aspect and by no means give the impression of an ‘open’ materials palette. To help focus attention, the DD produced the following list of materials cost implications:

- plain roof tiles vs concrete tiles: 200% [concrete being cheaper]
- timber windows vs UPVC: 300% [UPVC being cheaper]
- aluminium rainwater goods vs UPVC: 250% [UPVC being cheaper]
- fair-faced brickwork vs blockwork: 190% [blockwork being cheaper]
- render vs painted brick [labour]: similar? [unknown]

Tough Negotiating

6.1 Location Matters

The PD [planning director] spoke further about handling LPAs. He talked to a slide that charted site locations and their respective base prices. The PD also advocated KISS and cutting costs where the base price was low, particularly where the LPA and physical context are ‘*less demanding*’. Conversely, in high base price locations, the PD felt that planners are more likely to be ‘*precious*’, which ‘*necessitates robust defences*’ (especially where architect design review panels are involved). Inevitably these contexts incur additional time and cost, which can be part offset by added value. Reporting on planning issues, the PD was reminded of an RTPI (Royal Town Planning Institute) conference he attended some years ago, where it was said, ‘*it’s the same old chestnuts*’: intensity of use and density; size and scale of development; car parking; local assimilation and inward migration of older people; and Affordable Housing in relation to Use Class designation.³²

³² Peter Tanner, ‘Warden Assisted / Sheltered Housing’, presented at *Planning for an Ageing Population*, RTPI South East Conference, Winchester, 27 September 2012.

6.2 Standing Strong

The PD said the company needed to produce a robust document that ‘presents an explanation of what we do’ – something to put on the table at planning meetings. An ‘answer’ or counterpoint to the HAPPI report, ‘*adding the developer’s voice into the mix*’. He noted that the issue of double-aspect units ‘*keeps coming up*’ in pre-app meetings with LPAs. This was just one area where he felt a non-negotiable stance should be taken; one founded on the ‘*real financials of land*’. When fears were raised about the risks of appearing ‘*overly adversarial*’ in the face of planners, I argued that ‘*it works the other way*’; the company has a reputation for preparing robust arguments, based on indisputable evidence. The company has invested significantly in this way before.

6.3 Planning Service

The PD also pointed to research that highlights two areas where developers – as professional customers³³ – are thought to offer valuable insight into UK planning: (i) the variable quality of service and (ii) the reliability of paid-for advice. In 2015 representatives of PAS (Planning Advisory Service)³⁴ reported on customer feedback, stating that in aggregate there were clear messages to planners, paraphrased as: ‘Talk to us, generally. It’s just manners... Talk to us *especially* when there are issues’. PAS research asserts that ‘Councils (generally) fail on customer care... We fail because we don’t communicate and follow a target culture’.³⁵ Directors noted that LPAs could learn from business. Research also points to austerity measures and resulting limited resources as being a root cause of difficulty. The facts are clear: the spending power of

³³ Developers make substantial payments into the planning system. For a Full Application for new dwellinghouses Pink & Knight can expect to pay £462 per unit (fixed nationally), equalling £23,100 for a 50-apartment development. Local authorities also charge for pre-application advice and, at present, can determine their own fees structure. In 2017 Gloucester City Council charged £2,152.50 for residential developments of 50-199 dwellings, and £200 per hour for additional meetings.

³⁴ A Local Government Group programme, funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government, that provides consultancy and peer support, learning events and online resources to help local authorities understand and respond to planning reform.

³⁵ Martin Hutchings and Toby Hamilton, ‘Improving Planning Services’, presented at *PAS Spring Conference 2015*, Birmingham, 9-10 March 2015.

local authorities in England has been cut significantly. I noted that there are times when an under-resourced LAP works in our favour.

6.4 Take Advantage

The company has taken advantage of the system being under stress, having occasionally frustrated the planning process for commercial reasons. For instance, when it needed to keep alive land purchase negotiations or, conversely, force a default on the land purchase agreement in situations where a site needed to be ‘offloaded’. Sometimes in business you must do the unexpected. Yes, these were the kinds of lessons that should be shared at the next symposium.

Conclusion

Part one of this story explored the trope of the ‘evil’ property developer. In its place the research found alternative personas, including developer as visionary and change-maker; developer as intermediary between property, business and finance sectors; and developer as project driver, in the face of significant uncertainty and opposition. It also found sympathy for the developer as a potential target for public aggression, while building dreams for the ‘silent majority’ (and some of its objectors). It also posits that companies like Pink & Knight represent the ‘discipline’ of property development, inasmuch they are expert organisations in possession of specific branches of knowledge and business practices. We might even nurture the idea of the ‘professional’ developer; helping to distinguish those whose activities support livelihoods from those that are simply ‘having a go’. Indeed, for some property development is thought of as a retirement project. A plethora of daytime TV programmes support these fantasies; failing to advise on the real financial risks and the illusion of ‘success’ achieved through properties values ‘going up’ (automatically) in a rising market. True property developing means adding value and developing value, not just sitting back and waiting for the market to rise. Work, not (retirement) hobby.

Part two illustrated that company directors and their success stories are socially and discursively constructed, and further reinforced by the built environment of the office. The research also uncovered something of a dichotomy in terms of design values and differences of architectural language in Pink & Knight’s buildings. The headquarters are a material representation of how the company wishes to position itself within the

business world, and how it values the work environments that lay behind the public image of its residential product. It is interesting to note the office's contemporary language and high specification in terms of material finishes, but also the quality and volume of space it affords staff, especially directors. The office design was predicated on the idea of 'increased productivity', but also an implicit showcasing of business strength and success, and presentation to business investors. By contrast the company's developments tends towards 'traditional' forms, with designs based on standard layouts that meet nationally described minimum space standards. Developments have a standard specification, with materials called off a common materials palette that is predetermined by supply chains and long-term trade agreements.

Part three showed that Pink & Knight staff operate within a culture that values action and transaction, which feels different from the modus operandi of critical reflection that sustains the world of research. The Pink & Knight business culture advocates 'standing strong' and 'negotiating hard', with apparently no fear of appearing adversarial. Indeed, directors believe the company has a reputation for preparing robust arguments, based on indisputable evidence, and therefore commands a level of respect for its planning practice and performance at planning inquiries. With regards to design, the company exhibits a conservative approach and sometimes introverted culture, with a fixed gaze on its established, one-size-fits-all product. Indeed, there is little motivation to innovate, since the product appears to be popular, with schemes continuing to sell out and the market set for high customer demand. For this reason, the managing director asserts that design change be controlled and 'validated' by sales performance. There is an emphasis on cost control and general leaning towards building 'what we know' and sticking to company design policies and templates. As such, the agency of company architects is limited to design 'tweaks', with a clear message from management to 'keep it simple'.

This story also provides a little insight to how the company thinks about research. Directors are highly critical of published design guides generally regarded as industry benchmarks. In particular, 'Lifetime Homes' is thought to be too family-orientated – said to have been 'stretched' into the retirement sector – while the 'HAPPI' reports are thought to be architect-biased and woefully naïve on the 'real financials' of land-purchase and development. Furthermore, company directors were found to be opportunistic, seeing research as a potential badge or independent endorsement of its

Section 2

product and process.³⁶ In these terms, the company identifies a need to respond to research that is setting industry benchmarks, yet risks being overly encouraged by its own success story and failing to evolve its products in step with rising consumer aspirations and entrant competitors to the market.

³⁶ This aspect is further reflected upon within Story 9: Creative Practitioner, p.335 & 344.

Vignette IV

George's Environs

This vignette should be read in conjunction with the Developer Director story. It presents George's work environment through drawings and photography, using material prepared by the architects that designed Pink & Knight's office. A site plan and aerial photograph show the office's setting, including its car park. The architect's building plan describes the first floor and layout of the director's suite. Promotional photographs from the architect's website, meanwhile, show the material and spatial qualities of the office, including its boardroom. The vignette also provides a page of author-produced charts - based on material found within the company's annual financial report - that offer a glimpse into the way company directors communicate their business practice to external funders.



[Copyright of Google Maps]

Redacted Image
[Copyright of The Landmark Practice]

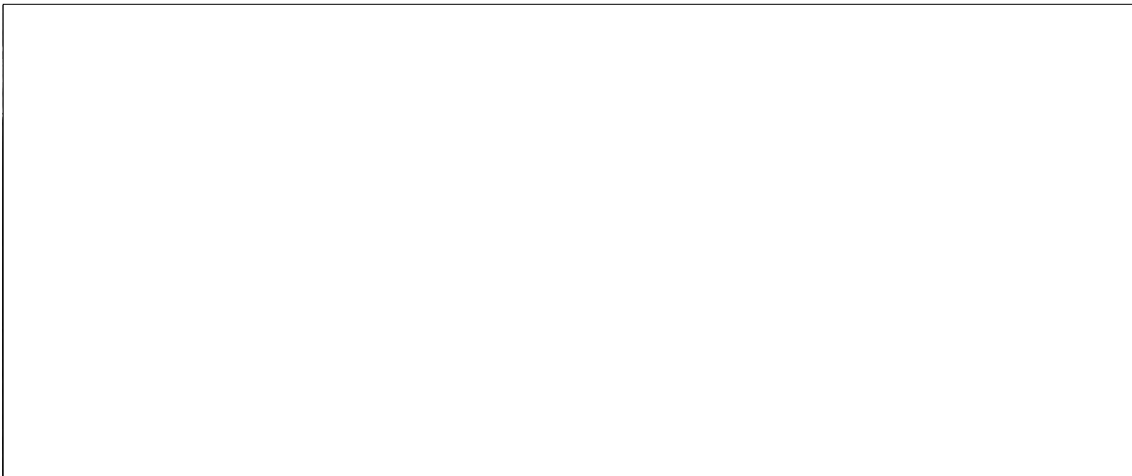
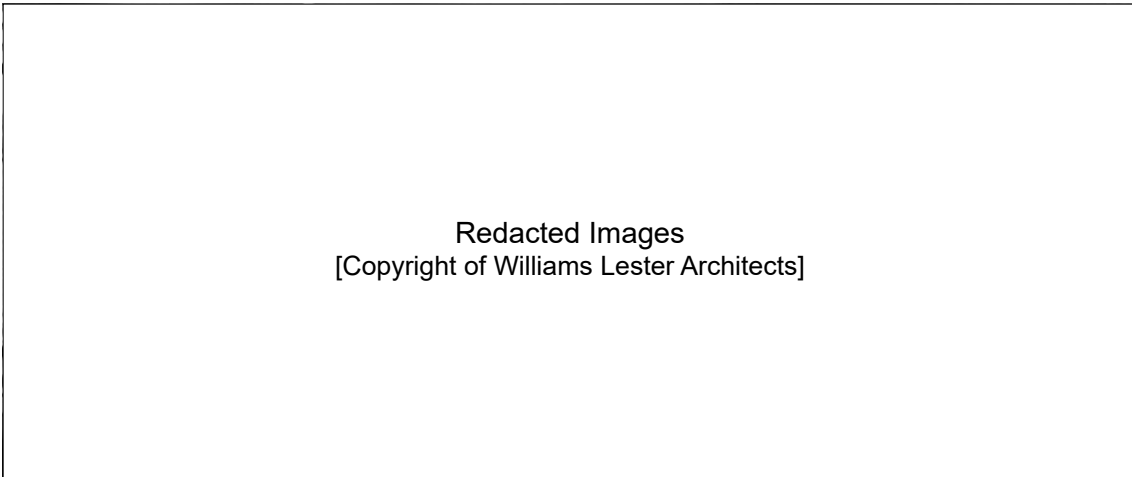
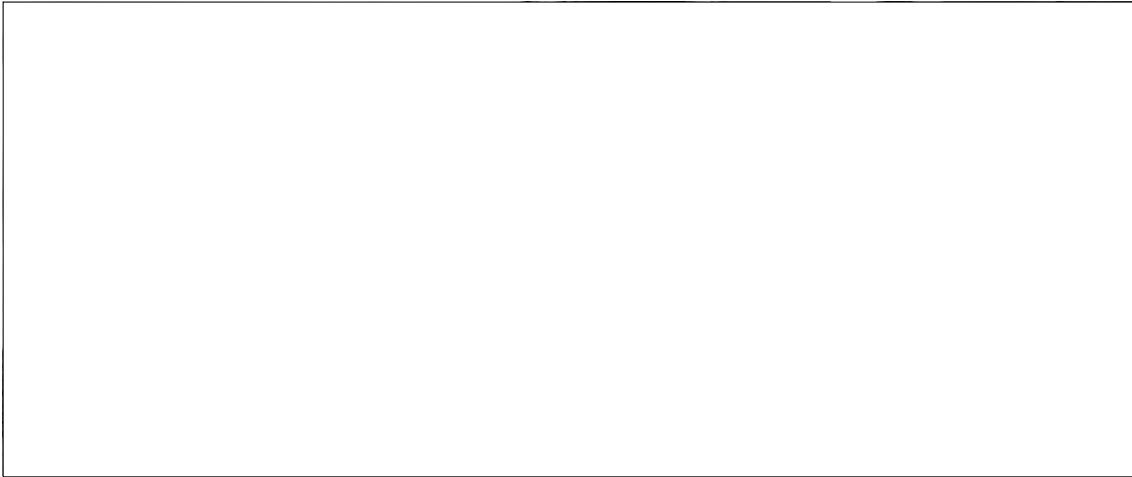
Aerial photograph and site plan showing Pink & Knight's office in context. The drawing relates to an earlier planning application; 92 car parking spaces were achieved following a successful planning appeal.

Vignette IV
George's Environs
~ Architect's Site Plan ~

Redacted Image
[Copyright of Brennan Williams Lester]

First floor plan drawing of Pink & Knight's office extension, showing the director's suit and boardroom with associated secretarial space.

Vignette IV
George's Environs
~ Architect's Floor Plan ~

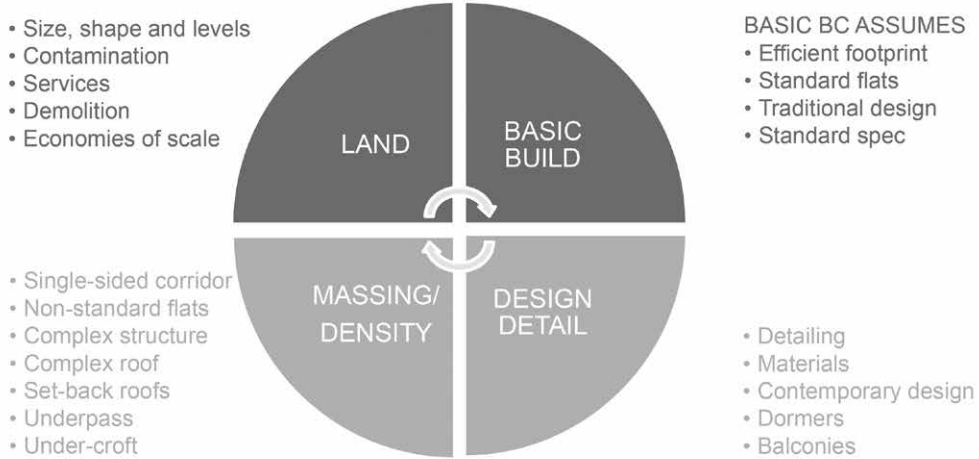


Promotional photos of Pink & Knight's office, sourced from the architect's website. Top and middle show the boardroom, exterior and interior respectively. The bottom photo shows a detail of the structural glass balustrade that links the director's suite to the main office, overlooking the entrance.

Vignette IV
George's Environs
~ Architect's Photos ~

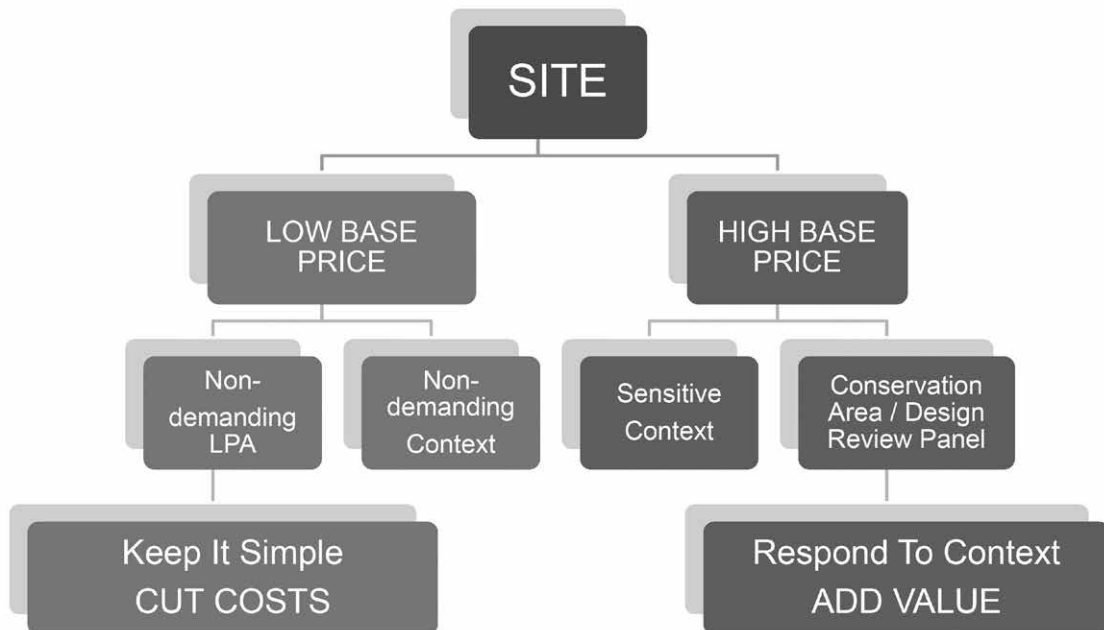
FIXED COST FACTORS

- stick to what we know and do
- liaise with landbuyer team



FLEXIBLE COST FACTORS

- be mindful of these costs
- control the factors we can



Author-produced charts, based on those within *Annual Report & Accounts 2016*.

The top chart presents ‘fixed’ and ‘flexible’ cost factors considered with each development. The bottom chart presents two design-costing approaches that are dependent on a development’s location.

Vignette IV
George’s Environs
~ Charts ~

STORY 4: RESIDENT OWNER

Synopsis

This research story opens with an exploration of different characterisations of the resident owner, which each attempt to distil a diverse group of people into a single identity that is easily imaged and ‘handled’ as a touchstone would be. This account reflects the positions of multiple resident owners met in the ‘field’ (here defined as four chalet settings); some were engaged in the research activity, and are quoted verbatim, while others were simply observed, such that they go unnamed. Groups of respondents have contributed to an understanding of ‘meanings of home’ and ‘motives for moving’, as well as providing candid feedback on the retirement-living lifestyle in which they are invested. Ten contextual interviews provide a sample of 10 resident owners expressing their views on the product, including the ‘niggles’ and ‘snags’ they identified. Furthermore, the story presents narrative accounts of three case study characters – Patrick, Gladys and Paula – that both affirm and contest assumed consumer profiles, and cast doubt on aspects of the developer’s image of its customer.

Methods

A wide variety of settings were visited, and informants met, during the fieldwork phase of the research, which loosely spanned the period September 2014 to December 2016. Four specific chalets are referenced within this research story. They are located in different parts of southern England (the primary business area of Pink & Knight) and represent distinct types of ‘destination’ for moving retirees, ranging from a traditional coastline, an area of outstanding natural beauty to an attractive city outside the capital. This sample is also representative of the size range of Pink & Knight developments, ranging from ‘small’ (29 units) through to ‘large’ (65 units). The chalets have been given pseudonyms, based on their location, and are presented here in alphabetical order:

- Avon Chalet – an urban scheme on the outskirts of Bristol city centre, comprising 65 apartments, built in 2012. The chalet manager is full-time and lives on site.

- Beachwalk Chalet – a near seaside scheme in central Worthing, West Sussex, comprising 29 apartments, built in 2014. The chalet manager is full-time and lives in the town.
- Downland Chalet – a suburban scheme in a dormitory area of north Worthing, comprising 39 apartments, built in 2012. The chalet manager is full-time and lives in a neighbouring town.
- Wealden Chalet – an edge of town scheme in Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent, comprising 38 apartments, built in 2007. The chalet manager is part-time and lives in a neighbouring town.³⁷

Mixed methods were used across the four settings to inform a multi-sited ethnography of the resident owner's situations and cultures. The research involved short residencies at retirement developments; staying overnight in the guest suite and engaging in the social life of the shared lounge, as well as conducting show-and-tell home visits that were contextually-responsive and contingent on the hospitality of informants. The residencies and home visits helped to shed light on consumer behaviour and experiences that are not apparent to the 'outsider' making a short and scheduled visit during office hours. Socialising with resident owners is a form of 'cultural immersion'³⁸ or contextual inquiry used by critical practitioners in the early stages of a design process to gain a deep understanding of the design context and respective end-user experiences and needs. Here the researcher sampled everyday experiences, teasing out information from resident owners as expert witnesses in 'retirement-living'. The informal context of a social event was found to be a good place to initiate longer-term enquires, and to test the appetite for research methods. In these terms attending a fish and chip supper is a kind of research primer, serving as an introduction to and means to recruiting potential informants (while noting that using an established social group may introduce an element of bias in terms of sampling). In terms of formal research methods, this research story presents data captured through focus groups, semi-structured and in-depth interview, photographic surveys and behavioural mapping. These will be explained in turn.

³⁷ Generally, Chalet Managers work full time hours, 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

³⁸ Brian Canfield, Lori Low and Alan Hovestadt, 'Cultural Immersion as a Learning Method for Expanding Intercultural Competencies', *The Family Journal: Counselling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 17.4 (2009), 318-322

A series of parallel mini-focus groups were undertaken at Avon Chalet in September 2014. These were semi-structured discussions between residents and undergraduate architecture students meeting in the shared lounge. The students were from the Celtic School of Architecture (CSA) and were acting as research assistants for the author, as well as gathering insights for their coursework.³⁹ Group sizes varied from two to five respondents (self-selecting, naturalistic groups) and one to two student-researchers (allocated), with discussions lasting up to thirty minutes and students noting responses to eight thematic questions or topic areas, as set out on an interview proforma.⁴⁰ The author, acting as principal investigator, moderated proceedings by briefing the student interviewers, framing the event, and bringing group discussions back to the intended topic areas. The event was conducted on three occasions on consecutive weeks, and involved 33 students in all, averaging 10 per session. Individual students visited once only. With regards to resident owners, 27 unique names plus 13 unique apartment numbers were recorded. Some were not formally recorded. On week one the shared lounge was at capacity. On week two the room was just under capacity and there were a few new respondents, though the majority were repeat attendees. By week three there were fewer residents, and all but one were repeat attendees, suggesting the method had reached saturation. Notable absences included non-white resident owners and wheelchair users, despite the chalet manager's targeted efforts to invite specific individuals. It was also noted at the time that the shared lounge at full capacity was a challenging environment for those hard of hearing.

Two limitations were noted with regards to the data collected from the Avon Chalet focus groups. The first being the interpretation of secondary source data. In general student-researchers wrote in note form, with varying degrees of quality and precision. For instance, it was not always clear if students were quoting verbatim, paraphrasing or synthesising feedback in their own terms. Some data could not be usefully interpreted (e.g. short-hand, ambiguous notes) and was therefore excluded. The second limitation

³⁹ See Story 6: Architecture Student

⁴⁰ Interview questions: Is living in a retirement chalet similar to living in university halls of residence? What does 'home' mean to you? What do you call your home and how do you describe it to others? What were your motives for moving? What was the transition like from your previous home to here? What do you (not) miss from your previous home? What architectural features of Avon Chalet do you most value? Do you feel at home here?

was around representation. The data is not quantitatively reliable, since repeated comments were not included/counted. Due to the informal nature of the sessions it was not possible to track individual contributors. For instance, the number of people included in group discussions was not always disclosed. There was also scope for repeat interviews, with participants rotating during sessions, and/or contributing over a number of sessions. Similar comments were included if it was felt they provided clarification on an issue. There is also evidence of participant opinions changing between sessions. Indeed, the familiarity of participants within a naturalistic group can lead to ‘groupthink’ in terms of consensus forming. Nonetheless interaction between participants can uncover broader insights, and the mini-focus groups were found to be extremely useful for generating qualitative data for testing and triangulating through other methods.

Ten semi-structured interviews were conducted with resident owners at Beachwalk and Downland Chalets. The researcher spent on average 30 minutes visiting residents in their apartments. Longer sessions tended to involve a cup of tea and sit down chat in the informant’s living room, with conversation leading to show-and-tell exploration of the apartment. Shorter sessions involved standing conversation and a brief walk-through principal rooms of the apartment, sometimes skipping the bedroom(s) and shower room for privacy reasons. In these terms the visits were a kind of contextual interview, with the informant(s) and their home. Indeed, the home often provided a script or room-by-room structure for an interview conducted whilst on the move. These interviews were particularly useful for uncovering tacit knowledge about informants’ homes; accessing knowledge that resident owners may not be consciously aware of or see the need to share. In this way the method parallels that of ‘wardrobe interviews’ developed by sociologists, which use clothes as a tool for exploring the life stories and narratives of people with dementia.⁴¹ Key differences are the interview scope and informant preparedness. In the retirement chalet context, informants were generally prepared for the visit; having invited the researcher and had time to get ready. A surprising number produced pre-prepared written notes or lists of ‘niggles’, as well as candid aural accounts of their experiences. This is likely due to the chalet managers ‘advertising’ the

⁴¹ Christina Buse and Julia Twigg, ‘Materialising Memories: Exploring the Stories of People with Dementia Through Dress, *Ageing and Society*, 36.6 (2016), 1115-1135

research residency, through word of mouth contact, electronic noticeboards and posters on the laundry and management notice boards. In general invitations were offered by residents attending chalet social events such as coffee mornings, knit and natter sessions, and fish and chip lunches. The chalet managers also fielded enquiries and often made personal introductions. On a few occasions managers set up interviews, particularly for hard-to-reach informants, such as the less able-bodied or more private individuals.

During a two-day stay at Wealden Chalet, the researcher conducted three in-depth interviews or 'open conversations' with resident owners, each lasting between 45 and 90 minutes, and situated within the informant's apartment. Informants were selected using 'convenience' or 'opportunity' sampling; the first was met at a social event, the second made a direct approach, and the third met through chance encounter. An unstructured interview approach was adopted, allowing for discussion on broad topics such as 'retirement living', as well as sensitive experiences around transitioning and respective push/pull factors. It was found that a longer and pre-arranged interview gave space for unpacking questions and answers. These interview conversations are represented here by three part-fictional accounts. Informants have been given pseudonyms – Patrick, Gladys, Paula – and typecast as a widower, aged 90, looking for snooker companions; malcontent, opting out of lounge life, aged 71; and a young and single, travel enthusiast, aged 67. These narrative accounts are based on interview notes that were written up as part of a research report to the sponsor. The description of personal and interior appearances are informed by 'headnotes'.⁴² The apartments are true representations with regards to size, siting, level, orientation and aspect, such that they could be located on plan. Italicised type within quotation marks represents verbatim comments from informants, noted on the same day the interview took place. Fictional aspects include 'narrative smoothing'⁴³ around introductions, as well as observed interactions between informants and their associates. Some suppositions have been made in relation to career and/or life histories, though these are informed by headnotes from interactions with informants in all the settings. Pure speculation is

⁴² Roger Sanjek, 'A Vocabulary for Fieldnotes', in *Fieldnotes: The Makings of Anthropology*, ed. by Roger Sanjek (New York: Cornell University Press, 1990), p.93-94.

⁴³ Donald Spence, 'Narrative Smoothing and Clinical Wisdom', in *Narrative Psychology: The Storied Nature of Human Conduct*, ed. by Theodore Sarbin (New York: Praeger, 1986)

otherwise made explicit. These accounts are from the researcher's point of view and are written in first person narrative.

With regards to visual methods, sketches and iterative plan drawings were used to map the ways in which informants inhabit the shared lounge at one chalet⁴⁴. These drawings could be said to form part of an observant methodology that transforms 'the static view of a building into one among many successive freeze-frames... [documenting] the continuous flow that a building always is'.⁴⁵ Their production was influenced by 'place-centred' behavioural mapping techniques outlined by Sommer and Sommer, mapping people in a place, rather than tracking the movement of individuals through space.⁴⁶ In the author's view these drawings are 'thick' visual descriptions indicating the ways in which the building users – acting as resident designers – reshape the shared lounge to suit their communal needs (conversely, social scientists remark on the importance of recoding when "nothing is happening",⁴⁷ which is particularly relevant to the shared lounge in the evenings and at weekends). Furthermore, photographic surveys were used to capture the material environment as well as 'trace measures'⁴⁸ of inhabitation; evidence of particular activities and home/place-making. The latter were taken in a spirit of 'incidental attention'⁴⁹ that could be described as 'almost casual, not trying to see everything but to absorb the sensory feel and activity of the space'.⁵⁰ Trace measures – typically erosions or accretions – can be useful for offering hints about human activity and may confirm information gained from other sources. Human interaction is not necessary, though obviously limits the reliability of interpretations. Most social scientists prefer to study live interaction rather than carpets and lawns (or tables, worktops and shelves in this case). The information can be misleading. For example, deterioration of certain library books may reflect the activities of a single

⁴⁴ See Figure 6 (Behavioural Mapping), p.169.

⁴⁵ Bruno Latour and Alben Yaneva, 'Give me a gun and I will make all buildings move: an ANT's view of architecture', in *Explorations in Architecture: Teaching, Design, Research*, ed. by Reto Geiser (Basel: Birkhauser, 2008), pp.80-89 (p.81)

⁴⁶ Barbara Sommer and Robert Sommer, *A Practical Guide to Behavioral Research/ Tools and Techniques* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002)

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 66

⁴⁸ Pamela Davies, 'Trace Measures', in *The SAGE Dictionary of Social Research Methods*, ed. by Victor Jupp (London: SAGE Publications, c.2013), pp. 303-305

⁴⁹ Dawn Lyon, 'The Labour of Refurbishment: The Building and the Body in Space and Time', in *Ethnographic Research in the Construction Industry*, ed. by Sarah Pink, Dylan Tutt and Andrew Dainty (London: Routledge, 2013), pp.23-39

⁵⁰ Ibid, p.26

individual rather than indicate heavy circulation. In a building (or neighbourhood), the absence of litter may reveal more about cleaning policies than social attitudes.

Nonetheless the photographic survey is visually potent and, in this instance, became an effective tool for capturing the physical manifestation of a social world.

Consumer profile

Pink & Knight directors assert that their target customer is a mid-market, owner-occupier over the age of 60 looking to downsize, or ‘right-size’, to a manageable and secure town-centre property with community benefits. However, the typical *purchaser* is thought to be a 79-year old widow moving after her husband has passed away; usually leaving an older, larger house – generally a mid-terrace or semi-detached with 2-3 bedrooms and a garden – for a one or two-bedroom apartment that is close to relatives. Historically purchasers have been driven by need rather than aspiration, prioritising location and sustained independence, while gaining the security and support that retirement-living brings. At present 59% of customers are single women, 26% are couples and 15% are single men. Within recent developments there are examples of couples making positive moves ‘ahead of time’, customers with part time jobs or engaging in third sector voluntary work, and active single men that are keen to garden, potter and mend things.

Research undertaken for Pink & Knight (work package one) explored consumer profiles published by Experian, which segment the UK consumer market into 67 types and 15 groups.⁵¹ Of these groups two specifically represent older persons: ‘Active Retirement’ (Group E) and ‘Elderly Needs’ (Group L), which broadly separates consumers with choice from those without or having circumstances that limit lifestyle. These two groups represent eight consumer types or subgroups. A further 10 subgroups were identified, outside groups E and L, totalling 18 that refer to older persons. Of these types Pink & Knight customers map most closely onto type E23 ‘Balcony Downsizers’ (primary fit) and E21 ‘Bungalow Quietude’ (secondary fit), accounting for 2.3% of the UK population; whereas all 18 types amount to 24.6% of the UK population. These figures serve to remind us of the wider market, which is necessarily broad by socio-economic

⁵¹ *Mosaic United Kingdom: The consumer classification of the United Kingdom* (Nottingham: Experian Ltd, 2010) <http://www.experian.co.uk/assets/business-strategies/brochures/Mosaic_UK_2009_brochure.pdf> [accessed 04 April 2014]

measures. Indeed, ‘older people’ is not a meaningful category in lifestyle terms. The research project therefore sought to get to know a sample population of resident owners, and test the ‘fit’ of consumer profiles and assumed personal characteristics and values.

	Demography	Environment	Postal Areas
Type E23: Balcony Downsizers [primary fit]	Elders, generally single, who have downsized to flats more suited to their income and capabilities.	This accommodation, either owned or privately rented, is often purpose-built with single retired people in mind, designed to ensure peace of ageing mind in a simple but sophisticated environment. Some will be a second home, or pied-à-terre in London, the South East or near Scottish cities.	Brighton Bournemouth Edinburgh Glasgow Birmingham
Type E21: Bungalow Quietude [secondary]	Elderly people owning their own bungalow and drawing a modest pension.	When this group retired, they sold their homes, and if they hadn't already paid off their mortgages, they did so at this point. With their profits from a few decades of house price growth, they moved to rural and coastal areas of Wales and England, where they bought themselves a substantial bungalow to see them through old age.	Norwich Peterborough Portsmouth Brighton Sheffield

Table 3: Types E21 & E23 Mosaic UK Consumer Profiles [Data Source: Mosaic UK, Experian, 2010]

Patrick: *Widower, looking for snooker companions.*

I met Patrick at a weekly gathering of the Wealden Chalet Debating Society; a misleading title for what appeared to me to be a rather genteel, yet informal meeting of minds. Patrick was particularly welcoming, albeit in a quiet, reserved manner. His smile seemed to exude confidence and interest; genuine curiosity in, and support for, my enquiries into the lived-experiences of chalet resident owners. My presence affected the debate that night. Instead we had a conversation around the design and atmosphere of the chalet. In hindsight, I could have posited: ‘Pink & Knight offer a ‘specialist’ product best suited to retirement living; discuss’. When visiting Patrick in his home he made a point of talking about the electrical sockets being placed higher up the wall than usual; just one detail he isolated when considering the chalet as a ‘specialist’ product. Patrick regards higher sockets as both “*unnecessary and unsightly*”, particularly as he is in ‘good shape’ and has no problems with reaching (Is reaching sockets a real problem? he asked). That said, Patrick regrets not fitting a shower before moving in, since he is

beginning to struggle with getting in and out the bath (his shower is over the tub). He has not taken a bath in the last year at least, and prefers showering in any event.

Patrick proudly announced his age (90) and enjoyed seeing the surprise on my face! I had assumed he was early eighties. He takes care of his appearance and dresses smartly whenever leaving the apartment – always leather shoes; never slippers. Patrick shaves every day and sustains a full head of thick silver hair. His eyes ever-bright with curiosity. His frame – tall and slim – carried by a straight back and keen gait. Patrick is a picture of good health. He is also a sociable person, albeit not overtly outgoing by nature. His primary motive for moving to Wealden Chalet was to be within easy reach of like-minded people. He enjoys a chat and is known to walk the corridors, exercising his smile as much as his stride.

Patrick owns a ground floor two-bed apartment on the corner of Wealden Chalet. Except for the bathroom window, his apartment is North-facing, overlooking a garden border along the site boundary. The outlook is private and sunny. Patrick rarely sees people walking past, particularly during the autumn and winter months. The sun never enters the apartment, but Patrick enjoys looking onto a sunny patch, weather permitting, and takes pleasure in spotting birds nesting in the mature oak trees along the border. Patrick acknowledged that his apartment often gets a bit cold, such that he usually keeps the heating on. His report did not surprise me, given the extent of external wall wrapping his apartment and its shady location set back from the sun's path. When touring around his apartment I noted a discernible drop in temperature on entering his bedroom; a large room with two windows and two external walls. The atmosphere of this room had a coolth I further attributed to the flat light quality (North light on an overcast day) and a spartan interior dominated by an immaculately well-made bed, dressed in off-white sheets.

In general Patrick's apartment appeared well kept, having a modest amount of furniture, few ornaments, and well-placed items of practical application. For instance, the TV remote and guide were neatly positioned – composed almost – on the brushed surface of an upholstered footstall parked close to his favourite armchair. I noted that there were very few photographs, though suspected that Patrick could have retrieved a well-ordered album or two. His home appeared denuded of things, which struck me as being a symptom of long term bachelorhood (he mentioned a wife passing some time ago). Patrick's kitchen appeared untouched, though a scent of tinned fish lingered in the air, declaring the contents of his sandwich just an hour before. Patrick made a short apology for the fishy fug, explaining how he avoids switching on the kitchen ventilator, to "*save it whirring away like a motorbike*". It is the same in the bathroom, though Patrick appreciates having a window where others do not – saves using the fan. About the kitchen; Patrick regards it an ideal size for him, though knows neighbours that find it small. That said, Patrick reported: "*now people are beginning to have meals delivered*". He could not understand why, but then he is a very fit, independent ninety-year-old. He likes to take care of his health *and* his wallet.

Patrick explained how he uses his second bedroom as a dining room; eating there every day, particularly for dinner. A single place mat lay on the table as if witness to - defending even - his position. Indeed, Patrick was a little embarrassed, feeling that it was rather old-fashioned, and perhaps unexpected for a person living alone to observe this kind of formality. In fact, Patrick's dining space is multi-functional, since he also

uses the dining table for his drawing and water colours (his artwork, alongside that of other residents, hangs in the main entrance lobby of the chalet). Despite his hobby Patrick reported spending most of the day time in his living room, which he finds more cosy, especially with the fire on. He finds it quiet and reported little to no noise from neighbours. Patrick is himself a considerate neighbour and uses headphones when he watches TV. He proudly showed a long extension lead that reaches the full width of his lounge, from TV to sofa, and to the kitchen. For a good part of every evening this lead describes his radius of activity.

Having toured the apartment, we settled in the living room for a short time, seated on the two-piece brown fabric sofa, which framed one corner and two sides of Patrick's coffee table. This part of our conversation was less fluid, as though we had depended upon the visual cues offered by Patrick's interiors. Patrick was not shy, nor particularly reticent in speaking; he simply "*does not have much to complain about*". After a little thinking and talking around the subject of lifestyle, Patrick raised his frustration with the small number of single men living there – three including him, and the other two "*are not very sociable*". Patrick referred to others "*with wives, but they're less active*". He poked fun at the stereotypical image of "*these places being full of little old women looking out the window*", indicating a kind of bitter truth. Patrick smiled as he reported undertaking the most basic of handyman 'repairs' for his female neighbours – changing bulbs, fixing blown fuses, and so on – saying that "*women of his generation are not very practical*". He did not mind really, for it offered him a kind of 'job satisfaction' and excuse to get out, though he would rather be with the boys. "I used to play snooker, but my friends passed away and now I'm afflicted with blasted bladder problems..." Patrick reasoned that he could still play, but would need a toilet nearby. However, the main problem was a lack of companions.

Gladys: Malcontent, opting out of lounge life.

Gladys, aged 71, is an extremely forthright person. She is a lady that introduces herself, making her feelings and intentions known from the off. She was one of the first people I met during my stay at Wealden Chalet, despite her not being present at any of the group social events. We met by the main entrance; her interest piqued by my photography and measured survey of this part of the building. Once my business was known, Gladys extended an invitation to meet her at home, so that we might discuss matters in private. Gladys was very particular on timings and made sure that I was aware of her busy schedule. Returning from litter picking duties on the common, she was on a quick 'turnaround' before making a lunch appointment in town. I had to visit Gladys in the evening, after her Pilates practice.

Upon arriving at the front door of Gladys' apartment I encountered an upright broly and brush door mat in the corridor. The mat struck a contradictory tone, offering both life-affirming sentiment and instruction: "*Live. Love. Laugh. Welcome to our HOME. Please wipe your feet*" it read. Curiously, Gladys lives alone (perhaps it's asking too much have a mat that is also factually correct). I later learnt that her husband had died young, such that they had only enjoyed a year of retirement together. Both had endured long careers within education. Indeed, Gladys had the presence of a head-teacher when we talked. There was something in the way she held herself that let me know her thoughts were in order. Everything about Gladys appeared prepared, together;

her hair pinned back behind her ears, keenly listening to my words; glasses at the ready, chained around her neck for close inspections; knitted poncho cape, fastened by a silver brooch, and fountain pen in hand, poised to complete *The Times* crossword. Add to this a strong, purposeful voice.

Gladys owns a first floor one-bed apartment that is West-facing, overlooking the main communal garden. Gladys told me how much she enjoys the sun and how the orientation and aspect of the apartment sold it to her – more so than the agents. Gladys' intellectual faculties were clearly on display in her apartment. There was a framed university degree, positioned over her writing bureau, plus dulcet tones of *Radio 4* floating in the background of our conversation, as if to let me know that she remained in tune with current affairs. We drank tea in her living room, Gladys seated in her chair and I perched on the edge of her chaise longue. The room contained a good deal of furniture and collectables, and was in stark contrast to Patrick's interiors. Here there were oil paintings, books, pot plants, and layers of soft furnishings. The carpet was dressed with a rug; the curtains adorned with pelmets and tie backs; the chaise longue dressed with cushions and a draped throw. It was like visiting a heritage interior; one where the rooms have been frozen in time for the purposes of making a museum display.

Gladys made clear her feelings on the social environment of the chalet and how she regarded herself different from the 'others'. I was reminded how we met – by the main entrance, not at a social event – and her persistent projections of an active mind and lifestyle. Gladys likened the chalet to “*a boarding school for the disabled*” and was particularly critical of “*those people that sit in those chairs by the front door*”. She talked in terms of ‘us’ and ‘them’ – “*we don't go downstairs*”. Gladys also referred to new residents, saying that they are “*a bit brash, but bring energy... They organised a Chinese dinner in the lounge...*”. Gladys talked extensively about the ‘rules’ of group dynamics – “*conform, conform, and conform*”. Naturally I was interested in what brought Gladys to the chalet. Apart from the environmental qualities of her apartment – aspect and orientation – why would she choose to live here? Gladys reported moving due to noisy neighbours. She did not elaborate, except to say she had moved the other side of the tracks.

About design, Gladys was particularly critical of the internal corridors, particularly on her floor. Gladys remarked that there are no windows, resulting in poor ventilation and compartments that “*hold food smells – yesterday's fish and chips!*”. She could not stress this point enough, asking me to make a note, and inviting me to smell ‘outside’. Gladys suffers from hyperosmia – a heightened sense of smell. When people wear perfume and walk along the corridor, she feels like they are holding the bottle right under her nose. The smell of cigarette smoke, hairspray, body odour, is enough to give her a migraine. Gladys often throws open her apartment windows to get ‘clean’ air. However, this makes the apartment cold and – this was mentioned a few times – she finds the heating system “*diabolical*”. In fact, Gladys uses two portable oil-filled radiators to supplement her heating.

When asked about her apartment, Gladys reported missing private “*outdoor space to sit out*”, though she values the proximity to The Common (taking the opportunity to mention her litter picking again). Gladys considers the apartment too small, and pointed to her ‘office space’ in the living room. Clearly having bought a one-

bed apartment means that Gladys spends most of her time in the living room; a space that must serve multiple functions across the day/week. That said, Gladys considers the kitchen a good size. Similarly, she is not concerned by the size of her bathroom, though she did investigate removing the bath – “*it costs £2000 to take it out – not worth it*”. Gladys has noticed that ‘resale’ apartments have sold quicker and cheaper. Therefore, in her view, it does not make sense to ‘invest’ in renovations.

Having reached the bottom of my tea cup, and on hearing the radio’s hourly pips, we made my excuses to leave.

Paula: Young and single, travel enthusiast.

I was introduced to Paula during a chance encounter in the corridor outside Patrick’s apartment. Patrick recommended that I visit Paula “*to get a young person’s view*”. Paula, barely breaking her stride, immediately ‘penned’ me into her electronic diary, before disappearing long-limbed down the stairs. She had to meet a friend for coffee on the high street.

Paula, aged 67, is the youngest resident at Wealden Chalet. Being single and without children meant Paula could take early retirement at fifty-eight. Having significantly downsized, Paula has the good fortune of being mortgage-free, though chooses to live life ‘frugally’ and manage her finances closely; always mindful of her potentially extended retirement and long term ‘love affair’ with travel. Paula is a very mobile, connected person; a devoted gym member and equally ardent user of social media. On the few occasions I met Paula she appeared dressed for action – practical trousers and fleece top – and would not have been out of place on a camp site. Indeed, Paula might well be described as a ‘happy camper’, having an extremely positive outlook on life and Wealden Chalet generally. A heart-shaped sign hangs on her front door, obscuring the spyhole. It reads: “*Home is where the heart is*”.

Paula owns a ground floor one-bed apartment that is East-facing, overlooking the building’s main entrance and car park. Her living room is longer and wider than the standard apartment; ‘additional’ space, including an alcove cupboard, for which she is most grateful. The room is modestly furnished, yet characterised by a carefully curated array of travel pictures and mementoes; the most prominent item being an acrylic painting of a moorland scene, bought while on holiday in Exmoor a few years ago. The room had the atmosphere of a quiet country inn. It was comfortable, and softly lit by table lamps, yet connected to the background hum of cars coming and going and the public life of the entrance. While preparing tea, Paula remarked how she likes that her kitchen is self-contained, having its own door and window. “*It’s a good size*”, she remarked, though immediately qualified: “*I’m not a cook*”.

While drinking tea, Paula explained how she had moved from a three-bedroom house with a garden in Orpington, Kent. She had liked the idea of “*a block of flats with everyone at home, not work*” and moved to “*avoid loneliness*” just before the market collapsed in 2008. Paula reflected on the ‘problems’ around moving. The chalet was not quite complete, and the contractors were allegedly ‘going bust’. She lists off a number of complaints “*from back then*” – electrics, leaking roof, damp – and points to a corner of the room that still suffers from mould. Paula explained that 2007 was a particularly

wet summer and that the building got very wet during construction. I suspected a building failure, though chose to remain silent on the matter, rather than spoil a good conversation.

Paula was careful not to appear complaining. However – while in ‘niggles’ mode – Paula referred to “*a lot of discussion*” about the first-floor corridor. She acknowledged that Gladys has problems with trapped cooking smells, but for others the problem was more to do with how hot it gets. The overheating causes residents to ask the chalet manager to open the ‘smoke vent’ window in the stairwell and to prop open the doors. Paula reports that some of the residents use the corridors for exercise, indicating an intensity of use beyond the obvious circulation requirements. Her tone implied a level of concern for the welfare and enjoyment of others, though notably less vehement than Gladys.

Speaking generally, and second-guessing my line of inquiry, Paula reported that noise is not a problem. “*Of course*”, she explained, “*you do hear the odd noise or two...*”, but “*I have always lived in apartments*” (this seemed to be at odds with what she told me about her previous home). Paula was most comfortable with the concept of a common entrance, saying that she was “*used to a public kind of life*”. It did not bother her that people might see her come and go. She continues to wonder about the design of the manager’s office – “*did it get forgotten or displaced during a re-design*”? Paula noted its irregular position, and suggested that it would be useful if the manager had a space for confidential conversations – a kind of interview room. Commenting further on the common spaces, Paula noted that the shared lounge is a good size and that “*it is well used, though quieter in the evenings*”. By her reckoning there were between two and three significant evening events per month. She attended some, implying that her motive was to keep in touch with her neighbours, rather than ‘needing’ or depending upon a social life within the chalet.

Paula was prepared to talk on, and reflected more generally on the design of the development, suggesting that it “*was designed a few times due to reactions to the scheme*” during the planning process. She commented positively on the ‘subtlety’ of the entrance – no signage or numbers – and the general ‘image’ of the front. Paula likened the long drive, the formal garden, and the principal façade to a stately home, saying “*it looks like a home*”. She also called out the ‘false’ chimney pots and vertical tiling as contributing to the overall successful image of the building.

Paula reflected further on the ‘image problem’ of retirement homes. She remembers how her friends used to think she was “*insane – wanting to move into a home with old people*”. She remarked how it is not like a retirement village “*which are often in rural locations, and there is a danger you can get stuck with older people*”. She said “*this place is attractive for people who like to travel – you can just leave one of these serviced flats... It’s good for holidays – someone looking after the place. Plus deliveries are made much easier with the concierge system*”. It is Paula’s belief that Pink & Knight need to improve their branding to attract younger people or the ‘empty-nesters’ as she called them. For her, the attraction was companionship and downsizing. She enjoyed divesting things and smiled at the suggestion of having undertaken a ‘life laundry’.

Describing Home

Early work in the field explored how resident owners describe their homes to friends, family and others. During an in-depth interview at Wealden Chalet one informant owner reflected on the ‘image problem’ of retirement homes; remembering how friends used to think she was mad to want to move into age-restricted housing. As a building type, retirement apartment buildings are still relatively young, and to some extent there is a missing language around third-age lifestyles and accommodation offers. Indeed, focus group respondents reflecting on their home environment regarded it: “all new...these places didn’t exist when we were young. It was the workhouse for grandma...”.⁵² They commented on the transition from their previous home to a retirement apartment, underlining the differences in lifestyle: “we have knowledge now. You’re coming from a different kind of home and do not necessarily know what you’re buying...”.⁵³ In general, few resident owners reported using the term ‘chalet’ when describing their home to friends and family. Respondents were clearer on what a retirement chalet is *not*: “it’s not a home, and not for the elderly”.⁵⁴ One resident owner wanted it understood that the chalet is “not like a retirement village”, suggesting these are often in rural locations and that there is a “danger you can get stuck with older people”.⁵⁵ Some resident owners made references to ‘hotel-style’ living, particularly in relation to the chalet’s physical architecture: the main entrance lobby, concierge-style reception, shared lounge and corridors generally. A group of resident owners in Wealden Chalet agreed on the descriptor ‘retirement apartments’.⁵⁶ During a subsequent in-depth interview one informant referred to ‘home’ as a block of flats with “everyone at home, not work”.⁵⁷ Indeed, the chalet environment is to a large degree defined by its inhabitants. Respondents in a focus group identified with ‘independent living’, but acknowledged that “there are more carers now... We need more, younger people, under 70”.⁵⁸ Pink & Knight apartments are sold with a lease that ensures only people of 60

⁵² Anonymous [Resident Owner], pers. comm. [Unstructured Focus Group (n=10)], Worthing, 13 July 2015.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Anonymous [Resident Owner], pers. comm. [Semi-Structured Mini-Focus Groups], Bristol, September 2014.

⁵⁵ ‘Paula’ [Resident Owner], pers. comm. [Interview], Royal Tunbridge Wells, 18 March 2015.

⁵⁶ Resident Owners, pers. comm. [Unstructured Focus Group (n=9)], Royal Tunbridge Wells, 17 March 2015.

⁵⁷ ‘Paula’ [Resident Owner], pers. comm. [interview], Royal Tunbridge Wells, 18 March 2015.

⁵⁸ Resident Owners, pers. comm. [Unstructured Focus Group (n=9)], Royal Tunbridge Wells, 17 March 2015.

years or over, or those of 60 years or over with a spouse or partner of at least 55, can live in the development.

For the sake of clarity, retirement chalets are *not* designed care environments, nor are staff trained care workers. Some owners make private arrangements for care when they need it, but otherwise it is a domestic environment. Resident owners have remarked, happily, that the chalet does not share the image of the institutional ‘home’; instead regarding it a means to maintaining an independent lifestyle with the benefits of a ‘like-minded’ community of older neighbours. We heard in the previous story how directors liken Pink & Knight’s product to ‘halls of residences for the postgrads of life’,⁵⁹ albeit few respondent owners referred to student living. Indeed, few owners have direct experience of university settings, though this is likely to change as the next generation of retirees enter schemes. Nonetheless Pink & Knight’s brand ambassador, Celebrity Dame, promotes the product’s potential to ‘combat loneliness’ in later life. In these terms the retirement chalet is more than just bricks and mortar.

Meanings of home

The Avon focus groups revealed that most respondent owners held positive meanings of home.⁶⁰ There was some negativity around privacy – around reaching the apartment front door, with resident owners leaving via a fire exit to avoid the shared lounge – which was reported in other settings too. The focus groups revealed that ‘home’ was constructed as a personal or private domain for the majority of respondents. Many resident owners cited positive relations with family, friends, neighbours and pets being an important aspect of their ‘home’. And many referred to the importance of a comfortable environment, particularly one where they have ‘control’ through ownership; from setting the central heating, through to personal choice of interior décor. Few respondents held financial meanings (homes as an asset, pension pot, income, and so on). None spoke of their apartment in terms of it being an investment. Respondents

⁵⁹ Albeit few respondent owners made references to student living. Indeed, few owners have direct experience of university settings, albeit this is likely to change as the next generation of retirees enter schemes.

⁶⁰ Semi-Structured Mini-Focus Groups, Bristol, September 2014. Respondents were recruited through a series of social events and so may not represent the views of less sociable residents. Respondents are also less likely to be critical of their home in ‘public’.

were more likely to talk of ‘spending the inheritance’ and some shared stories of “purchasing before telling the kids”.⁶¹

Motives for moving

Research published by McCarthy & Stone in 2003 concluded that “the move into private sheltered housing is primarily determined by a realisation that independence in ordinary housing is becoming more difficult to maintain”.⁶² Particular concerns that led prospective residents to think about downsizing were the ongoing ability to cope with a house bigger than really needed and the demands of a private garden. The commissioned research also reported on behalf of residents, saying that they “perceive themselves as benefiting from improved health, less responsibilities and greater freedom”. The report suggests that by moving into private sheltered housing, “older people are taking an active decision to secure their quality of life and independent living”. These themes still ring true today, albeit developers call their products ‘retirement housing’, distinguishing them from ‘sheltered housing’, and retirement culture has evolved such that lifestyle has become a significant consideration for older people, particularly for contemporary retirees seeking to ‘extend the middle years of life’.⁶³

Findings from the Avon focus groups suggest that respondents’ primary motives for moving were the basis for their perceived meanings of home.⁶⁴ Motivations were varied and not necessarily in step with the narrative held by the developer. Directors at Pink & Knight consider the chalet to be a ‘needs-orientated product’; not physical, but socioeconomic ‘needs’ defined as reduced living costs/property maintenance and increased opportunities for companionship. However, respondents tended to emphasise ‘lifestyle’ and having made a positive choice to move. In a few instances respondents

⁶¹ Anonymous [Resident Owner], pers. comm. [Semi-Structured Mini-Focus Groups], Bristol, September 2014.

⁶² *A Better Life: Private Sheltered Housing and Independent Living for Older People* (Bournemouth: McCarthy & Stone Plc., 2003) <<http://www.mccarthyandstone.co.uk/documents/research%20and%20policy/orb2.pdf>> [accessed 15 July 2014] p.25

⁶³ Richard Best, *Accommodating Our Extended Middle Age* (London: Hanover Housing Association, 2013) <<http://www.hanover.org.uk/media/6735106/Lord-Best-Our-Extended-Middle-Age.pdf>> [accessed 03 May 2017]

⁶⁴ Further research is required in this area, and use of ‘laddering’ questioning techniques advised.

directly challenged the idea that the chalet is a ‘needs-based’ product. Members in one focus group said that they had been ‘thinking ahead’.⁶⁵ Furthermore, two chalet managers shared the view that owners are ‘thinking ahead’ and ‘coming for the lifestyle’. The idea that people are ‘buying in a time of crisis’ was no longer thought to be true. Indeed, one owner informant remarked:

“[the chalet is] attractive for people who like to travel – you can just leave one of these serviced flats... It’s good for holidays – someone looking after the place. Plus deliveries are made much easier with the concierge system”.⁶⁶

When asked about their motives for moving, respondents at Avon Chalet largely centred on positive moves ‘at the right time’. Some couples moved in anticipation of diminishing mobility or one being “left behind on their own”.⁶⁷ Few moves were apparently forced by failing health. That said, having access to a lift was a critical feature for some. Three informants met during chalet residences reported moving away from a previous home where there was an unreliable lift. The Avon focus groups revealed the primacy of the chalet’s social architecture. Many informants actively sought out an environment that offered greater opportunities for companionship. One informant explicitly stated moving ‘to avoid loneliness’.

Downsizing was also regularly cited as a key motive for moving to a chalet. A number of respondents moved to alleviate themselves from property maintenance, including cleaning windows, grass cutting, weeding, painting, decorating, and so on.⁶⁸ Improved security was considered an ‘added benefit’ of the chalet environment i.e. not a primary motive. Respondents also reported taking into account the proximity of family members before moving. There was a mix of ‘push’ and ‘pull’ motives, with a few compromising on location due to their offspring. Indeed, location is critical, particularly the chalet’s proximity to shops and services. Respondents in a focus group at Beachwalk Chalet

⁶⁵ Anonymous [Resident Owner], pers. comm. [Unstructured Focus Group (n=8)], Worthing, 13 July 2015.

⁶⁶ ‘Paula’ [Resident Owner], pers. comm. [interview], Royal Tunbridge Wells, 18 March 2015.

⁶⁷ Anonymous [Resident Owner], pers. comm. [Semi-Structured Mini-Focus Groups], Bristol, September 2014.

⁶⁸ Semi-Structured Mini-Focus Groups, Bristol, September 2014.

considered alternative locations that were deemed ‘too hilly’ or ‘too far’ from shops. One respondent considered proximity to the train station but was not prepared to buy into an area where “you couldn’t go out after six”. Living directly on the sea front was considered: “no good... you can’t get out on a windy day”. Respondents reflected on the view: “we realised there’d be no ‘change’ – few people on a winters day, fewer boats, and no trees”. One respondent shared their decision process, reflecting on how they ruled out one chalet in favour of another with a bigger lounge that was directly connected to the garden.⁶⁹

The author presents secondary source quotations from prospective residents i.e. those looking to move and not yet committed to a retirement property (Box 2). These are gathered from a McCarthy & Stone report,⁷⁰ with selection based on citations that could be directly attributed to prospective purchasers. The research suggests that there is common agreement on the headline motives – social benefits, reduced maintenance and downsizing – though casts doubt on the timing of moves into retirement housing: ‘ahead of time’, ‘just in time’, or at a critical time. Directors at Pink & Knight maintain that their customers are driven by need rather than aspiration, and appear to hold onto one narrative image: the 79-year old widow moving after her husband has passed away. Respondents, resident and prospective, report differently. Their story seems to be one of preparedness and thinking ahead.

⁶⁹ Anonymous [Resident Owners], pers. comm. [Unstructured Focus Group (n=8)], Worthing, 13 July 2015.

⁷⁰ *A Better Life: Private Sheltered Housing and Independent Living for Older People* (Bournemouth: McCarthy & Stone Plc., 2003).

[Social Benefits]

*“I’m getting old. I need more people around me who are in the same boat.”
(Woman, 79, Cheshire)*

*“I’m 80 and my husband is 81 and I want something that we can stay in so
when one of us dies the other one is staying somewhere comfortable.” (Woman,
80, Axminster)*

*“I want to find somewhere suitable for my wife, where she is comfortable if
something happens to me, because I have cancer.” (Man, 60, Reading)*

*“I got robbed. My daughter doesn’t want me to be on my own. She likes the
idea of there being a warden and me being able to socialise.” (Woman, 67,
Surrey)*

[Downsizing]

*“We want to move on and downsize from our current position. We want locality
and easy access and a support network within the building.” (Woman, 66,
Yorkshire)*

*“When there’s only two of us in a five bedroom house, we need something
smaller.” (Woman, 60, Cambridgeshire)*

[Reduced Maintenance]

*“My husband died nine months ago. I find the garden hard work and there is all
the maintenance of the house; that would all be taken care of if I was in a
retirement flat. I want to keep a degree of independence and have the manly
side of things looked after.” (Woman, late 70s, Sussex)*

*“We are getting older and finding it more difficult to look after the house we are
in. It would be cheaper living in a retirement flat – it would make life easier for
day to day living.” (Man, 78, Lincolnshire)*

*“We have a very large garden and my husband isn’t very well and there will
come a day that we won’t be able to cope. I like the idea that someone is on
hand so if he fell down and I couldn’t pick him up, someone will be able to
help.” (Woman, 63, Devon)*

Quotes sourced from: *A Better Life: Private Sheltered Housing and Independent
Living for Older People*, (Bournemouth: McCarthy & Stone Plc., 2003).
Presented under three headings determined by the author and therefore shown in
square brackets.

Box 2: Prospective Residents’ Motives For Moving

Transitions

Respondents at the Avon focus groups were also invited to consider what the transition was like, moving from their previous home to the chalet. Naturally a number reported feeling stressed when moving. For some this was made more pertinent by having to ‘let go’ of a life phase, with respondents reporting on the emotions involved in the action of breaking up and leaving the familial home, downsizing, and so on. Nonetheless moving was largely a positive experience for respondents, with a number finding additional support from chalet staff and other resident owners. Many respondents highlighted the importance of an active chalet manager during and beyond the period of their move. Resident owners at Avon Chalet clearly benefited from a manager that lives on site. Furthermore, sales consultants were acknowledged by company directors to be ‘relationship building’ during the sales process. In some instances, this relationship extended to post-sales support, such as making introductions, helping new residents to settle, and in exceptional cases helping them to ‘break’ and ‘make’ their homes (informally advising on what to bring, what to unpack, and so on). In these terms moves appear better supported to retirement housing than mainstream housing, perhaps in acknowledgement of the transition from one lifestyle to another. We might draw parallels with transitions made by students entering university, often supported by family members and university staff. Indeed, this comparison was discussed at Avon Chalet.

Living differently

Through the Avon focus group discussions, and encounters with resident owners generally, the research has gathered and reflected upon respondent attitudes to communal living. In general, the chalet communities observed tended to display cohort-like attributes with resident owners buying-in at broadly similar life stages. One informant acknowledged that everybody growing older together is good, “but has its limitations”, referring to the performance of the residents’ committee chair-person “going downhill”.⁷¹ In Wealden Chalet – a more established setting – there were discourses around ‘newcomers’ and their relative pros and cons. There appeared to be a tension between wanting ‘new energy in the place’ and having the established culture

⁷¹ Anonymous [Resident Owner], pers. comm. [interview], Royal Tunbridge Wells, 17 March 2015.

contested. New residents with new ideas, or ‘change’. More broadly, the researcher was made aware of social divisions or cliques within each chalet visited. One informant talked in terms of ‘us’ and ‘them’, saying “we don’t go downstairs”. She was particularly critical of “those people that sit in those chairs by the front door”.⁷² In addition, a married couple reported how some of the others “talk as though they are not long departing from this world”.⁷³ While another informant felt that he was living in a female dominated environment – he wondered where the other men his age were? Furthermore, some owners acknowledged where they had moderated previous behaviours and habits to fit their new lifestyle and neighbours. One informant observed that “you have to be considerate living here – I’m up at six but wait to do the hoovering”.⁷⁴

In terms of behavioural adaptations there were three stand-out scenarios around the shared lounge, car park and garden. The first concerns instances where informants reported a sense of unease about having to walk through the shared lounge to reach their apartment. The most extreme situation being when the lounge at Downland Chalet was being used for a ‘private’ funeral party. With regards to parking, the first-come-first-served policy is an apparent cause for ongoing complaint among residents, and is not limited to new chalets. For instance, at Wealden, the more established chalet, there were fewer resident drivers, but a growing demand for short-term parking for visiting care workers. Anecdotal evidence presented by residents is largely perceptual, reporting perhaps on a situation that is at odds with their former experiences of private parking. While evidence collected by external consultants, commissioned by Pink & Knight, suggests that the volume of on-site parking is acceptable, based on survey results and operational reports from multiple schemes.

⁷² ‘Gladys’ [Resident Owner], pers. comm. [interview], Royal Tunbridge Wells, 18 March 2015.

⁷³ Anonymous [Resident Owners], pers. comm. [interview], Worthing, 13 July 2015.

⁷⁴ ‘Trish’ [Resident Owner], pers. comm. [interview; home visit], Worthing, 13 July 2015.



Figure 5: Wealden Chalet, ‘garden walk’ (Clark, 2015)

Similarly, Pink & Knight directors and resident owners have differing views on the garden. Directors consider it a ‘common right’ to walk around the garden, while resident owners expressed being ‘embarrassed’ to walk around the shared garden, feeling observed or ‘too close’ to apartment windows.⁷⁵ The research found that, while Pink & Knight staff subscribe to the idea of a ‘garden walk’,⁷⁶ its application on site and everyday utility was often compromised. In chalet settings, a lack of appropriate paths prohibited circular walks (walking on the lawn was regarded unsuitable, particularly in the winter months). One path had steps and was part obstructed by service pipes. The research also found that owners find places within the shared garden for objects from their previous homes, such as birdbaths, benches, sundials, and so on. A few respondents at Avon Chalet reported planting commemorative roses for former neighbours. Focus groups revealed a strong desire from owners to further appropriate outdoor spaces. Respondents wished for different kinds of outdoor space – balconies, seating, sun/rain shelters, etc. In particular, respondents desired bigger patios and “non-Pink & Knight” areas.⁷⁷ Respondents expressed a desire to continue gardening on a smaller scale, and so Pink & Knight are responding by introducing the idea of a

⁷⁵ ‘Karen’ & ‘Heather’ [Resident Owners], pers. comm. [interview], Worthing, 16 June 2015.

⁷⁶ A Pink & Knight term that developed from a pre-application consultation where a local authority design consultee recommended an “internal ‘parkland’ circular walk with seating etc.” around the proposed building. The concept is likely to stem from the ‘circuit walks’ that featured within Georgian garden design. [Max Schulz, ‘The Circuit Walk of the Eighteenth-Century Landscape Garden and the Pilgrim’s Circuitous Progress’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 15.1 (1981), 1-25]

⁷⁷ Anonymous [Resident Owner], pers. comm. [Semi-Structured Mini-Focus Groups], Bristol, September 2014.

‘gardening club’ – a shed, basic tools, budget for bulbs, and raised beds – to complement professional services.

The shared lounge

Turning back indoors, the research found a vibrant social life within shared lounges, with activities ranging from coffee mornings through to fish-and-chip suppers to social clubs (cards, debating, film, knitting, and so on). Nonetheless, it was also observed that there were times when lounges lay dormant for many hours, particularly in the evenings. Directors at Pink & Knight recognise the shared lounge is a programmed space where regular use depends on planned events. It is a space that gets periodic, intensive use. Indeed, focus group discussions and direct observation revealed occasional overcrowding within lounges. During events at two of the settings respondents reported the lounge was ‘too small’ and ‘too hot’. Furthermore, informants in all settings reported the common kitchen/tea point being ‘too small’ and hard to access during events.

The research found that shared lounges are used for a range of activities, sometimes in parallel, and there are times in the week when the furniture is radically reconfigured to suit an event. In these terms, resident owners are implicitly advising the providers how the physical environment could better support the multitude of activities they wish to collectively perform at home. We might conclude that the social architecture – that we recognise as a positive feature of the chalet – is limited by the physical architecture, which is governed by design templates and standard specifications for interior finishes and furnishings that may be outmoded.

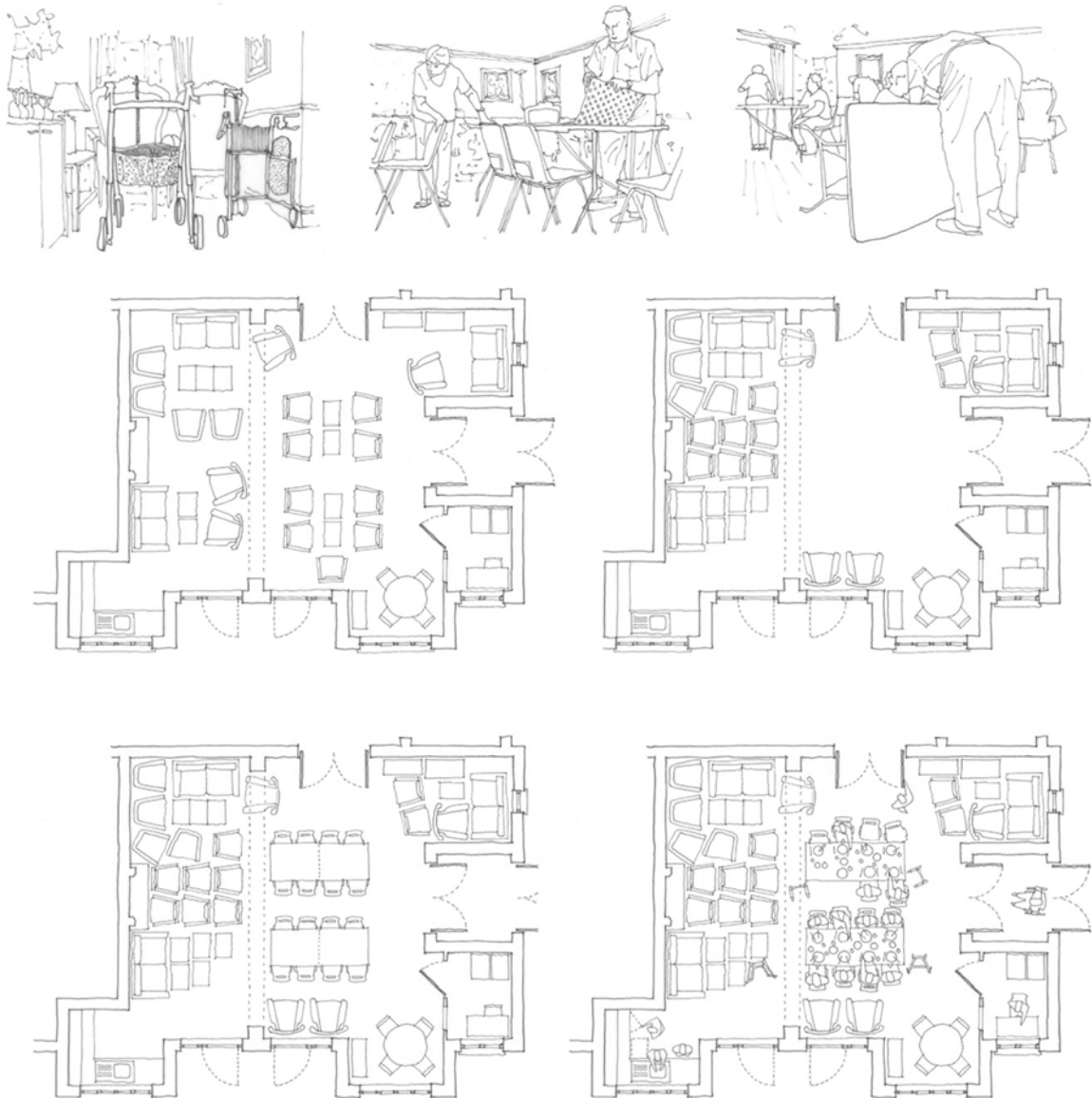


Figure 6: Behavioural Mapping (observational sketches and iterative plans), depicting how residents reshape the lounge for lunch

Home reports

Findings from visiting residents in their apartments range from general reflections on retirement living, to architect observations of occupancy and detailed feedback, particularly in relation to kitchen appliances and shower-room suites. In general informants reported being happy, though welcomed the opportunity to air their observations and ideas. The types of feedback offered by informants appears to correlate with length of occupation. Informants that had recently moved were found to have a heightened sense of space and light; experiencing a general reduction in both,

typically having moved from a larger, multi-aspect property. Whereas informants that have been living in place for some time had become conditioned by their surroundings and tended to report a list of ‘niggles’. A few informants commented on the transition from their previous home to a retirement apartment, underlining the differences in lifestyle, saying things like: “We have knowledge now. You’re coming from a different kind of home and do not necessarily know what you are buying...” Indeed, there is a lot that is unfamiliar within these homes (“it’s not what we know”). For instance, technological differences such as electric storage heaters, electric cooker hobs, halogen spotlights and ‘stud’ walls, as well as a multitude of social differences that come with communal living.

Many informants were experiencing limited mobility, ranging from arthritic hands struggling to unlock/open windows through to walking frame and wheelchair users struggling to negotiate door closers separating fire compartments (e.g. apartment entrance doors and in corridors generally) and raised thresholds on doors leading to the garden. There were also informal reports of dementia sufferers though none were visited/interviewed. There were a number of frustrated voices with respect to designing an appropriate physical environment for older people, with one informant stating, “They are ‘retirement’ flats; these things need to be thought about”.⁷⁸ Respondents – giving candid feedback at a social event – expected a higher level of age-appropriate design from retirement flats. By way of illustration, one resident reported having “to take the foot rest off my wheelchair before fitting in the lift”. Clearly the lift cannot be described as ‘accessible’ to all. Accessibility was a key concern for informants, at the building level, as well as fixtures and fittings. Height, for instance, was a challenge for many residents. Residents reported on ‘too high’ kitchen cupboards/shelves, shower heads, oven controls, and shower trays. Two informants reported struggling to reach across kitchen worktops to open windows. Similarly, a number of informants reported difficulties accessing the back of corner cupboards in the kitchen. An earlier focus group suggested rotating racks be installed as standard.⁷⁹ Figure 7 presents the detail comments collected on the design specification of the apartment kitchen and shower/bathroom fittings respectively.

⁷⁸ Anonymous [Resident Owner], pers. comm. [open conversation], Worthing, 16 June 2015.

⁷⁹ Resident Owners, pers. comm. [Unstructured Focus Group (n=9)], Royal Tunbridge Wells, 17 March 2015.

A common complaint heard in all settings visited was the height of the apartment toilets. This issue was visually apparent in the home visits, with many owners having fitted adapters to raise the seat height. A measured survey of two guest suite facilities revealed a common toilet specification that is 85mm below the Building Regulations (Part M) recommendation. The same study identified further scope for improvement in the specification and arrangement of sanitary ware. The researcher observed a number of owners have retrofitted showers in place of bathtubs. The research found resident owners who regretted not fitting a shower before moving in, as the cost of retrofitting was considered prohibitive.

A number of informants expressed a lack of choice with respect to finishes, fixtures and fittings when buying their apartment (having agency over the floor coverings only). In particular, some would like to have had the option to choose kitchen appliances. Common complaints raised in the home visits were the fridge freezer needed defrosting and the oven is hard to access/clean. The research revealed variable attitudes to kitchens and cooking amongst owners. The kitchen is considered an 'ideal size' by some, while others find it 'small' though appreciate its efficiency. One confessed 'I'm not a cook' and pointed to others getting ready-meals delivered.

Storage was a common concern for informants, including 'outdoor' and bulky items such as Christmas trees, suitcases, shopping trolleys, walkers, wheelchairs, garden chairs and, in one case, a step ladder. Internally, informants were looking for more cupboard and wardrobe space, particularly couples or those living in one-bedroom apartments. There were multiple cases where second bedrooms were being used for storage, with approaches ranging from 'mini warehouses' to multi-purpose rooms with a corner for storage or a second wardrobe. One informant reported needing to accommodate work files and prioritising storage capacity over aspect/solar orientation when choosing an apartment.

These are not unique findings. In 2016 the NHBC Foundation published research that reported on residents' experiences of retirement housing. The independent study involved six retirement developments (provided by Blue Cedar Homes, Churchill Retirement Living, McCarthy & Stone, PegasusLife and Renaissance Villages), with almost 400 homes in total. The research involved a self-fill two-page questionnaire,

distributed to each resident with an explanatory letter, and completed prior to a focus group at each development. The focus groups lasted two hours with an average of 15 residents at each development. In some respects this work parallels that undertaken by the author. Box 3, for instance, presents findings from the ‘*Factors Considered Less Satisfactory*’ section of the NHBC report, which highlights similar issues to those discussed here. The message is clear, “the needs of elderly residents had not always been taken into account sufficiently”.⁸⁰ One resident suggested that “architects don’t understand the people who have got to live in their apartments”.⁸¹

⁸⁰ NHBC, *Retirement Housing/ Residents’ Experiences* (Bracknell: IHS BRE Press, 2016) <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/_assets/Resources/Housing/OtherOrganisation/Retirement_Housing_report.pdf> [accessed 04 May 2017] p.32

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.35

Design, internal issues and appliances

- Layouts of kitchens and bathrooms. The needs of elderly residents had not always been taken into account sufficiently. For example:
 - fridges/freezers/cookers were positioned low to the ground or too high
 - kitchen windows were difficult to reach to open/close/clean
 - protruding cooker hoods causing frequent knocks to the head
 - more freezer space required.
- Insufficient storage space or shelving was an issue at most developments, and the amount of storage in apartments sometimes varied within the same development.
- Some kitchen appliances were of a relatively low specification, that is below what was anticipated. There were a few examples of appliances that did not work correctly.
- Some residents would like the option of a washing machine or dishwasher in the apartment, although it was recognised that this would require extra space.
- Doors, in a few cases, were found to be heavy to operate or not automated for those using mobility aids, including one development's front door and also doors to WCs in communal areas.
- Baths were considered to be too low or were not required.
- Absence of grab rails and poor positioning in bathrooms was a problem, although it was recognised that requirements for positioning would vary.
- Switches and power points were sometimes poorly located.
- Other design factors which were mentioned less frequently and at different developments were as follows:
 - toilets were too low
 - controls on showers were difficult to operate by those with restricted mobility
 - steps in from the street (to one of the main doors) were difficult to negotiate.

Source: NHBC, *Retirement Housing/ Residents' Experiences*, (Bracknell: Published by IHS BRE Press, 2016)

Box 3: Factors Considered Less Satisfactory (in Retirement Developments)

Section 2

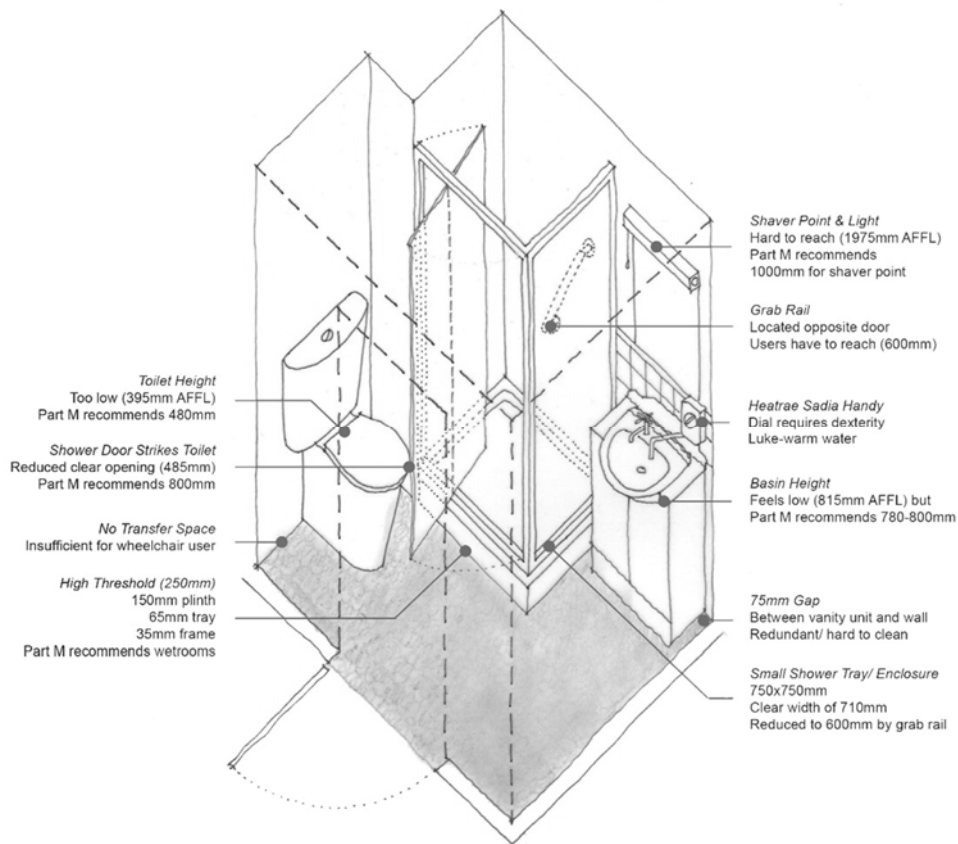
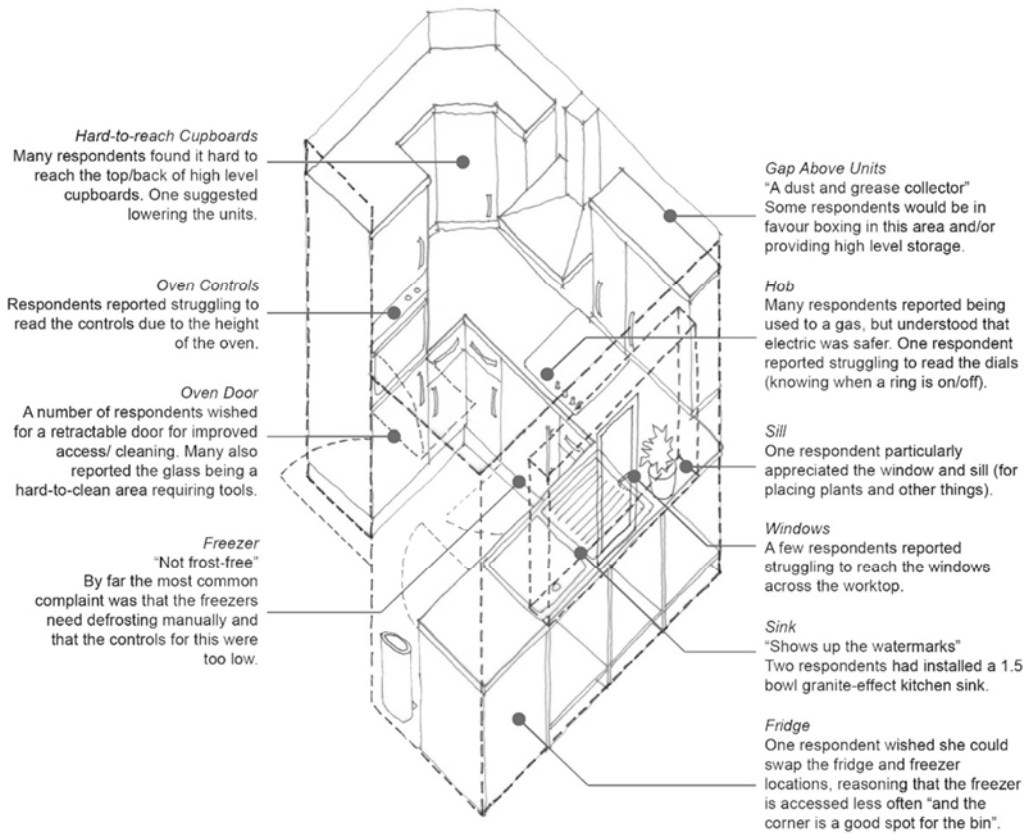


Figure 7: Typical Pink & Knight apartment kitchen and shower rooms, annotated with research findings

Conclusion

Doubts have been cast over the ways in which Pink & Knight think of its customers. There is a tendency for staff to hold onto one narrative image: the 79-year old widow moving after her husband has passed away. This research presented Patrick, aged 90, a widower looking for snooker companions; Gladys, aged 71, a malcontent resident, opting out of lounge life; and Paula, aged 67, a young-at-heart travel enthusiast, enjoying frequent trips away. The research – by no means exhaustive – could have storied a few other characters, such as the still-keen gardener, looking for a potting shed and little patch of ground to dig. Furthermore, there are the couples; the 26 percent of customers that buy into a chalet with their husband, wife or life partner. It has been suggested that Pink & Knight review its idea of customers being driven by ‘need’ rather than aspiration, since the research indicates that achieving the right sort of lifestyle is a significant concern for prospective buyers. Add to that, informants appear to share a common story of ‘preparedness’ and ‘thinking ahead’, regardless of primary meanings of home and/or motives for moving.

Regarding motives, the research found consensus that prospective residents were looking to move for a smaller property, reduced maintenance, social advantages, or a combination of all three. Indeed, a key finding was that the retirement chalet offers a positive social architecture, which resident owners apparently value over the physical environment. Many informants, when looking to move, actively sought out an environment that offered greater opportunities for companionship, and in some cases couples were positioning themselves for a time when the ‘other half’ passed away. The story reflected a variety of social activities, ranging from coffee mornings, through to fish-and-chip suppers and film nights, as well as debating clubs and knit-and-natter groups. That said, there were also those – Gladys for instance – that found the chalet community a bit too insular and ‘old’.

The research also identified differing views towards the design, occupation and utility of the communal areas of the retirement chalet; namely the shared lounge, communal garden and first-come-first-served parking. With regards to the latter, there is a clear disconnect between the developer’s view, based on operational evidence, and resident owner perceptions, based on previous experiences of parking where he or she was rarely inconvenienced. With the garden, company directors assert it is a ‘common right’ to

walk around, whereas resident owners report reticence due to a lack of space and being too close to apartment windows, as well as a lack of good paths. Focus groups also revealed a strong desire from resident owners to further appropriate outdoor spaces. Respondents wished for different kinds of outdoor space and particularly desired bigger patios and ‘non-Pink & Knight’ areas. With the shared lounge, the research found that it has been designed primarily with sitting in mind, perhaps in front of a television. However, resident owners are engaging in a wide range of different kinds of activities, some of which are frustrated by the design of the space and specification of its finishes and furnishings.

Turning to the private homes of resident owners, the research found evidence of unsatisfactory design, particularly regarding the layout and specification of kitchen and bath/shower-rooms. The research heard in different ways how the needs of older people had not always been considered sufficiently, with informant suggesting that ‘architects’ do not appear to understand the people they are designing for. Curiously, Pink & Knight recently celebrated ‘five-star customer satisfaction’, winning an industry award to that effect. Could it be that owner residents are failing to report issues, or worse, failing to be heard? Perhaps customer satisfaction surveys only ask the questions that can be easily answered, and positively. What tacit knowledge do they leave uncovered?

This research suggests that show-and-tell contextual interviews are a good model for accessing unspoken or tacit knowledge, including consumer feedback that appears undervalued (by the informants and others). The research also presents a case for survey drawings, suggesting they can be considered ‘thick’ visual descriptions, highlighting issues, negative knowledge, or indicating the ways in which the building users – acting as resident designers – reshape the environment to suit their needs. For instance, the iterative drawings of the shared lounge, give voice to resident owners that are implicitly or unknowingly advising providers how the physical environment could better support the multitude of activities they wish to engage in as part of their retirement lifestyle.

Vignette V
Photographic Surveys

This vignette presents a series of photographic surveys, which either directly represent the physical condition of chalets (building materials, products, details and so on) or constitute an alternative form of behavioural mapping, recording 'trace measures' of inhabitation (evidence of particular activities and home/place-making). It includes four environments: the guest suite, shared lounge, communal garden and private apartments. These are designed to accompany the Resident Owner story.



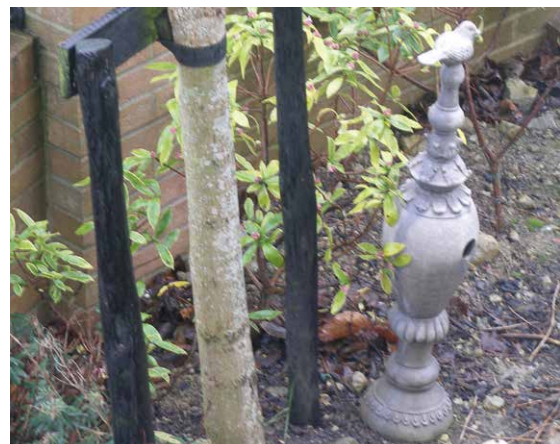
The interior environment of the guest suite at one Pink & Knight case study development. Guest suites were typically well furnished, giving an overall quality first impression; the tea tray, folded towels and information pack being reminiscent of hotel hospitality. A facility available to friends and family members of residents, as well as residents travelling from other developments.

Vignette V
Photographic Surveys
~ Guest Suite ~



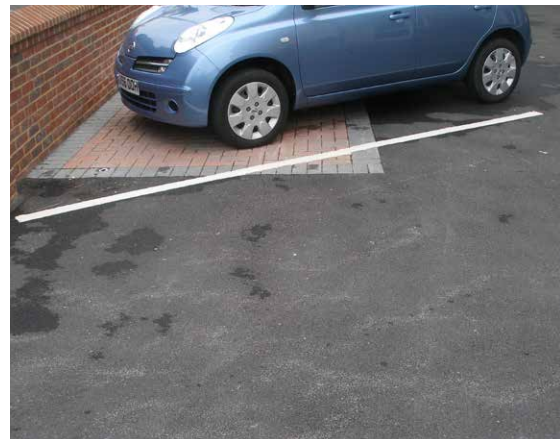
Traces of resident use of shared lounges within Pink & Knight case study developments. Here we can read the tension between space that is presented - marketed even - and utilised. There is a blending of material cultures and practices from archetypal hotel, home and nursing home. In one lounge residents were debating how to accommodate their 'library' - a corner with dedicated table and/or shelves?

Vignette V
Photographic Surveys
 ~ Shared Lounge ~



Traces of resident appropriation of shared garden spaces within Pink & Knight case study developments. Here residents are bringing personal possessions - bird baths, feeders and benches - to 'Pink & Knight' space.

Vignette V
Photographic Surveys
~ Garden Appropriation ~



Photographs taken as aide-memoires from interviews conducted while on the move. From top to bottom, these photos stand in for conversations about arthritic hands and windows; second 'bedrooms' as multi-purpose spaces; insufficient and hard-to-access storage cupboards; an 'ugly' and non-draining flat roof; and a revised parking layout.

Vignette V
Photographic Surveys
~ Home Interviews ~



Photographs taken as aide-memoires from interviews conducted while on the move. From top to bottom, these photos stand in for conversations about replacement kitchen sinks; electric cooker hobs, in lieu of gas; awkward spaces within the shower room; replacement walk-in shower enclosures; low toilet seats and grab rails.

Vignette V
Photographic Surveys
~ Home Interviews ~

STORY 5: CHALET MANAGER

Synopsis

This story is written from the point of view of the chalet manager; the person providing a concierge service to resident owners, and a property management service to the developer. The story opens with an exploration of the chalet manager's job description and person specification, and provides the reader with a general background on this group of mature workers. The story proper takes the form of a 'day in the life' of a chalet manager, Lindsey, providing a fictional account of the social world she helps to support and sustain within Morecambe Chalet, based on real events observed in the field. Whilst there is a narrative plotline – the lead up to a summer garden party – and corresponding plot twist, this is also a collection of micro stories; everyday occurrences and adhoc interactions occurring across a typical week in the work life of the chalet manager.

The story reflects on the chalet manager's shifting positions necessitated by engagement with an array of stakeholders, ranging from employers to customers and visiting others, including cleaners, maintenance workers and members of the emergency services. The story highlights the concerns of the chalet manager, particularly grey areas with respect to customer expectations and customer care, as well as the challenges presented by an ageing cohort of resident owners with ambitions to reshape the environment of the chalet, be it the car parking or interior furnishings of the shared lounge. It is the author's intention to give voice to the chalet manager as an expert in the field, providing a platform for critical feedback and some amount of agency within the design review aspects of the research. Certainly, the story shines a light on how chalet managers facilitated research methods, through the recruitment of respondents, and acting as informants – consciously or otherwise – contributed towards the generation of research data and the triangulation of research findings.

Methods

Several chalet managers were met during the fieldwork phase of the research; some for a matter of minutes, while touring a recently completed development, and others for longer periods of time. Initially managers were considered facilitators in the research, helping the 'researcher' access resident owners – individually and within social groups

– and organising overnight accommodation for the ‘residences’.⁸² On longer visits, I typically engaged with chalet managers upon arrival and departure, as well as during and in-between social events in the shared lounge, and in passing as he or she went about everyday duties. To some extent I became a participant observer of chalet managers and their interactions with resident owners and others. Indeed there is scope for further research to adopt a more structured ‘day in the life’ method, explicitly observing and recording events experienced/shaped by managers, noting particular ‘touchpoints’ with the developer’s product and customers, and repeating this method over the course of a week. Readers should note that such an approach represents high stakes for the informant – knowing my relationship with the developer as a funded researcher – some felt as though they were being ‘inspected’ and/or potentially exposed before their employer.

The position and attitudes of the manager presented here is largely based on adhoc or chance interactions, and depends on my headnotes built up over time, rather than formal fieldnotes. Indeed, this story is the product of a sense-making process, piecing together episodic events and activities focused on other respondents, namely resident owners, that foregrounded the manager. In these terms, the possibility of storying the chalet managers is a by-product of a broader contextual inquiry. At the same time, there were two critical and in-depth encounters where I shared work with two chalet managers, individually, and engaged in a kind of knowledge transfer through structured conversations around product review reports prepared for Pink & Knight. These encounters revealed that managers have an in-depth knowledge of individual chalet developments and ‘untapped’ expertise in the lived-experiences of the products they and others inhabit. And since this expertise is being formally expressed through this research story – possibly for a first time within the retirement-living sector – I should make explicit how quotations are represented: double quotation marks contain verbatim transcript, whereas those contained within single quotation marks are paraphrased remarks.

This story is fictional inasmuch it presents a single protagonist, Lindsey, a composite character standing in place of multiple informants. To further protect the anonymity of

⁸² See Story 4: Resident Owner, p.146-7 & 149-150

informants the story has a fictional setting, Morecambe Chalet, in a location considered outside Pink & Knight's operational area at the time of writing.⁸³ I have adopted an alternating third-person narrative voice; alternating between third-person omniscient – conveying the thoughts, feelings and opinions of multiple characters – and third-person limited. In limited mode, the narrator only describes events perceived and information known by Lindsey, thereby offering the reader an 'over the shoulder' perspective. While Lindsey is the focal character, the story also captures something of the researcher's actions. Here I present myself in the objective third-person and narration takes a 'fly on the wall' or 'camera lens' approach, recording observable actions but not interpreting these actions or relaying what thoughts are going through the mind of the character, Sam. The researcher is presented as a visitor to the chalet and accommodated by Lindsey, who takes an interest in his activities. In these terms, the story further unpacks research methods and field tactics, albeit as perceived by an incidental research informant.

Background

Lindsey is the manager for Morecambe Chalet, a Pink & Knight retirement-living scheme in Morecambe Bay, near the Lake District. Lindsey took up her role two years ago, having spent the best part of three decades working within the hospitality and catering industry, and running her own restaurant for eleven years. Aged 57, Lindsey is nine years from state pension age and receiving a free bus pass. By definition she is a member of the 'Young-Old'⁸⁴ group (persons aged 55 to 75 years). Lindsey and her husband, aged 61, would qualify to buy a Pink & Knight 'retirement' apartment. Pink & Knight sets the bar at 60, but this does not preclude owners having a younger partner. In fact, chalet developments are subject to a standard planning condition that they be used to accommodate persons over the age of 55. But as we know, resident owners tend to be in their late seventies; making them about the same age as Lindsey's parents.

Lindsey does not work for Pink & Knight directly. Retirement chalets are run by a separate management company, Chalet Management Services (CMS), which takes up

⁸³ Morecambe Bay in North West England has similar place characteristics to other development locations; it being on the coast and near two National Parks and one AONB.

⁸⁴ Bernice Neugarten, 'The Young-Old and the Age-Irrelevant Society', in *The Meanings of Age: Selected Papers of Bernice L. Neugarten*, ed. by Dail Neugarten (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp.34-46

occupancy once developments are ‘practically complete’ and before the first owner moves in. CMS employ the chalet managers and is therefore responsible for Lindsey’s induction, subsequent training needs and annual appraisals. Whilst CMS is not inspected by external parties or a governing body, it is a member of the Association of Retirement Housing Managers (ARHM) and operates within ARHM’s Government approved Code of Practice.⁸⁵ Under its terms Lindsey is committing to help “continually raise the standards within the sector by promoting best practice and ethics amongst those managing retirement housing”.⁸⁶ CMS is also a member of the National Association of Estate Agents (NAEA) and is a voluntary member of the Property Ombudsman Service, providing customers with independent redress should the need arise. At the time of writing, CMS is responsible for the management of 122 retirement housing developments, nationally, which equates to 4,698 apartments, providing services to over 5,000 retired people. The company’s website states that CMS “only allocate 25 developments per Area Manager to ensure all developments are supported to a high level”. Lindsey operates under one of these area managers and is dedicated to serving Morecambe Chalet and its 59 residents, full-time (35 hours per week). Lindsey does not live on site and, within reason, avoids working on weekends.

Job Description

Lindsey’s employment history is not unusual for a chalet manager. According to CMS, a number of chalet manager appointments result from mature workers opting for a ‘lighter’ or reduced workload during the twilight years of their career. Former publicans and hoteliers talk of “winding down a gear or two” after the stresses of running a business and managing staff. However, this is not to say that the chalet manager job is easy or straightforward. The person specification within the job description – Box 4 – requires experience in working with the public through service delivery, and identifies the following ‘desirable’ backgrounds: hotel or holiday business, property/facility management, care and sales. The chalet manager is expected to “enjoy organising

⁸⁵ At the time of writing ARHM’s website claimed the association represented 55 member organisations, including private sector providers and registered social landlords, who jointly manage over 100,000 retirement properties in the UK. This is thought to be less than one fifth of UK retirement properties or 0.4 per cent of all UK housing stock, based on research published by DEMOS in 2013, which found that retirement properties made up 2% of the UK housing stock, or 533,000 homes [Wood, Claudia, *The Top of the Ladder* (London: DEMOS, 2013)].

⁸⁶ Association of Retirement Housing Managers (London: ARHM, 2016)
<<http://www.arhm.org/>> [accessed 08 June 2016]

events” and ideally is “outgoing and likes being involved and working with others”. Essential person qualities are listed as: ‘can do’ approach, personable, empathetic, diplomatic and assertive. Whilst employment law prohibits age discrimination, one can appreciate that age could be an advantage in this role; one explicitly requiring no academic qualifications, but a range of soft skills, arguably attained through maturity and life experience.

Job Title

- *Chalet Manager/Estate Manager/Scheme Manager/House Manager/Relief Manager*

Main Purpose of Job

- *To professionally manage the development and to provide a safe, secure and well- maintained residence for Owners and to encourage and facilitate social activities for the Owners in order to provide a happy, fulfilling lifestyle for them.*
- *To provide a welcoming and homely atmosphere and develop a good community spirit at all times.*
- *Provide additional non-essential services to Owners, such as booking taxis, finding out information from the web, internet shopping, etc., and to be as helpful as possible regarding Owner enquiries.*
- *To assist the Company in the sale of new and re-sale apartments.*
- *To maintain an excellent working relationship with the Owners, respecting their personal needs and encouraging harmony amongst the Owners whilst gaining their trust and respect.*
- *To use common sense and be available to provide any reasonable assistance in the event of a request for help from an Owner. Every Owner must be treated the same.*
- *NB – the post holder is not required to provide nursing care or services such as shopping or cooking for individual Owners.*

Box 4: Extract from Job Description (CMS, 2014)

Lindsey’s job is a dynamic one, involving responsibility for the building and its occupants, and requiring a level of autonomy and individual responsivity. At full

throttle you might confuse her for a Butlins' Redcoat, switching from entertainer, contributing to the flow of conversation at the 'knit and natter' coffee morning, to responsible steward, directing visitors and delivery persons to apartments – pharmaceuticals for Mrs B and one week's supply of frozen meals for Terry! Lindsey's role is obviously customer-serving, but readers should also note that she has a contractual responsibility to "actively promote the chalet at all times, endorsing the lifestyle available".⁸⁷ One would expect Lindsey to be loyal to her employer, but CMS and its ethos are inextricably linked to the developer and its product. By default, therefore, Lindsey is expected to be faithful to the chalet, from concept through to design detail and service model. Indeed, Lindsey is as much a sales representative, showing around prospective purchasers and family members, guest and visitors, and future owners of re-sale apartments (hence CMS' membership of the National Association of Estate Agents). This is important to remember, since everyday interactions could lead one to presume that the chalet manager is a truly autonomous agent, in-between the customer and company, but in fact there exists a real conflict of interests. Lindsey must serve a paying employer, and its masters, while sustaining a level of customer care that is to a large degree founded on good rapport.

Lindsey has an office by the main entrance, though she is rarely stationed there for long; this job requires you to be on your feet. The distribution of an official communication, for example, involves walking the corridors and dropping letters through individual apartment front doors. Colleagues report loss of weight when they first start: "we're not allowed to use the lifts, but it's good for your health walking up and down these stairs". Lindsey carries a cordless phone, which picks up internal and external calls to the office; anything from a delivery enquiry ('where is the chalet?') to a resident calling 'down' to check on arrangements ('what time is the garden party?'). Emergency buttons within the apartments are also linked to Lindsey's phone, alerting her when owners have "taken a fall" or accidentally hit the floor-level button whilst vacuuming the shower room! Lastly, the intercom on the front entrance is diverted to Lindsey's phone. And this is where our story begins.

⁸⁷ Operations Director [CMS], *Chalet Manager Job Description* (Chalet Management Services, 2014)

Chalet Inspector?

A buzz on the front door at quarter past ten on Monday 13th July 2015. Picking up Lindsey asks: ‘Is that Sam? Hello Sam, hold on a second and I’ll buzz you in. I’ll be down in just a minute’. Lindsey had been expecting Sam ever since his unexpected telephone call last month. At first she was apprehensive, thinking Sam might be an undercover BBC journalist looking to write an exposé on retirement chalets. He later confirmed his identity by email, copying in her boss, operations director of CMS, and a director at Pink & Knight. Sam advised that his visit was part of ongoing research on behalf of the developer, and that he had chosen Morecambe Chalet as a representative development based on location, size and age. He wrote that the principal objectives of his visit were to: experience staying overnight in the chalet; undertake a photographic survey of the building; discuss with residents their experiences of living in the chalet; and observe or participate in everyday social events.⁸⁸ Lindsey could not help but think of the British television series by celebrated hotelier and businesswoman Alex Polizzi: *The Hotel Inspector*. Was Sam coming to inspect her and the chalet and report any deficiencies back to management? Lindsey knew that Sam was an architect and that the research was also part of his PhD studies. She supposed therefore that he would be more interested in the building, though was surprised that he should want to stay, let alone take part in social activities.

Perhaps Lindsey thought architects were only interested in the appearance of buildings and making them ‘look cool’ or ‘in-keeping’ with neighbours. Maybe it never occurred to her that architects would look at how people used buildings. Indeed, architect and academic Mel Dodd writes that “the discipline of architecture is poorly understood”; claiming that it is both “culturally critical and pervasive, but at the same time as an architect you get pigeonholed into the production of buildings alone”.⁸⁹ For Dodd it is important to consider the idea that architects might extend their role “beyond final completion”, in a way that provides professional space for being interested in how people occupy buildings, and how architects can make very small changes to “intercede in those occupations”.⁹⁰ Sam was apparently interested in reviewing the chalet; being

⁸⁸ Sam Clark, pers. comm. [email to Chalet Manager], 24 July 2014

⁸⁹ Mel Dodd, ‘The Double Agent’, in *Future Practice / Conversations from the Edge of Architecture*, ed. by Rory Hyde (London: Routledge, 2012), p.77-78

⁹⁰ Mel Dodd, ‘The Double Agent’, in *Future Practice / Conversations from the Edge of Architecture*, ed. by Rory Hyde (London: Routledge, 2012), p.77-78

sponsored by Pink & Knight to undertake research that would feed into the company's Product Review Project, which had been announced in the summer issue of the chalet magazine for residents. Lindsey looked forward to hearing Sam's observations and to sharing some of her own.

GUEST ROOM BOOKING FORM

Apartment No: _____ Name SAM CLARK

I WOULD LIKE TO BOOK THE GUEST ROOM:

£12 SINGLE £15 DOUBLE PLEASE

FROM: 13.07.15 TO: 15.07.15

TOTAL NIGHTS: 2 COST: _____

PLEASE COMPLETE AND HAND TO _____ MANAGER

MR SAM CLARK
WILL BE SPENDING THREE DAYS
WITH US FROM
MONDAY 13TH JULY

SAM WILL BE HERE TO DO A
PRODUCT REVIEW OF

AND WOULD LIKE THE
OPPORTUNITY
TO TALK TO ALL OF YOU
ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE OF
LIVING HERE.

SAM IS STAYING IN THE GUEST
SUITE DURING THIS TIME.

Figure 8: Booking Form & Notice for Sam's Visit

Sam's visit required a degree of planning and preparation. The first challenge was booking the guest suite, since he was visiting at a peak time. This time of year many friends of owners and family members, as well as travelling owners from other chalets, visit Morecambe Chalet for its close proximity to the beach and lakes. For this reason Sam's stay was limited to three days and two nights – Monday to Wednesday – thereby avoiding the weekend. Lindsey made the booking in a way that there would be sufficient time to 'turnaround' the suite, for she is responsible for stripping and making the bed(s), restocking the tea tray and replacing the towels in the shower room. Also, for good measure – knowing that Sam would be taking photographs – Lindsey tidied her desk and bought fresh flowers for the shared lounge. In addition Lindsey prepared two posters giving advance notice to the owners and asking them to make Sam feel welcome. In particular she invited owners to think about any issues they might want Sam and the developer to know about. Lindsey anticipated having to help introduce Sam to owners.

The Week Ahead

Sam's visit was timed to coincide with the summer garden party at Morecambe Chalet. From his point of view it was the perfect opportunity to reach a critical mass of owners and collect candid opinion and comment. Such an event would also allow Sam to observe how the garden and shared lounge performed under intensive use. The garden party is the biggest summertime event in the calendar, attracting many visiting neighbours, as well as friends and family (up to 150 people). But this was not the only special event to take place this week; one of the owners was also celebrating her eightieth birthday on Friday. For all concerned this was going to be an extraordinary week. Lindsey's schedule of events for the shared lounge read: 'Monday, 12:30 Fish & Chip Lunch; Tuesday, 9:00 Cleaners, 11:00 Knit & Natter; Wednesday, 10:30 NO Coffee Morning [notifying a cancellation], 14:30 Summer Garden Party (NO Film Club); Thursday, 10:30 Beetle Drive, 19:00 Cards; Friday, 19:30 Pam's Party (Open Invitation)'.⁹¹ Occasional/seasonal events were to overlay an already lively schedule of weekly social fixtures. And then there were other maintenance activities and people to consider, such as the gardeners cutting the grass and trimming the hedges in advance of the party on Wednesday. Contractors were also addressing a few remaining building 'snags', including work to one of the flat roofs by the garden. Lindsey consulted the office diary, required by ARHM code to record all significant events on site (including dealings with residents such as emergencies, injuries, disputes and maintenance works). This was to be a busy week, but Lindsey preferred things this way. She particularly liked to see people using the shared lounge and enjoying themselves, and very much looked forward to strawberry and Pimm's come Wednesday afternoon.

Monday Morning

Sam had arrived in good time – a quick ride from the station by all accounts. He had brought his folding bicycle and was now asking where to park it. Lindsey thought twice about the guest suite with its cream carpet. She offered a corner in the manager's office or a place under the stairs. But Sam sought the 'regular' parking in the external store intended for mobility scooters. There he bumped into an owner, Tom, who was polishing his new folding tricycle. Who would have thought it, a meeting of folding bike enthusiasts! Tom was soon bending Sam's ear about secure parking and a recent

⁹¹ Based on schedules observed in multiple chalets.

theft – his previous bicycle. Sam was already at work gathering attitudes and experiencing everyday life at Morecambe Chalet. He discussed with Tom the idea of ‘healthy infrastructures’⁹² and how UK towns and cities could adapt to accommodate the active third age. Tom expressed a lifelong frustration of being treated like a ‘second-class citizen’ for travelling by bike – few or poor quality cycle lanes, insufficient space on trains and generally poor parking (inconvenient, unsecure, unsheltered, and so on). In the meantime, Lindsey offered some reassurance regarding Tom’s most immediate concern, reporting that police officers were due to visit later this week.

Once parked Lindsey showed Sam to the guest suite she had prepared earlier that day – her first task of the week. The towels were all neatly folded and stacked on the end of the bed, which was dressed with a throw and cushions, much like a hotel room. Lindsey remarked on its comfort, explaining that she had stayed overnight on a few occasions: “it’s a useful facility if I have to stay late or make an early start for a special event”. Sam quizzed Lindsey on the accessibility of the suite, asking “how do guests find getting in and out of the shower?” Lindsey conceded that “the shower room is too small for walkers – frames and the like – and can be hard for people to move around”. She had always wondered why Pink & Knight did not build wet rooms, since they would be much more practical. What surprised her most was the step up into the shower cubicle, bearing in mind that most of the visitors were older people (friends of owners). Indeed, the apartment shower rooms were built to the same specification.⁹³ Before Lindsey could expand on her point, the phone rang out from her belt. One of the owners had a problem within her apartment: a tripped switch in the consumer unit, which she was struggling to reach. Lindsey explained how electrical contractors were ironing out some faults linked to recent work. She arranged to meet Sam downstairs in the shared lounge. Lindsey was thinking how best to host Sam; who she might introduce him to, whether he would like to join the fish and chips lunch club today, (she would need to add another portion to the order), and if he needed any restaurant recommendations for the

⁹² Matthew Barac, Will Hunter and James Parkinson, *Silver Linings: The Active Third Age and the City* (London: RIBA / Building Futures, 2013) <<https://www.architecture.com/RIBA/Campaigns%20and%20issues/BuildingFutures/SilverLiningsNEW.aspx>> [accessed 09 June 2016]. Describes “new environments which draw on design to foster and support healthy lifestyles rather than spending unsustainable amounts on health provision - a move from reactionary towards preventative action”.

⁹³ See Story 4: Resident Owner, p.170 & Figure 7 (Typical Pink & Knight apartment kitchen and shower rooms), p.174

evening. Lindsey was equally conscious of her routine and that Sam was here to speak to the owners, or so she thought (was she being spied upon?).

By the time Lindsey reached the shared lounge Sam had introduced himself to another owner; a passerby curious to know why he was taking photos, “more marketing?”⁹⁴ they asked. The shared lounge was otherwise empty at this time (around 10am) and had the feeling of a hotel lobby two hours after everyone had checked in and out for the day. Lindsey took the opportunity to provide Sam with some background information on the chalet: one of the first following the 2008 financial crisis, completed four years ago, comprising 40 apartments (26 one-bed and 14 two-bed), and accommodating 59 people. Most of the owners arrived in the first two years, and the scheme sold out relatively quickly due to its popular location. It is a medium sized development for Pink & Knight and typical of their approach in terms of looks and feel. Lindsey had visited several chalets when she first took up post two years ago and judges this one to be particularly ‘lively’, though she expects that may dampen down over time. She keeps in regular contact with another chalet manager on the other side of town – they often cover one another during holiday periods – but finds his place much quieter in atmosphere (it was one of the first to be built by Pink & Knight).

Sam shared his impression of falling resale prices of retirement flats, which was raised in his early research into the sector. He and Lindsey considered the experience of buying into a recently completed retirement development versus the purchase of an apartment resold a number of years later. Clearly there is the potential psychological hurdle of buying into a deceased person’s home, albeit this phenomenon is not limited to the retirement-living sector. More likely there are potential barriers surrounding ideas of cohort – ‘feeling like the newcomer’ said Lindsey, and being perhaps ten years younger than the other members of an established community of older persons. Sam recalled a previous meeting with the managing director of CMS, and frank discussion of cohorts “slowing down over time”.⁹⁵ All agreed that it is difficult to mitigate against this, and to some extent unclear whether action is required, or considered necessary, by owners already in place. There is perhaps a need for further research in this area,

⁹⁴ Anonymous [Resident Owner], pers. comm. [open conversation], Worthing, 13 July 2015

⁹⁵ Operations Director [CMS], pers. comm. [meeting], Pink & Knight, 25 September 2014

examining insider and outsider perceptions of age-segregated independent-living facilities and meaningful social interactions during the later years of retirement. There are expert accounts of peer companionship and neighbourliness being unavailable or being withdrawn over time within retirement villages (NB a different typology to chalets).⁹⁶ Speaking at an ENHR conference Professor David Clapham cited research in which some resident respondents disliked the quietness of an age-segregated environment – that could ‘feel like a morgue’ – and others felt excluded from the communal activities.⁹⁷ Clapham reported how residents were found to be exhibiting ‘distancing behaviour’ from the frailer residents to protect their own self-esteem. In another study referred to by Clapham some residents said that their retirement village could not be a community because it had ‘no people of different ages’. These remarks suggest there are real and potential shortcomings of a ‘like-minded’ (and like-bodied) residential community of older persons over time.

Managing Expectations

Taking advantage of a natural pause in the conversation, Lindsey put the kettle on and invited Sam to take a seat. Drinking tea in the shared lounge, the conversation changes gear and Lindsey recounts her time at the chalet. In particular she recalls her experiences being the ‘newcomer’ in a community that had established itself over two years. Of course, her position will always be different to that of the owners; Lindsey being part inside and outside the community, and crucially at work rather than at leisure. Lindsey recalled having to ‘live-up’ to the legacy of the first chalet manager – his shield ‘Best-Managed Chalet, 2013’ sits on the mantle piece. Lindsey’s voice lowers – they are alone, but the shared lounge is open plan and closely linked to the lift area – as she tells Sam how she struggled with one particular owner. In hindsight Lindsey attributes this person’s attitude to not wanting to be here, because she had been moved from afar by her family members. Furthermore, this resident and her family had unrealistic expectations of support from an independent-living setting. Lindsey recoiled a well-rehearsed argument, saying “a little bit of advocacy and advice, yes, and the odd favour, but managers are not supposed to get involved in care arrangements”.

⁹⁶ David Clapham, ‘Evaluating Supported Housing Options for Older People in Britain and Sweden’, in *European Network for Housing Research (ENHR) Conference* (Edinburgh: Heriot-Watt University 1-4 July 2014)

⁹⁷ Ibid.

According to research by AgeUK, one of the “significant barriers to the general public, policy-makers and journalists understanding retirement housing is terminology”.⁹⁸ The research authors found that different people meant different things when they talked about sheltered housing, retirement housing or retirement housing with care. In their view confusion is in part due to a range of providers wanting to “adopt a distinctive brand to distinguish their ‘product’ from the competition”. Indeed before visiting Morecambe Chalet, Sam conducted a desktop study of its neighbourhood and discovered a range of accommodation offers for older people including so-called courts, halls, homes, houses and lodges. No doubt this makes life harder for people talking about, let alone comparing, different accommodation choices. AgeUK advocate that different sectors work with ‘residents’ (also known as customers, end-users, homeowners, pensioners, veterans, and so on) to clarify what different schemes are offered and how they are ‘labelled’. The same problem of terminology is thought to extend to ‘scheme managers’ – alternatively known as estate managers; retirement village managers; house managers; lodge managers; and so on – and the varying level of housing ‘support’ they offer to residents. Attitudes and responsibilities also naturally evolve. For instance, Lindsey has noted a creep towards facilitating ‘lifestyle’ in the short time she has been a chalet manager. The American company, Retirement Holidays, employs ‘community managers’ to oversee the running of its independent living environments. How long will it be before we see ‘Retirement-living Managers’ or ‘Retirement Redcoats’ in the UK?

The panel behind the aforementioned AgeUK report believes that there should be greater clarity about the role of scheme managers and the boundaries of their responsibilities. Indeed making clear what scheme managers can and cannot do for residents and “protecting them from unreasonable demands”⁹⁹ is a core responsibility for management companies, as outlined in the ARHM Code of Practice. An ongoing and important issue for providers and commissioners of sheltered housing is knowing

⁹⁸ AgeUK, *Making it Work for Us: A Residents’ Inquiry into Sheltered and Retirement Housing* (London: AgeUK, c.2012) < <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/For-professionals/Housing/Sheltered-And%20Retirement%20Housing%20Report.pdf?dtrk=true> > [accessed 09 June 2016] p.12

⁹⁹ Association of Retirement Housing Managers, *Private Retirement Housing: Code of Practice – England*, (London: ARHM, 2016) p.46

what older people were led to expect before they moved into sheltered housing, as well as expectations of housing and care they will obtain if and when their needs change. On a related note, the AgeUK resident panel claimed that they “do not have confidence that all commissioners and providers are making proper assessments of the needs of older people living in sheltered schemes”.¹⁰⁰ Lindsey’s employers, CMS, do make appropriate checks on entry, though there is no ongoing assessment.

Lindsey alerted Sam to the wider sheltered housing context in which many scheme managers and support services have been withdrawn from publically-funded schemes where residents are extremely frail and vulnerable. According to AgeUK, commissioners and providers have argued that “sheltered housing was never intended to provide high levels of support for these groups”.¹⁰¹ If so, should residents be offered alternative supported accommodation? Do the problems reveal a failure of either social services or the scheme provider? And if the providers are right, in as much as sheltered housing is meant to offer general needs housing with some communal features and basic support, is it reasonable to examine how limited staff can be used more effectively for all older residents? It’s a long discussion and obviously an ‘academic’ one for the residents concerned.

Ambulance Drop-Off

As if to focus attention on the issue, an ambulance rolled onto the forecourt of Morecambe Chalet. Lindsey stepped outside to investigate. She returned a few minutes later, accompanied by ambulance staff wheeling owner Alice through the lobby and into the lounge. It is here that the news unfolds, and the necessary paperwork is completed. Alice transfers from the wheelchair to a high wingback armchair, embarrassed but generally relieved to be home. She had been out food shopping and was returning on the bus when she ‘took a tumble’ down the aisle. The bus driver had called the ambulance and its staff attended to Alice’s wounds by the roadside. Fortunately nothing was broken. For Sam it was surprising that this homecoming should unfold in the shared lounge. What if it had been busy? Would Alice have been expected to air her most private medical details in public? Fortunately the only person encountered was a

¹⁰⁰ AgeUK (c.2012), p.48

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p.53

professional dog-walker. Seeing the dog, Alice and the others spared a thought for its owner who is unable to get out and about. Alice dusted herself off one last time and allowed Lindsey to escort her upstairs. Naturally Alice's fall and ride home was a popular subject at lunch, such is the nature of close-knit communities.

Fish & Chips

By the time twelve thirty arrived the owners had transformed the shared lounge. All the furniture had been pushed to one side, leaving a clear route to the kitchen and outside, and an open space for their temporary dining table, comprising of two metal trestle tables, pink poker dot tablecloth and a number of stacking chairs brought out from under the stairs. A small round dining table remained insitu as an 'overflow' facility for extra people. Soon there were twelve diners sat at the main table, eagerly tucking into their fish and chips, accompanied (for some) by a glass of wine! In total about one quarter of the chalet's residents attended. Lindsey remarked on the work involved in setting up and reorganising the lounge; work that she takes pleasure in facilitating. She is, however, concerned about the residents shifting furniture when she is not there, highlighting that "some of these men have heart complaints". Lindsey drew Sam's attention to the need for greater flexibility within the shared lounge, saying "we're really going to have to start thinking outside of the box, now that we aspire to a lifestyle service". She was referring to the increasing emphasis on chalet managers and regional events managers facilitating a more structured social life for resident owners. All for the good in her opinion, but somewhat constrained by the architecture and interior furnishings of the product.

During the lunch Sam got into conversation with three owners and a visiting relative from Australia. By now Lindsey was getting a better sense of Sam's method – a method he described as a kind of 'cultural immersion', sampling the everyday experiences of residents. Part way through the main course a non-attendant owner emerged from the corridor, obviously on her way out, bags packed for her holiday. Inevitably there was much interest in her destination and duration of stay. A luncher paused for comment, directing his voice towards Sam: "You see, this is the problem with this lounge – you can't get out... you get stopped by people when you're trying to go on holiday!"¹⁰²

¹⁰² Anonymous [Resident Owner], pers. comm. [open conversation], Worthing, 13 July 2015

Another conceded that “everybody ends up knowing your business – every little visit to the doctors is talked about”.¹⁰³ And ‘what about poor old Alice this morning?!’ Much was shared and chewed over. The lunchers were excited by the forthcoming garden party, hoping that the weather would hold out, and that “those holy men next door will pop by” (the chalet neighbours a home for retired clergy). Meanwhile Sam was scribbling down notes and taking snapshots on his camera. Lindsey could understand the group photo – a kind of ‘party’ snap – but was bemused by some of the other shots. Why was he taking close-up shots of tables and chairs, walking frames and strollers, bookcases and table tops? And what notes was he adding to Pink & Knight’s drawings? Sam explained how he was ‘mapping’ how residents used the shared lounge, especially at this busy time. Indeed, Lindsey had advised Sam of this particular social event, knowing that he wanted to see the shared lounge during intensive use. Sam later explained his intention to draw a series of plan sketches showing how the space is changed by residents rearranging the furniture. For Lindsey, the promise of drawings matched her expectations of what an architect does.

Tea Talk

After lunch the table was swiftly cleared and the room returned to some semblance of normality, though the furniture left was aside to make it easier for the cleaners to vacuum the floor (the next morning). One owner strolled across the room with her walker and a friend at her elbow. She was made nervous by the open space – “don’t leave me in the middle here, will you?!”¹⁰⁴ Momentarily setting aside her fear she spared a thought for Lindsey, saying thank you for her work. This lady and a few others migrated outside, just as the gardeners were arriving for their work. Lindsey offered Sam a cup of tea, taking the opportunity to touch base with what he had observed today and in the course of his research. They had a general discussion about Pink & Knight’s product and the standardised ‘image’ of the shared lounges.

Lindsey and Sam discussed a number of critical design challenges observed in shared lounges, including ‘multi-functionality’, with frequent changes of use involving furniture rearrangements and removal. In this way the residents are behaving as

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Anonymous [Resident Owner], Worthing, 13 July 2015

designers, or in Michel Foucault's terms, playing out a kind of 'resistance' to the professionally planned environment.¹⁰⁵ In any case there is an apparent need for flexibility to accommodate a programme of diverse events – the fish and chip supper, ballroom dance class, pilates, and so on. Lindsey agreed that the potential to split the lounge and offer different furniture set-ups concurrently would be very useful. Lindsey often moves furniture around for different events, stating, "some of the chairs and tables are quite heavy, they're not designed for easy rolling, and I'm not always here to help". Sam continued with his analysis, suggesting there is also an associated need for better 'servant' spaces and storage spaces. Lindsey agreed – somewhere to store the folding tables and chairs. Sam thought flexible space may also attend to the challenges presented by occasional overcrowding and under-occupation. In addition he identified issues around the accessibility of the kitchens, in terms of their 'communication' with the lounge and suitability for events. Lindsey remarked how their "tea station is generally considered too small by those that use it". Similarly the communal toilets were found to be less than convenient, being a 'long walk' from the lounge, and technically inaccessible for wheelchair users. Lindsey added, "visitors often remark on the distance between the lounge and the 'public' toilet".

Looking outside, Sam remarked on the proximity of the garden. He reported visiting a number of developments where the lounge was 'detached' from the garden. This was something Lindsey had observed too, and to a lesser extent experienced at Morecambe Chalet. The lounge here opened onto a patio and planted area beyond, but the garden proper was around the corner. Lindsey and the owners had often talked of having a conservatory – a place that feels like sitting outside – that can be enjoyed in all weathers. Come to think of it, Lindsey had always found the patio doors poorly designed too. She drew Sam's attention here, saying "the frames stick up from the floor, which means that wheelchair users have to go out the main entrance and travel the long way around". Sam thought this probably presented a challenge to other users too (for instance, those with walking frames). Lindsey said the same problem existed where a fire exit door had been recently upgraded to a 'shopper's door', allowing direct access (for the able-bodied) to and from the shops, and saving a good deal of walking for a number of owners. Some owners have been spared walking the length of the

¹⁰⁵ Gordana Fontana-Giusti, *Foucault for Architects* (New York: Routledge, 2013)

development. Lindsey reported a key lock being installed on the exterior, though nothing was done about levelling the threshold. Sam brought the conversation back round to the shared lounge and some more positive observations.

Sam's research suggested that shared lounges facilitate companionship by providing residents with a 'big space' for social events (bigger than most domestic living rooms can accommodate). Informants from another chalet acknowledged moaning a lot about the building, but conceded that social community is the most important thing, implying it was strong. Feedback suggested that owners appreciated the shared lounge being 'controlled' by managers, particularly as respondents had little prior experience of communal domestic space. Respondents made positive associations with hotel lobbies; a useful and luxurious image for the developer and residents alike (when describing it to others), though suggestive of the shared lounge being considered a place *away* from home, rather than *at* home. It was also apparent that occupation of the shared lounge depended upon a structured and facilitated programme of events, led by the manager, with notable quiet periods outside of office hours. Indeed, Lindsey was only too aware of her custodianship of the shared lounge. Similarly she recognised Sam's anecdotes of 'conscientious objectors' who spoke of avoiding the lounge and "of them that sit in those chairs by the door" and other assertions of wellness or "being too active for this place".¹⁰⁶ Lindsey recalled a shortlist of owners at Morecambe Chalet, including one that had been moved here by her family and a younger couple that recently moved out (claiming they had been led to believe that there would be more 'younger' people moving in). On the whole, however, a cohesive and happy community is apparent; a social cohesion that can be largely accredited to Lindsey's hard work.

The afternoon passed by uneventfully. A few owners were outside enjoying the sun on the terrace, while the gardeners were hard at work. Lindsey wandered out to check on progress – the box hedges were being trimmed, and the lawn was looking tidy – all taking shape for Wednesday's party. She passed by the owners, but was careful not to disturb their peace. Lindsey is mindful that her job is not to 'check in' with people such that they should feel 'minded' or surveilled. A little small talk, yes; about the activities before them or speculation on the weather, but enquiring about their visitors, for

¹⁰⁶ See Story 4: Resident Owner ('Gladys'), p.155-7

instance, begins to feel overly familiar or borderline invasive. Ending her rounds, Lindsey called in at the shared lounge and loaded her coffee cup into the dishwasher. She then tidied her desk, set the phone on charge and reached for her bag behind the office door. Lindsey had a short walk to her car, it being parked off-site (company policy), and from there a ten minutes' drive home.

Tuesday Morning

The next morning Lindsey was met by the cleaners waiting outside the front door. This lot were proving to be more suitable than the last. The previous firm treated the chalet like an office contract, and failed to understand why it was unacceptable to clean early in the morning or late at night. Lindsey recalled problems with cleaners vacuuming the lounge whilst it was being used – owners felt that they were being quite literally swept aside. The new team understand the importance of timing – they need to be in and out of the lounge before owners come downstairs. By half past ten on Tuesdays the ladies start to congregate for elevenses and the weekly knit and natter get together. Knowing that the lounge would soon spring to life, Lindsey turned her attention to some paper work and email correspondence. Like the cleaners she had to be strategic about what work she did when. At this moment she was emailing her regional manager, confirming a date for meeting all the owners to discuss parking. This had been a sticky issue since the opening of the chalet, as spaces had been calculated on a one-to-three ratio (i.e. 13 spaces for 40 apartments). The first-come-first-served policy presents ongoing cause for complaint. In her email Lindsey explains that “people are creatures of habit and want to park in the same place each day”. Tensions recently arose with the arrival of a ‘newcomer’ to Morecambe Chalet – a driver – moving into a re-sale apartment on the ground floor overlooking the car park. Some owners feel that the system should prioritise those that moved in first, while others are critical of the newcomer, saying “the lady with the smallest car parks in the best space [the most accessible] but has not driven since moving in”.¹⁰⁷ Following a period of resentment and a spate of harsh words towards the newcomer, Lindsey facilitated a discussion that led to owners drawing up a proposal to reconfigure the car park, adding a new space. Lindsey needed her manager to approve the proposal and release funds to carry out the work.

¹⁰⁷ Anonymous [Resident Owner], pers. comm. [interview], Worthing, 13 July 2015

Right on cue at half past ten, the ladies – always ladies at knit and natter – started to assemble in the lounge, taking up their usual corner, close to the windows for light, and within easy reach of the kitchen. Sam was also in attendance, using this opportunity to 'recruit' informants. For him the knitting club constituted an 'unstructured' focus group. From Lindsey's point of view, Sam appeared prepared for the conversation to go in multiple directions, often at the same time. He later conceded that the discussion better served as an 'introduction' and that he would follow up with in-depth interviews. Lindsey offered to help Sam contact a diverse range of owners, including men who rarely enter the lounge and other hard-to-reach individuals. Meanwhile the knit and natter group delivered some lively exchanges of ideas and opinion. Lindsey was present for part of the discussion and was amused by the group's suggestion for a hot tub in the garden. She also heard familiar concerns and wishes, including a need for a better local bus service; dreams of 'care-on-tap'; the apartment toilets being too low; and a lack of storage both inside and outside apartments. The women also shared their respective decision-making processes prior to moving to Morecambe Chalet. They wholeheartedly disputed the notion that the chalet was a 'needs-based product'; each reporting to have made a positive choice to move. Lindsey suggested that company executives had an "outdated view of their product and the market"; that people are "not all moving here in a time of crisis". Evidencing her position Lindsey named a couple of owners who like to travel – cruises, safaris and the like – stating that they "really appreciate knowing that their home is safe whilst they are away". In fact Lindsey has an arrangement with one couple that she will check on their water tank each week whilst they are away. She then got to her feet as if to exercise her obligation.

Design Review

In a quiet moment Lindsey quizzed Sam some more on the nature of his research. By way of further explanation Sam shared work based on two other chalets – product review reports – that included photographs and drawings, as well as detailed feedback from the owners (the things they liked and so on). It struck Lindsey that managers were not being consulted, formally at least. Surely, she thought, managers have a good deal of valuable feedback to offer to a product review; each has a depth of knowledge and experience from working with the building and its respective owners on a daily basis. Lindsey felt 'unheard' as an expert witness. On a more positive note she really valued seeing how other chalets tackle common issues. Lindsey was particularly intrigued by

the photographic surveys, which gave her some ideas for the entrance lobby at Morecambe Chalet (wall pictures, setting out chairs for waiting and so on). Lindsey said that she would like to see more chalets and, “it would be interesting to see how new ideas get taken up with each development”. Lindsey wondered whether it would be possible for chalet managers to be invited to opening events – an idea Sam promised to raise with head office. Likewise, Sam was to ask permission to share his report on Morecambe Chalet with Lindsey.

Lindsey was particularly interested to see alternative designs for the entrance area and manager’s office. She was surprised to learn that her office was not the smallest, and that there were offices without windows, remarking, “I can’t imagine having to watch the entrance on a CCTV camera”. Lindsey’s office is a separate room off the shared lounge, which is something she prefers over the new-style concierge desk found in newer chalets. She considers the office more secure and remarked that “the owners cannot reach over the counter and answer the phone out of hours”. In a way, her setup affords a more direct and visual connection with owners. Whereas Lindsey perceives the manager to be less visible at the new chalets, reporting that “they are seated behind the desk – all you see is the top of their head”. Lindsey reflected, “of course some managers prefer to be further away from the lounge, but I am quite happy being nearby”. However, there are times when this adjacency and close proximity is a disadvantage. For instance, Lindsey recalled owners calling to her across the shared lounge whilst she was on the phone. There are also occasions when it can get a bit too noisy, such as during card games or large gatherings, and sometimes the TV can be a distraction. Lindsey does at least have the option to shut the office door, though she is wary about ‘sending the wrong message’. On reflection she thinks that the office door could have opened into the entrance lobby (in her chalet at least), with a fixed window through to the shared lounge. Regardless, Lindsey’s main criticism is that the office is too small to receive visitors, particularly for a private chat with distressed owners or confidential discussion with colleagues. At present she depends on quiet moments in the shared lounge and/or visiting owners in their apartments.

Another design idea stood out for Lindsey: ‘resting places’ at the corridor ends and intermediate locations. Being a frequent user of the chalet’s corridors, Lindsey was keen to see them enhanced in some way, even if that just meant a lighter paint scheme or

carpet. She considered them to be “dark and somewhat barren” and had observed that they were wider in newer developments. Lindsey could see that making opportunities for windows and seating places at the end of the corridors made a lot of sense. Lindsey reported that another chalet manager “had a problem with trapped food smells, and not being able to ventilate parts of the corridor”. Lindsey added, “the corridor on their top floor can also get quite hot with the sun coming through the roof lights”. For Lindsey there was a clear case for open-able windows at the corridor ends; even better would be doors leading to roof terraces. She noted that seating at strategic points along the corridor would “help to make them feel more homely”. Lindsey also reported that some of the residents use the corridors to exercise, stating that “they go in a loop, down one stair and up the other”. In these terms the corridor is much more than a means for getting from A to B. In fact some owners spend more time travelling the corridors than sitting in the shared lounge. Similarly, researchers examining local authority old people’s homes found that the fitter – and most typically male – residents used the main circulation routes for exercise and for chatting.¹⁰⁸

A Quiet Afternoon

The lounge fell silent around lunchtime and remained so for the rest of the afternoon, but for one visitor. He strolled in around three o’clock, completely unannounced. Bold as brass he entered through the garden doors, marched along the carpet towards Lindsey’s desk and inspected the room. Lindsey caught sight of him in her peripheral vision and lifting her head instinctively began to clap her hands – ‘shoo, shoo, SHOO’! The seagull took fright and flapped its way back towards the doors, just as Tom entered, his hands blackened from working on his bike. The gull was surrounded and began to break into a jog, orbiting a cluster of wingback chairs and coffee table. Seeing what was going on Tom stepped away from the doors and waved his arms as if to signal his flight in the opposite direction. The gull blustered on, dropping a few small feathers as it changed direction, and eventually took cover beneath the puzzle table. Tom and Lindsey stood still, signalling to one another their next moves. They conjoined and began to advance towards the gull, directing his renewed and frantic wanderings in a straight line towards the door. At last the gull caught sight of the sky and stretched its wings to leave

¹⁰⁸ Dianne Willcocks, Shelia Peace and Leonie Kallaher, *Private Lives in Public Spaces: A research-based critique of residential life in local authority old people’s homes* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1987) p.95

the building, its flight aided by a gentle sea breeze. Tom and Lindsey immediately fell about laughing. ‘Well, whatever next?!’ said Lindsey. Tom could not resist an opportunity to tease: ‘You ought to write another one of your notices – Birds Prohibited’. Or ‘Pets to be kept on leads at all times!’ Lindsey chimed in, “I expect you’ll want one for the trees in the car park too – ‘No Loitering. No defecating’!” Lindsey was aware of her reputation as a civil enforcement officer, a role partly bestowed on her by owners.



Figure 9: Chalet Manager Notices

At around half past three Lindsey was called up to an apartment due to a noise complaint. On entering Henry’s apartment the problem was loud and clear – the television from the apartment below was blaring out. Poor Henry could hear every word of David Attenborough’s *Explorations of Life on Earth*. Lindsey was empathetic and offered to visit Hannah downstairs. Lindsey had previously been in contact with Hannah’s family members who assured her that they were looking into a few options; starting with a pair of cordless headphones, which were due to arrive any day now, and

an appointment with the doctor to talk about hearing aids. Lindsey went off to investigate. She thought she recalled a parcel being delivered last Friday. It may be the case that Hannah had received the headphones but was unsure how to ‘install’ them. Upon entering the corridor leading to Hannah’s apartment, Attenborough became audible once again, albeit this was not the only noise she could hear. Indeed, Lindsey was surprised that there were not more frequent complaints about noise, for it was not unusual to hear televisions, especially if owners kept their living room doors open. Sometimes on her rounds Lindsey heard conversations leaking out from under the front doors (not that she listened in). For instance, one could hear Pam feeding her cat at dinner time – her smooth voice and clatter of dishes in response to an urgent and persistent meowing! And just this morning Sam commented on waking up to a symphony of breakfast news bulletins! Thinking about it, whenever she stayed overnight she would hear doors slamming, like in a hotel.

Amazingly, Hannah had fallen asleep in front of her television and it took some time before Lindsey attracted her attention. Again nothing unusual here – owners often failed to hear their doorbell, in part because the apartments only have one sounder located in the hall. Nonetheless it was moments like this that Lindsey feared the worst and resisted going back to the safe to fetch her copy of Hannah’s apartment key. Since Hannah lives on the ground floor, Lindsey decided to walk round to the garden and knock on the windows. And so within a matter of minutes Lindsey had captured Hannah’s attention and Attenborough was silenced. Lindsey explained that Henry was having a tough time upstairs, while Hannah turned to reach into the cupboard under her television set, wherein she recovered the headphones wrapped up in cloth as though they were some ancient relic. At last, thought Lindsey, resolution was within sight. And in the relative quiet she heard Henry drag a chair across the floor above, while Hannah, oblivious to any background noise, recovered a set of instructions from a kitchen drawer.

On returning to her desk Lindsey reflected on the variety of challenges in her job. In particular she thought about the grey area between care and being helpful. Some might recognise the time she had spent with Hannah as a light form of social work; certainly the time spent discussing Hannah’s situation with her family is a form of advocacy, helping relatives to explore solutions to inadvertent anti-social behaviour, and sustain healthy relations between neighbours. Similarly, Lindsey recalls recommending respite

for a couple last year. In this instance Lindsey helped the husband access information and services at a time when he was becoming overwhelmed by the progression of his wife's dementia. In fact this kind of scenario was discussed at a recent training event for managers, acknowledging a greater emphasis on care in the community; one implication being a greater number of older people caring for other older people at home – a so called 'invisible but invaluable' workforce. In England in 2010, there were 959,836 recorded people aged 65 plus providing unpaid care to a partner, family member, or other person.¹⁰⁹ There is a growing concern that these workers are equally vulnerable and often socially isolated. Thus chalet managers may reasonably find themselves on the front line spotting difficulties at home.

Police!

Lindsey was in the stairwell moving trestle tables out from storage when there was a buzz at the front door. Two officers had arrived to discuss the recent bike theft and measures to make the chalet environment more secure. In her busyness, Lindsey had forgotten they were due today. The tables would have to be dealt with in the morning. At least then there would be some help at hand to carry the tables through the shared lounge to the garden terrace. Lindsey hotfooted to the front door and welcomed the officers into the shared lounge (another instance where she could use a private interview room). Fortunately the space was empty and they were able to use the corner table; two factors Lindsey was grateful for as the conversation unfolded and entered into cost-sensitive areas. In particular, the officers were insisting on the merits of a garden side gate, saying that the presence of a physical barrier, regardless of whether it is lockable, will deter opportunistic criminals. Their message was clear: do not underestimate the psychological power of the gate that marks a public-private threshold. Nonetheless, Lindsey knew that CMS would not be prepared to pay for the installation. She also knew that the owners would be dissatisfied with this as a response. Speaking in hushed tones Lindsey explained her position, and while drawing the meeting to a close, promised to take up the issue with her area manager once again. And so at the end of a long day, Lindsey returned to her email and drafted a quick message to her boss. She already knew what the response would be, but felt she had a duty to the owners.

¹⁰⁹ Figures from Projecting Older People Population Information System, Department of Health. Cited in: AgeUK, *Invisible but Invaluable: Campaigning for Greater Support for Older Carers*, (London: AgeUK, 2010)

Regardless of her point of view, Lindsey would have to position herself against the company she represents so as to maintain a good rapport with the people she serves.

Wednesday, Mourning

On arriving at work Lindsey discovered a handwritten note that had been slipped under the door of her office. Jack, an older man in his nineties, had passed away in the night. Jack, in his own words, had been slowly going ‘downhill’ for the past six months, and had recently become bedbound. Lindsey knew this much, as his wife – Emma – was considering installing a hoist and tracking at ceiling level to link the bedroom and shower room¹¹⁰ – an idea since dismissed due to prohibitive costs and general unsuitability of the shower room. Jack was a proud and somewhat private man, yet Lindsey had been in regular contact through Emma who was going about her daily errands, getting in the groceries and so on. Emma’s brief note requested that Lindsey kindly visit the apartment as soon as possible. Whilst unexpected, Lindsey was quite prepared for this eventuality. Dealing with death was part of the job, albeit she had no formal role to perform. She would provide a little advocacy, by directing Emma towards local services, and liaise with the undertakers in the practical matters of parking and movement through the building. For instance, she knew from experience that the chalet’s lift was too small for a coffin (or stretcher for that matter). The usual ‘final exit’ was down the fire escape stairs, a pity thought Lindsey as they are very gloomy spaces (the dark brickwork, metal railings and uncovered pipes made them look and feel a bit like a carpark). This route also involved some amount of co-ordination in terms of managing a dignified and timely departure. Typically, Lindsey would determine a quiet time in the shared lounge and walk ahead to open the doors, making sure nobody inadvertently got in the way. Of course this was the day of the garden party! Lindsey collected her thoughts and went in the direction of Jack and Emma’s apartment.

Word spread fast, particularly as people were gathering to make final arrangements for the garden party – setting up chairs, tables and umbrellas. Tom, self-appointed head barman, had been up since the crack of dawn running through the drinks inventory one last time. He and a handful of others were now discussing the news of Jack’s death, and

¹¹⁰ As per Lifetime Homes Design Criteria 13, in Chris Goodman/Habinteg Housing Association, *The Lifetime Homes Design Guide* (London:IHS BRE Press, 2011)

after a little deliberation unanimously decided to postpone the party to another day. Put simply they were uncomfortable with ‘merriment making’ whilst Emma was grieving and receiving visitors. On this basis the group galvanised into alternative actions: two started knocking on apartment doors; two went out to the neighbours; and two began to pack up furniture and make the lounge look ‘respectful’. They would need Lindsey’s help in contacting the chalet on the other side of town, as well as post appropriate notices on the front door.

Lindsey was looking into the availability of the guest suite should any family members want to stay over the next few days. Sam meanwhile was packed-up and preparing to check out. Under the circumstances he felt an early departure was appropriate. Lindsey suggested he go across town and catch the other chalet’s regular fish and chip lunch, and come again for the garden party at Morecambe Chalet another day. She would email him with the new date. Sam prepared to leave as Lindsey started to call round and inform others of the recent bereavement at Morecambe Chalet. She was interrupted by the delivery of a crate of wine addressed to apartment number 12 – “for Pam” – for her eightieth birthday party on Friday. Lindsey waved goodbye to Sam and reached for the phone once again.

Conclusion

This research story has shown that the role of the chalet manager is socially complex and at a times contradictory, being positioned in-between the developer and its customers. The manager is inherently bound to his or her employer, yet needs to develop and sustain a rapport with resident owners. The chalet manager is customer facing, but not necessarily customer-serving, at least not to the levels that some expect. There is a fine line between customer care and healthcare. And an inherent risk that good will and advocacy may stray into the realms of companionship or soft forms of pastoral care and support. Indeed, some prospective resident owners and their family members expect more, perhaps subconsciously equating the chalet manager role to that of wardens in sheltered housing and residential homes.

In-between the lines of this research story the reader may observe quiet hints of the institution that providers and occupiers of retirement chalets purport to be avoiding. For instance, the implicit need for a chalet manager to structure and facilitate social events,

through the production and dissemination of timetables and notices; assistance with rearranging furniture and storing occasional tables and chairs; and generally providing social encouragement and prompts to attend. Indeed, one might question whether the fish and chip supper is contingent on the manager nominating a time and collecting everyone's food order. Furthermore, the photographic survey captured a plethora of notices to owner residents, advising and instructing on the proper use of shared facilities. These are visual manifestations of a quiet authority that choreographs common usage, generally maintaining a sense of order and cleanliness, particularly over the shared spaces – garden, lounge, kitchen, laundry and refuse area – that fall outside the jurisdiction of private apartments and, to some extent, the life experiences of the residents who are learning to live communally.

The story equally underlines the depth of knowledge that chalet managers hold, with real potential to be equal stakeholders in an ongoing process of design consultation that listens and attends to user experiences in and around the retirement chalet. Through the reportage of manager feedback, and in-between the lines of the story, one could establish an architectural brief, identifying several design opportunities or areas where the existing chalet product could be 'tweaked'. For instance, the design of the shared lounge and communal areas could be finely tuned to better support resident owners' needs and aspirations for retirement-living. In these terms, further investment in design and the physical environment could help to underpin and enhance the social architecture that the product offers.

Vignette VI

Chalet Working

This vignette speaks to the Chalet Manager story, in support of the social architecture and advocacy/ soft care services that were facilitated by the manager. It first explores three kinds of work environment - internal office; adjacent office; concierge desk - that serve as a base or centre of gravity for the manager whose day is largely spent on their feet, moving around the chalet and its grounds. The vignette also presents two key spaces - the laundry and refuse room - that are under the jurisdiction of managers, plus a photographic record of a central working practice - notifying residents. The vignette closes with a proposed 'service menu'; an early research output that explored the potential for value added customer service in the context of the retirement-living development.



In one case study development the Chalet Manager considered their office 'a cupboard'; a small internal room, without a window, except for the glazed door onto the corridor. The room has no direct physical communication with the entrance or shared lounge. Here the only view the manager has of the entrance is via one security camera and monitor. They cannot see the grounds.

Vignette VI
Chalet Working
~ Internal Office ~



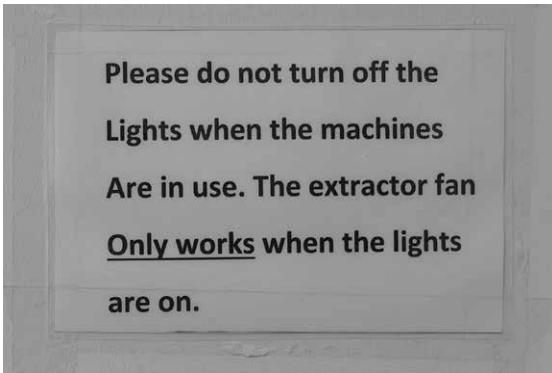
In one case study development the Chalet Manager's office was a room adjacent to the shared lounge. It would be considered an 'inner room' in terms of fire regulations, albeit it has daylight and ventilation, with a window overlooking the site entrance. The office also had an internal window looking into the shared lounge. Here the manager sometimes felt 'too close' to residents and from time to time struggled with noise from lounge activities such as fish-and-chip lunches.

Vignette VI
Chalet Working
~ Adjacent Office ~



In one case study Chalet (and new developments generally) the Chalet Manager's space takes the form of a concierge desk and back office by the main entrance. This device further borrows from the world of hospitality, giving the entrance a stronger identity and sense of supervision for visitors - friends, family members, trade-persons, delivery staff, taxi drivers and so on.

Vignette VI
Chalet Working
~ Concierge Desk ~



This aspect of the Chalet Manager's practice - notifying residents - is made visible on the walls and doors of the chalet. There is a variety of notices ranging from social postings on the notice board to 'polite notices' conveying instructions and/or advice on the use of chalet facilities.

Vignette VI
Chalet Working
~ Notifying ~



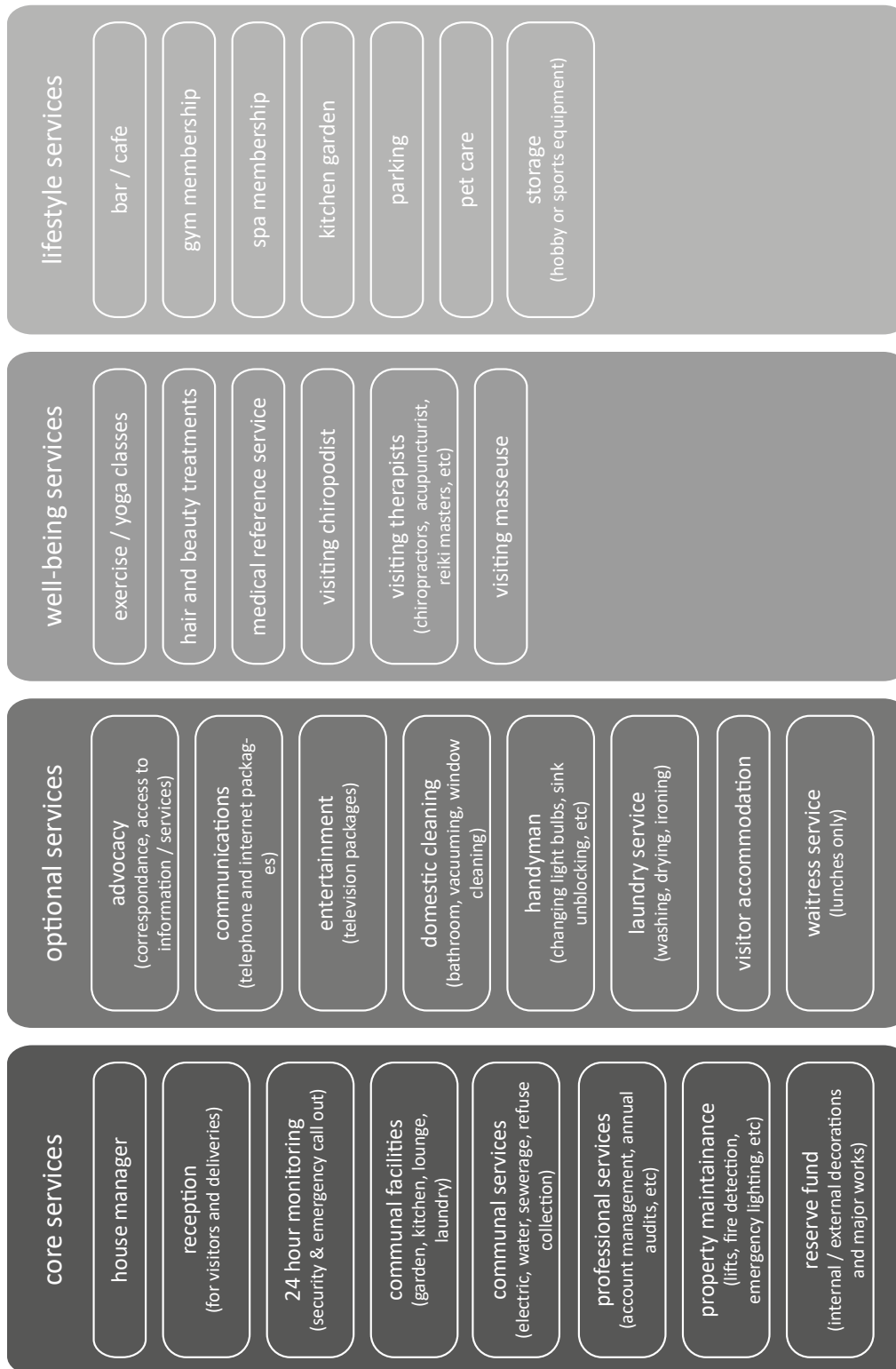
A key space overseen by the Chalet Manager.

Vignette VI
Chalet Working
 ~ Laundry Room ~



A key space overseen by the Chalet Manager.

Vignette VI
Chalet Working
~ Refuse Room ~



An early output from the research that reflects how care services are constantly evolving in innovative ways to meet current needs - physical, cognitive or otherwise. The author prepared a preliminary 'services menu', outlining a range of existing and possible services offered by retirement home providers. These are organised into four service categories – core, optional, well-being and lifestyle – which broadly occupy the territory between home-based services and more intensive care environments such as Extra Care centres and traditional nursing homes.

Vignette VI
Chalet Working
 ~ Service Menu ~

SECTION REFLECTIONS

In this section three stories were brought together to focus attention on a single subject – Pink & Knight’s retirement-living developments – albeit with different emphases, reflecting the contrasting positions of provider, consumer and end-user. In *Developer Director* the emphasis was on a saleable *product* that is the result of standardised design and construction processes, combined with customer services. In *Resident Owner*, meanwhile, the emphasis was on a *dwelling place* that was appraised for its suitability in meeting the residential and social needs of older people. Whereas, in *Chalet Manager* the emphasis was on an *environment*; a place of work that requires maintenance and servicing. In some respects, these stories contrast the different actions of producing and consuming, albeit the chalet manager was found to be involved in both – being situated in-between provider and consumer – and owners were found to be acting as resident designers, reshaping the shared lounge to suit their communal needs. The role of ‘designer’ is further explored within section three of this thesis, which examines professionals acting within the retirement-living sector.

Before proceeding, it is worth noting the significance of this section within the thesis, inasmuch that it represents a significant proportion of the fieldwork undertaken, having drawn directly from the applied work packages and product-review activities for the research sponsor. Another aspect worth underlining is the risk of extrapolating findings for the retirement-living sector from research that is focused on one subject – the retirement chalet. A significant limitation in this research is that resident owners have literally and emotionally bought into a retirement chalet, and as such have a vested interest in making it work. Indeed, it could be said that these older people have moved from a ‘taste of necessity’¹¹¹ towards one of ‘fantasy’, inasmuch they are being drawn – by marketing, the availability of credit and property wealth, and an assumed extended period of retirement – towards an aspirational product that promotes ‘independence’, and thereby suspends thinking on ‘assistance’ in later life. In these terms it is hard for informants to both criticise their new environment and visualise alternatives to better

¹¹¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1984)

suit an aged version of themselves. Nonetheless, it was noted that informants – when asked the right questions, in the right way – could offer critical feedback.

Lastly, the design of Pink & Knight's product has been a significant feature of this section, and the research has uncovered some surprising findings in terms of design deficiencies, particularly regarding accessibility to and within retirement chalets. These are surprising given the developer's market position and respective marketing campaigns predicated on 'specialist' housing and exclusively catering for older people. Furthermore, many of the identified design compromises could be easily resolved through considerate architectural specification of products and constructional detailing. For instance, the selection of appropriate kitchen and sanitary ware, and general attention to door thresholds and ironmongery. The next section of the thesis looks more closely at design activity and the design professionals invested in the retirement-living sector.

SECTION 3: PROFESSIONALS

This section focuses on professional actors, presenting contrasting positions of architecture students, as prospective professionals; inhouse architects working for Pink & Knight; and local authority town planners, evaluating Pink & Knight developments. In *Architecture Student*, design teaching is presented as a situated research practice, involving dialogic work with emerging products of architecture and their respective authors. The story reflects upon student approaches to developing designs for older people. Whereas, *Company Architect* reports on interactions with architectural staff at Pink & Knight's head office. Here poetic representation afforded retrospective sense-making of episodic encounters, including a design review where students presented designs for a Pink & Knight development site. *Town Planner* presents an apparently hard-to-reach, yet critical actor, mediating commercial interests of developers with those of the wider public. It includes a part-fictionalised account of a planning inquiry relating to a Pink & Knight scheme.

STORY 6: ARCHITECTURE STUDENT

Synopsis

This story captures the position of the architecture student responding to the dual challenges of housing design and accommodating an aged population. The story is situated in the Celtic School of Architecture (CSA) and reports on the design and research outputs of a second-year student design studio, called ‘Ageing Town’, as well as higher-level learning outcomes regarding students’ terms of reference and how they think about designing for older people. It posits that the academic design studio can provide a space to explore research methodologies, involving short-term ‘cultural immersion’¹ or ‘empathic modelling’² and other fast ethnographic techniques, resulting in meaningful engagements, with potential to generate knowledge *for* and *from* design. In particular, the story references ‘semantic ethnography’³ as a method available to design students.

The story presents August, a composite character representing several undergraduate students taught by the author during the academic session 2015-16. August’s gender varies, sometimes as a direct consequence of informant quotations and viewpoints, but more so for a true representation of the student sample. The story also captures something of the author’s position, as an architectural educator, since his voice speaks directly to the reader through retrospective first-person narration. Furthermore, the author engages a reflective practitioner mode of writing when analysing teaching activities that he led or participated in. Regardless, the story considers the learning environment of architecture student (under- or post-graduate) in relation to designing housing with older people placed front of mind.

¹ Brian Canfield, Lori Low and Alan Hovestadt, ‘Cultural Immersion as a Learning Method for Expanding Intercultural Competencies’, *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 17.4 (2009), 318-322

² Colette Nicolle and Martin Maguire, *Empathic Modelling in Teaching Design for All* (Loughborough: Ergonomics and Safety Research Institute, c.2003)
<<https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/dspace-jspui/bitstream/2134/722/1/PUB184%20Empathic%20Modelling.%20pdf>> [accessed 18 January 2016]

³ Galen Cranz, *Ethnography for Designers* (New York: Routledge, 2016)

Methods

Through this research story I present design teaching as a situated research practice, involving dialogic work – ‘a kind of exchange’⁴ – with emerging products of architecture and their respective authors. Design teaching is inherently dialogic, involving regular one-to-one discussions with students, sharing ideas, developing design narratives, as well as rehearsing presentations and refining drawings and models. In this instance, the Ageing Town studio involved 20 students and 2 members of staff, meeting weekly for a period of 12 weeks. Two of the meetings comprised interim and final design reviews or ‘crits’⁵, involving student presentations to their peer group and a panel of invited experts from the fields of gerontology, design research and architectural practice. The latter were formally recorded through feedback proformas and student scribe sheets, while tutorials were recorded through visual notes, diagrams, sketches and drawing annotations. The students’ work, while formally ‘theirs’, is also a visual record of a kind of collaborative design process.

Student voices were primarily captured through a mini focus group that was conducted one month after the final design review. Five respondents were selected (convenience sampling) and were asked to reflect on learning outcomes from engaging with the studio’s agenda and their respective design projects. Principal questions were: what have you learnt? What have you learnt about older people / housing / developer-led and specialist housing? And how do you think Pink & Knight might value the work of the studio? The focus group had the dynamic of a friendship circle or small family (students knew each other and their respective projects very well), and so the discussion was natural and lively at times. Clearly the researcher was not a neutral observer in this instance, having directed the work of the studio and established a rapport with the students (I might be counted a participant observer). Nonetheless a receptive attitude was assumed, as opposed to being instructive or professing, and the researcher consciously applied a persistent questioning or ‘ladder’⁶ interview technique to tease out

⁴ Alison Shreeve, Ellen Sims and Paul Trowler, ‘A Kind of Exchange: Learning from Art and Design Teaching’, *Higher Education Research & Development*, 29.2 (2010), 125-138

⁵ A disciplinary-specific pedagogic tool and “well-established way of improving the quality of design outcomes in the built environment” [CABE, *Design Review: Principles and Practice* (London: Design Council, 2013)]

⁶ A technique developed by qualitative researchers in advertising and product design. See: Thomas Reynolds and Jonathan Gutman, ‘Laddering Theory, Method, Analysis, and Interpretation’, *Journal of Advertising Research*, Feb/March (1988)

underlying values and meanings in what the participants learnt through their design research and practice. Additional student voices were captured through coursework submissions for a parallel architectural history and theory module to which I contributed a mini lecture series on housing, including content and an essay question related to my research. Further attitudes were drawn from headnotes committed during the semester and from longer-term teaching experience.

A significant limit to data collection, particularly from students, was that the research was only tangential to the Ageing Town studio. Students, as well as tutors and critics, were primarily committed to meeting a pedagogic agenda, with real world applications being a bonus or by-product. Readers should remember that students were not formally selected, nor appointed research assistants as part of a commissioned research team. Similarly, the students were very much at the beginning of their professional journey and lacking in the general competencies expected of architects or researchers. Indeed, this was the first time they had designed a housing scheme, let alone considered a ‘specialist’ one targeting an unfamiliar user group. Students were gaining fundamental design experience and naturally struggling with the complexities of designing a contextual response to a challenging site, while handling a complex programme and relatively large building volume. Likewise, students were developing core skills in architectural representation, akin to non-native speakers learning a new language. In these terms, it was necessary to filter student feedback on their learning, since they tended to report uplift in basic skills, including digital drafting. The researcher sought to mitigate this by setting up the focus group and by adopting a ladder interview technique to pursue research-relevant data.

My reflective practice was part facilitated through weekly discussions with an external teaching partner – before, during and in-between teaching days – as well as critical discussion with colleagues teaching parallel tutor groups. Discussions ranged in depth and means, with some conducted in-person or over the phone and others by group email. The latter were invaluable to the researcher, since they made possible a verbatim account of how a live project brief was reviewed and fleshed-out in real time. I also depended upon memory of critical issues and threshold moments in the studio projects. To some extent, the eventual shape and characteristics of the students’ output also bears silent witness to cyclical design processes, with drawings and models serving as vivid

aide memoires for tutors, helping to resurface background dialogues. In addition, feedback from visiting critics was captured through a combination of design review notes issued to students, as well as notes from personal conversations, email correspondence and formal interviews. Furthermore, I could review personal notes on feedback received at an international conference, following a presentation of studio work and a corresponding research paper.⁷ Indeed, the paper helped to shape reflections on the work and some content has been brought to this story.

Background

The CSA emphasises a holistic, integrated approach to design, based on a thorough understanding of how buildings are made, how they are used and their impact on the wider world, including the cultural, social and physical contexts. The BSc in Architectural Studies programme is therefore based on and responsive to real world agendas and issues, such as the UK housing crisis and European population ageing. CSA undergraduates first encounter housing during semester one of second year, through the Architectural Design module (colloquially known as ‘studio’) and linked history-theory and technology lectures. Typically four thematic design studios are offered, allowing students to pursue their own interests within a coherent and legible framework. Each studio centres on a particular place, each with a theme appropriate to that place. The 2015 second year studios and their respective themes were: *Ageing Town* – social architecture; *Riverine Town* – designing with nature; *Town & Garden* – sensory architecture; *Craft Town* – tectonic form and culture.

Each studio nuanced a common curriculum and agenda that asked students to study a small town and develop contextually responsive housing schemes. *Ageing Town* studied an old UK town – an ancient settlement with a medieval street pattern – where Pink & Knight was planning a new development. The town is also home to a significant number of older town-folk, which for the purposes of the studio was considered representative

⁷ Sam Clark, ‘Towards the Reflective Developer: Design Approaches Outside the Conflictive Context of Developer-Led Gentrification, With Lessons from the Architecture Studio’. Presented at: *Housed by Choice, Housed by Force*, The Cyprus Institute, 21-22 January 2015, Nicosia.

of the UK.⁸ The research has found that visions – as opposed to ‘concerns’ – for ageing are beginning to emerge from UK architectural discourse; part stimulated by the RIBA *Silver Linings* report, outlining scenarios for how towns and cities may evolve and respond positively to the needs and aspirations of ‘active third agers’.⁹ ‘Aspiration’ being the operative word, for research and media rhetoric also tells us that ‘last-time’ buyers are trapped at the top of the housing ladder, with too few compelling options for downsizing or more appropriate housing generally. *Ageing Town* explored aspirational models of ‘age-friendly’ housing. The studio was ‘grounded’ by the constraints of a real development site, and further informed by a field trip to local alms housing, where students interacted with residents and toured individual homes. Critical feedback was also invited from external experts, including an architect from Pink & Knight.

Career Prospects

Before unpacking more of the setting of this story it is worth reflecting on the wider professional context that August has entered. Pedagogically speaking August has been accepted at the peripheries of the profession, and over time will develop a mastery through processes of ‘situated learning’ and ‘learning by doing’, travelling towards a supposed centre of expertise.¹⁰ To date, August has an excellent academic profile, having met CSA’s entry requirements of three ‘A’s at A-Level or equivalent, and achieved a mid- 2:1 classification in the first year of architectural studies. August is nonetheless naïve to societal and/or professional challenges, such as the UK housing crisis, a growing population of older people, and the ever-changing role and status of the architect. As such, August has overly optimistic ideas about the power of the architect and the potential for his/her architectural agency to answer big societal challenges.

From my previous experience chairing first year I deduce that August has both creative and altruistic motivations for becoming an architect; she wants to ‘make the world a better place’ and he wants to ‘build’ something lasting and impressive. Entrants to the

⁸ In retrospect ‘*Ageing Town-folk*’ would have been a better name for the studio. From the outset there was a desire for the thematic studios to be universally concerned about ‘place’ and material/spatial physicality.

⁹ See Introduction (Architectural Practice Context), p. 6-7.

¹⁰ Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)

UK profession will know and admire the work of Sir Norman Foster and the late Dame Zaha Hadid. Indeed, students often imagine a ‘starchitect’ future for themselves, and to some extent this image is pedalled by the architectural academy. Students are expected to analyse the works of the architectural canon and reference acclaimed projects when developing their own work. In this way they associate themselves with ‘greatness’ from the outset. Of course, deference to architectural ‘heroes’ helps in another way, as academic Andrew Saint explains,

*“Another use of hero-worship is that it reduces technical and complex operations to human comprehensibility. The picture of Norman Foster piloting his helicopter away from a site meeting sums up an elaborate and often dull business in an attractive way”.*¹¹

Young architecture students like August could also be said to have recently departed a lay public; seemingly excited by architectural icons that are often nicknamed by the media, based on form alone.¹² Within wider society there is an apparent correlation between architectural presence – acrobatic form, material expenditure, scale, and so on – and the volume of media coverage leading to a wider public consciousness of architecture and architects. Hence the dream commission for an architect, or the collective architectural office, is the big public building with a generous budget and client. Few architects aspire – nor manage for that matter – to make public acclaim through housing. Even fewer associate themselves with disadvantaged groups, such as the ‘elderly’. In fact architectural researchers at Columbia University believe that, with regards to designing for older people, “architects disassociate themselves from all things senior because their work needs to represent the timely and contemporary”.¹³ Mark Wigley, architect and former Dean at Columbia University, describes an age-phobic discipline:

¹¹ Andrew Saint, *Theory Lectures by Andrew Saint, Michaelmas 2000: Notes for Revision* (Unpublished: Cambridge, 2000)

¹² London’s skyline is said to have a Dome, Gherkin, Cheese-grater, Shard, Walkie-Talkie and so on.

¹³ C-Lab, ‘Grand Tour’, in *Volume 29: The Urban Conspiracy*, ed. by Jeffrey Inaba (Amsterdam: Stichting Archis, 2011), pp. 62-65 (p.62)

*“The paradox is that the architect will be at the height of his powers in his 70s in a discipline absolutely phobic about taking care of anything or anyone that is disadvantaged in any way. You have a group of people who tell themselves that they have wisdom because of their age who nonetheless can’t design and would never design for the aging. These are people marrying much younger women, flying their planes and helicopters, and generally doing anything they can to prove that they are a perfect combination of wisdom and youth”.*¹⁴

And so the same implicit design values and motivations are played out within architecture schools. Colleagues as much as students bias the public building project; the thermal baths situated in some remote idyll is always going to produce more beautiful drawings, and the centre for contemporary dance will always be more ‘fun’ to design (for the student *and* the tutor). It is also easier to be architecturally expressive where there is a big space, flexible programme (not tied to regulated spaces in support of specific domestic activities i.e. bedrooms, kitchens, bathrooms, etc.) or free façade (not contingent on duplication of units with similar number and size of windows and doors). Housing by contrast is necessarily cellular, human-scale and often formally repetitive. And yet homes and housing are the bread and butter for the majority of architectural practices. Few architects get the chance to design a ‘millennium’ centre funded by The National Lottery (the commissioning process being a lottery in itself, as the late Zaha Hadid infamously attested; being a victim of politics in Wales). Every architect, including a future qualified August, will plan a residential unit and wrestle with millimetres to accommodate domestic furniture. In my opinion, housing design could be a more significant or reoccurring feature of the architectural curriculum. Certainly the issues presented in *Ageing Town* could equally challenge graduate students, such is the complexity of housing.

Ageing Town

August elected to work within *Ageing Town* studio. His first choice was *Craft Town*, but it was oversubscribed due to a popular perception that it was the place for making

¹⁴ Linda Fried, ‘Blind Spots’, in *Volume 29: The Urban Conspiracy*, ed. by Jeffrey Inaba (Amsterdam: Stichting Archis, 2011), pp. 22-25 (p.24).

things (getting hands dirty). *Riverine Town* was equally popular, offering promise of adventure or risk (getting wet feet). I wonder if this reflects prevalent values of the profession (making and risk) or simply young people? And what does it say about how the ‘young’ think of the ‘old’? Curiously, women in the *Ageing Town* studio outnumbered men by 2:1. Similarly, women choosing the ‘housing’ option for their history-theory coursework outnumbered men 4:1.

August was not alone in his preferences. Therefore, our first task as tutors was to sell the benefits, and potential pleasures, of working within *Ageing Town*. My teaching partner extolled the merits of focusing on a particular user group and drew on his experiences practicing within the social housing sector, whilst I shared anecdotes and fieldwork experiences. We highlighted the importance of getting to know an active and aspirational older person market; an argument rehearsed by author and journalist, Ted C. Fishman:

“We’re really only in the first minute of an unprecedented change. We’ve only been at the longer life game for about 100 years and we’re at the point now where people are really old for the first time. There’s no real way we could’ve designed for it. A lot of this stuff wasn’t plan-able. Who expected life spans to grow by 2.5 years per decade? Having said that, the world is going to continue to go this way...”¹⁵

We also gave a hard sell on the applied nature of the studio, in which August and his colleagues would be required to face up to the real-world contingencies and commercial position of a borrowed industrial partner, Pink & Knight.

Research Outputs

The studio adopted a wasteland site purchased by Pink & Knight, located within the centre of a historic UK market town. August and her contemporaries (20 in total) undertook a holistic assessment of the town and site, including a review of ‘age-friendly’ characteristics and potentialities. Key outputs were case study reportage of

¹⁵ Ted Fishman, ‘Shock of Gray’, in *Volume 29: The Urban Conspiracy*, ed. by Jeffrey Inaba (Amsterdam: Stichting Archis, 2011), pp. 68-71 (p.68).

local alms housing, including filmed discussions with older residents; infographics generated from survey data collected from older shoppers at a major supermarket; archival material, including historic maps, photos of major events within living memory; a photomontage of memories collected from older people; age-friendly urban mappings, identifying accessible toilets, good places to walk, sit and cross roads; a physical model of the townscape (1:500 scale), revealing the structure and topography of the town (high street, market square, water courses, and so on), and accompanying cross sections of the town in context (1:2500 scale). The students were then asked to design housing schemes *for* or *with* older people in mind. Pink & Knight provided access to its site and survey information, whilst its proposal drawings were withheld so as not to lead the students.

In essence the students took up a privileged position, being able to proceed outside the socioeconomic conflictive context of developer-led gentrification; free from conflicts of interest that emanate from development control, public consultation, marketing, construction and commercial concerns, such as return-on-investment calculations and profit margins. Conversely, it could be said that August and her colleagues proceeded inexpertly, having no previous experience or reference points; without the financial and professional resources of a profitable company, including a back catalogue of similar projects and access to ready-made drawings, and working within a relatively short time frame. Nonetheless, too much knowledge and an existing infrastructure can be constraining. Indeed August remarked that “the more Pink & Knight build, the harder it must become to change its standard product”¹⁶ – to innovate in other words. The students had a greater degree of freedom. No client. No building project. Pink & Knight’s standard product was offered for reference – a starting point only for students inexperienced in housing design.

Design Outputs

Students were encouraged to consider divergent responses to accommodating older people, explore conceptual ideas and ambitious design strategies. For example, August and a number of his colleagues sought to reveal an existing, culverted watercourse and establish a ‘blue’ walking and cycling route through the urban block. Students also

¹⁶ Anonymous Respondent, pers. comm. [Focus Group (n=6)], CSA, 12 January 2016

sought to create areas of public open space – courtyards, gardens and play areas – and their housing schemes included publicly accessible cafés and meeting spaces, generally beyond what a developer would be comfortable with. Similarly, students explored alternative planning strategies, irrespective of surface-area to volume ratios, such as placing buildings along the site perimeter, forming interior streets and internal courtyards. In doing so they challenged national planning guidance, which decrees minimum distances between opposing windows of habitable rooms. Students also reinterpreted building regulations and adopted ‘European’ flat layouts with fewer fire partitions. They explored a range of unit types – apartments of varying sizes, micro-townhouses and maisonettes – and proposed a mix of tenures.

Studio Outcomes

In a subsequent focus group, student informants expressed a clear message that the studio work had caused them to think more about the end-user of architectural environments. One student said that she had learnt “not to go in [to the design project] with pre-conceptions of what an older person is”, whilst another stated that “there is not just one approach” – the one-size-fits-all product being a false promise. A further student reported: “our preconceptions were not necessarily accurate”. When the students were asked how they used to think of older people, they shared common stereotypes of limited mobility and loneliness. Students later identified these attributes as belonging to an “upper level of old”, appreciating that the studio brief had encouraged them to think about different definitions of older people. Perhaps one of the most important outcomes is summed up by this future architect:

“I learnt that people are not going to want to give up their old habits and their freedom just because they are old!”¹⁷

In what could be described as an Emperor’s New Clothes moment,¹⁸ August asked me how Pink & Knight know what makes an ‘age-friendly’ building, and how it keeps up-

¹⁷ Anonymous Respondent, pers. comm. [Focus Group (n=6)], CSA, 12 January 2016

¹⁸ "The Emperor's New Clothes" is a short tale by Hans Christian Andersen (1837) about two weavers who promise an emperor a new suit of clothes that is invisible to those who are unfit for their positions, stupid, or incompetent. When the Emperor parades before his subjects in his new clothes, no one dares to say that they don't see any suit of clothes until a child cries out, "But he isn't wearing anything at all!"

to-date with new information. I answered on behalf of Pink & Knight, reasoning that it has used a combination of independent customer satisfaction questionnaires (in recent years this has been the NHBC National New Homes Survey, issued at 8 weeks and 9 months respectively) and postal surveys devised by the company.¹⁹ August wondered how much feedback reached in-house architects, reasoning that Pink & Knight's product could be improved, with specific reference to its scheme for the same site.

From my point of view, as an educator, August and her colleagues have learnt to consider building users from the outset of their design process. In particular they have a heightened awareness of the possible needs and aspirations of older people. August is equally aware that 'older people' is not a meaningful category in lifestyle terms and that classification by age alone is problematic. August has heard in lectures that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines older people as being 'over retirement age'²⁰ – a bandwidth of 40 to 50 years – and therefore accepts that there is a need for flexibility in attitudes and building design. In her history-theory coursework essay, August wrote:

"The elderly are as heterogeneous as any other age group, meaning housing needs vary drastically, and there is no single housing form equally suited for all".²¹

August has a clear grasp of the diverse nature of this hypothetical group she calls the 'elderly'. At this juncture it is appropriate to share a note on labels. In defence of August, and her quote taken out of context, she was not 'othering' or seeking to cause offence through her choice of wording. In fact August's use of the word 'elderly' accords with a guide published by the *International Longevity Center*, which advises using the word carefully and sparingly:

¹⁹ The postal surveys include questions about the communal facilities and design and layout of the apartment. Pink & Knight's recent Product Review has also involved resident focus groups at four of its developments. Not being party to these events nor the resulting data, it is difficult to comment on the new knowledge gathered.

²⁰ *National Planning Policy Framework* (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf> [accessed 11 July 2014] p.54

²¹ Anonymous Student, [c1401201], Coursework Submission, (CSA, 2016)

*“The term [elderly] is appropriate only in generic phrases that do not refer to specific individuals: concern for the elderly, a home for the elderly, etc. In other words, describing a person as elderly is bad form, although the generalized category ‘elderly’ might not be offensive”.*²²

It seemed, with students, that finding the right language can be harder than changing attitudes. There is of course an ongoing need to deconstruct cultural stereotypes and the dichotomising tendencies of thinking about difference. Members of *Ageing Town* accept that difference is but a matter of time. For August ‘old age’ is three to four decades away; practically a lifetime away, but she will arrive there some day too. In fact this is an attitude advocated by John Beard, Director of the Department of Ageing and Life Course at the World Health Organisation:

*“We talk about ‘life course’. What we’re trying to emphasize is that aging is a lifelong event. We’re all aging, and why would you distinguish that one day you’re middle aged and the next day you’re old...”*²³

Terms of Reference

From my point of view the *Ageing Town* studio succeeded in nudging students away from their own terms of reference and the practice of ‘self-design’²⁴ (designing according to one’s own ideas and experiences). In previous years the students’ designs for housing have unwittingly taken on the form of halls of residences and/or projected the image of a younger person’s dream home. For example, drawings were populated by young bodies, sometimes scantily dressed, poised on trendy furniture as though they were about to head out.²⁵ As an aside, during a plenary discussion at a recent academic

²² Raluca Cozma and Nicole Dahmen, *Media Takes: On Aging / Styleguide for Journalism, Entertainment and Advertising* (Sacramento: International Longevity Center, 2009) p.43 <http://www.ilc-alliance.org/images/uploads/publication-pdfs/Media_Takes_On_Aging.pdf> [accessed 18 April 2016]

²³ John Beard, ‘Lifelong Cities’, in *Volume 29: The Urban Conspiracy*, ed. by Jeffrey Inaba (Amsterdam: Stichting Archis, 2011), pp. 50-51 (p.50).

²⁴ Cranz, p.ix

²⁵ Imagine the collages of interiors by pop artist Richard Hamilton, specifically the collage ‘Just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing?’ created in 1956 for the catalogue of the exhibition *This Is Tomorrow* (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, August 1956)

conference, participants assumed that architects are ‘not interested’ in bodies, since they rarely appear in architectural drawings. One academic offered an apparent exception to the rule, the marketing CGI (computer generated image), in which “we can expect to see a young professional carrying a take-out Frappicino, always smiling”.²⁶ Naturally this bewildered the handful of architects within the room, as it did August – of course we think about people! However, we might ask whether the professional architect has a problem with images, as well as an image problem? And does this extend to or get propagated within the academic studio? Naturally members of *Ageing Town* placed a high value on both designing for, and figuratively representing, people within their projects. In fact the graphic litmus test for the *Ageing Town* studio became the presence of older people within its drawings; a kind of visual shorthand for spotting the difference between studio outputs – active agers, craft, garden or river.

An external reviewer of the students’ work commented that student attitudes about older people “probably depends on how they think of their grandparents”.²⁷ Indeed this was confirmed in the focus group. Students’ grandparents were a primary reference point for *beginning* to think about designing for older people. Thus for a short time August’s grandparents became a stand-in for all older people – spending the inheritance and travelling the world. Meanwhile, on the other side of the table, August’s friend was thinking of her one remaining grandma with Alzheimer’s disease. Fortunately students were able to pool their knowledge, as well as access practice-led research and literature. Nonetheless, the reviewer’s comment raises the question how else might August gain relevant knowledge, or knowledge for design?

Academic Galen Cranz raises an interesting conundrum with regard to designers coming to understand ‘users’, making the “obvious link” between anthropology and architecture, but signalling that:

“...architecture works at a faster pace than anthropology. By the time someone has been able to become a member of the community, the

²⁶ Paraphrased comments from a plenary discussion at *Materialities of Care: Encountering Health and Illness Through Objects, Artefacts & Architecture*, University of York, 16 September 2015

²⁷ Angela Morrison, Non-Executive Director at Quattro Design Architects, pers. comm. 12 November 2015

building could have been planned, financed, designed, built and occupied! The more one thinks about it, the more one realizes that it's not so obvious what 'paying attention' to the user might mean. It's not at all obvious what the most practical way to pay attention is".²⁸

Contrary to what one might expect of an academic setting, I have found the problem of 'paying attention' to the user most acute within the academic design studio. My reasons for feeling this are threefold. Firstly, there rarely is an actual client or user to remind August of their needs and expectations ('we want X by date X'). Secondly, August is under-skilled; still acquiring fundamental skills in architectural representation and design thinking, and without sufficient professional and/or life experience to understand 'other' contexts. Thirdly, the academic programme is often highly time-constrained, and as any designer knows, the creative process is rarely quick, particularly where it involves the production of high quality drawings and models. August finds himself running out of time and working late into the night. In my experience the collective attention span is particularly short for anything deemed outside 'design'. In this context paying attention is at best a kind of 'fast ethnography', or at worst, borrowing another discipline's tools and applying them inexpertly (more on this later). For Cranz, the answer is 'semantic ethnography'; a practice that does not rely upon participant observation in the field, but carefully listening for cultural terms and their meaning through informant interviews. In some sense August practiced this during a fieldtrip to local almshousing. Indeed the focus group revealed that students placed a high value on the insights gained from meeting other older persons (besides grandparents) and talking to them in their homes.

Fast Ethnography

Another external reviewer credited fieldtrip notes and the resulting film as an important resource for students, "capturing the everyday experiences of a few older people".²⁹ He highlighted that students have limited life experience for designing housing, since they have lived in few houses, and very likely not apartments (particularly UK students). They do have experience of communal living, through halls of residences, albeit this is

²⁸ Cranz, p.x

²⁹ John Carter, Design Director at Pentan Architects and Lecturer at the Centre for Alternative Technology, pers. comm. 18 November 2015

a very different life phase to the one they are studying. The reviewer believes that students have yet to develop their thinking about bodies and often need support in simulating the lived experience of their schemes. He advocates the importance of “observing bodily actions” and the insights gained from staying overnight in a nursing home (something he has done for his own design practice). I too have gained valuable insights from staying overnight at Pink & Knight’s developments; simulating a retirement lifestyle and experiencing things not immediately apparent to the daytime visitor or external professional. Of course, this raises a key question: what if the architect cannot access such opportunities? How does the architect or student of architecture get beyond guesswork, for instance, when thinking about reasonable travel distances to a toilet? One way is to develop a simulation or empathic model, such as the Third Age Suit developed at Loughborough University for the Ford Motor Company. The suit simulates reduced joint mobility through the use of restrictors for the hand, wrists, elbows, neck, upper and lower torso, knees and ankles. In addition, surgical style gloves are provided to mimic the reduction in tactile sensitivity, and yellow tinted glasses to demonstrate the reduced sensitivity of the eye to blue light as we age.³⁰ Similar approaches, albeit more modest and less technological, have been deployed through student projects in schools of architecture, including at CSA.

The cohort before August’s also undertook a housing project (*Design with Care*), though followed a different brief, prepared by a colleague. As a primer for this project students were asked to spend a day or two researching and ‘experiencing’ a disability of their choosing. Students created empathic simulations such as wearing a blindfold or applying gel to glasses to simulate poor eyesight (an ‘easy’ simulation, and therefore popular choice). Some students interested in dementia adapted tools such as the ‘Virtual Dementia Tour’ developed by P.K. Beville.³¹ Rather than pay for the ‘tour’ the students did the following: (i) made tunnel vision goggles using sunglasses and black card and tape, simulating glaucoma, (ii) wore rubber gloves, simulating reduced sense of touch

³⁰ Colette Nicolle and Martin Maguire, *Empathic Modelling in Teaching Design for All* (Loughborough: Ergonomics and Safety Research Institute, c. 2003) <<https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/dspace-jspui/bitstream/2134/722/1/PUB184%20Empathic%20Modelling.%20pdf>> [accessed 18 January 2016]

³¹ *Virtual Dementia Tour: Interview With P.K. Beville* <<https://www.caring.com/articles/virtual-dementia-tour>> [accessed 19 April 2014]. The author cannot comment on the credibility of the Virtual Dementia Tour.

and loss of dexterity, (iii) put scrunched up paper in their shoes, simulating pins and needles, and approximating a dementia patient's shuffling gate, and (iv) wore headphones and played loud everyday sounds ('confusion tape'), simulating a sense of being in a bubble but with heightened awareness of 'external' sounds. The students then undertook the following everyday activities: pairing up socks; writing and sealing a birthday card for a friend; tying shoe laces; texting a friend with a plan to meet up; setting a table for a meal, and making a cup of tea. Instructions for these activities were written out in a way that the students perceived someone with dementia to read them (words in the wrong order, missing letters, different sizes and emphasises, and so on). At risk of stating the obvious these simulations do not truly enable us to understand the everyday experiences of others (or our future aged-selves). They are simply a tool for thinking about the issues *temporarily*, since we can return to our 'normal' or younger selves at any moment.

Following their simulations, students were asked to design an architectural detail or element, which they were to imagine being part of their housing projects; the idea being to design something to help the building user(s) with their disability. Much discussion was had around this task, particularly the translation of research findings into a design proposal. It was recognised that "architecture may not be the vehicle for a solution, but perhaps a 'response'...".³² Discussions with students explored the agency of architecture (hinting at discourses around environmental determinism), whilst demanding a high level of innovation. The latter presented a challenge to those exploring limited vision, since the products and types of intervention are generally well known (handrails, contrasting and/or tactile surfaces, and so on), while those exploring more complex simulations such as dementia had greater scope for 'unknown' responses. The biggest challenge was that the response had to encompass a spatial quality and/or material physicality. Rightly or wrongly, technological products involving electronic sensors and feedback were considered outside a "fundamental architectural vocabulary".³³ This was a design process fraught with a particular kind of connoisseurship borne out of implicit architectural values and disciplinary

³² Anonymous colleague [author of project brief, *Design with Care*], CSA, pers. comm. 03 October 2014.

³³ Anonymous colleague [author of project brief, *Design with Care*], CSA, pers. comm. 03 October 2014.

ensorship/editing. In several cases the suggested ‘response’ was not attendant to the specific problem but increased the general quality of environmental experience. For instance, a well-considered window could benefit the wheelchair user and bed-bound alike.

I recall how the above discussions took on a surreal quality at times (housing blocks intended exclusively for wheelchair users, for example), and being grateful that they were conducted within the private, safe space of the academic studio. Whereas, on the train home, I was conscious that people may be listening in on the conversation, affirming their worldview of architects as being out-of-touch and/or egocentric. The discussion continued at home with my partner, a speech and language therapist, and I found myself cringing as I explained how the students had tried to replicate the condition of an older person following a stroke, simulating an assumed communication problem. The students’ simulation – speaking partly in a foreign language and using a low voice in a noisy environment – was hardly scientific nor appropriate, and according to my partner, their research was out-of-date, referencing offensive terms such as ‘social disorder’. It was not obvious why architecture students should be spending their time doing this! Nonetheless the empathic approach was ‘designerly’ and students ‘succeeded’ by generalising. They simulated (poorly) the specific condition of speech loss, then examined social communication more broadly. In fact they were considering ‘non-verbal communication’, including modes of ‘shared attention’ (shared focus of two or more individuals on a subject, such as a bird in a garden). By considering ‘visual connections’ the students were able to respond architecturally and develop designs for a ‘Social Window’ that allowed for communication between residents, particularly when located in unexpected places such as between a private kitchen and shared corridor, between two private kitchens or between two apartment balconies. Whilst the students had been designing with a specific user in mind (those with a speech impediment), the Social Window could also attend to a wider range of users and their social needs. For instance, the Social Window located along the corridor could play host to messages: “I’m up today” or “tea at 5” (a form of low-tech social media?). The Social Window could also serve as a place for display, proving useful when finding the home for the first time (visitors), or *every* time for those experiencing cognitive decline.

Meanwhile the students investigating dementia designed a flexible ‘Dementia Wall’ that allows the occupant to display their possessions – a form of open storage not requiring, but stimulating memory, akin to ‘memory boxes’ commonly used within dementia care settings – and to see between spaces or rooms. The Dementia Wall would also improve visual connectivity and may equally help “the psychological wellbeing of the immobile aged [by allowing] views to other parts of the apartment [such as the rooms] where a spouse is likely to move between”.³⁴ In this way students were exploring an architecture for all, conceived by examining a specific and somewhat unreal scenario: the improvised Virtual Dementia Tour that led to the Dementia Wall, and the compromised conversation that led to the Social Window.

Subsequent design ideas within the housing project proper included alternative responses to restricted mobility, such as reducing open space, thereby reducing risk of falling; reducing long travel distances, particularly non-habitable circulation; considering ‘control centres’, responding to ‘environmental centralization’,³⁵ and promoting different means of movement between spaces (sliding, for example, as opposed to walking or wheeling). A particular highlight for me was a project that investigated blindness and therefore different light qualities. The student went on to design an environment that offered possibilities for receiving warm sunlight on the skin – a literal response to Juhani Pallasmaa’s ‘eyes of the skin’³⁶ and a reminder that architects can gain knowledge and inspiration from reading as much as ‘experiencing’.

Year End

Returning to August’s story, the completion of her design project and history-theory coursework marks the end of a critical engagement with housing within the undergraduate degree, and possibly her studies. I can see that she still has a lot yet to learn (as have I), but feel nonetheless reassured by our engagements at the drawing board and seminar table. In practical terms August has vicariously come to know something of a specialist developer – its market position, standard product and customer

³⁴ Anonymous Student [c1402996], Coursework Submission, (CSA, 2016)

³⁵ Frank Oswald and Hans-Werner Wahl, ‘Dimensions of the Meaning of Home in Later Life’, in *Home and Identity in Late Life: International Perspectives*, ed. by Habib Chaudhury and Graham Rowles (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2005), pp.21-45 (p.25)

³⁶ Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (Chichester: Wiley, 2005)

base – and undertaken her own fieldwork close to an adopted development site, including meeting almshousing residents, and presented her design ideas to professional audiences. In theoretical terms August has developed the beginnings of a capacity for empathic design, acquiring tools and modes of thinking that counteract ‘self-design’. August has also learnt the importance of flexibility and designing ‘accessible’ homes for all.³⁷ In the words of her colleagues: “a good house for an older person should also suit a younger person”.³⁸ And in the words of Felix Bohn,

“the elderly, sick and disabled people are a normal part of our society” thus “should as far as possible be integrated and live and dwell independently.” [Accepting this] “...it is only logical that what the elderly need is not a special kind of architecture but rather that existing building codes should be better adapted to the needs of all”.³⁹

A well designed window is often good for everyone. A lower sill better reveals an external view to children or those who may be bedbound; good daylight distribution will be appreciated by young and old eyes alike, and access to the sun’s warmth will be felt by those with or without sight.

The Young Architect

We should remember that the education of an architect is long and extends beyond the academy. Indeed an implicit value held by August’s chosen profession is that to become good at architecture takes time. Mark Wigley articulates this most clearly in his aforementioned appraisal of the profession:

“Architects offer an interesting model for how one could take advantage of age as a resource. You’re not expected, or even really allowed, to do serious work until you are in your 50s. And it’s totally understood that

³⁷ The expansive sense of the word ‘accessible’, rather than the somewhat reductive meaning attributed through legislation (DDA/Equality Act, etc.) or built environment professionals’ short-hand for physical access to buildings.

³⁸ Anonymous Respondent, pers. comm. [Focus Group (n=6)], CSA, 12 January 2016.

³⁹ Felix Bohn, ‘Designing Buildings Suitable for Life,’ in *New Approaches to Housing for the Second Half of Life*, ed. by Andreas Huber (Basel: Birkhauser Verlag AG, 2008), pp. 173-185 (p.174)

you operate into your 90s and beyond. There is a concept of wisdom; when you're in your 80s and 90s, you have wisdom..."⁴⁰

What August learns in architecture school he will soon take for granted; fundamental design and representation skills will be subsumed by an ever deepening knowledge borne out of professional practice. August will likely forget what it was he learnt at university, though may be reminded by future mentoring or teaching roles, be they with architectural assistants in the office or students in the academic studio. The practicing architect is programmed to be speculative, forward-looking, and is often in pursuit of the next project. Some might say that the young architect wishes to be older; age seemingly being a pre-requisite for important commissions. We recall August's early ambitions to make the world a better place and build something lasting and impressive. On a meta level August is thinking of his legacy. Researchers at C-Lab believe that architects wish to be old, and that no matter how much designers' works are about the moment, they "aspire to immortalize their lives and to be timeless".⁴¹ August continues to admire the projects attributed to architectural heroes, and projects a fantasy career and lasting built portfolio of works – *by and for herself*.

Conclusion

Galen Cranz, in her book *Ethnography for Designers*, reminds us that design can be said to be the union of three concerns: social purpose (commodity), structure (firmness) and aesthetics (delight). Cranz is referencing the Roman architect and theorist Vitruvius, albeit her interpretation of his terms could be contested. Nonetheless I accept Cranz's sentiment that "an architect is not just a structural engineer, nor only a sociologist, nor solely an artist" and further observation that "the artistic function of architecture has come to have most of the emotional hold on both faculty and students in architecture school".⁴² Cranz refers to a time in the 1970s when faculties recruited social scientists to "rebalance a previous weight on structure and appearance" and references a seminal pedagogic article from 1974, in which educators are raising important questions about design responses to user needs, asking questions such as: How does one get inside the

⁴⁰ Fried (2011), p.24

⁴¹ C-Lab (2011), p.62

⁴² Cranz, p.viii-ix

head of the user? How do you find out the attitudes, basic needs, and interests of users? And how can these answers be applied to design?⁴³

This story advocates that academic architecture studios could help to support the development of professional knowledge, through priming design research and/or by honing disciplinary methods. For instance, the exploration of ‘fast’ ethnographic methods, such as immersive experiences, empathic modelling, shadowing and interviewing users, in support of grounded post-occupancy evaluation that informs designers how buildings are used and valued. Here CSA students were found to have a role within a situated research practice, involving dialogic work with emerging products of architecture. The Ageing Town design studio succeeded in nudging students away from a default practice of ‘self-design’, causing them to review their own terms of reference regarding older people and this diverse group’s needs and aspirations for housing. Yet, architecture students – at CSA and elsewhere – are known to operate within a quasi-professional context that focuses on and rewards artistry or a masterly handling of the formal aspects of architecture. Indeed, major criticisms of architectural education include: bracketing-out elements of ‘the real world’ to focus on design;⁴⁴ ‘privileging of the visual’⁴⁵ outputs (drawings and models) in support of design narratives, as opposed to realisable buildings; an inward gaze and self-perpetuation of architectural heroes or ‘starchitects’ through ‘canon formation’.⁴⁶ Architectural education is also said to display some ‘absurd’ modes of behaviour, as discussed in the seminal book, *Spatial Agency*, that presented a metaphorical mirror and provocation to the profession:

“...the continuation of the master tutor and willing servant students, the privileging of the visual, the inculcation of absurd modes of behaviour (sleep deprivation, aggressive defensiveness, internal competition), the raising of individuals on to pedestals, all these and more self-perpetuate in schools of architecture around the world, a strange form of interbreeding with tutors

⁴³ AIA/ACSA, ‘Teachers Seminar Program Notes’, *Journal of Architectural Education*, 28.1 (1974)

⁴⁴ Jeremy Till, *Architecture Depends* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009)

⁴⁵ Nishat Awan, Tatjana Schneider and Jeremy Till, *Spatial Agency/ Other Ways of Doing Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2011), p.46

⁴⁶ Greig Crysler, ‘Critical Pedagogy and Architectural Education’, *Journal of Architectural Education*, 48.4 (2013), 208-217

*passing the architectural gene to students who in turn become tutors who perform the same rituals”.*⁴⁷

Implicit in this commentary – particularly its reference to gene-passing – is the tendency for design studio teaching toward imparting tacit knowledge and cultural capital through a “transmission model... [that may be said] to portray students as passive and homogeneous professional subjects removed from social and political forces”.⁴⁸

Transmission occurs through studio ‘masters’ modelling architectural language; ways of communicating and presenting; aesthetic judgement and taste preferences, combined with a currency of in-vogue references. These ingredients appear to bond co-professionals and prospective professionals, creating a sense of collective identity and group position (“people like us”). Critics have even suggested that, although architectural education is obviously intended as vocational training, it is “also intended as a form of socialization aimed at producing a very specific type of person”.⁴⁹ Clearly this raises a number of issues, including pedagogical and ethical questions around how such a system might favour certain types of students, such as “those from well-to-do, cultivated families – at the expense of others”.⁵⁰ In this research context, however, we might ask how well-placed the architectural profession is to design for others, given its bias toward the production of its own group identity with a coded value system, maintained by architects for architects. Are architects hard-wired to labour toward their agenda? Are architects subconsciously designing environments to suit themselves? And to what extent is the architect concerned with the production of a portfolio in support of public acclaim and/or status within the profession?

⁴⁷ Awan, Schneider & Till, p.46

⁴⁸ Crysler

⁴⁹ Garry Stevens, ‘Struggle in the Studio: A Bourdivin Look at Architectural Pedagogy’, *Journal of Architectural Education*, 49.2 (2013), 105-122

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Vignette VII

Student Projects

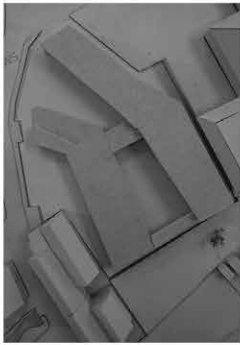
This vignette presents a sample of student design schemes that emerged from second-year design studio projects at the Celtic School of Architecture, as described in the Architecture Student story. Three of the profiled schemes emanate from the Ageing Town design studio unit, and present alternative proposals for a Pink & Knight development site. While the fourth stems from an earlier project brief – Housing With Care – that helped form the agenda for Ageing Town. Each scheme is presented with an accompanying description that was prepared by the researcher - as design tutor - and ratified by the student authors.



1



2



3



4



5



6

Vignette VII
Student Projects
~ Urban Enclave ~

- 1 Street Elevation
- 2 Entrance Perspective
- 3 Massing Model
- 4 Unit Plan
- 5 Contextual Plan
- 6 Elevation Study

Kim envisioned a scheme that would attract 'active agers' seeking close connections to both urban and natural environments. While the scheme represents a downsize for prospective residents – one bedroom apartments – it could be thought of as a 'lifestyle' option, in as much as two thirds of the apartments overlook water. A former millstream along the site boundary has been expanded into a pond, and five apartments have room-sized jetties at water level. The scheme takes the form of two linked blocks that frame a 'linear park', allowing views into and through the site, and promoting a sense of connectivity by opening onto the road junction.

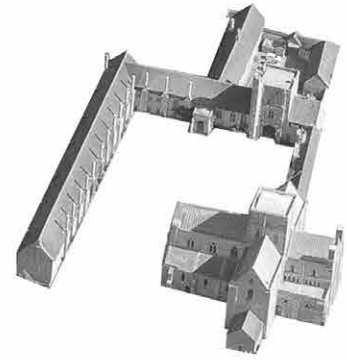
Kim took cues from built precedent, both local seventeenth-century alms housing and an international social housing scheme designed by O'Donnell + Tuomey Architects. The latter – known as 'Timberyard' – informed the cranked and splayed plan form, which sets up an intimate urban enclosure or "residential enclave". Kim's project also shares something of the material language of Timberyard; one of red bricks and hardwood windows and projecting balconies. Kim wanted to echo the brick of neighbouring houses as well as industrial buildings in the area. Similarly, the entrance plaza is paved with stone cobbles reminiscent of the town's market square.

The 'linear park' is bisected by a bridge that links the building entrances and circulation cores – foyer and atrium. Besides connecting the two blocks, the bridge is a kind of solarium or viewing gallery for the pond. Kim's collage suggests that it may also be used for playing indoor bowls! The vertical circulation cores are equally generous in size, having been thought of as important social spaces, 'book-ending' the bridge. The foyer links to a resident-managed café that is publicly accessible via the plaza.

The link bridge also divides the site into two distinct zones: one public, paved plaza and the other private and flooded. In this way the scheme is reminiscent of the courtyard arrangements found within local alms housing, each courtyard having a distinct sense of identity. Unlike alms housing the courtyards are not relied upon for circulation. Here residents reach their apartments via external access decks, along the 'backs' of the site (alongside a former mill building with bricked-up windows and a supermarket delivery yard).

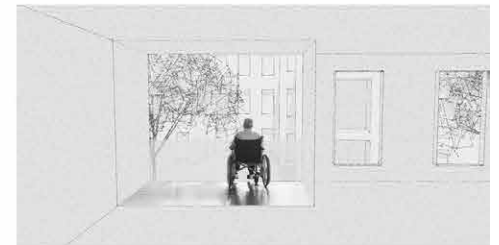
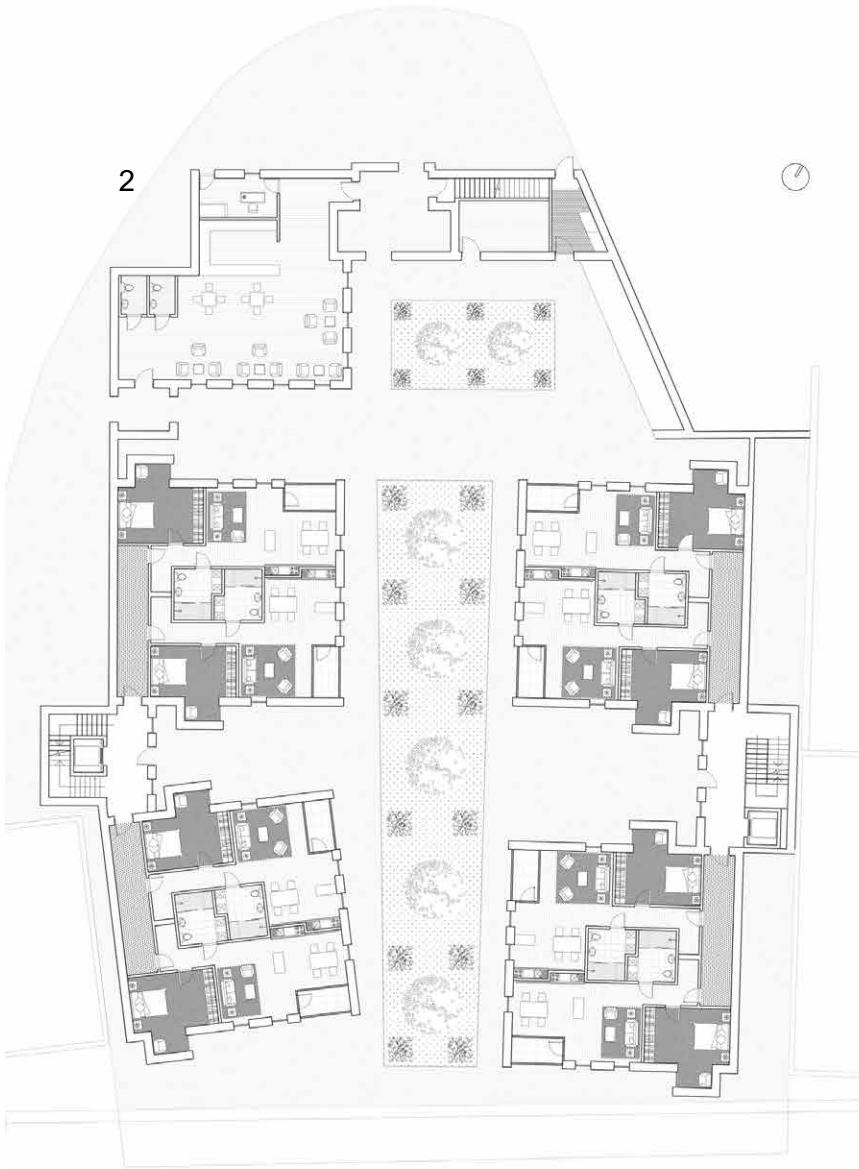
The apartments are dual aspect, albeit there is a clear privileging of outlook given to bedrooms and living rooms, some of which open onto jetties equivalent in size to a double bedroom (plenty of space for barbecues and sunbathing!). Kitchen and bathroom windows provide 'eyes on the decks' as well as opportunities for natural ventilation. The access decks feature plinth-like benches that define a small area outside each apartment entrance that residents can appropriate. At ground level the pond is used to define a hard edge between public and private realms, providing privacy to the residents. The water will also reflect rippled light into apartment interiors giving a 'forever-on-holiday' feel.

Vignette VII
Student Projects
 ~ Urban Enclave ~

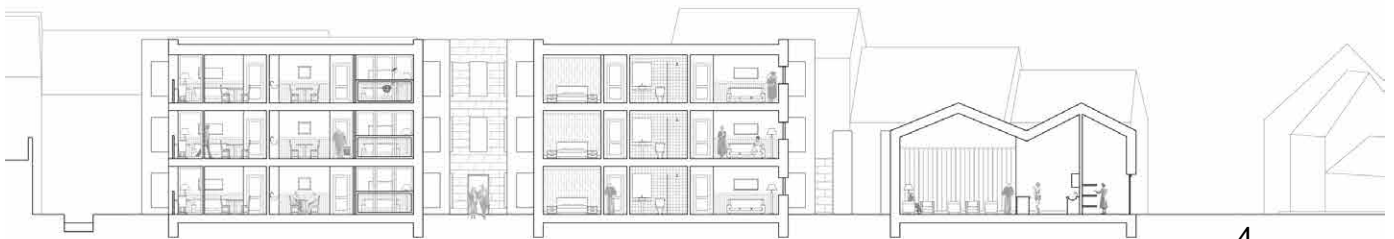


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4

Vignette VII
Student Projects
~ Gated Community ~

- 1 Concept Images
- 2 Ground Floor Plan
- 3 Exterior Spaces
- 4 North-South Site Section

Emily envisioned a scheme that would attract the security conscious older person looking for a level of reassurance from being within an intentional community with common values (loneliness after bereavement and fear of crime being two common 'push factors'). Emily took inspiration from local town gateways and the public spaces that they 'protect'. Her scheme proposes two gateways, 'controlled' by active communal spaces. In effect hers is an introspective scheme that turns its back on its neighbours; arguably an appropriate response to the rear annex and goods entrance of a supermarket and the bricked-up windows of a former mill building, though tough rebuttal of a part residential street.

Emily's site strategy took cues from England's oldest operational alms housing – Hospital of Saint Cross, Winchester – and its former double courtyard arrangement. She was interested in the journey of the resident, moving from public to semi-public to private realms (from street to courtyard, garden, staircase and apartment). The structure of Emily's scheme has parallels with the way student communities are organised within Oxbridge colleges – around staircases, accessed via courtyards – which also reference monastic complexes designed for seclusion.

The accommodation is split between one 'gatehouse' building, containing common facilities and services, and two residential wings. The three buildings counterbalance the large supermarket, and to some extent screen it, by distributing programme around the site edges. The buildings

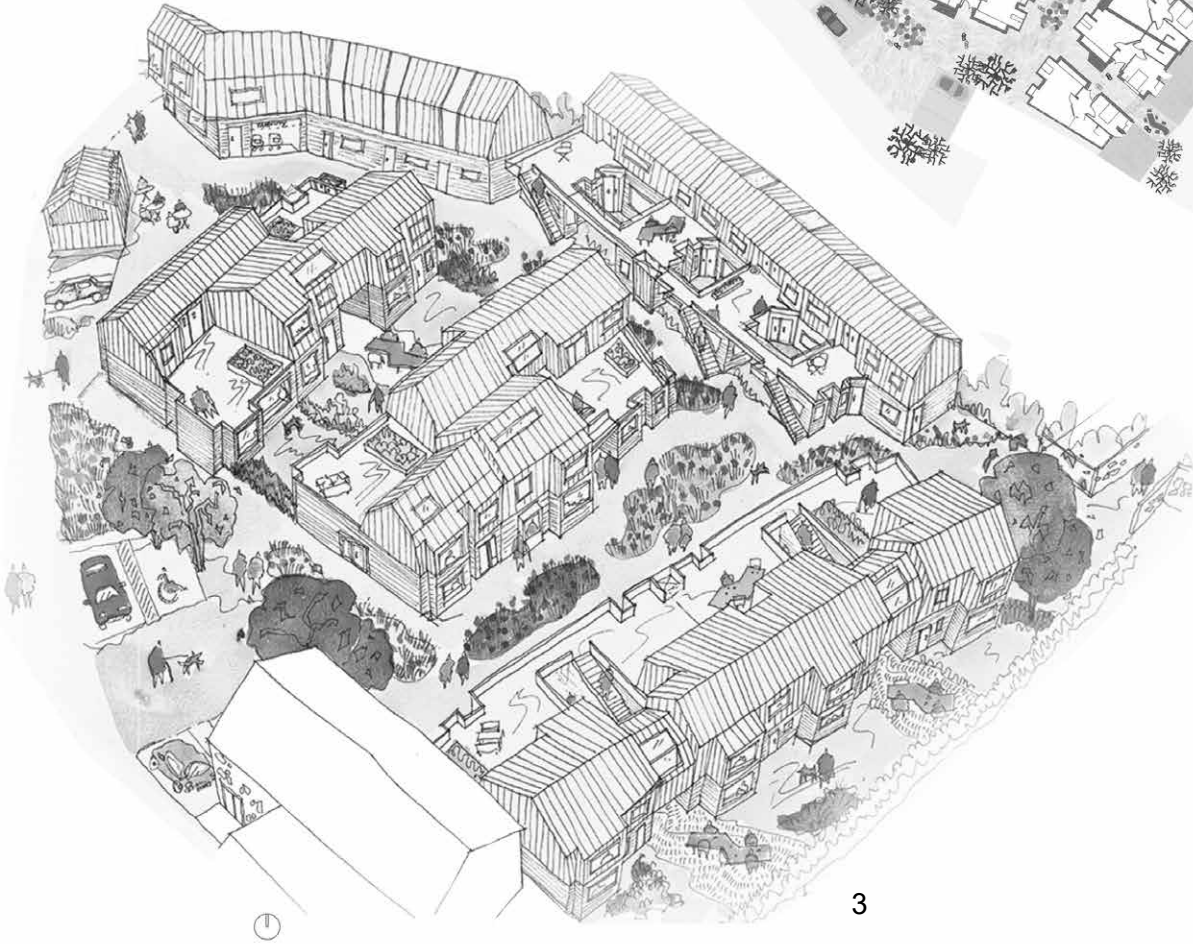
are linked by a boundary wall, which wraps around three sides of the site, opening up to the southern aspect and a former culverted mill stream. A long garden, reminiscent of the archetypal village green, is at the centre of the scheme, flanked by the residential wings. Each wing comprises 2 'pepper-pot' blocks linked by a common stair and lift, accessed via entrance courts that lie perpendicular to the green.

The apartments are coupled and interlocking in plan; each is dual aspect though predicated on good views from the living spaces to the green, while bedrooms are set-back in plan and their windows positioned to maintain privacy. The internal layouts are compact though cater for limited mobility: scooter parking as well as accessible shower rooms, kitchens and balconies. Kitchen facilities are split between an island counter and service cupboard, while the washing machine and drier are located within the shower room, allowing occupants to close doors on messy areas and noisy appliances. Each apartment has a sheltered balcony overlooking the inner court/green, providing a private place for older people to be outside in all weathers and within close proximity to home conveniences. Careful attention was paid to the material qualities of the balcony enclosure – glass balustrading and floor tiling help to admit light to apartment interiors. The scheme materials are reassuringly massive: rubble stone walling (referencing neighbouring building façades) and in situ board-marked concrete.

Vignette VII
Student Projects
 ~ Gated Community ~



1



Vignette VII
Student Projects
~ Wandering Realm ~

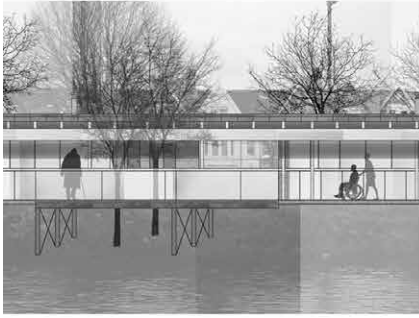
- 1 Concept Storyboard
- 2 Ground Floor Plan
- 3 Scheme Overview
- 4 Street Level Perspective

Harriet envisioned a scheme that would attract those that like to wander or potter about. Her scheme sought to offer an alternative “life between buildings”; contesting mainstream approaches to sheltered housing – single buildings surrounded by perimeter communal gardens. Harriet’s scheme groups apartments into house-sized chunks, with pockets of outdoor space in between forming an urban realm that facilitates carefree wandering.

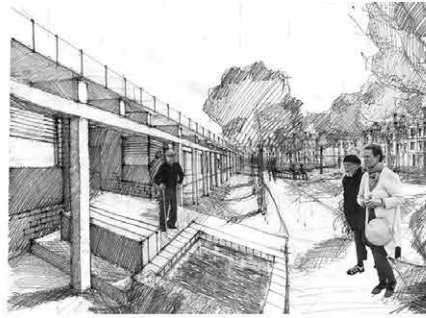
Harriet was inspired by ‘Donnybrook Quarter’, a low rise, high density residential scheme in London designed by Peter Barber Architects. Its streets have an intimate scale being 7.5m wide and bordered by 2-3 storey buildings, and therefore heavily overlooked by residents. Balconies, oriel windows, terraces and numerous front doors create a sense of ownership and the opportunity for personalisation, which Harriet considered a good model for responding to isolation/loneliness reported by older people. Harriet advocates small scale urban environments as potential sources of ‘physical connections’ close to home. Her scheme promotes public accessibility by offering a new walking route through the site and urban block, alongside the mill stream. Particular attention was paid to ‘home zones’ by placing communal tables and raised planters beside shared entrances, thereby constructing an environment for chance encounters.

Harriet’s scheme may also be regarded an instinctual response to those that represent/care for dementia sufferers and regard wandering as “dangerous... requiring strategies and services to help prevent it” (to quote Alzheimer Association literature). A fact sheet produced by the Alzheimer’s Society acknowledges that “walking is not a problem in itself - it can help to relieve stress and boredom and is a good form of exercise” and suggests finding solutions that allow dementia sufferers to wander safely. Harriet’s scheme offers relatively safe, car-free surroundings with easy pedestrian access to local amenities and services. And a circular path, which may equally satisfy dementia sufferers or those taking exercise. A rich landscaping strategy provides means of orientation (small scale and familiar landmarks) as well as sensory stimulation helping to sustain well being.

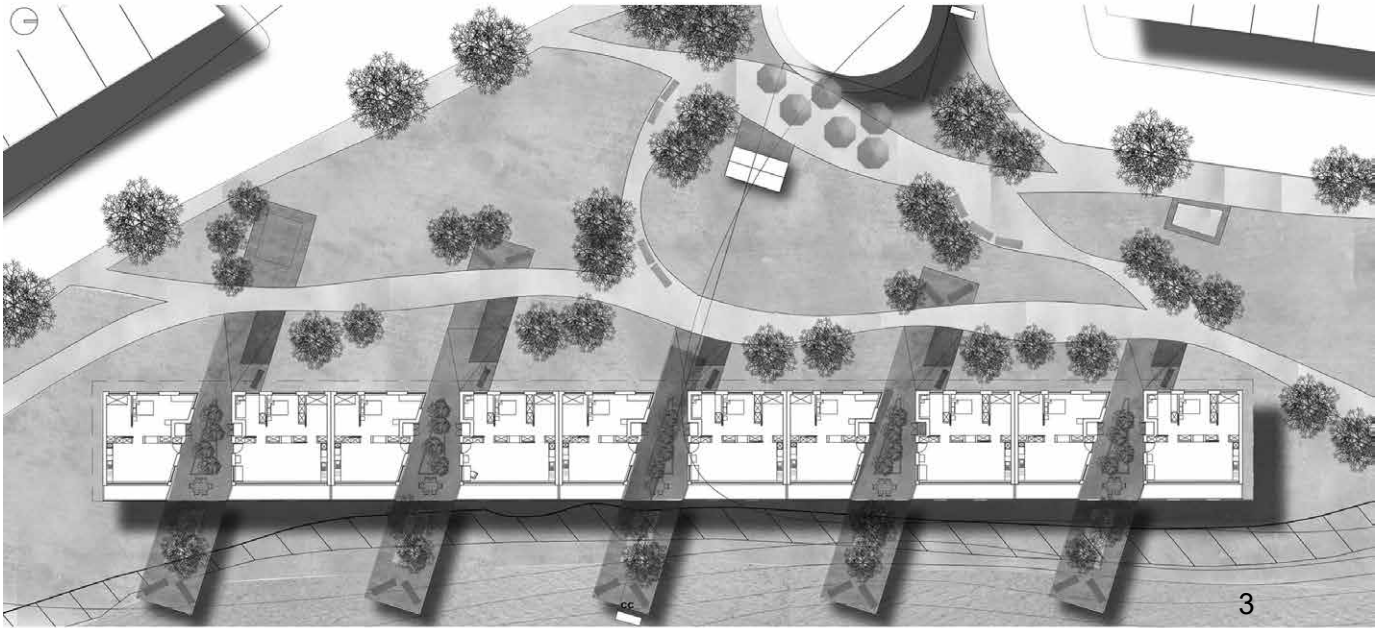
Harriet argues for micro-homes; the reduced maintenance required by living in a smaller apartment having a favourable effect on well being, as well as benefiting the UK housing market by vacating family homes for younger generations. All the apartments are fully ‘accessible’, including those on the first floor, which can be reached by shared platform lifts that serve each cluster/terrace. The ground floor apartments are designed such that kitchens front onto the public realm while bedrooms look onto individual garden areas. In this way residents can choose to withdraw and observe life outside without feeling forced to interact; a safe place for minds and bodies to wander.



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Vignette VII
Student Projects
~ Riverside Terrace ~

- 1 Board-walk Section
- 2 Exterior Spaces
- 3 Contextual Plan
- 4 Riverside Elevation
- 5 Dwelling Cross-Section

Piotr envisioned a scheme that would suit older people with limited mobility, particularly wheelchair users. His scheme could equally stand in for the thought shared by John Beard in an interview about Lifelong Cities (in Volume 29: The Urban Conspiracy): "...really what it's about is maintaining function and social engagement". Piotr's scheme seeks to engender a greater sense of neighbourliness and opportunities for interaction, orchestrated by shared entrance paths, pocket gardens, gazebos and seating areas. These are organised along timber board walks that 'cleave' the building into smaller pieces.

Piotr took inspiration from local terraced housing – its massing and form – and his scheme is similarly wall-like, having a distinct front and back with different material expressions (brick and glass elevations respectively). Yet this is a single storey terrace, with a low-pitched copper roof and punched openings, which allow neighbouring properties and passers-by views of the river. In this way the building has the unity and presence of terrace housing, whilst offering a greater level of visual permeability.

The interior plans follow the logic of terrace housing, having distinct fronts and backs, organised by a spine wall that separates reception rooms from private quarters. This wall accommodates servant spaces such as coat storage, wardrobes,

linen cupboards and a hearth. The centrality of the hearth, and the way it is used to separate rooms, is in common with a number of homes designed by Frank Lloyd Wright (the Robie House for example). For Wright the hearth – whilst outmoded by modern cooking and heating systems – was the heart of the home and a "symbol of family life and attachment to the earth". In Piotr's scheme the hearth may serve as a reminder of family life or provide a focal point for reunions. Piotr's fireplace also provides a visual connection from the bed through the hearth to the sitting room and river. In this way the hearth may also play an emotive 'anchoring' role for older people, in sickness and in health.

Piotr was keen to achieve a sense of openness and flexibility in the dwelling plans. He uses pocket doors between the private quarters – bedroom and bathroom, as well as bedroom to bedroom – allowing for free circulation, as well as visual and audio communication between rooms that may support the care and well being of an older person in late life (dwellings with a second bedroom may accommodate a live-in carer). The main living space is equally open plan, with floor to ceiling glazing and access to a balcony overlooking the river. Piotr makes the most of a good location and delivers a scheme that could give occupants a heightened sense of connectedness to people and place.

Vignette VII
Student Projects
 ~ Riverside Terrace ~

STORY 7: COMPANY ARCHITECT

Synopsis

This is a story told in a series of verse episodes. Here, the author explored means of poetic expression to capture the values of the development company architect and cultural environment in which they perform their professional work. Five short poems represent key ‘encounters’ with in-house architectural staff working for Pink & Knight. The poems blend a range of research materials that stem from episodes of participant observation, collaborative working and social interaction. The poems are further accompanied by author notes that offer respective backgrounds to their making; dates, locations and situations are declared, as are the primary research materials used to construct the work. These are supported by two organisational ‘trees’ and a work-flow diagram that provide further insight to the environments and processes written about. The story serves to give voice to –and isolate the practices of – the architect working within Pink & Knight. In doing so the author reviews the position of co-professionals operating within a business-orientated context.

Rationale

The author’s rationale for presenting research in an alternative form was inspired by sociologist Laurel Richardson’s chapter ‘Poetic Representations of Interviews’ in *Postmodern Interviewing*, edited by Gubrium and Holstein. Here Richardson draws attention to the norms of social science research writing:

“A deep and totally unnoticed trope used by social researchers is the reporting of interview material in prose...In the routine work of the interviewer, the interview is tape-recorded, transcribed as prose, and then cut, pasted, edited, trimmed, smoothed, and snipped, just as if it were a literary text-which it is, albeit usually without explicit acknowledgement or recognition as such by the researcher...The use of standard writing conventions, including the use of prose, conceals the handprint of the researcher who produced the written text”.⁵¹

⁵¹ Laurel Richardson, ‘Poetic Representations of Interviews’, in *Postmodern Interviewing*, ed. by Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2003), pp. 187-201

Richardson's words remind us that the written communication of research is the creative output of the researcher and is subject to a level of crafting, albeit through formal modes constructed over time and consented by 'scientific' research communities. Richardson promotes the use of poetic forms of representation, arguing that the construction of poems from interview material 'does not delude the researcher, listener, or readers into thinking that the one and only true story has been written'. Indeed, poetic representations offer scope for readers to engage in reflexive analyses of their own. Richardson suggests that poems bring readers into a more equitable position, inviting them into an 'interpretative labour', in much the same way that the researcher has laboured in relation to the interviewee's interpretative labour. Richardson reasons that under these terms the construction of research text is 'positioned as joint, prismatic, open and partial'.

Poems may also be considered more 'true to life' in terms of their formal characteristics. Richardson highlights that when people talk, their speech is closer to poetry than prose – 'nobody talks in prose'. She refers to the universal use of 'poetic device' the pause, and the work of oral historian Dennis Tedlock, which found that pauses occupy nearly half the time Americans spend talking.⁵² Prose excludes this important characteristic of speech, whereas poetry writes in pauses 'through the conventions of line breaks, spaces between lines and between stanzas and sections, and for sounds of silence'. Of course, poems are not literally true, having been consciously constructed to evoke emotion through literary devices such as imagery, pattern, rhythm, typography, and so on. In these terms, poems,

"exist in the realm of making (mimesis) rather than of knowing or doing; they are representations of human experience...not speech uttered by, or speech acts performed by individuals who happen to be poets".⁵³

Richardson argues that the short poem is a particularly effective means to 're-present significant moments in lived experience', suggesting it is well suited to describing

⁵² Dennis Tedlock, *The Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983)

⁵³ Marie Borroff, 'Introduction: Cluster on the Poetic; From Euripides to Rich', *PMLA* [Journal of the Modern Language Association of America], 108.5 (1998), 1032-1035

something 'epiphanous'. Furthermore, Richardson recommends sequencing short poems with an implied narrative, such that each poem represents a candid photo or episode in a longer story. She asserts that "people organize their sense of self around and through such epiphanous moments", rather than around the long biographical account or life story. Here, poems were chosen for this story due to the data available and tentative interpretations of moments remembered. Poetic verse also creates distance between the researcher and informant/setting, and at times allows things to be said more directly.

Methods

The sequence of poems presented here represent a series of key encounters with architectural staff at Pink & Knight. Each took place outside of the formal 'research' meetings held at the sponsor's headquarters, and therefore serve as a kind of record of in-between moments and interactions with an important, yet less powerful set of actors within the company. The poems appear in chronological order, loosely corresponding with threshold moments in the research, ranging from an introduction ('The Driver') to early orientation ('Design Huddle'), through to an in-depth and special encounter ('Day Release'), and later reflections ('Informants'), as well as consideration for future research and practice ('In 2050'). The poems were borne out of a reflective process that relied on my memory and a near-to-end project position where hindsight was possible. From this vantage, I could identify significant encounters previously considered 'everyday' or unremarkable, albeit somewhat episodic.

Once identified, it became apparent that the abovementioned encounters were under-recorded, inasmuch that a participant-observer method had not been deployed within the respective settings of car, office, train, home and so on. There was a corresponding lack of field notes. Whereas in other settings and situations, when I could draw data from recognised methods, such as a semi-structured and transcribed interview, here there was experience. In some respects, this reflects the messy reality of practice-led research. While an initial research proposal imagined that an ethnographic study of the business and its staff would be possible, the reality was that 'work placements' never happened, and visits to its headquarters were centred on presenting research and associated work. I was never treated as one of the staff, left to his own devices; being either hosted or attending to a schedule of prescribed and performed actions. In these terms, I was never

‘in the field’ with access to everyday activities, observing the work of company architects. Nonetheless, encounters did take place.

I believe that representing encounters through poems gave me ‘license’ to work from memory; the medium providing space for retrospective analysis and sense-making. Also, taking a lead from Borroff and Richardson, I found comfort in the attitude that poems are a more obvious creative work, offering an interpretation rather than single ‘truth’ and inviting the reader to explore further. In these terms, I could consider myself an ‘honest broker’. Indeed, ethical considerations were paramount. One further advantage of poems is that they allow for a greater level of abstraction, and can help to discuss attitudes and issues without identifying persons, projects or locations. Thus, the poems maintain anonymity of both subject-informants, before their respective employer, and the sponsor organisation before its customer base and wider public. At the same time, there is a kind of immediacy or ‘nakedness’ to poems that allows situations to be presented ‘undressed’, without preamble nor the formalities of research vocabulary.

Poetry was found to accept a diversity of research ‘materials’, ranging from conversation items, through to email and texts, as well as participant observations, headnotes and memories. The poems also provided scope for speculation and exploring ideas (‘In 2050’), which is arguably censored through more traditional research writing. Yet, it has been claimed that poetry and dreaming can offer ‘real truth’ that is ‘higher than literal truth’.⁵⁴ Furthermore, poetic representation blends well with other creative practitioner research outputs, particularly design practice, which is inherently forward thinking.

The poems are further supported by three author-produced diagrams – a flow chart (Figure 10) and two organisational trees (Figures 11 and 12). These diagrams speak directly to poem 4 (‘Informants’), since they represent the two cultures being considered; that of Pink & Knight and a typical UK medium-sized architectural practice. The organisational trees can be used to locate the Project Architect within the

⁵⁴ David Bakan, ‘Some Reflections About Narrative Research and Hurt and Harm’, in *Ethics and Process in the Narrative Study of Lives*, ed. by Ruthellen Josselson (London: SAGE Publications, 1996), pp. 3-8 (p.7) [Emphasis as per the source text]

company structure, and determine respective lines of communication. The first tree (Figure 11) has a notably ‘flat’ hierarchy in which the architect is one degree of separation from practice partners, though in reality they are likely to have direct contact with both ‘bosses’ and clients. Whereas the second tree (Figure 12) is multi-layered, showing three degrees of separation between the top Managing Director and the Architect Team (which has its own internal hierarchy). The MD is a ‘client’ figure in this context. Lastly, the flow chart (Figure 10) is a visual representation of an internal ‘Red File’ process that governs Pink & Knight projects and staff, particularly the architect team. The chart is informed by aural accounts from staff members in different company departments, as well as the following description found within the staff induction guide:

“[The architects] initially produce feasibility drawings to establish the appropriate level of development on sites to enable the land teams to commence negotiations [documents are kept in a Grey File]. This is then followed by sketch designs for [a Pre-App] discussion with Local Planning Authority officers. [A full application is prepared] When contracts have been exchanged for the site purchase... This work also involves appointing consultants to advise on [site-specific] issues... A key stage in the planning submission process is the preparation of a Red File which is a pre-application file containing all necessary drawings, reports and appraisals to submit to the Approvals Committee for consideration. This is to ensure that the proposed planning application is in accordance with Company Policies in terms of product, design, specification and costs. On approval of the Red File, [planning staff] then submit the planning application which will include a perspective view of the scheme showing its setting.”

The Red File process is predicated on staff meeting specific targets, checks and approvals within a twelve-week timeframe, and is thus represented as a one-way passage with distinct staging posts (as opposed to the cyclical and ‘open’ process to which architects commonly refer). Furthermore, the diagram features industry acronyms (CAD, CGI, et al) as well as terms of reference that are specific to the organisation (Grey/Red files, ABC and LDP).

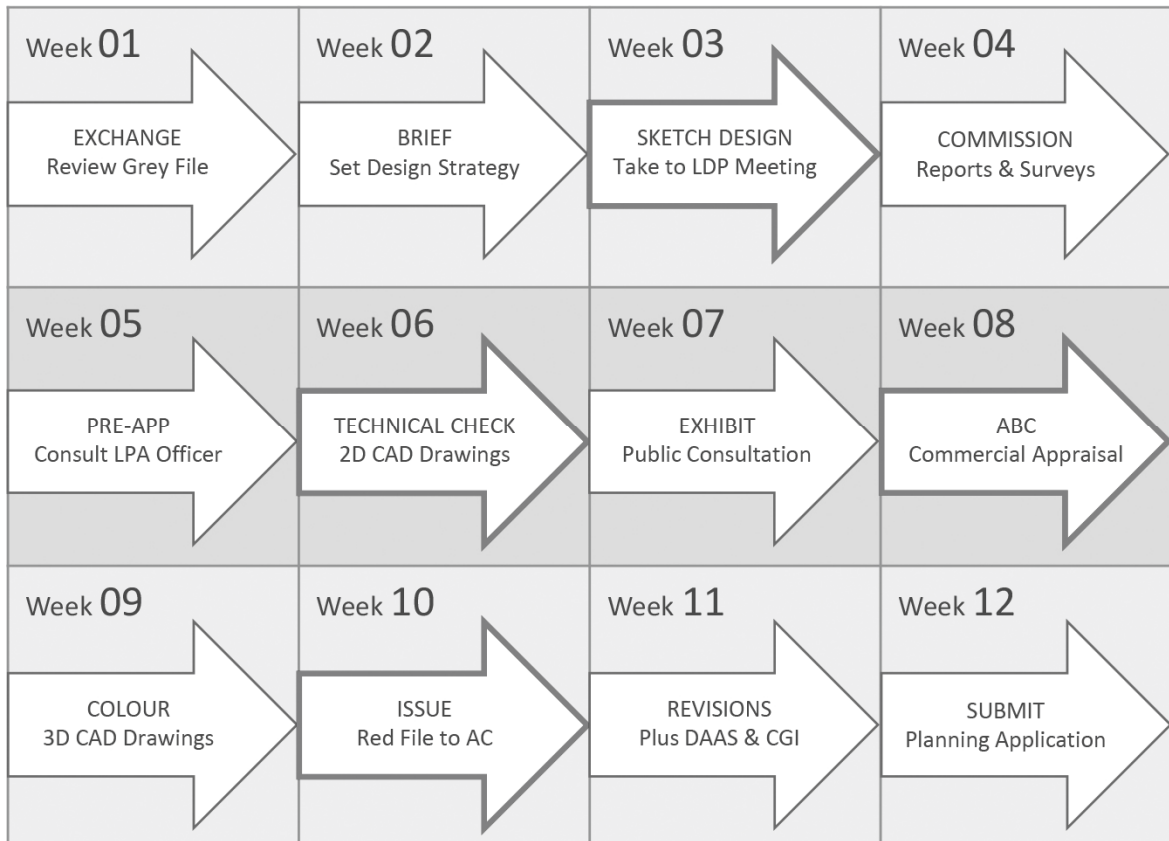


Figure 10: Pink & Knight ‘Red File’ Process

Key
 Activity-Base Costing (ABC); Approvals Committee (AC);
 Computer Aided Design (CAD); Computer Generated Image (CGI);
 Design & Access Statement (DAAS);
 Land Design Planning (LDP); Local Planning Authority (LPA).

The Driver

I'll arrange a driver, he said.

She arrived overqualified,
suited.

An easy professional matching,
hardly conversational.

Similar titles, different sectors.

Over the short road we took measures,
found some common ground.

A curiosity for sheltered housing,
from a comfortable distance.

A professional interest,
we young imagine for others.

The retirement chalet was foreign.

Non-existent in her country,
non-vested in his family.

How could we understand these elders?

Displaced, from empty nest to chalet.

Who, what drives this product?

Poem 1

This short poem captures the first time I was met at the airport and driven to Pink & Knight's headquarters to present early research findings (April 2014), meet key stakeholders, and participate in a photoshoot for a press release. The poem is constructed from memory and centres on a surprising 'introduction' to a company architect (the driver). I was considering research methodologies around this time, and for me this encounter underlined the need for an ethnographic approach – namely, to stay with, observe and interact with Chalet residents. It struck me as interesting that company employees could stay in the guest suites, free of charge, yet this architect did not know anyone that had. A primary question then was to what extent the company architect knows the end-user? Coming from an academic background, concern for 'inhabitation' and the 'lived-experience' is something of a litmus test for critical practitioners.

Design Huddle

I needed directions to find them;
their territory was unmarked,
a sea of screens and cabinets,
they were floating in an open plan.

My intent was human,
little rehearsed – more tribal.
An internal question held near:
how does it feel to architect here?

I was met with curiosity,
no agenda, no interview schedule.
We found comfort in systems talk,
and ritual through project reviews.

From a quiet office section,
we talked protocol and process.
Blocks, layouts, templates.
Hidden drawing layers, all in waiting,
to be dressed in traditional English.

Then they showed me contemporary;
schemes regarded different or contrary.
Those that required more attention,
albeit treats for our eyes and imagination.

We shared delight for the bespoke,
and in hushed tones we buzzed.
This little huddle of archi-ciples,
convened in quiet, short worship.

For those with ambition were hellbent,
here design was to be contingent,
expected to perform to script.
Challengers learnt to be tight-lipped.

Poem 2

This encounter took place at Pink & Knight's headquarters, following a Product Review presentation (February 2015). I regard the occasion as a kind of unstructured mini-focus group. The 'enquiry' was driven by my curiosity to see and hear a project *'from the point of view of a job architect'*; to meet them in their setting and to *'informally look over their shoulders at the workstation'*. A kind of 'shadowing' (research talk) or 'work experience' (business talk). In hindsight, this focus group or 'huddle' has become a significant moment in the research, in part because we've not had opportunity to meet again (though doubtless we could) and through the Product Review reports I commented on their projects and work. Through this encounter I discovered shared design values and empathy for their situation. On a practical level, it helped me to identify non-standard projects and understand some of the everyday challenges and 'red-lines' in their practice.

Day Release

It was a protracted encounter,
from train to studio to table to bar,
and back again.
The mid carriage rendezvous;
doubt turned to slow recognition,
out of context, out of trouser suits.
Outward, we sat opposite – quietly
opposed.
Return, we sat beside – prospect shared.

Our first conversation was stilted.
Unrehearsed, unfamiliar lines punted.
Talking shop exposed different values,
different clients, alternative wares.
I made tentative enquiries:
The review site – one of yours?
The design scheme – seen before?
The reply excused form:
Outsourced. External. Back-and-forth.
Project known, but unclaimed.

Before the students,
she gave measured responses;
assuming client representative,
and issuing practical, technical advices.
Part M4. Parking standards.
Gradually, divesting responsibility,
she turned from the corporate line,
to wider precedent.
And deep within something swayed;
she nurtured conceptual thinking,
revealed empathy and designerly ways.

At lunch, she confessed:
we take much for granted,
rarely start from first principles.
She recalled her ‘real’ world,
where time is expended differently.
There, processes are undergone at speed,
mentally, sometimes under-drawn.
Always sheet drawings – never models.
We talk differently there;
here, there is *fun*.

Returning together;
heads stretched by the day,
tongues loosened by a drink,
another confession is set free.
It’s a *nine-to-five* for her,
with part-time practice after hours.
One pays the bills, and self-build,
the other offers creative release.
We part at a track and timetable junction,
returning to our contexts, reviewed.

Poem 3

This poem records a moment of collaboration between me (as lecturer/design tutor) and a company architect (as invited critic) in November 2015. I had invited the architect to review student proposals for the academic project, 'Ageing Town',⁵⁵ which adopted a Pink & Knight development site. The poem recalls the spirit of a day-long conversation in and in-between different contexts. For me it represents a significant 'in-depth interview' with a key informant, with whom I had the opportunity to form a positive working relationship, through shared experience on 'neutral' ground. The research material was pieced together from memory and 'post-interview' email correspondence. A key observation is the tension that exists between architecture taught as a creative practice and practiced as an applied business – or *fun* and *real-life*. The informant remarked that '*looking at what the students were doing made me want to have some fun and design*'.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ See Story 6: Architecture Student

⁵⁶ Anonymous, pers. comm. [email from sponsor organisation], 06 November 2015

Informants

Her new name in my mailbox,
a colleague from yesteryear.
Circumstances changed;
contemplating the other side.
She the researcher,
I the informant – part inside?
Seeking thoughts, sounding board.
Social data exchange;
arguments for and against.

Good employer proof of evidence,
acclaimed Best Company 20-15.
Bonified business, not studio;
shop-bought desks, not doors;
budgets, bonuses, benefits.
A menu of company cars;
carrots presented at interview.
Good for you?
Maybe it's time to push the bike.

Absolute business context,
from flat to steeple hierarchy.
Directors layer the architects;
all governed by business model,
net-to-gross, return-on-investment.
Profit margins, the measure of success,
for him that shouts loudest?
Guts, and fire in the belly, though
they seemed like nice chaps.

Might she escape archi-torture?
For more time with the kids.
An opportunity to learn,
what and how developers earn...
What happens while we're architecting?
Can we colour, and collect readies?
More jaw, less draw-ing.
What is retirement housing,
future-proof, or boomer fashion thing?

Few awards – is design on the agenda?
Taken aback, by the lack of interest.
Architecture... Any other business!
Getting land, doing deals finds reward.
Grey docs, red files, cost checks, sign-offs.
Patterns, standard details.
Schemes cut-paste. Delivered.
A bash it out mentality,
a product of numbers.

Who has the inside view?
What cultures the informant?
The interview, *interesting and lengthy.*
Now a kind of decision rehearsal;
appointment possible,
subject to tests.
Is this for me, we both wonder.
The questions were different.
I know I should have seen it coming.

Poem 4

This poem is an account of a ‘data exchange’ between myself and a former colleague as she prepared for, and reflected upon, a job interview at Pink & Knight. This account is based upon correspondence (an exchange of emails and text messages), as well as retrospective notes from a telephone conversation. It also draws from my own thought processes, working *with* Pink & Knight, and the prospect of working *for* a developer. This was an important encounter with a ‘prospective’ company architect; an encounter that provided space for a close and candid discussion with a co-professional about the ‘other’ context. The poem also seeks to capture the reflexive duality of our roles; each person switching between investigator and informant. Key ‘findings’ are the cultural differences that exist between working within an architectural practice and the developer’s office. The qualities of these lived and imagined cultures are subtle as well as complex and contradictory. She didn’t get the job.

In 2050

Crossing the border at 68,
a new, old recruit.

In 20-10, there were 10;
forty years then, 19 million.
One-in-four aged 65 plus,
2.4 workers for each of us.⁵⁷

Young-folk huddle in ghettos,
'compacts' at town fringes.
They administer the service economy,
serve Silver needs and wants.
Key workers for institutes;
caring, cleaning, clapping.

A two-score career,
the architect leaves the care team,
exits office, enters the scheme.
Once provider, now consumer.
Living a dream designed for others.
Does it fit?
Perhaps not, yet.
Maybe in ten years...

Time to withdraw,
30 years without salary.
Collect rent from compacts?
Or spend on the very olds?
For some life is stretched thin,
Slowly, slowly
Silver Surfers suffer.

Once specialist – 3% of stock,
now mainstream.
Halls for the post-grads of life,
a chalet for life's vacation?
Did we build choice?
For one-size-fits-all, eventually.

⁵⁷ Richard Cracknell, 'The Ageing Population', in *Key Issues for the New Parliament 2010*, ed. by Adam Mellows-Facer (London: House of Commons Library, 2010) <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons/lib/research/key_issues/Full-doc.pdf#page=2> [accessed 29 March 2017] p.44-45

Poem 5

This poem represents the career-end for a fictional architect that provided significant ‘service’ to Pink & Knight. It is based on an imagined event, rather than ‘researched’ encounter. Nonetheless the poem draws from research literature and data, including historic and projected population figures for older people in the UK, as well as current concerns, such as lack of housing choice (*‘3% of stock’*), and product perceptions or marketing ‘images’ (*‘post-grads of life’*). Similarly, the poem draws upon expressions heard within the research field (*‘Maybe in ten years...’*). Key questions raised by this poem are: the limits of architectural agency, or how much architects can affect products and market choice; whether architects of the future will be integrated members of a ‘care team’, as opposed to principal designers in an ever-more diversifying ‘design team’; and why housing for older people is considered ‘specialist’, as opposed to age-friendly criteria being implicit in all housing.

Discussion

Two underlying themes of the poems are the identity of the architect and relative degrees of professional ‘agency’⁵⁸ or ‘voice’.⁵⁹ Poem 1, *The Driver*, presents an unexpected introduction to a key informant and gradual revelation that they are a co-professional – another architect – albeit operating within a different sector of the construction industry. Poem 2, *Design Huddle*, explores an information exchange; a group bonding around a shared set of implicit architectural values – recognising progressive design and exemplar projects – that transcend differences in professional status and practice contexts. Poem 3, *Day Release*, presents two architects shifting between contexts and reflecting on everyday practice, as well as outlets for design (or having ‘fun’). A key observation here is the informant’s shifting positionality and attendant temporal gains in agency, particularly regarding the expression of design narratives and ideas. Poem 4, *Informants*, looks at switching positions – researcher as informant, and vice versa – as two former colleagues report on the ‘other’ practice context and culture, as observed and as experienced temporarily. It presents a question of career choice; a kind of weighing up of alternative contexts, opportunities and potentials for job satisfaction. Poem 5, *In 2050*, presents an imagined self-reflection of an architect entering retirement. It examines a professional career, asking, ‘what was I doing’ and ‘what was achieved’? This series of poems is thus a representation of key research encounters and commentary on architect agency evidenced in the field, but also an open question: how can architects be happy and effective in this sector?

Judith Blau’s sociological study of architects and firms conducted in 1980’s Manhattan found that architects’ job satisfaction and commitment to their employers was linked to the size and structure of the firm in which they worked. While historic, Blau’s findings map onto contemporary UK architectural practice, as experienced by the author and reported through anecdotal accounts of others. Blau’s data showed a reduced commitment to work and a relatively weaker ‘professional identification’ within large

⁵⁸ Agency: being able to intervene or ‘make a difference’ to a pre-existing set of affairs or course of events. As discussed in the following two publications: Nishat Awan, Tatjana Schneider and Jeremy Till, *Spatial Agency: Other Ways of Doing Architecture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), and Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Saturation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p.14.

⁵⁹ Voice: the exercise of power over one’s work, over the work of others, and over the allocation of resources. Discussed in: Judith Blau, *Architects and Firms: A Sociological Perspective on Architectural Practice* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1988), pp.24-45 (p.24)

firms. This was attributed to “the ways in which jobs are structured in them [larger firms] and the lesser voice in the large firm’s affairs that its architects have”.⁶⁰ Blau’s research found that offices that are organised ‘vertically’ (see Figure 11), with architectural teams handling projects from start to finish, were ‘superior’ in terms of architects’ commitment. The reason being that verticality gives architects opportunities to be generalists and to have diverse responsibilities. Whereas, in offices that are arranged ‘horizontally’, with projects moving through different departments, architects must be specialists, responsible for elements or phases of work. Regarding horizontality, Blau found that it is considered ‘superior’ in industry (as opposed to the profession), “because top management can exercise greater control and because of the efficiencies that relate to economies of specialization”.⁶¹ In the context of Pink & Knight (see Figure 12), where ‘horizontality’ is apparent, we might also associate the hierarchical, departmental structure with its attitude toward the production of a product, as opposed to bespoke architectural projects with an emphasis on design service. The developer values volume and mass-production, with industrial logic being borrowed from the assembly lines of other products, such as those within the automotive industry. The potential problem for design staff is that they may experience a lack of satisfaction and develop lower career contentment due to having narrowly defined responsibilities and little opportunity to exercise ‘voice’ in professional decisions.

Blau identified a couple other characteristics of architect firms that are relevant to this discussion. Firstly, she identified a ‘close fit’ between organisational objectives and individual professional goals within architectural firms, due to the partners having the same general training and background as employees. She relates to the work of Howard Becker by claiming that architecture offices have the characteristics of ‘collective enterprise’,⁶² whereby workers are bound together by a set of common conventions that override divisions of labour and differences in power. This engenders a kind of collegiality that supports equal voice in professional affairs, which may be harder to achieve within a larger, multi-disciplinary organisation. Secondly, Blau identifies a universal problem for architects:

⁶⁰ Judith Blau, *Architects and Firms: A Sociological Perspective on Architectural Practice* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1988) p.142

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.55

⁶² Howard Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982)

*“the discrepancy, between what architects believe defines the profession – creative design – and what in fact they find themselves engaged in. Because there are many more jobs in production than in design and more commonplace buildings than chefs d’oeuvre”.*⁶³

In these terms, we might develop empathy for the company architect engaged in production-orientated tasks, with little voice or responsibility, and perhaps missing the intensive design activity (‘fun’) they experienced as part of their training. Indeed, another author commenting on ‘moonlighting’ within the architectural profession, suggests that while it may contribute to income, it also provides independence and the opportunity to make decisions, and ultimately a way of keeping ‘business’ at the office while pursuing an ‘outlet for design’.⁶⁴ Certainly, this could explain why a well-paid professional working for a UK ‘best employer’ might run a part-time architectural practice outside business hours. That said, it begs the question how design talent might be better nurtured and rewarded by the daytime employer? Or, conversely, is it the role of the employer to satisfy these kinds of professional aspirations?

⁶³ Blau, p.54

⁶⁴ Dana Cuff, *Architecture: The Story of Practice* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1995), p.51

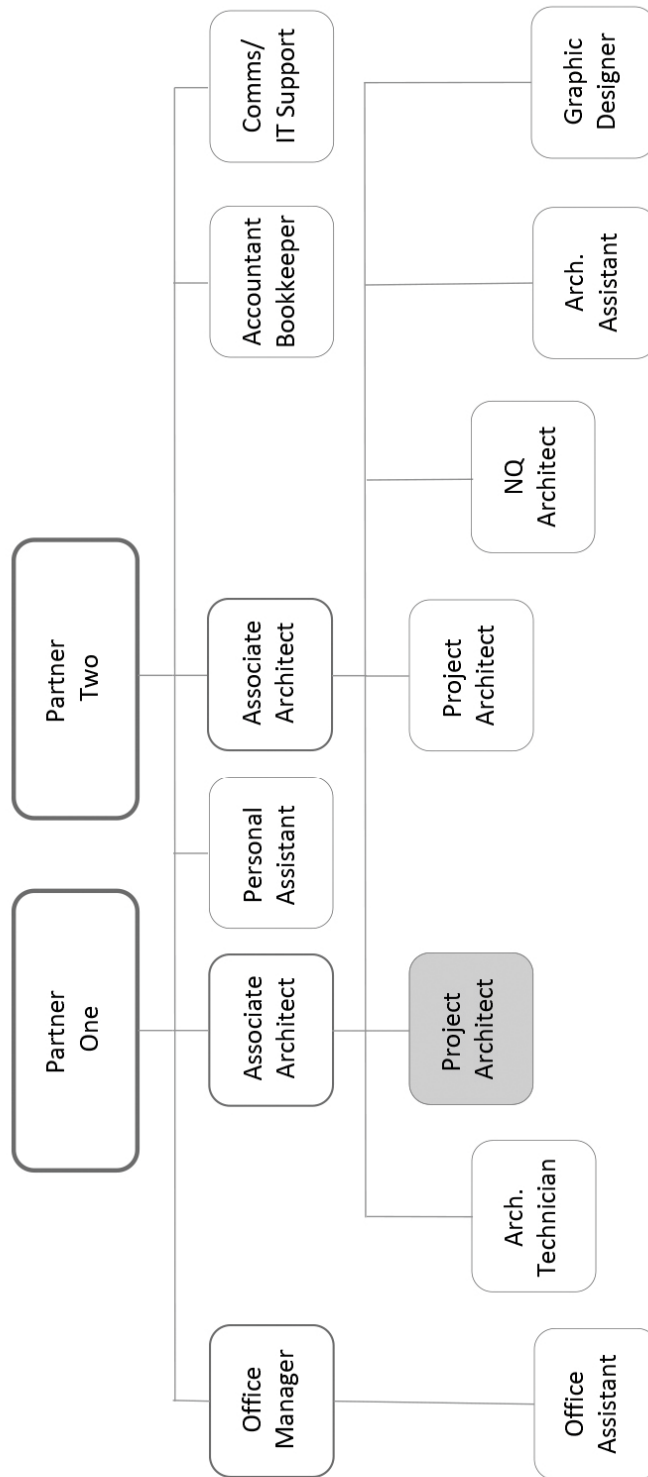


Figure 11: ‘Vertically’ Organised UK Architectural Practice (Medium-Sized)

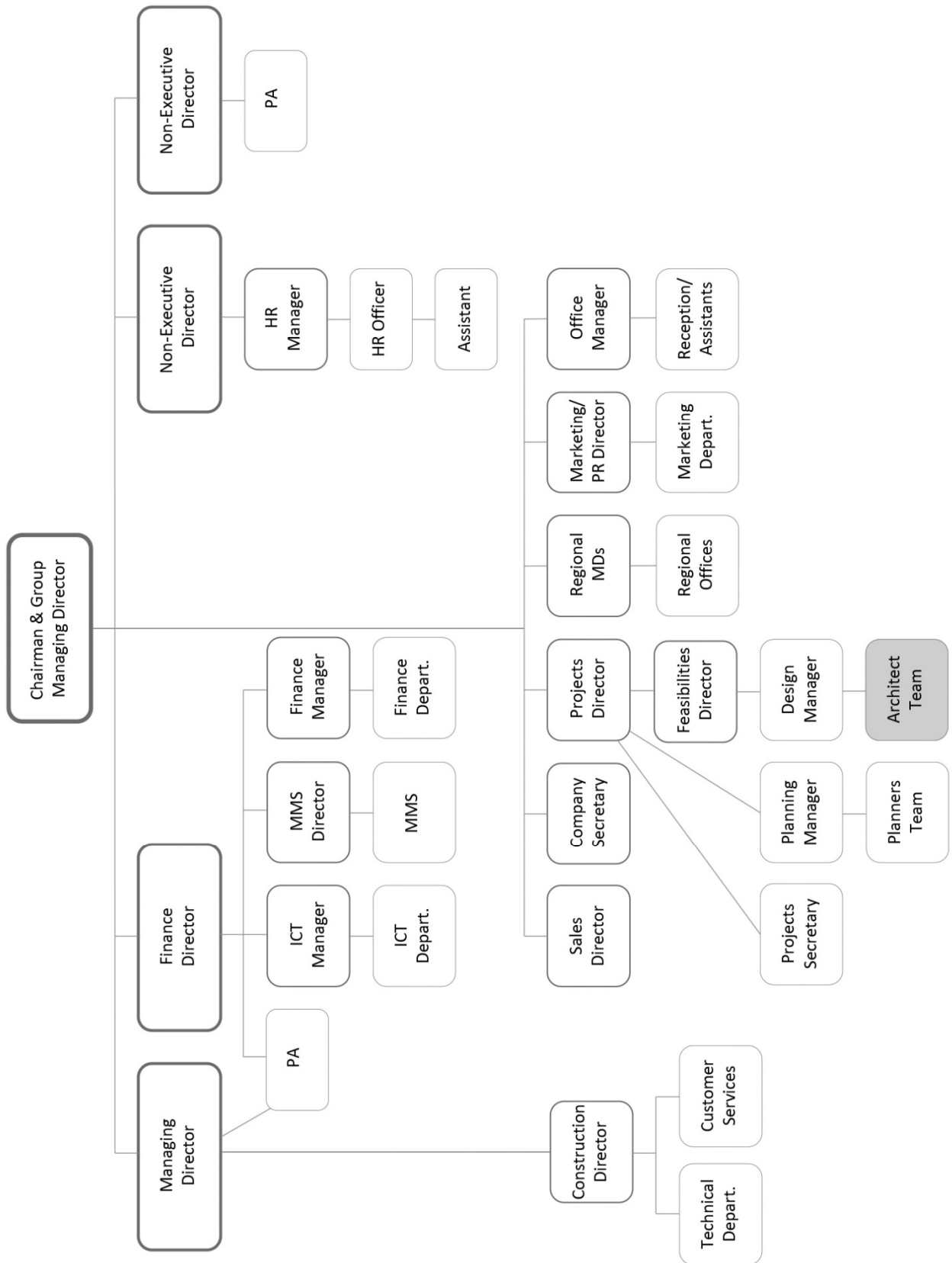


Figure 12: ‘Horizontally’ Organised National Development Company (Pink & Knight)

Conclusion

The author posits that this series of poems and accompanying discussion have helped to shine a light on the position of the company architect, by situating them within a broader professional/industry context; highlighting some differences in architect's expectations of their role and respective degrees of agency, as well as differences in the organisational structures in which they operate. Architects as agents – being able to intervene or 'make a difference' to a pre-existing set of affairs or course of events – are both empowered and constrained by the environments in which they work. Here the company architect was found to be shaped by a strong business context, multi-layered management, and clearly defined production-oriented processes designed to maximise profit. One might consider, then, whether architects at Pink & Knight are 'designers', or if their role could be better described as 'custodians'; persons entrusted with guarding or maintaining a design or set of design patterns that are shaped or tweaked to fit specific development sites and contexts. Certainly, one critic, speaking on behalf of PegasusLife, accused a competitor provider of "pedalling unsophisticated, outdated buildings",⁶⁵ suggesting that the design of its competitor's product has needed updating for some time. Interestingly, PegasusLife is looking outside of its organisation and seeking consultant architects to develop innovative designs. One might ask whether this innovation could have been afforded internally? And where the financial cost of innovation was being borne – the architectural practice and/or the development company?

⁶⁵ *Designing for the Baby-Boom Generation* (London: Archiboo, 2014)
<<http://archiboo.com/event/creative-director-of-pegasus-on-designing-for-the-baby-boom-generation/>> [accessed September 2017]

Vignette VIII

Lounge Logic

This vignette presents design work that was prepared for the sponsor. Design was used as a method for synthesising and testing emerging ideas, gathered through mixed research methods and field tactics (resident feedback, residency and design review). A close examination of the chalet product led to the identification of 'opportunity areas' for design review and enhancement, including the shared lounge. Analysis found that the lounge was a kind of default or negative space, resulting from the omission of two residential units on plan. Designs sought to work within existing frameworks - grids, layouts, unit mixes, strategies, etc - and are therefore posited as potential enhancements to the standard product. Here two proposals are presented, based on a case study chalet. The first proposal comprises a simple remodelling or 'tweaking' of the existing lounge, reflecting resident feedback and aspirations. The second proposal involves more substantial structural alterations, albeit respects the established space allocation for shared lounges.



Photographs of shared lounges within case study Pink & Knight developments, showing a common palette of soft furnishings, including high wing back and low back arm chairs and dining table sets.

Vignette VIII
Lounge Logic
~ Lounge Interiors ~

In essence a Pink & Knight development comprises of private one- and two-bedroom apartments clustered around common facilities, including a 'shared lounge'. The atmosphere of the typical lounge is somewhere between that of a hotel lobby and a TV or day room within a nursing institution, but without the nurses. Within the case study location the lounge is one open plan space, articulated on one side by a bay window with integral door leading onto a south-facing terrace. At one end the room is open to the main entrance, which includes a concierge style reception desk. There is a small kitchen, separated by a door at the opposite end, which is primarily intended for preparing tea and coffee. Appliances include a fridge, dishwasher and microwave. The lounge itself has an ornamental fireplace, flat screen television, a number of soft armchairs, three coffee tables and two dining tables with upright chairs. The ways in which residents have appropriated the space are documented within my photographic survey. Key features are a small table by the entrance for out-going post, a folding table near the reception for displaying shared books, and a puzzle table close to the kitchen. It's also worth noting that there is insufficient space for all members to attend a function at one time.

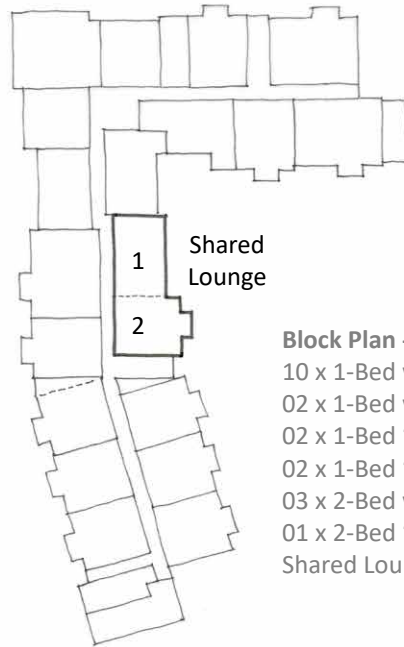
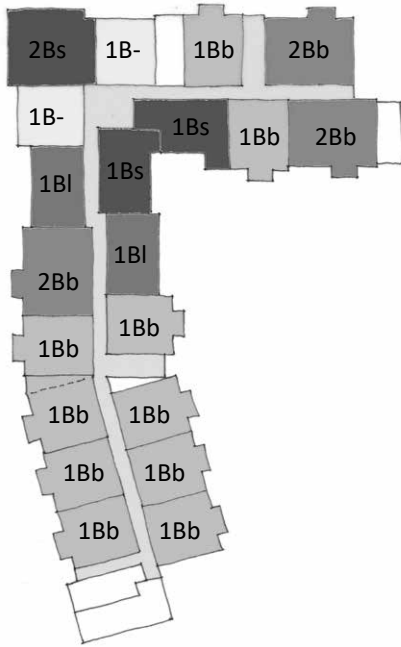
The shared lounge is a kind of default space, typically resulting from the 'omission' of two residential units on plan. My studies of schematic drawings reveal traces of a 'plan logic' associated with the apartments above – the same compartment and external walls, often with a bay projection occupied by apartment kitchens elsewhere. In these terms the typical lounge is a kind of 'geometrical' or 'empty space' that might be regarded representative of Henri Lefebvre's perceived shift in philosophical considerations of space towards a 'science of space'.¹ Arguably this way of thinking "decouples space from time, and thus also from considerations of social life as unfolding in space".² Lefebvre points to an apparent gap that separates the products of professionals from their intended inhabitants.³ Likewise I question to what extent the architects working for Pink & Knight are considering future lived-experiences of the lounge spaces they propose. It appears that design energy and budget is expended on interior finishing – the objects that fill the 'empty space' as opposed to inherent architectural qualities of space and light. Chalet managers have confirmed that the same furniture and finishes can be found in all the developer's lounges, acknowledging that "they all look the same".

¹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991)

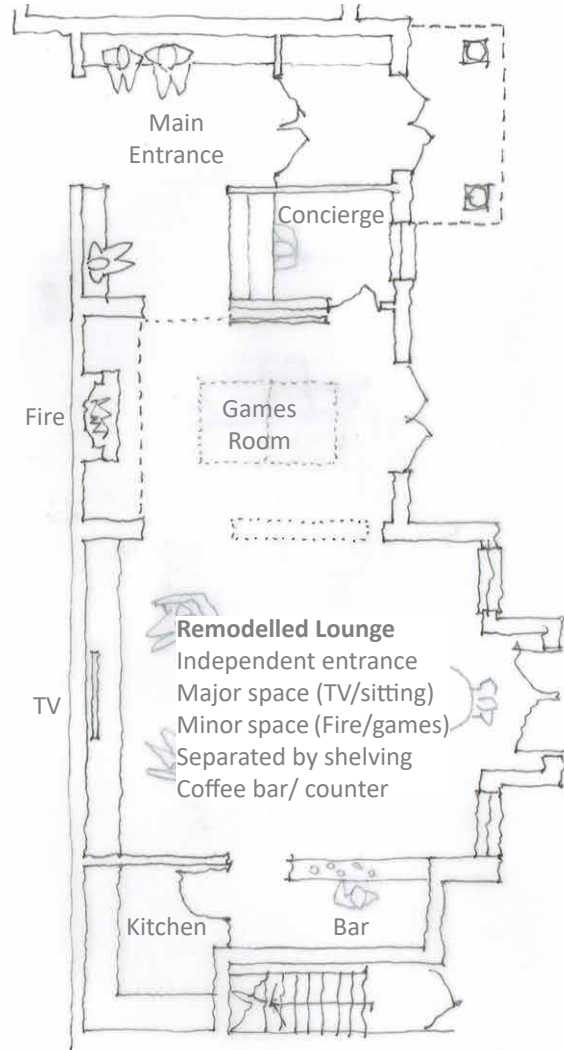
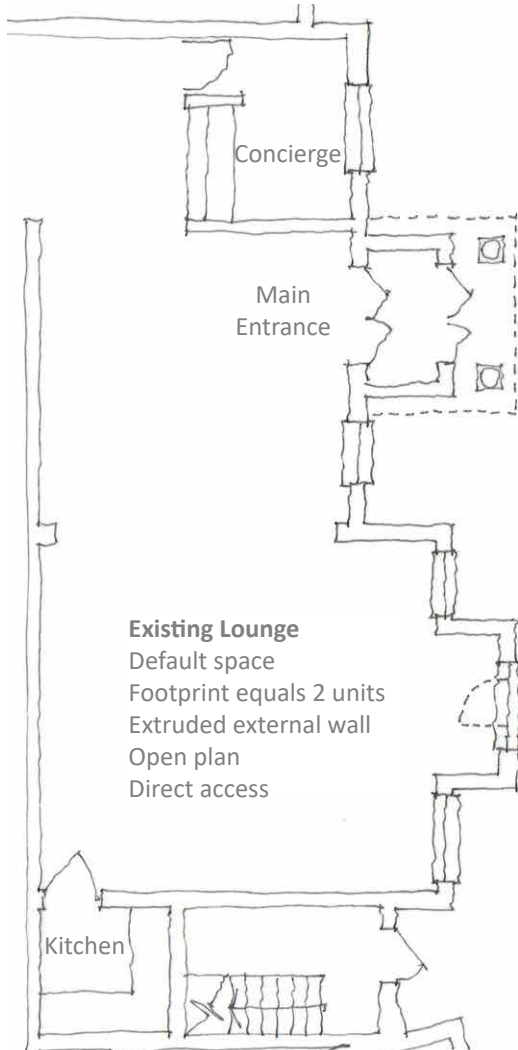
² Nathaniel Coleman, *Lefebvre for Architects* (London: Routledge, 2015)

³ Lefebvre

Vignette VIII
Lounge Logic
~ Analysis ~

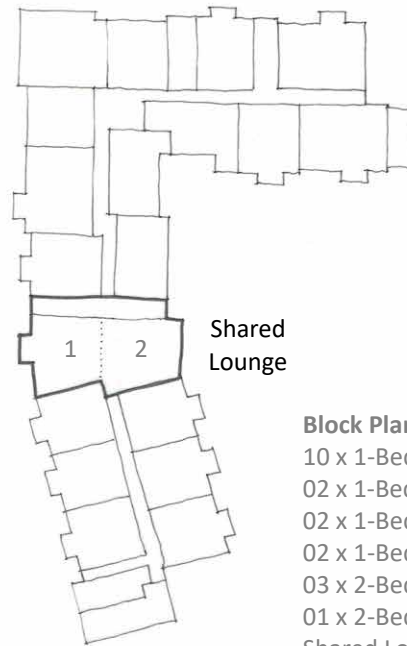
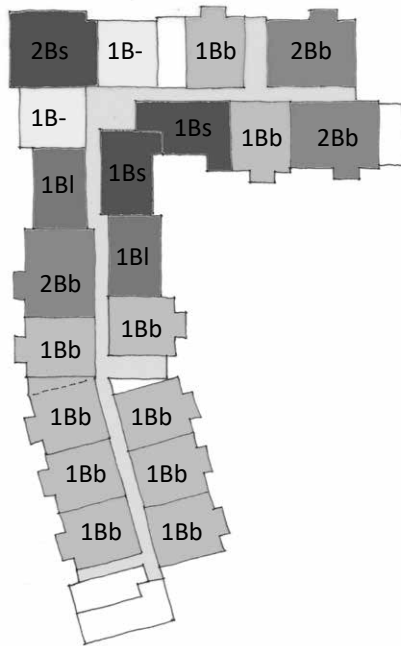


Block Plan - Unit Mix
 10 x 1-Bed with bay (1Bb)
 02 x 1-Bed without bay (1B-)
 02 x 1-Bed 'long' (1Bl)
 02 x 1-Bed 'special' (1Bs)
 03 x 2-Bed with bay (2Bb)
 01 x 2-Bed 'special' (2Bs)
 Shared Lounge = 2 Units



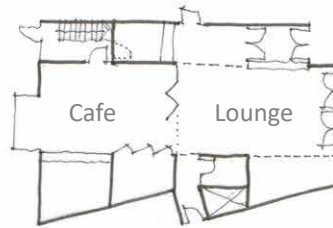
Design sketches presented to Pink & Knight, as described overleaf.

Vignette VIII
Lounge Logic
 ~ Analysing & Tweaking ~

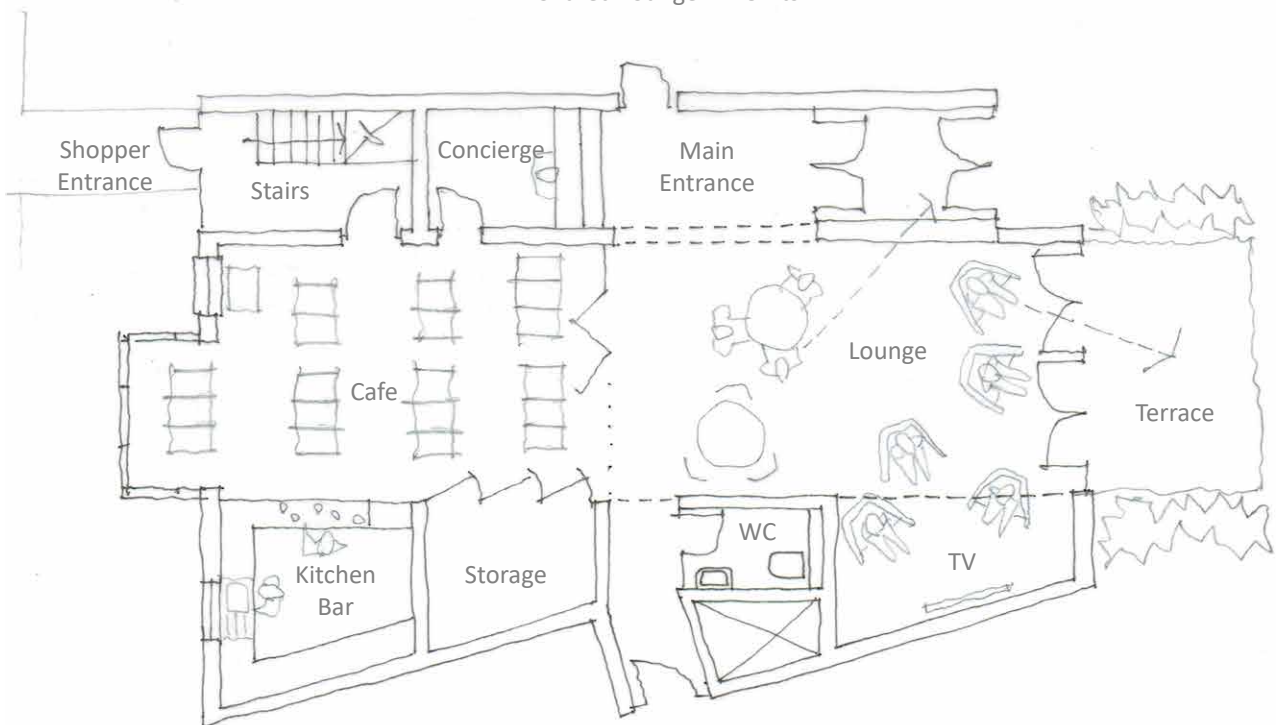


Shared Lounge

- Block Plan - Unit Mix**
- 10 x 1-Bed with bay (1Bb)
 - 02 x 1-Bed without bay (1B-)
 - 02 x 1-Bed 'long' (1Bl)
 - 02 x 1-Bed 'special' (1Bs)
 - 03 x 2-Bed with bay (2Bb)
 - 01 x 2-Bed 'special' (2Bs)
 - Shared Lounge = 2 Units



Shared Lounge = 2 Units



Sketch design proposal for a 'through lounge' presented to Pink & Knight, as described overleaf

Vignette VIII
Lounge Logic
 ~ Through Lounge ~

The first design proposal – ‘remodelled lounge’ – shows the concierge desk relocated in-between the lounge and the main entrance. This improves thermal comfort within the lounge as well as reduces unwanted distractions e.g. deliveries. Some residents also felt strongly about having to walk through the lounge in order to reach their apartment, sensing that it was an erosion of their privacy. The proposal recognises the entrance as an important public-private threshold and makes provision for display space within the lobby as well as seating around the reception. This area can be closed off by means of a sliding door. Similarly, the chalet manager has dedicated office space that communicates with the lounge and overlooking the entrance, both internally and externally. The lounge is articulated on two sides and moveable furniture is used to subdivide into a games room with fireplace, and a sitting room with the television. The division could be formed by book shelving, thus accommodating the library that is currently laid out on a folding table by the reception. Both sides of the lounge would have direct communication with the outside by means of double doors leading onto the terrace. The sitting room features a coffee bar, which would better facilitate coffee mornings and parties. There is still a separate room for the kitchen, recognising that there are times when residents will want to shut the door on the noise of the dishwasher.

The second design proposal – ‘through lounge’ – presents a lounge that extends the full depth of the building block, though is no bigger in real terms. This has the benefits of more than one aspect and improved access to and from both sides of the development – street and garden court. The primary entrance is associated with the garden and parking, while a secondary entrance offers more direct and/or discreet access to and from the street. This is referred to as the “shoppers’ entrance” on other Pink & Knight schemes. The proposal also seeks to make better storage provision for furniture, allowing for greater flexibility of use and multiple functions within the lounge. Pink & Knight are now thinking about the identity of the lounge and the potential benefits of it looking and feeling more like a coffee lounge or public-facing shop. In some respects this would be a more natural or better understood venue in terms of its programme, since people have been ‘meeting for coffee’ for a greater part of their lives. Whereas how and when to use a shared lounge is less clear. There is also a risk that current participation depends upon the direction of the chalet manager and therefore limited to office hours. In this way it shares the ‘day room’ image of care settings.

Vignette VIII
Lounge Logic
~ Design Proposals ~

Vignette IX

Design Patterns

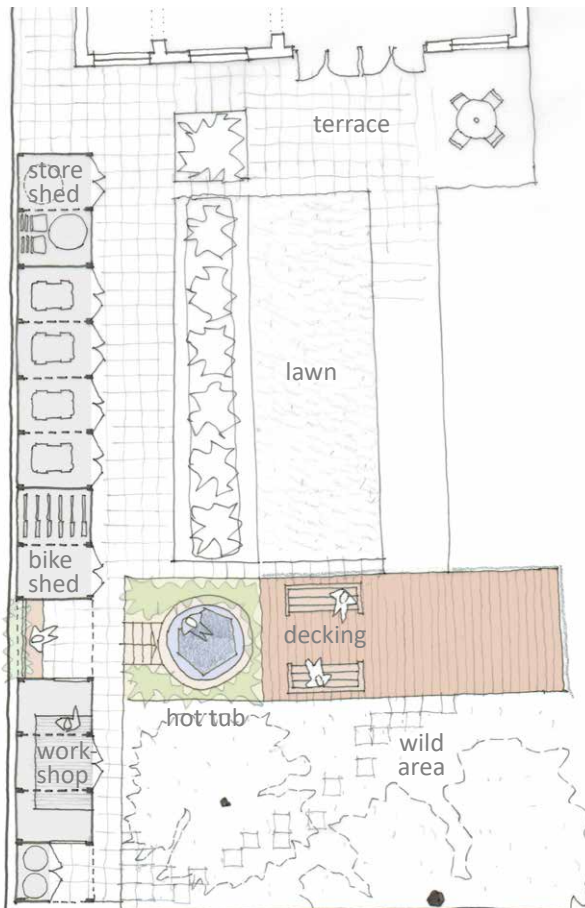
This vignette presents a series of 10 design patterns that were prepared for the research sponsor, in support of enhancing its standard product and responding to the research findings that emerged from the product reviews. The design patterns sought to work within existing frameworks - grids, layouts, unit mixes, strategies, etc - and are therefore posited as potential 'enhancements' to the product. To date two patterns have been adopted and built-out in new developments (Pattern No.2: Autonomous Entrance; Pattern No.3: Coffee Bar), while two others have been partially adopted (Pattern No.1: Active Garden; Pattern No.4: Walking Routes).

ACTIVE GARDEN

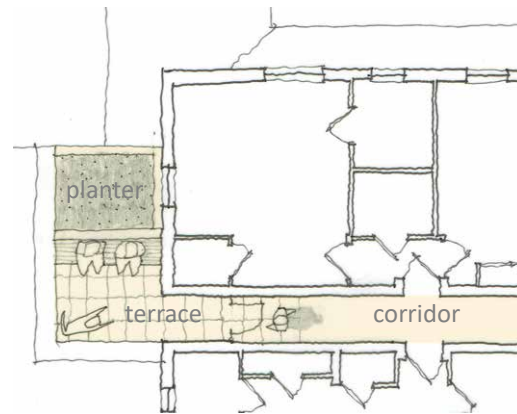
The chalet garden is more than a high-quality visual amenity.

The core of the Active Garden is comparable to an outdoor theatre, surrounded by private balconies, shared terraces and window seats, as well as occasional seating (the latter being stowed in purpose built accommodation off-season). The Active Garden sustains year-round social interactions and hobbies, with facilities including sheltered seating, a barbecue area, gardeners' potting shed, workshop for menders and makers, and an outdoor hot tub for you to relax in. The full extent of the Active

Garden is accessible via circular pathways alongside sunny resting places and raised flower beds. The border beds of the Active Garden are home to personal sun dials, bird baths and perhaps a shared beehive. You will find a hierarchy of garden spaces, ranging from public-facing formal beds to private kitchen gardens, yard 'areas' and wildlife corners. It might even be home to some hens – providing an alternative means of companionship and *raison d'être* for so-called 'Hensioners'.



Active Garden plan showing hot tub, potting shed and workshop



Plan of corridor-end roof terrace



Plan of winter garden next to laundry

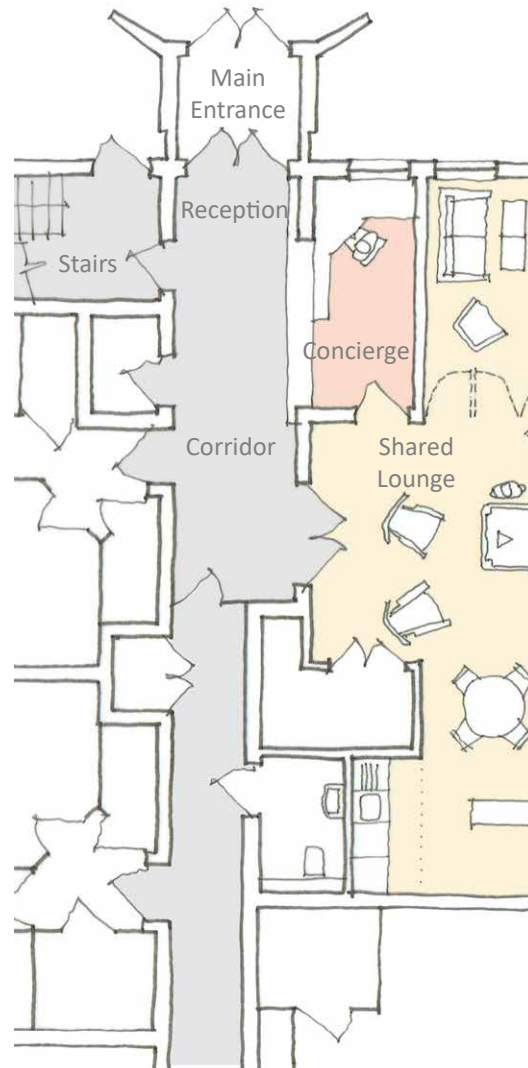
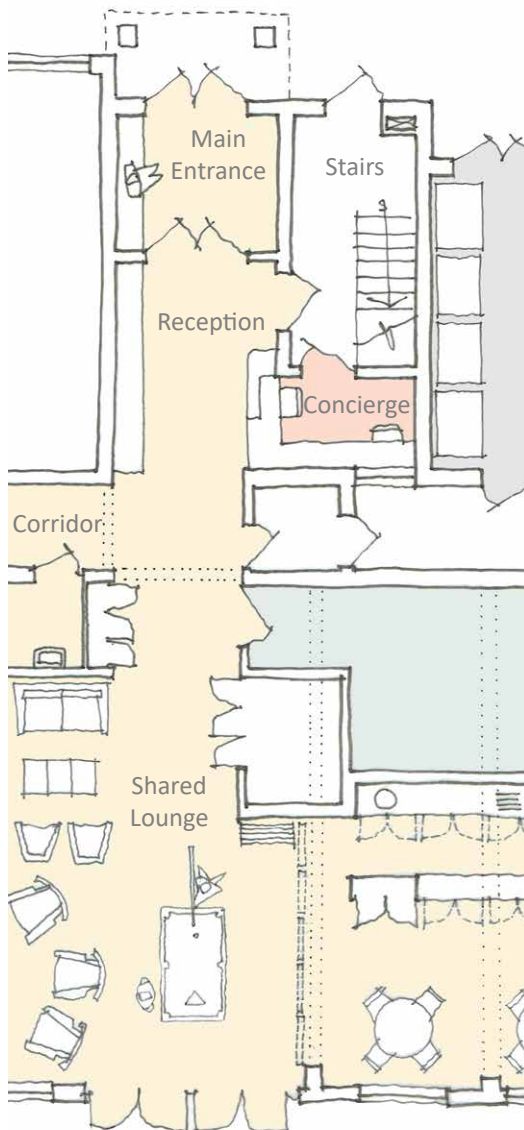


AUTONOMOUS ENTRANCE

*The main entrance is more than
a critical point of access and control.*

The Autonomous Entrance is separated from the shared lounge by means of a concierge-style reception and associated office space. The Autonomous Entrance allows you to come and go without compromising your privacy and/or dignity. You can choose to cross the threshold of the shared lounge or simply walk by and continue with your day, free from inquisition or untimely conversation. The open reception counters provide a friendly and obvious port of call for visitors and delivery

persons, and an associated interview room makes a confidential conversation possible. Nearby seating allows you or your visitors to wait in comfort, whilst keeping a good lookout. The person arriving by mobility scooter can choose to park outside the Autonomous Entrance or drive directly into the building, no assistance required. There is even a discrete place to leave your trolley for when you return from the supermarket and need to transport goods from the car boot to the apartment.



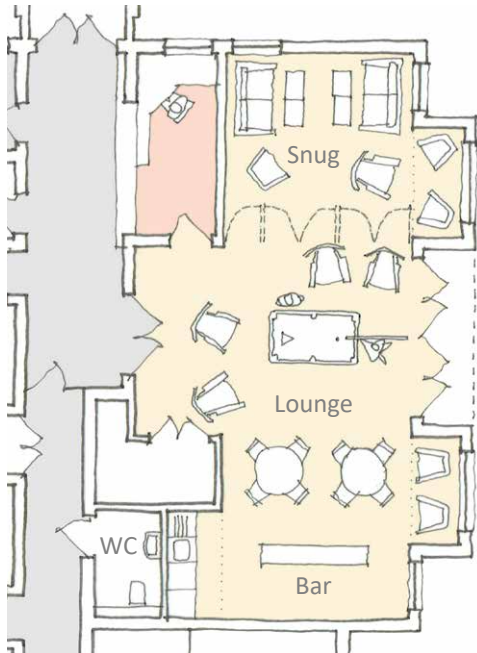
Vignette IX
Design Patterns
~ No.2 ~

COFFEE BAR

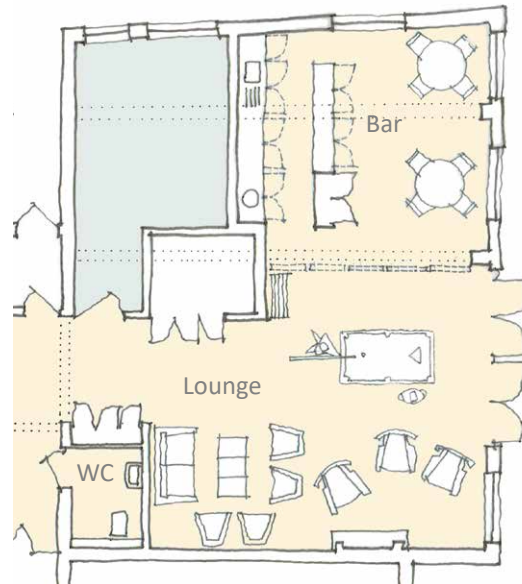
*The shared lounge is an unfamiliar place,
not experienced in earlier life.*

The Coffee Bar replaces the shared lounge. The social protocol is clear; this is a place to meet and share a drink, like the familiar coffee shop where we met at weekends or the Raffles bar where we whiled away our holidays. The Coffee Bar overlooks – and is directly accessible to/ from – an important exterior space such as the garden terrace or street. There is a coffee bar and café-style tables, as well as a ‘snug’ with soft furnishings, including your favourite wing back armchair by the fire. The Coffee Bar offers

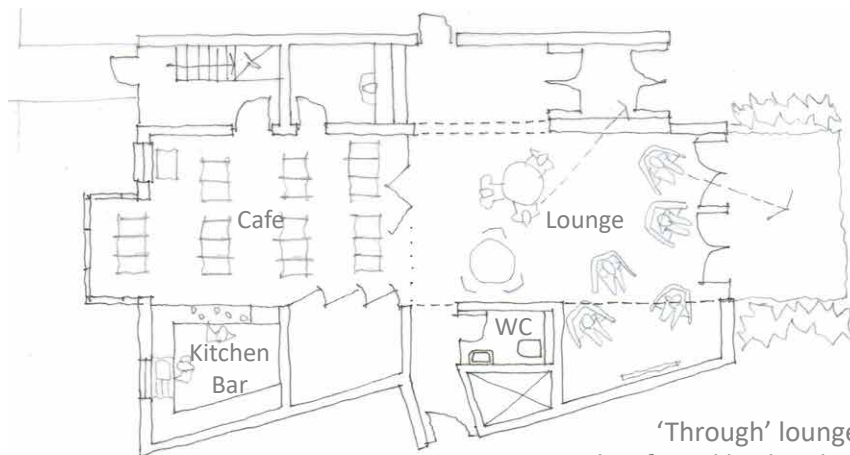
the possibility of splitting the space, by means of sliding bi-folding doors, allowing for parallel activities such as card games or watching a film. The Coffee Bar has some amount of flexible space, readily accommodating a fish and chip supper, yoga or ballroom dance class. There will be storage space for the folding pool table and a nearby accessible toilet. In short this will be a great place to throw your 80th birthday party or plot your ninetieth!



Lounge with open plan coffee bar and snug



Lounge and side bar with sliding partition



‘Through’ lounge
with cafe and kitchen bar

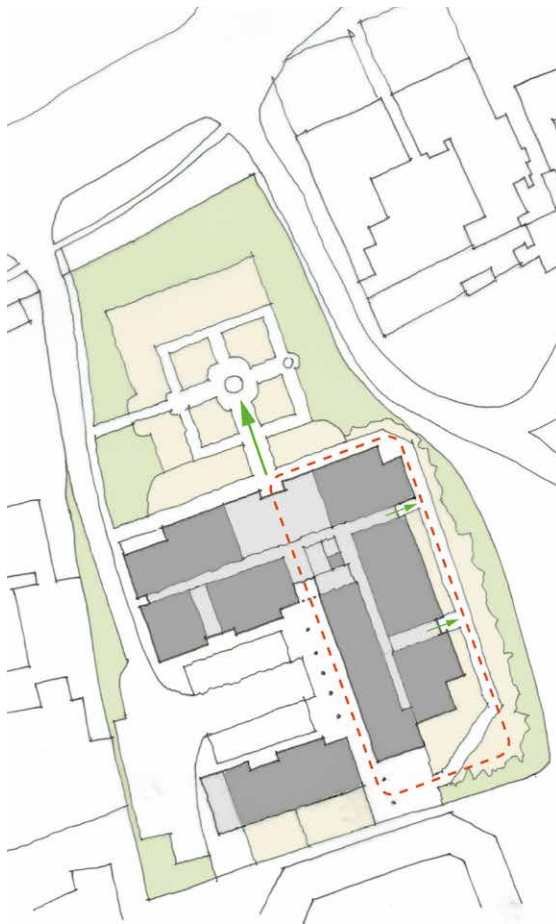
Vignette IX
Design Patterns
~ No.3 ~

WALKING ROUTES

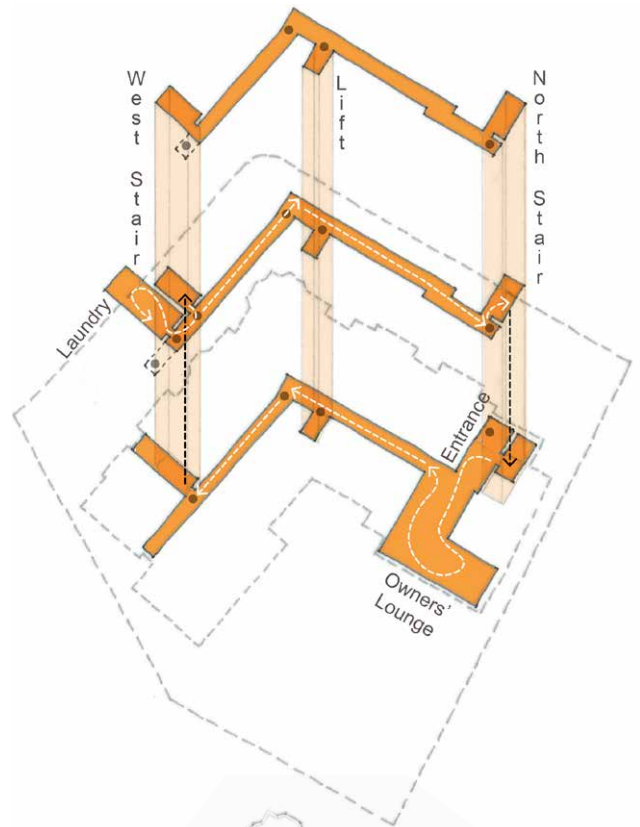
*The chalet is bigger than a house;
its shared spaces add up to a long walk.*

Walking Routes are designed circular walks that connect destinations (e.g. entrance, coffee bar, garden terrace, workshop, etc.) as well as sequences of resting places (e.g. by the lift, stairs, window, bookshelf, etc.). Walking Routes follow natural desire-lines and facilitate visual connectivity (seeing along and/or above routes, through use of vistas and vantage points); utilising intuitive 'land-marking', as opposed to signposting. Walking Routes are relatively level (not precluding stairs) and sufficiently wide

for two people to pass, making allowances for mobility aids. Walking Routes are variable; they encompass different surface qualities and spatial experiences, ranging from interior to exterior and passing through ('transversal') and alongside ('tangential') larger territories. Walking Routes facilitate personal exercise, ad-hoc social encounters, and engender a sense of orientation and purpose, helping you to sustain an active and independent lifestyle.



Above: Site plan showing walking route around grounds and through lounge



Above, right: Axonometric showing internal walking routes through common areas



Right: Plan drawing showing resting paces along internal walking routes

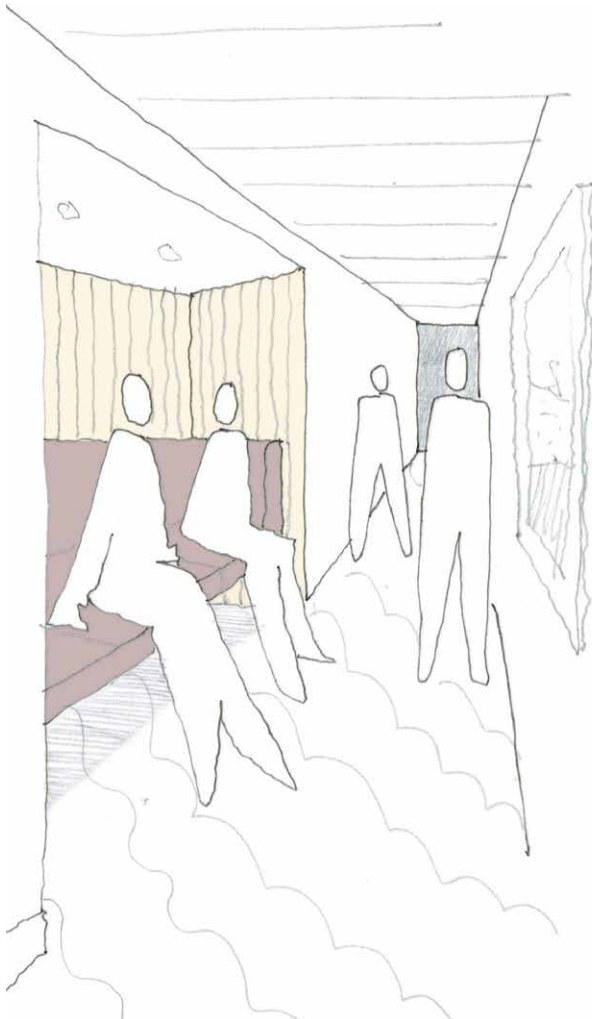
Vignette IX
Design Patterns
~ No.4 ~

SOCIAL CORRIDORS

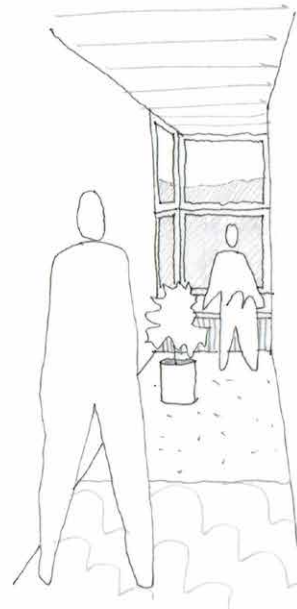
The chalet corridors do more than simply connect other places.

Social Corridors provide opportunities for informal interaction, as you might expect on a country lane. No need to visit the village hall, nor cross the threshold of the shared lounge and attend organised events. The Social Corridor is naturally lit and ventilated, with floor-to-ceiling windows and roof lights where possible. Wall and floor coverings are selected for daylight distribution and avoid high contrast or glare. The Social Corridor is wide enough for two people to pass or stop and talk; its height made more generous by exposed services and innovative construction.

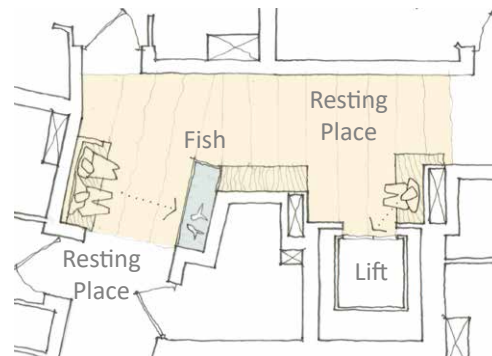
There are 'eddy' places, coinciding with front doors and removed from the general flow of movement, and pools of daylight that aid orientation by providing obvious points to walk towards, highlighting 'events'. The Social Corridor offers a sequence of resting places – by the window, lift and stairs, and at designed midpoints – including built-in seating, feature lighting, an interior/exterior view (to stairs or garden), and display spaces (a bookshelf, information board or tropical fish tank) to help sustain your social life.



Perspective view showing corridor resting place



Perspective view showing corridor-end window seat



Plan showing resting place and fish tank by lift core

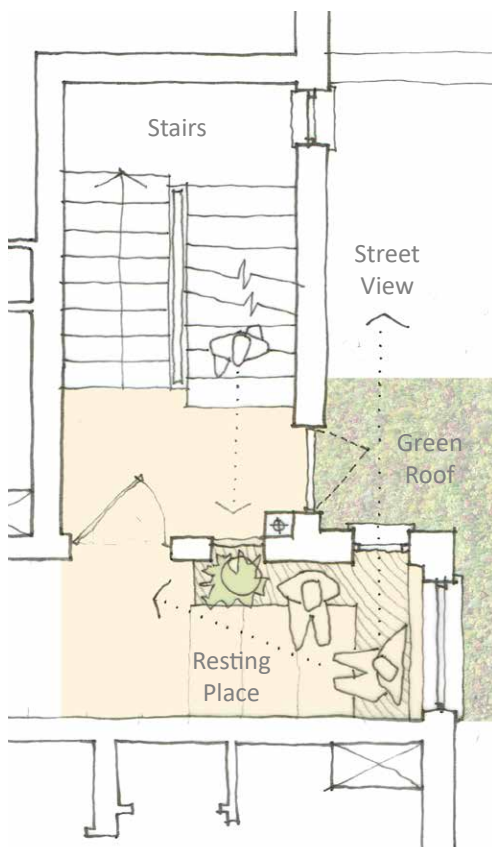
Vignette IX
Design Patterns
 ~ No.5 ~

WELLBEING STAIRS

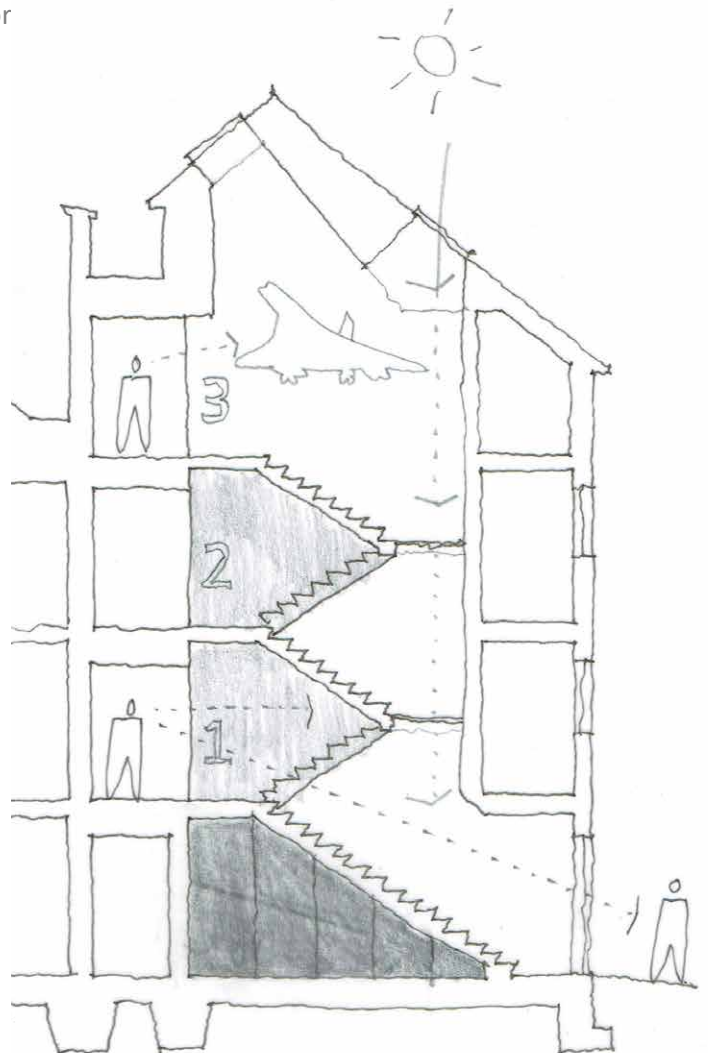
*The stairs are not just for emergency escape
or being carried out feet first.*

Wellbeing Stairs offer an attractive alternative to using the lift; helping to sustain a healthy and independent lifestyle, by providing physical and mental stimulation, as well as greater opportunity for social interaction. Wellbeing Stairs are naturally lit and ventilated and offer a range of external aspects from garden to rooftop level. Similarly, internal windows (between stair and corridor) aid your sense of orientation and connection with neighbours above and/or below. Way-finding and creative interior decoration give each floor

a clear identity and character. Wellbeing Stairs are designed with older people in mind. Deep treads and shallow risers allow for comfortable travel, while robust balustrading provides reassurance and the handrail is warm to touch. Rich materials and good lighting make for a homely and hospitable environment; a welcome place that feels pleasant and safe. You might even boost your pedometer count by going up and down a few times before sitting down.



Plan showing stair core with green roof access door and resting place



Cross section through stair core, showing sight-lines through vision panels, plus way-finding signage and decor

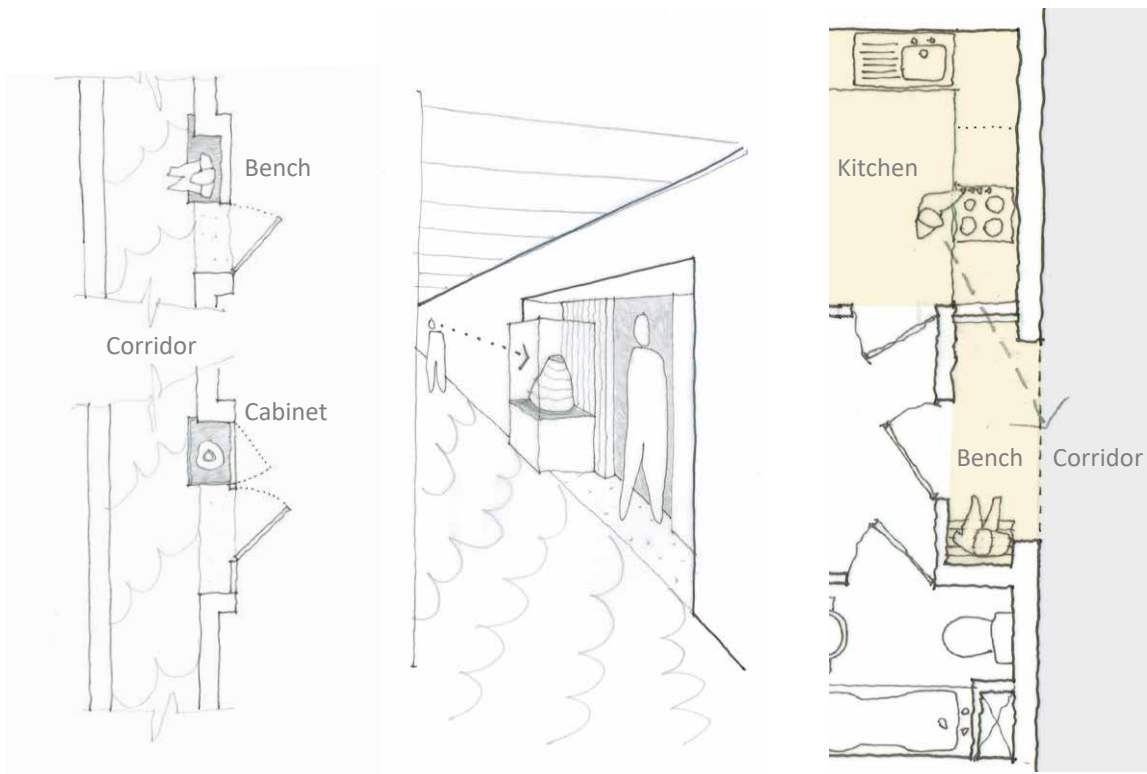
Vignette IX
Design Patterns
~ No.6 ~

EXPANDED THRESHOLD

The chalet is not a hotel where every door looks the same.

Expanded Threshold acknowledges the importance of the so-called ‘front’ door that separates the private apartment from shared space. If this door were on the street you would expect it to be secure and weather tight, but also an expression of yourself. You would choose the paint colour, style of door furniture, and make decisions about flower pots and door mats. The Expanded Threshold incorporates an ‘eddy’ or recess that makes space for these things, allowing you to

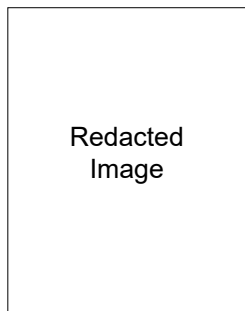
appropriate a bit of corridor. A timber plinth offers seating, display space, a hideaway for parcels and location for utility meters. The front door has a shutter window, which you may choose to leave open for passers-by. Similarly, the Expanded Threshold is overlooked by your kitchen window, offering further opportunity for display or communication with your neighbours. There is also an ‘external’ cupboard where you keep occasional or bulky items such as golf clubs, suitcases and shopping trolleys.



Sketch plans of apartment front door thresholds

Perspective view of resident's display cabinet in corridor

Plan of residential unit with kitchen corridor window



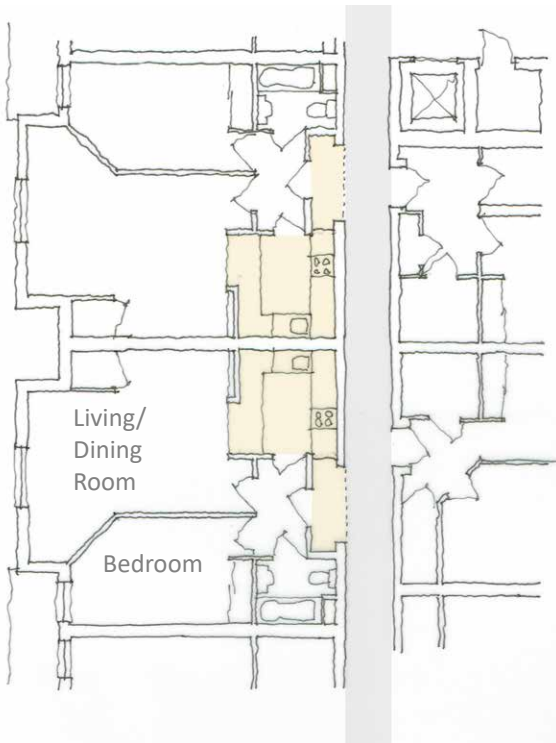
Vignette IX
Design Patterns
 ~ No.7 ~

KITCHEN HUB

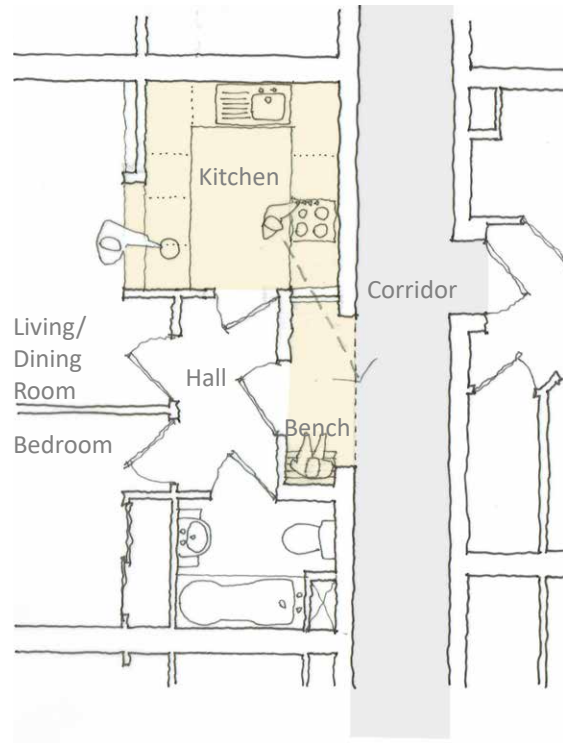
The kitchen has evolved from annex to heart of the home.

The Kitchen Hub is at the 'heart of the home', and cooking considered a 'theatrical event' or form of entertainment. The Kitchen Hub is accessed from the (entrance) hall and within reach/view of the living room (through the breakfast-bar hatch). It also has a visual connection to the 'social corridor' (through a fixed window), which offers opportunities for natural observation (of the corridor), non-verbal communication with your neighbours and a further place for display. The Kitchen Hub is wheelchair accessible and relatively

compact, which means it's easy and efficient to use; its counters and cupboards are appropriately placed (not too high) and include effective storage solutions for hard-to-reach areas (corner carousels, racks, etc.). There are glass-fronted cupboards at eye level; making it easy to see, rather than remember the contents. 'Tower' ovens with retractable doors come as standard and you can choose your own kitchen appliances; a choice of different looks and levels of functionality, making the Kitchen Hub an enjoyable place to spend time.



Plan showing 2 apartments with corridor-side kitchens



Detailed plan showing apartment kitchen in-between corridor and dining room

Corridor window in an ExtraCare development



Redacted Image



Kitchen servery in an ExtraCare apartment

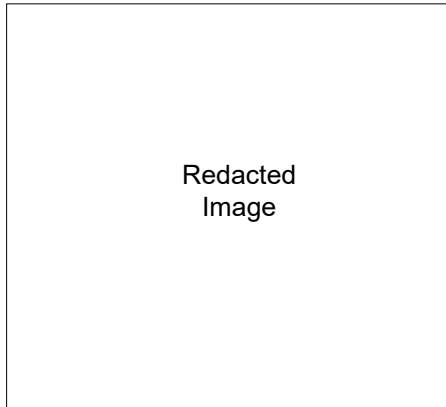
Vignette IX
Design Patterns
 ~ No.8 ~

HOME SPA

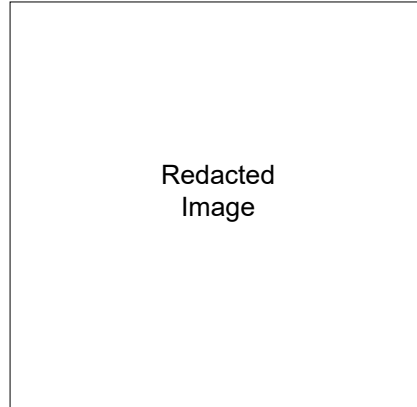
The bathroom has evolved from a place of utility to relaxation and indulgence.

The Home Spa is a place for pampering and soothing aches and pains. The one-bed apartment is equipped with a walk-in shower complete with underfloor heating and non-slip tiles – no steps, ledges, curtain or carpet to negotiate. The shower is truly accessible and is fitted with a hand rail that extends beyond the enclosure, providing additional support as well as hanging space for towels. There is sufficient space for a fold down stool, if required. The toilet and washbasin are designed with older

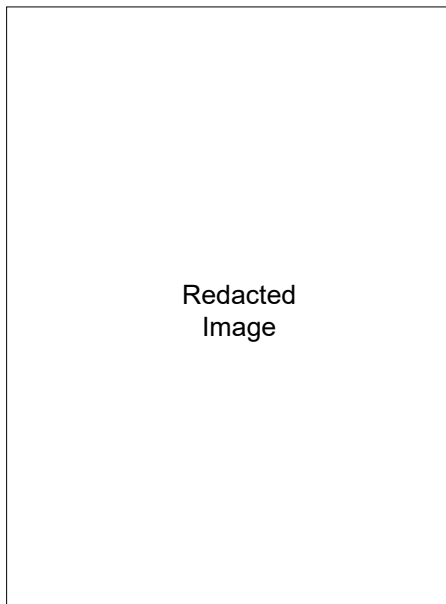
people in mind, being not too low or high, respectively. For a premium you can add mood lighting and a steam facility to create your own aromatic spa experience. Should you want a soak, you could visit the communal hot tub and sauna overlooking the garden. Alternatively, the two-bed apartment offers a separate bathroom and shower room en suite, providing choice and additional convenience for you and your guests.



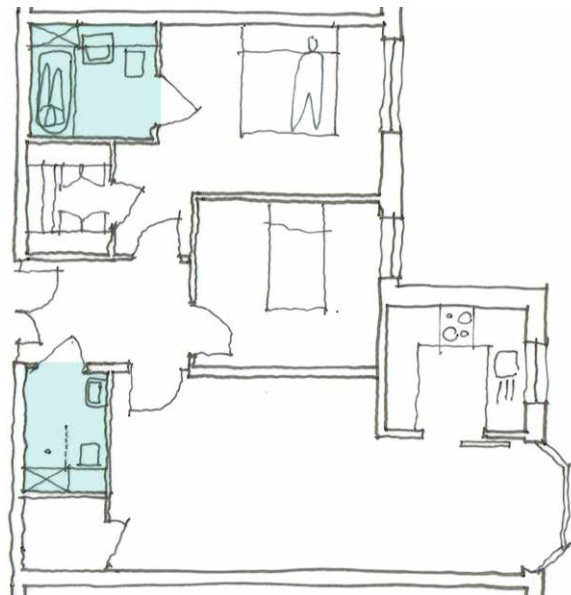
Example of fully-accessible shower enclosure



Contemporary wet room with walk-in shower within retirement development



Turkish hammam shown for atmosphere and sense of indulgence



Plan showing 2-bed apartment with en-suite bathroom and main shower room

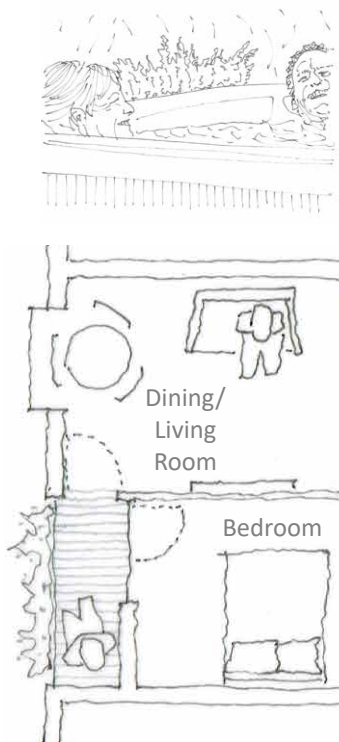
Vignette IX
Design Patterns
 ~ No.9 ~

OUTDOOR POCKETS

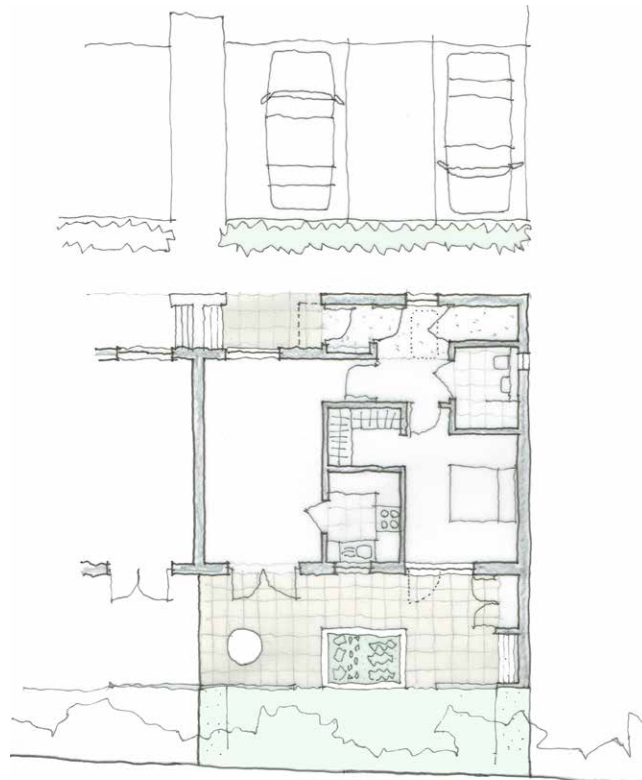
Everyone deserves a piece of ground or sky to call their own.

Each apartment has access to a private roof terrace or recessed balcony; a pocket of outdoor space sufficient to enjoy a favourite 'tippie' in close proximity to nature, be it your collection of pot plants, a green view or clear expanse of sky. Outdoor Pockets are small, yet big enough to share with a friend or loved one. In the summer you can spread out the sun lounger, and in the winter you can use it to step out for a quiet 5 minutes each morning. The Outdoor Pocket is easily accessible from

your bedroom and living room, and enhances the aspect from both. The balustrading and handrail are designed with safety in mind, but also assist good views, including from the bed. Being Outdoor Pockets these spaces are setback in plan and/or section, and offer a degree of protection from the elements. Return walls, sliding screens, overhangs and deployable canopies protect you from heavy wind and rain – a comfortable outdoor place to relax year-round.



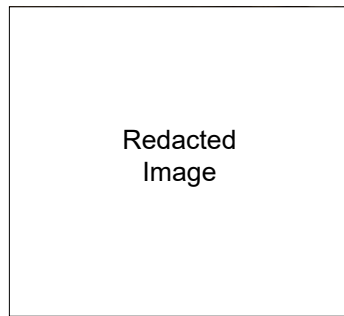
Apartment plan showing balcony with dual access



'Bungalow' apartment with front area and back yard



Precedent images of indoor and outdoor seating close to nature
 Left: Blaise Hamlet, Bristol, designed by John Nash
 Right: Home for Senior Citizens, Chur, by Peter Zumthor



Vignette IX
Design Patterns
 ~ No.10 ~

STORY 8: TOWN PLANNER

Synopsis

This story captures the position of the town planner working within a local authority, and their vital role in the regulation of housing for older people; being placed in-between housing providers and consumers, and ‘protecting’ the general public/public realm. This is a fragmented story inasmuch that it pieces together research episodes and secondary source evidence. The story opens with an account of a planning inquiry where two town planners – ‘Victor’ and ‘Rachel’ – were observed (and subsequently considered ‘rare sightings’ of their kind). Thereafter the researcher reflects upon a desktop study conducted as part of a work package prepared for the research sponsor. The latter highlights an ongoing ‘identity problem’ with regards to retirement-living products and their passage through the planning system. Furthermore, the story raises concerns regarding government ‘austerity’ measures and limited resources, including an apparent lack of retirement-living expertise within local authority planning departments.

Methods

The primary research methods supporting this story are direct observation and a desktop study involving document analysis, as well as one-off personal communications with planning professionals. Direct observation was undertaken at a planning inquiry held on 9-11th July 2014, where a Pink & Knight development was being considered following a local authority’s failure to give notice within the prescribed period of a decision on a planning application. Two representatives of the local authority were observed providing evidence and advancing a case for refusal of planning permission. The subsequent desktop study, meanwhile, conducted in October 2016, examined three regions of southern England, each representing distinct types of ‘destination’ for migrating retirees: a traditional coastline, an inland area of outstanding natural beauty and an attractive city outside the capital. For each region a synopsis and annotated bibliography was produced, providing an overview of regional planning policies, including local strategy and housing strategy documents. Also included were the views of local authority planning professionals, captured through direct communications and online documentation, such as committee meeting minutes and reports.

Here my research positionality was regarded a limiting factor, inasmuch that I am not a member of the planning profession and have a limited professional network with regards to practitioners located within local authorities. In these terms I could not revert to project contacts, and potential referrals by the sponsor's staff would have compromised anonymity and overall independence of the research. Informants were found to be hard-to-reach – elusive even – and thus likened to rarely seen or heard creatures, such as stoats, otters and pine martens 'at risk' in the British landscape. This aspect is further reflected upon within the research story, which necessarily pieces together one close encounter – the planning inquiry – and other shorter, remote exchanges.

Inquiry

The planning inquiry was held at a city Civic Hall; 'home turf' for the local authority being challenged. The building had an impressive classical portico with giant Corinthian columns and pediment containing a coat of arms that serves to remind visitors of its importance, and the authority of those officials that meet within. The meeting room, where the inquiry was held, had an interior rich in decoration and detailing; the room approximately square in plan, with a high, ornate ceiling and intricate cornicing. On one wall there were two large, sash windows, South-facing and overlooking a public square, which was flooded with sunlight during the two days of the inquiry. Conference tables were grouped together to make a U-plan arrangement, with the Planning Inspector seated at the head – central, on axis with the entrance door and fireplace, before and behind her respectively – and the two legal parties seated either side, facing one another. Representatives of the local authority were seated on the right-hand side of the Inspector, their backs to the windows, while the appellants looked into the sunlight. There were three rows of chairs for a small public audience that faced the Inspector.

The public audience was small in numbers throughout the inquiry. For the most part there were two student observers from planning degree courses, plus three observer-supporters from the appellant's side. The latter did not make representations, but bolstered the developer's presence and provided support and feedback to the legal team during the breaks. There were no further staff from the local authority, though a local councillor made a short representation on the second day. I was sat in the end seat of the

front row, having been invited as an observer by the appellants, Pink & Knight. I should declare a professional interest, in that I was equally sympathetic to the local authority's case, particularly with respect to its concern for good design. The appeal was against 'non-determination' within the statutory consultation period, though at the root of the case was a dispute over design approach and quality. The case officer's Proof of Evidence report states that had the authority determined the application, the delegated reason for refusal would have been as follows:

*"The Local Planning Authority considers that the proposed development by virtue of the overall scale and massing, including the siting of the proposed accommodation blocks, results in a form of development which harmfully dominates the site and fails to respond positively to its context. In addition, the detailed design of the scheme fails to respond to the vernacular architecture of the town..."*⁶⁶

Furthermore, the same Proof of Evidence noted that the planning team had sought to negotiate with the appellants during the application process to resolve design issues. An internal memo from the local authority design officer to the case officer states,

*"...we are not minded to say that a solution is not possible and we think that some discussion with the applicants would be beneficial and with a positive response a suitable solution may well emerge".*⁶⁷

However, the appellant failed to take up numerous invitations to meet with the planners and discuss the scheme. From the exchanges in the inquiry it was clear that certain behaviours had frustrated dialogue and the lines of communication were broken. The developer's apparent failure to engage further aggravated the planning process and is noted within the case officer's Proof of Evidence.

⁶⁶ 'Rachel' [Case Officer], *Proof of Evidence*, (Planning Services, City Development Directorate, c.2013), p.5

⁶⁷ 'Victor' [Design Officer], *Appeal Design Statement*, (Sustainable Development Unit, c.2013) Appendix 4.13: Internal Memo/Consultation

*“Although an unwillingness to work with the authority is not a reason to refuse the scheme, this behaviour has resulted in an appeal scheme that is of poor design and that fails to take the opportunity available to improve the character and quality of the area, wholly contrary to paragraph 64 of the NPPF”.*⁶⁸

This story of non-engagement calls to mind a recent piece of journalism that sought to expose developer cynicism and tactics. In 2014 Oliver Wainwright, *The Guardian* architecture and design critic, lambasted developer ‘exploitation’ of planning authorities in London and elsewhere in the UK. Wainwright raised a number of criticisms of planning process and includes candid quotes from relevant stakeholders. One of his sources, a former planning officer, is frank about the reality of the imbalance in our ‘confrontational’ system:

*“If you throw enough resources at a planning application, you’re going to manage to tire everyone out...The documentation gets more and more extensive, the phone calls get more frequent and more aggressive, the letters ever more litigious. The weight of stuff just bludgeons everyone aside, and the natural inclination is to say, ‘Oh yeah okay, I’ve had enough of this one,’ and just let it through. It’s like a war of attrition”.*⁶⁹

Rather than cooperate with planning officials, applicants are said to pursue means of applying pressure on the system. Indeed, it is common practice to submit multiple applications for the same site, particularly if subject to an appeal. In addition, Wainwright suggests that the system is being further undermined by some developers unwilling to engage with case officers and local decision making:

“Rather than being the last resort option, after negotiations with the local authority have broken down, the process of planning by appeal has become a tactic in itself. One developer is particularly candid on the matter: ‘Planning

⁶⁸ ‘Rachel’ [Case Officer], *Proof of Evidence*, (Planning Services, City Development Directorate, c.2013), p.11

⁶⁹ Oliver Wainwright, ‘The truth about property developers: how they are exploiting planning authorities and ruining our cities’, *The Guardian*, 17 September 2014 <<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/series/urban-futures-with-oliver-wainwright>> [accessed 10 February 2017]

decisions are so often the result of political wrangling at committee anyway,' he says. 'Why would you waste months negotiating something to get the planning officer on side, when they can't guarantee delivery at planning committee?' On appeal, it comes down to a battle between planning lawyers, the judgement often determined by who can afford the best representation".⁷⁰

An imbalance of legal representation was evident in the inquiry. The developer had a more experienced lawyer – ‘Queens Counsel’ as opposed to ‘of Counsel’ – than the local authority, though there is no evidence to suggest this had a material impact on the appeal decision. Wainwright suggests, in highly provocative terms, that the outcome is inevitable “when the Rolls Royce legal team of the private developer meets the quivering case officer of the emasculated public sector”.⁷¹ Clearly this position neglects to recognise the professional standing and independent remit of the Planning Inspector. The Inspector’s Code of Conduct states that “Inspectors should not be influenced by irrelevant considerations or outside influences when making their decisions and recommendations”, including the “identity, status or personality of those providing the evidence or argument”.⁷² Nonetheless the imbalance of non-legal representatives – their character, demeanour and experience – and their reports was most apparent in the inquiry observed. In general, the local authority representatives appeared under-prepared, or less rehearsed, as if they had snatched conversations on the subject in-between more pressing meetings. The non-legal representatives of the local authority were a design officer and a senior planning officer (the assigned case officer), referred to here as Victor and Rachel respectively. I will characterise each in turn.

Victor

Victor is a registered architect with twenty plus years of architectural and urban design experience, and in his current post he undertakes conceptual urban and architectural design for ‘residential’ and ‘care homes’ for the city council’s Adult Social Care department. The written evidence he prepared was somewhat repetitive and contained a

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Oliver Wainwright, ‘The truth about property developers: how they are exploiting planning authorities and ruining our cities’, *The Guardian*, 17 September 2014 <<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/series/urban-futures-with-oliver-wainwright>> [accessed 10 February 2017]

⁷² *Inspectors’ Code of Conduct* (Bristol: The Planning Inspectorate, 2017)

number of typographical errors. His argument, which centred on the scheme ‘not being of its place’, was awkwardly structured around reoccurring themes of ‘simplicity, consistency and domesticity’. His aural delivery was no more sophisticated. At times he contradicted himself, saying the scheme was ‘undercooked’ in terms of massing, yet ‘overcooked’ in respect of material presence and architectural detailing. Furthermore, there were mistakes in the binding order and pagination of supporting documents, as well as scalar and title inaccuracies in two of the drawing appendices.

By far the most compelling evidence produced by Victor was a set of the developer’s drawings annotated with a near forensic level of analysis and critique. I include a small sample of the notes he made on the elevation drawings:

- *“Generally too many discordant changes of style / detail and window style size (proportion). (Throughout the scheme)”*.
- *“This half of the elevation is incongruous to the other. The scheme throughout contradicts its own rational with two [sic] much variety”*.
- *“Arbitrary difference / change of gable forms. (Left hand hipped gable imbalances elevation & is a contrary introduction to the rest of scheme)”*.
- *“Use of render arbitrary and not in context”*.
- *“Five different window proportions in this piece of the elevation alone”*.
- *“Polychromatic brickwork and banding not contextual”*.
- *“Change to ‘classical’ string course & not consistent with others”*.⁷³

For a summative account of Victor’s position on the ‘general architecture’, I refer to the aforementioned memo between him and Rachel following their consultation:

“Generally we [the design team] think that the chosen style and depiction of the architecture is somewhat arbitrary, over eclectic and not the context of the development. The building offers too much visual activity and is unresolved in some areas. We can understand that this is to try and reduce the initial scale and massing [bulk] but it is not successful.

⁷³ ‘Victor’ [Design Officer], *Appeal Design Statement*, (Sustainable Development Unit, c.2013) Appendix 5: Sheets 4 & 7

A more clam [sic], ordered and contextual approach to the architecture along with a better articulation of the massing [bulk] may result in a much more successful approach. Typically we would need to address the multiplicity of variety in the openings [windows and doors] and the like of the brick banding [coursing] etc.”⁷⁴

To paraphrase Victor, his suggestion is that the proposed building’s bulk (‘massing’) should be broken down (‘articulated’) into smaller pieces, and the design detailing simplified. Regarding the latter, Victor is concerned that the design is not in keeping with local buildings, in terms of style, with elevations that are too busy due to the variety of materials and different styles of window openings. He posits that these issues are the result of a mishmash approach and incomplete design process.

Having reviewed the scheme and Victor’s extensive comments on design I am inclined to agree with his position. However, as previously stated, his Proof of Evidence report is highly repetitive and poorly structured as an argument. Furthermore, his aural presentation of the evidence was highly distracting (and subsequently satirised by Pink & Knight representatives). Indeed, I admired the Inspector’s neutral demeanour throughout the proceedings. My own thinking and reception of the case was hijacked by the strength of Victor’s personality, made manifest through his heavy, almost sluggish body language; his tired, untidy looking suit and shoes; his informal, borderline irreverent mannerisms, and his direct way of talking that seemed to conform to the ‘straight talking’ stereotype of Yorkshiremen. All these characteristics seemed to project a level of comfort about Victor and his role. I sensed that Victor had ‘stood the test of time’ and was considered part of the ‘old guard’ at the council; a status acquired through hard graft and dogged determination, as opposed to any political manoeuvring or careerism. His lack of tact suggested he was not used to explaining himself. Indeed, his explanation of the process came across in an altogether casual manner. For instance, he suggested there were different kinds of pre-application meetings, and reasoned that the project “becomes real and serious when it becomes an application”. This comment served to further fuel discontent on the side of the appellant, albeit quietly expressed.

⁷⁴ Ibid., Appendix 4.13: Internal Memo/Consultation

Rachel

Rachel spoke in a more measured way. Indeed, her body language and presentation manner met my expectations of a modern public-sector professional, albeit she lacked the gravitas and confidence that Victor projected. Nonetheless, it was clear that Rachel was attempting to mediate the situation, showing willing to reach out to the appellant-developer and repair severed lines of communication. At times she appeared almost apologetic on behalf of Victor; her non-verbal communication seemed to say, “he’s a plain-speaking lone ranger, but he talks a lot of sense”. Rachel’s Proof of Evidence report was concise – sixteen pages, compared to Victor’s sixty – and well composed, with an exact language and numerous references to planning policy. On design matters her report deferred to Victor’s, saying that it

“...outlines the concerns of the authority in detail and these will not be replicated here. However, it should be noted that the NPPF makes it clear that good design is a central tenet of sustainable development, and as paragraph 7 notes the planning system should not only help achieve social and economic goals (such as the delivery of housing) but must contribute to protecting and enhancing the built environment”.⁷⁵

Rachel’s report was a good study in preparing objective evidence, cross-examined through the lens of national and local planning policy. In her delivery of the fact Rachel never expressed opinion; her personal effects were classically neutral and her personality cloaked by professionalism. In some sense Rachel acted more as a representative of the local authority, while Victor presented as *the* authority. In these terms they were a curious tag-team. They had a common message – the protection and enhancement of the built environment – and yet individually they seemed implicitly to undermine the other’s values and approach. If I were to caricature them, I would present Victor as the didactic authority and Rachel the open-book facilitator. Furthermore, both representatives appeared unfamiliar to their lawyer, as though they had just recently met.

⁷⁵ ‘Rachel’ [Case Officer], *Proof of Evidence* (Planning Services, City Development Directorate, c.2013), p.10

The Appellants

The developer's Proof of Evidence reports were proficiently crafted, and seamlessly coordinated with the drawings pack and appendices. It was clear that the developer's documentation had been proofed and thoroughly gone over with a fine-tooth comb. Similarly, project files were in order, with email bundles numbered and telephone notes close to hand. Every document was branded and bound with a glossy cover. Furthermore, those presenting evidence appeared well-practiced. They were calm, controlled, open to questioning and confident in providing polite responses; the product of professional coaching and frequent representations. Everything about this team appeared together – a united front of grey suits, crisp white shirts and polished Brogues. The developer had thrown a huge amount of resource at the case.⁷⁶ The Queens Counsel lawyer was clearly better briefed; having had the benefit of time to dissect the facts on both sides, and rehearse an argument that chimed with the appellants. It was an impressive performance, albeit fruitless on this occasion as the developer's appeal was dismissed.

Rare Sighting

I did not realise it at the time, but attending the inquiry would be the only occasion in the four-year research period that I would meet, at least occupy the same room as, local authority planners, and that the observations gathered from seeing and hearing these two talk on issues concerning an individual retirement housing scheme would become a precious touchstone within the research. I can only speculate as to how Victor and Rachel considered the dismissal. The case was thickly layered, such that it was not clear what 'winning' constituted. Did winning mean exercising the right to refuse development? Was it a win for design quality; acknowledgement of a staunchly fought case in opposition to 'poor design'? Did winning help to uphold professional reputations and/or positions – to "exercise fearlessly and impartially their independent professional judgement"?⁷⁷ One might speculate that it made *everything* worthwhile; a sweet-tasting reward for over-worked, under-valued local government workers operating within an under-resourced public sector.

⁷⁶ I later learnt that Pink & Knight budgets a six-figure sum for a typical planning inquiry, and has standard appointments and procedures in place.

⁷⁷ Royal Town Planning Institute, *Code of Professional Conduct* (London: RTPI, 2016), p.3

Generally speaking, professional planning staff in the UK are seemingly kept at arms-length, behind customer relations officers and front-of-house staff, including those on reception desks who control physical access. My impression, based on professional practice, is that planners have become increasingly harder to reach in the past ten years. No doubt this is a symptom of central government austerity measures and resulting limited resources; matters which have been picked up by the following commentators:

*“The spending power of local authorities in England has been cut by 27% since 2010/11, compared to 11% in Scotland. Housing and Planning departments have seen their budgets cut by 45% and 40% respectively”.*⁷⁸

*“...with average submission to determination times increasing by four weeks year-on-year to 32 weeks, this suggests that under-resourcing of LPAs is seemingly having a direct impact on determination times”.*⁷⁹

*“The number of architects employed in the public sector has fallen from over 60% to less than 10% over the last 30 years, while planners have been relegated to third- and fourth-tier officers, with some [London] boroughs contracting the service out altogether. As part of the Farrell Review into architecture and the built environment, a ‘Plan First’ initiative has been proposed... to try to lure the best graduates into planning. But it faces an uphill struggle to overturn the years of neglect and transform a system that is fundamentally anti-plan-making”.*⁸⁰

We might then find empathy for Victor and Rachel – commend them even for their commitment to the public sector – at a time when co-professionals are taking up consultant jobs in environments where they are apparently better valued; guaranteed job satisfaction, through having greater creative agency or professional voice, and potentially better protection from high workloads.

⁷⁸ Annette Hastings et al., *The Cost of the Cuts: The Impact on Local Government and Poorer Communities* (York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2015)

⁷⁹ BPF/Capita plc, *Annual Planning Survey 2015* (London: GL Hearn, 2015), p.13

⁸⁰ Wainwright

Further into the research period I came to appreciate that local authorities discourage open or general discussion with planners, to the extent that their infrastructures only permit project-specific enquiries through automated, electronic contact forms (some with prescribed questions). It is impossible to ask broad questions such as: ‘how is retirement housing defined by your local authority?’; ‘what does retirement housing look like in your town/city?’ and ‘can your town/city lay claim to examples of best practice or case study exemplars in retirement housing?’ Departmental phone numbers and locations are rarely available on websites and planning staff are protected by anonymity (no online profiles or individual email addresses). In my home city Development Control (Planning) is located on an upper floor of an unmarked, ordinary-looking 1980’s redbrick office development with recessed bays and cant (chamfered) brick detailing. In fact, the building stands behind a grade two listed Neoclassical-style front with a monumental colonnade of fluted Ionic columns; a limestone front that cloaks the council offices from public view. Here planning officers are about as far removed from publicly-accessible space as possible, though this may simply be a product of estate management, determined by another spatial logic rather than deliberate attempts at reducing access or transparency.

Regional Review

Post-inquiry, I have had no further in-person encounters with local authority planners as part of this research. However, the desktop review conducted in a later phase of my fieldwork involved one-off correspondences with other planning professionals, as well as further insights gleaned through document analysis. The review sought to provide granular detail on retirement housing definitions, locations and designs, as well as respective challenges, benchmarks and examples of best practice at a regional level. In fact, the review evidenced a growing awareness of the *need* for specialist housing (identified within local strategy documents), though there was an apparent over-emphasis on large scale ‘extra-care’ solutions. Generally, there are some potentially useful local policy guidance documents emerging. However, it was hard to find planning personnel with specific experience and expertise. Accessing professional staff was difficult in all three regions, though marginally easier with the city authority, where I managed two conversations with a Building Control officer; a telephone interview with a Housing Development Project Officer; and an exchange of emails with a

Planning Officer, specialising in Affordable Housing Liaison, before reaching saturation. I include their comments and points of reference here, to give a specific environmental context – the city – to the story of the planner.

In 2013 the city launched its ‘Retirement Living’ vision, which advocates a mix of Retirement Living options with “the potential to provide a viable alternative to residential care”.⁸¹ Refreshingly it takes the view that for many older people the answer is “simply a lifestyle choice which helps keep their future options flexible”. Nonetheless the vision takes on the identity of an Extra Care housing programme. Indeed, the background vision document, produced in 2012, suggests it is about ‘housing with care’ and offers an overly inclusive definition: “housing with care, also known as Extra Care Housing (ECH), Assistive Living, Retirement Living and Very Sheltered Housing”.⁸² Tellingly the document header reads ‘Extra Care Housing’ (the Building Control officer explained that ‘Retirement Living’ replaced the ‘ExtraCare’ team around the time of this publication).

The city estimates that it requires the development of 986 units, including 222 affordable housing units available to rent, for it to meet needs and demand over the next 10 years. A detailed market assessment and breakdown of these projections is provided within its vision report. For instance, the majority of the city’s ‘very sheltered housing’ is currently for rent at a time when 75% of older people living in the city own their own home and have capital to buy. Therefore, the council’s priority is to enable an increase in the supply of developments with a predominance of market units; enabling schemes with a tenure ratio in the region of 80:20 in favour of owner occupation. Hence, the Retirement Living Vision launch coincided with an advance tender notice for a development site on which the city council would like to see a retirement-living development comprising of 200 flats and a 60 bed Dementia Care Home. This was

⁸¹ *Retirement living vision: Bristol’s vision for Retirement Living* (Bristol: Bristol City Council, c.2013) <<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/policies-plans-strategies/retirement-living-vision>> [accessed 02 February 2018]

⁸² *Bristol Retirement Living: Future Provision within Bristol*, (Bristol: Bristol City Council, 2012), p.2 <<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/33399/BCC+Vision+for+Retirement+Living.pdf/f8649c24-3c14-40e0-bda0-3c0ca2b9d282>> [accessed 02 February 2018]

billed as phase two of the vision. To date there is no evidence of a planning application, and seemingly nobody available to comment on progress.

The housing project officer for Retirement Living, confirmed that the vision was part of a cross-departmental programme led by Adult Health & Social Care Commissioners, and that the tender site represented the largest retirement development for the City Council. The officer reported that outline proposals had been prepared by City Design Group, an in-house urban design team, who referred to Housing Local Improvement Network (Housing LIN) for information, as well as design guides produced by the Dementia Services Development Centre (DSDC) at the University of Stirling, and eleven built ExtraCare projects in the city. The vision document contains a reference to an Appendix, of which item two “lists relevant industry guidance”, though it appears to be no longer available (I made several unsuccessful requests). The building control officer confirmed: “HousingLIN is the best website for best practice and guidance...That’s where the council gets its best practice and guidance from”.⁸³ I was also told that planners look to appeal decisions for reference.

Correspondence with the planning officer further confirmed that “Retirement Living is a corporate priority for the City Council”⁸⁴ though little more detail was offered. When asked about further examples of retirement housing, the following three cases were referenced (two were cases for this officer), each having been recently considered and approved:

Case A: a privately run extra care scheme comprising 65 units operated by PegasusLife.

Case B: an ‘extra care housing’ development comprising 60 units to be provided on a formerly council-owned site and operated by local charities.

⁸³ Anonymous Informant [Building Control, Bristol City Council], pers. comm. [telephone interview], 2 August 2016

⁸⁴ Anonymous Informant [Planning Officer, Bristol City Council], pers. comm. [email], 9 September 2016

Case C: a private housing scheme comprising 32 units with limited supervision undertaken by Churchill Retirement Living.

When asked about common challenges, the planner reported that “key issues tend to centre on the bulk [scale] of this type of development – tied into critical mass – and the amount of parking provided”. And with respect to parking: “we only accept reduced provision if we can condition the users of the development”. In terms of a broader attitude towards this form of housing I refer to the planner’s ‘Delegated Report’ for Case B, which acknowledges a different approach to accommodating older people, while implicitly tracking variance from residential institutions for the ‘elderly’. For this planner the ‘change’ or ‘difference’, as manifested in this ‘extra care’ housing development, concerns greater levels of independence and privacy for the older person. This ‘change in approach’ (self-contained flats) is not so significant that the product be considered something altogether different when compared to the archetypal ‘elderly person’s home’:

*“The previous use on the site was an elderly person's home, which provided a lesser degree of independent living than the current proposal. Notwithstanding the intended residents of the proposed accommodation will also be older people in need of an element of care. Hence in many ways the proposed use is very similar and the provision of self- contained flats simply represents a change in approach to the provision for the elderly in that, amongst other things, they will be able to maintain an element of privacy”.*⁸⁵

Further comments from officer ‘delegated’ and ‘committee’ reports for cases A, B and C are presented within Table 4. The extracted comments make explicit reference to specific considerations for older people or specialist housing, and are collated under three headings: ‘special provision’ including reference to policy statements and standard criteria; ‘lifestyle/ environment’ with an emphasis on environmental qualities for older residents, and ‘viability assessment’ in the consideration of planning gains and contributions to affordable housing. The latter typically involves a process of

⁸⁵ *Delegated Report and Decision: 15/04614/F* (Bristol: Bristol City Council Development Management, 2015), p.8

negotiation and is commented upon in Wainwrights' article, which suggests that case officers or 'public servants' struggle to meet the sophistication of property developers:

"... 'Councils just don't have the expertise to challenge viability reports,' says one senior planning officer. 'We can't argue back'. Instead, they [local authorities] can commission viability assessments, produced by the same consultants that work for developers, to determine whether the report is accurate – but not to propose an alternative".

*"...It comes down, he thinks [Professor Mark Brearley], to the fact the UK planning system is overly reliant on individual negotiation between private developer and public servant, which is usually far from a level playing field. 'It makes a very opaque and confusing system that relies on having people that are very sophisticated at brokering deals,' Brearley adds. 'And those people will generally settle in places where they'll earn more money. The people negotiating on behalf of the public are simply not sophisticated enough'..."*⁸⁶

It is impossible to make a reasonable judgement of the local authority's capacity or expertise in dealing with the 'viability' of cases A, B and C, as I have not been able to gather the necessary evidence. Developer-authored viability appraisals are often classified confidential, since they contain sensitive commercial information, and therefore not publicly available. The developer-supplied spreadsheets can only be scrutinised by the local authority and its consultants. Nonetheless I suggest we contrast the above remarks with the following case officer comment (bold typeface added for emphasis):

*"...all flats are to be to life time homes standards and meet the Technical Standards in respect of room sizes. Only 12% are wheelchair accessible, but it is stated that the type of accommodation has been carefully **considered by the applicants**, who have **significant experience** of this type of accommodation and is **based on their** experience of needs..."*

⁸⁶ Wainwright

Section 3

Special Provision	Lifestyle/ Environment	Viability Assessment
<p><i>“[Policy DM2 states] Older persons' housing schemes should aim to meet the following criteria: (i) located close to shops, services, community facilities and open space appropriate to the need of the intended occupiers or provided on site; and (ii) located close to good public transport routes; and (iii) provision of level access; and (iv) all units built to the Lifetime Homes standard and (v) 20% of units designed to be wheelchair accessible or easily adaptable for...wheelchair users”.</i></p> <p><i>“Through the development gradients are kept to a minimum to allow full accessibility, all flats are to be to life time homes standards and meet the Technical Standards in respect of room sizes. Only 12% are wheelchair accessible, but it is stated that the type of accommodation has been carefully considered by the applicants, who have significant experience of this type of accommodation and is based on their experience of needs. All flats will have level access shower rooms and assisted bathrooms which can be adapted to greater mobility needs and kitchens that could be changed for wheelchair users. Colours and tactile information will be used to guide those with visual impairment”.</i></p> <p><i>“Internally the proposed flats comply with space standards and the agent has confirmed that all units are to be built to a lifetime homes standard which allows or easily adaptable apartments for wheelchair[s]”.</i></p>	<p><i>“The previous use on the site was an elderly person's home, which provided a lesser degree of independent living than the current proposal ...in many ways the proposed use is very similar and the provision of self- contained flats simply represents a change in approach to the provision for the elderly in that, amongst other things, they will be able to maintain an element of privacy.”</i></p> <p><i>“The flats will provide accommodation for older people in need of an element of care and provide a home for life as far as is practically possible”.</i></p> <p><i>These apartments are for older people living independently, thereby requiring access to all facilities but are more likely to have impaired mobility so accessible transport and proximity to such facilities are essential”.</i></p> <p><i>“There are a number of mature trees to the south of the proposed development...which will cast significant shade onto the southern part of the proposed development. This can be a particular issue with elderly person's facilities, as the occupiers spend most of their day at home”.</i></p> <p><i>“Concerns have been expressed by objectors that some of the rooms are north facing and therefore provide a poor living environment. This is noted but only if the proposal was single depth would it be possible to provide sun to all rooms. The communal space on the ground floor is south facing”.</i></p>	<p><i>“The operational requirements of ‘retirement village’ developments mean that the management of them is inconsistent with that required by a Housing Association, and therefore a financial contribution towards off-site affordable housing provision is sought from such schemes”.</i></p> <p><i>“...’retirement village’ type schemes have a very low gross to net ratio. This means that a relatively low proportion of what is built is actually sellable. To put this into context, a scheme comprising solely houses, has a gross to net ratio of 100% because every square metre build is sold”.</i></p> <p><i>“A standard flatted scheme would normally have a gross to net ratio of between 75 and 85% as communal areas, lift shafts, stairwells, plant rooms, bin rooms etc are not sellable floorspace. In the case of...the developer is building 8,847 square metres but only selling 5,682 square metres, giving a gross to net ratio of only 64%. The remainder of the floorspace comprises communal areas such as an on-site restaurant, spa, health and wellbeing centre, in addition to the expected corridors, lifts, stairwells etc”.</i></p> <p><i>“Therefore, though the proposed sales values are very high; the high specification of the development, high existing use value and low gross to net ratio, means that the scheme is not considered viable in planning terms and is therefore unable to make a contribution towards off-site affordable housing”.</i></p>

Table 4: Extracts from Officer Delegated & Committee Reports (Cases A-C)

The acknowledgement of ‘significant experience’ and inclusion of the term ‘based on their experience’ suggests that the local authority is to some extent dependent on information supplied by the developer. Furthermore, the case officer appears to be persuaded by an argument that is based on the applicant’s evidence, and is contrary to policy – accepting 12% wheelchair accessible flats, where local development management policy DM2 requires 20%. It would appear that the authoritative data and expertise is one-sided in this case, and perhaps at odds with what the public might expect of its representatives in development control.

Expertise

In 2003 a good practice guide was written by a joint working party of the Planning Officers Society and the Retirement Housing Group, with an audience of local authority planners and retirement housing developers in mind. It acknowledges that retirement housing is a small part of the total housing stock and therefore “many local authority planners will not have encountered planning applications for such housing before” and furthermore “may not understand its characteristics”.⁸⁷ The guide also states that “developers are not always aware of the concerns of both planners and local residents when a planning application goes forward”, and asserts the need for developers to understand and address those concerns and to communicate more effectively. These positions are recognisable today, while other aspects of the guide need updating. Terminology such as ‘the elderly’ and typological definitions such as ‘Category 2 housing’ have become redundant, and much of the detail of planning policy and guidance has moved on, as have population statistics. Older person age groups are still growing.

More recently, in 2015 the Planning Advisory Service published a case study report containing a number of lessons and tips for local authorities. It advised identifying a single point of contact in the local authority for older people’s housing in the local area, and regularly reviewing information on housing needs and aspirations for older people.⁸⁸ Thereby implying that there are deficiencies or missing links with regards to

⁸⁷ Planning Officers Society/Retirement Housing Group, *Planning for Retirement Housing: A Good Practice Guide* (London: The House Builders Federation, 2003)

⁸⁸ *Case study Planning for Older People’s Housing: The Shock of the New* (London: Planning Advisory Service, 2015)

these matters. Nonetheless, it is fair to say that planning authorities show a greater awareness of ageing populations and the need for specialist housing, albeit there is a general emphasis on ‘Extra Care’ and large-scale ‘village’ developments. In this respect there has been some progression away from the accusations of ‘ghettoes for older people’⁸⁹ that the famous developer John McCarthy described in his biography. However, research acknowledges that developers still do a lot of ‘educational work’⁹⁰ to explain their products, to differentiate them from care homes.

*“Educating the planners was an all-important task. This was not helped by journalists who described our schemes as “ghettos for old people”. The Daily Mail ran with copy that implied too many old people living together wasn’t right. We tried to point out that birds of a feather do flock together. When you are in your twenties you socialise and mix with those of a similar age and the same is true of the older generation”.*⁹¹

Identity Problem

It should be noted that the cases A, B and C are medium sized developments. They are of a scale that presents a legible scheme of housing, though not so big that they may be considered a ‘village’ or piece of city. Whereas phase one of the city’s Retirement Living vision comprises a development in partnership with a neighbouring council (on land that crosses local authority boundaries) that is being developed by Taylor Wimpey and The ExtraCare Charitable Trust. The planning permission for the first phase of the development includes 261 Extra Care units with 2217sqm ‘mixed use’ communal areas. Taylor Wimpey is also behind another local site, which involves conversion of the former factory by a local charity. Here a £60 million retirement village will include a 93-bed care home and 136 Extra Care apartments. Given the visibility of these projects one might be forgiven for thinking that ExtraCare is the only model/option for older people. Indeed, my experience – when calling local authority planning departments about ‘retirement housing’ – is that informants’ presumptions are of large-scale

⁸⁹ Charlie Berridge, *Building a Billion: The Story of John McCarthy* (Peterfield: Harriman House Ltd, 2011), p.106

⁹⁰ Friederike Zielger, ‘Developing Age-Friendly Housing: DWELL Findings’, presented at *Fit for Ageing: Applying Design to the Production of Age-Friendly Places*, Sheffield, 6 October 2016

⁹¹ Berridge, p.106

development and the need to speak to the ‘major sites’ team that handles new neighbourhoods or ‘villages’ in this case.

Claudia Wood, deputy director of Demos, argues that we lack a coherent strategy at national level and guidance at local level on retirement housing, and that this shows in everyday planning decisions and the attitudes of those dealing with developers.⁹² Wood believes that retirement housing remains in an “uneasy space between general needs housing and residential care, and suffers from association with both”.⁹³ In fact, at the inquiry Victor colloquially referred to – on two separate occasions – two sheltered housing schemes for older people as ‘care homes’. Both schemes – the proposed and a neighbouring one built circa 1986 – were specifically designed for independent older persons i.e. *not* designed care environments or so called ‘Residential Institutions’. This mistaken identity was also apparent in the Inspector’s Appeal Decision, which twice referred to the scheme as a ‘care home’. Clearly there is a general lack of awareness and precision in this field, which may be explained by wider cultural points of reference, as well as professional training.

In 2016 I conducted a desktop study of the curricula of three leading UK Planning degree courses, with a view to locating sector-specific content (‘housing for older people’). No modules were found that specifically targeted housing and therefore specialist housing (sheltered, retirement, and so on). While issues concerning age or older people are located within ‘social’ modules that deal with ‘diversity’ or ‘change’.⁹⁴ In one instance, where there are links to a relevant research institute, ‘ageing’ is explicitly listed on an outline syllabus.⁹⁵ Curricula are necessarily broad so as to reflect the breadth of the profession and the variety of contexts in which planners operate. With respect to the local authority planner, he or she is expected to apply policy to a range of

⁹² Claudia Wood, *The Top of the Ladder* (London: DEMOS, 2013)

<<http://www.demos.co.uk/publications/topoftheladder>> [accessed 07 April 2014] p.9-12

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ *CP0120: Social, Diversity & Planning*, School of Geography and Planning, Cardiff University, 2016; *ENVS3044: Cities and Social Change*, The Bartlett School of Planning, UCL, 2016; *PLAN10041: Cities and Society*, School of Environment, Education and Development, The University of Manchester, 2016.

⁹⁵ *TCP1025: Social Worlds*, School of Architecture, Planning & Landscape, Newcastle University, 2016. The school also offers an elective within a second-year module, *TCP2005: Housing & Homes*, that includes issues on housing for older people.

building types and situations, as and when they present themselves. In common with other professions that demand reflective practitioners, much is learnt on the job.

On the whole planning officers are not expecting to encounter specialist housing every day. In some settings, applications for retirement housing will be very infrequent – perhaps one or two in a year. Adopting the position of a local authority planner, we might imagine the scenario of receiving an application for a scheme of retirement housing within our borough, city or district for the first time. Naturally we would turn to our colleagues who may have prior experience, albeit limited, if more than a few years back. Failing that, we would turn to an external source for up-to-date information. Indeed, when I made contact with local authority planning staff, expertise was often cited as being outside the department, be it research platforms such as HAPPI, Housing LIN or Stirling University’s Dementia Services Development Centre, or the providers of specialist housing and their consultant designers. For example, accessing Housing LIN in September 2016 and using the search term ‘retirement housing’ generated 102 ‘content’ and 620 ‘document’ results – a good deal of up-to-date reference material for planning officials such as Victor and Rachel.

Critical Role

Daniel Scharf, ‘Viewpoint’ writer on *Housing LIN*, is one of a number of commentators that recognise the critical role that local authority planners can play in the future provision of housing for older people. Scharf writes,

*“Whilst it is true that many important social and environmental problems are not dependent on planning controls over the use of land and erection of buildings, there are some important matters to which planners should give their attention. In this case, I would argue that it is better that those currently in this privileged position of planners should get their act together and adopt constructive policies on housing for older people rather than wait for some wholesale and systemic reforms”.*⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Daniel Scharf, *Viewpoint 59/ Senior Momentum: What have the planners ever done for us?* (London: HousingLIN, 2014)
<http://www.housinglin.org.uk/_library/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Viewpoints/HLIN_Viewpoint59_SeniorMomentum.pdf> [accessed 21 February 2017]

Scharf offers a broad definition of ‘planners’: those professionally trained and qualified to prepare and comment on development plans and deciding on applications. Furthermore, his recommendations are intended to apply to the ‘political masters’ of planners, private developers and other housing agencies. While Scharf is provocative in tone, others have been outright critical of planners, suggesting that they have been ‘barriers’ to more schemes getting approved and built. For instance, Bruce Moore, Chief Executive of Housing 21 and before that Chief Executive of Hanover Housing Group, has lamented that local authority planners put ‘additional hurdles’ in the way; planners apparently ‘fail to understand’ the challenge of changing demographics and the opportunities good quality retirement housing can provide.⁹⁷

Moore is not the first to raise concerns about planners’ understanding of the wider benefits of retirement housing. Research published by housing charity Shelter stresses the need for planners to recognise that new housing developments for older people, including mainstream or private developments, are ‘socially useful’⁹⁸ and have knock-on market impacts. Independent housing and regeneration consultant, Janet Sutherland, suggests that planners could see the provision of “suitable smaller units as part of a strategy to free up family homes”.⁹⁹ Sutherland also advocates that local authorities engage with the private sector to encourage homes and schemes aimed at the full range of retirement housing. It is fair to say that planners, and their masters, are encouraged to think and act more broadly; to treat specialist housing schemes as more than a means to more housing units.

⁹⁷ Andrew Ross, *Viewpoint 58/ How can local planning authorities engage better with the housing needs of an ageing society?* (London: HousingLIN, 2014)
<http://www.housinglin.org.uk/_library/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Viewpoints/HLIN_Viewpoint_58_LAPlanners.pdf> [accessed 21 February 2017]

⁹⁸ Nicola Hughes, *A better fit? Creating Housing Choices for an Ageing Population* (London: Shelter, 2012)
<http://www.housinglin.org.uk/_library/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Other_reports_and_guidance/Better_Fit_Report.pdf> [accessed 21 February 2017]

⁹⁹ Janet Sutherland, *Viewpoint 19/ Viewpoint on Downsizing for older people into Specialist Accommodation*, (London: HousingLIN, 2014)
<http://www.housinglin.org.uk/_library/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Viewpoints/Viewpoint19_Downsizing_II.pdf> [accessed 21 February 2017]

In 2013 the House of Lords Select Committee on Public Service and Demographic Change published its recommendations, which included a role for planners as members of ‘Health and Wellbeing Boards’ that would,

*“draw up plans for how communities can prepare themselves for older populations and involve housing associations and private developers to ensure that there is enough specialist housing, adequate transport and other easily accessible facilities for older people. [The Committee believed that] Health and Wellbeing Boards should consider housing in tandem with health and social care provision because well-designed housing, as well as older people’s capacity to avoid social isolation, are strongly linked to better health outcomes”.*¹⁰⁰

It seems that commentators from a range of sectors – charity, construction, public service, private consultancy, research, and so on – consider planners to be uniquely placed to help stitch together disparate agendas, such as public health and housing, and to play a central role in responding to ‘wicked’ problems arising from significant demographic change. However, we should take care not to lay everything at the door of one group of public servants, particularly at a time when there appears to be scant public resource and minimal future investment in prospect. Debbie Shanks, a local authority policy planner and surveyor, reminds us that planners are not the only figures to find themselves under-prepared for ageing:

*“The recent House of Lords Select Committee Report, ‘Ready for Ageing’, highlights that policy makers across the board, not just in planning, have long been in denial about many important issues affecting older people. They conclude ‘the Government and our society are woefully under prepared’. So if planners are being remiss, at least we are not alone!”*¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ *Select Committee on Public Service and Demographic Change: Ready for Ageing?* (London: The Stationery Office Limited, 2013), p. 88
<<https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201213/ldselect/ldpublic/140/140.pdf>> [accessed 21 February 2017]

¹⁰¹ Debbie Shanks, *Viewpoint 47/ Older People: The New Kids on the Block* (London: HousingLIN, 2013)
<http://www.housinglin.org.uk/_library/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Viewpoints/HLIN_Viewpoint47_NewKids.pdf> [accessed 21 February 2017]

While Shanks' message is one of 'remiss', her Viewpoint piece is equally stocked with several suggested 'actions' to be considered by planners to help improve older people's housing opportunities. These are re-presented here in manifesto form as a kind of 'call to arms' or 'voice' for planners:

- We need clearer information about how better housing reduces hospital stays and care home admissions.
- We need joint council strategies between housing, planning, adult services and health to address wicked problems and complex development issues.
- We need a national Government database on existing older persons housing, which uses standard definitions.
- We need to identify older peoples housing needs, preferences, housing wealth and income need through Strategic Housing Market Assessments and Older Persons Strategies.
- We need to challenge mainstream housebuilders to provide more homes for older people. Is it reasonable to require these through plans and to limit occupation to older people?
- We need to face up to changing demands on social retirement housing. Should outdated retirement stock be used to meet spiralling needs for affordable housing from working age tenants? Should affordable housing programmes focus on providing new 'fit for purpose' retirement housing to replace transferred stock?
- We need to encourage design innovation. Outdated NHS domestic technology, like hoists and toileting equipment warrant particular attention. Could new equipment be used in smaller bathrooms, enabling more people to age in place for longer?
- We need to seek the (changing) views of older people and their carers to understand their housing needs and aspirations. How might we help members of the 'sandwich generation' caught between providing care for their parents and mitigating a lack of affordable housing for their children?
- We need to use imaginative media coverage to bounce urgent debate about older peoples housing into the public arena, highlighting spiralling needs, limited choices and what 'could be'.

In these terms, commentators such as Shanks are calling for local authority planners to have a broader role – or greater licence to exercise their professional agency – that goes beyond the maintenance and enforcement of planning policy. Planners should be given opportunity to collate evidence and expertise; raise awareness around important issues; promote design innovation, and help to develop joint strategies and inter-departmental practices.

Conclusion

It is apparent that planners could play a more central role in the delivery of future housing choices for older people, if there are appropriate resources and mechanisms to allow creative plan and decision making. At present there are clear indications of limited resource/capacity within local authority planning departments generally, and further evidence to suggest a lack of specialist expertise. Without significant investment and concerted efforts at changing the culture and image of local authority planning departments, it seems likely that talent and expertise will continue to be lost to private sector consultancies and the offices of developers and housing providers. Are we at risk of handing over the maintenance of expertise and generation of evidence and viability appraisals to those with vested interests? Who will be representing the interests of the public and the broad spectrum of older people in the future? There is a significant risk that society becomes dependent on developers to vision and shape our environments, with little critique and challenge from elected authorities. Planners can sometimes appear deferential to ‘what is’ – conserving existing built environments and maintaining existent policies – as opposed to pursuing ‘what could be’ – through creative facilitation and plan-making. Of course, there are examples of innovation within the planning sector, such as those celebrated by the RTPI’s centenary report.¹⁰² Nonetheless, planning chiefs warn that further cost-cutting is a major threat:

¹⁰² Geoff Vigar, Paul Cowie and Patsy Healey, *Success and Innovation in Planning – Creating Public Value* (London: RTPI, 2014)
<http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1191762/rtpi_research_report_success_and_innovation_in_planning_full_report_8_november_2014.pdf> [accessed 16 March 2018]

*“Without the necessary resources, the RTPI warns, there cannot be the vision and leadership required for long-term strategic planning to deliver the infrastructure, environmental benefits and housing areas need to grow and thrive”.*¹⁰³

Perhaps the most resounding lesson to emerge from writing the local authority planner’s story is their collective distance and lack of voice. There is plenty of literature that makes recommendations to planners, ranging from criticism to advocacy for the vital role they play, and yet there are very few formal responses from planners. Individual officers can be ‘heard’ responding to specific and live cases, typically through ‘delegated’ or ‘committee’ reports, and to a lesser extent their decision notices. However, these documents leave little scope for opinion. Indeed, the jobbing planner’s voice is backgrounded by plans, policy statements and planning precedent. The planner appears muted. I suggest further research is needed to ascertain if this is true, and if so, whether quietude is desirable in professional practice and public service? It seems to me that architects by contrast – though very few now work within local authorities – can speak more freely and have easy channels for broadcasting opinion, for good or bad.

¹⁰³ *RTPI’s Centenary Report Praises Planning Innovation* (London: RTPI, 2014)
<<http://www.rtpi.org.uk/briefing-room/news-releases/2014/december/rtpis-centenary-report-praises-planning-innovation/>> [accessed 16 March 2018]

SECTION REFLECTIONS

In this section three stories were brought together to focus on the professional actors met in the research field. It contrasted positions of CSA architecture students, as prospective professionals, engaging with a Pink & Knight development site; the company architect, or inhouse architectural staff, working to deliver Pink & Knight's product; and local authority town planners, evaluating retirement-living developments, including Pink & Knight proposals. The stories make visible the different ways in which these professionals are engaging with the developer, and the varying degrees of professional agency afforded, with roles ranging from naive critical friends to design custodians and public regulators/facilitators, respectively. Story six, *Architecture Student*, portrayed how undergraduates operate within a quasi-professional context that focuses on and rewards artistry, or a masterly handling of the formal aspects of architecture. Whereas, story seven, *Company Architect*, reflected on commercial pressures that crowd the available space for deep thinking, review and reflection, including getting to know the end-user. Story eight, *Town Planner*, found that local government workers could play a more central role in the delivery of future housing choices for older people, provided appropriate resources and mechanisms allow for creative plan and decision making.

Architecture students and company architects were found to operate within wholly different environments and cultures. Pink & Knight architects were shaped by a strong business context, multi-layered management, and clearly defined production-oriented processes designed to maximise profit. While CSA students operated within a 'safe' academic space, responding to a fabricated brief that was free from the contingencies of applied practice. Students' labour is in support of individual development and skill acquisition, whereas the company architect works in service to a variety of other stakeholders. Yet these two characters share fundamental disciplinary values and common motivations; each beholds creative design as the primary objective, pursuing opportunities for (individual) design expression where possible. The student is relatively time-rich and possesses a strength of professional identification through 'membership' of an academic design community, though lacking in skill and real-world opportunity. While the company architect has the advantage of experience, plus a depth of professional competencies, and the potential for private practice.

Section 3

Regarding the town planner, the research found clear indications of limited resource within local authority planning departments generally, and further evidence to suggest a lack of specialist expertise in retirement housing, particularly around schemes designed for independent-living (as opposed to an awareness of assisted-living schemes, namely through carrying the ExtraCare brand). Perhaps the most resounding lesson to emerge from the town planner's story is their collective distance and lack of voice. This is particularly concerning since these professionals occupy an important regulatory space in-between housing providers and consumers/end-users, and furthermore, represent the wider public. The important issues of voice and professional agency are further explored within section four of this thesis

SECTION 4: IN-BETWEENER

This section presents the researcher as an agent situated in-between the other actors, and operating within an expanded field of creative practice. The *Creative Practitioner* story contains a reflective account that acknowledges the author's shifting positionality and agency as researcher; it is the meta narrative that relates to and connects all the others. This section also weighs up the limitations of the research, and its respective methods; moving towards a narrative inquiry, reflecting upon writing challenges and the representation of the 'cast' of actors.

STORY 9: CREATIVE PRACTITIONER

Synopsis

This is the author's story. It is an autoethnographic account of myself as an actor in the research field; an acknowledgement that I have played a part in the research, having developed and performed multiple personas throughout the project and sustained relations with the other actors. I have spent the best part of four years developing and honing an academic 'voice' for research purposes, and now I turn to review the presence and shape of that voice. This story 'listens' to what I have said through the research documents – notes, emails, transcripts, reports, conference papers, publications and so on – and to make sense of research framed as 'creative practice'.

Autoethnographic writing is by nature self-reflective – placing emphasis on the ways in which I have interacted and been immersed with the culture being researched¹ – and so this story has something of a 'confessional' quality; referring to regrets, paths not followed, and mistakes made, as well as some positive experiences and surprises, and connecting these to wider cultural meanings and understandings.

Methods

The story draws upon qualitative data from three core 'datasets': my research notebooks, university email account and ePortfolio. The latter is a university-managed online platform, used to log meetings between post-graduate research students and their supervisors, and became a useful place for me to file a running commentary on the research project. At the time of writing, 41 supervision meetings had been recorded, between February 2014 and July 2017. Each record is accompanied by 1-2 pages of notes that reflect upon a conversation between me, the researcher, and my supervisors who provided direction, critical comment and general encouragement. The notes were typically written within one day of meeting. While reviewing ePortfolio content I prepared the following inventory of headline themes, roughly in order of occurrence, though some were naturally reoccurring and discussed at different points in the research. I offer these headlines as an index of keywords for the story.

¹ Nicholas Holt, 'Representation, Legitimation, and Auto-ethnography: An Auto-ethnographic Writing Story', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 2.1 (2003), 18-28; Mariza Méndez, 'Auto-ethnography as a Research Method: Advantages, Limitations and Criticisms', *Applied Linguistics Journal*, 15.2 (2013), 279-287.

- Academic voice; finding and developing
- Critical distance and closeness
- Critical friend; for the sponsor
- Creative practice; the shape of
- Design (research); about, through, or relevant to
- Reflective practice; performing and recording
- Teaching; as a strand of practice
- Multiple viewpoints and/or settings
- Creative writing
- Story telling
- Research audiences
- Thesis structure and sequencing
- Ethics; representation of informants
- Publication and launch event

A similar review was conducted with my university emails. The email account was created at the outset of the research project and has been the primary mode for distance communication between myself and my supervisors, as well as representatives from the sponsor organisation and research informants generally (though the majority were engaged with in-person in the field). I limited my review to 'sent' emails (over 1200 at the time of writing), because I sought to capture my 'voice' in the research. I then sampled this data field by searching for sent items addressed to my supervisors (jointly), which also included formal communications with the sponsor. This resulted in approximately 250 emails, from which I noted subject headings and underlying themes, as well as milestone exchanges and candid comments. A similar approach was taken to my research notebooks – three pocket-sized Moleskines – which contain a mix of notes from training workshops, fieldwork activities and conference proceedings. These notebooks were less formal, not being intended for a public audience, and not subject to the constraints of email (format, language, and so on) or the regulated practice I established using ePortfolio. In reviewing these three datasets I constructed an actual chronology for the research; tracked parallel activities and strands of practice; cross-referenced key events and corroborated facts.

Structure

The story on paper takes the form of a ‘self-interview’² or ‘self-reporting survey’, using questions informed by the review of the abovementioned datasets, set out in an interview schedule. Unlike an interview, the questions were answered on screen, rather than orally. In this respect the answers represent a crafted response, as opposed to a verbatim transcription of a live reflection. Indeed, the questions and answers were subject to an amount of fine tuning and editing respectively. I should also note that my responses to the questions were prepared out of sequence (by order of convenience), and with a level of temporal flexibility – the answers were formed over a period of two weeks, with everyday activities providing subconscious time with the work. As with any piece of extended writing there was an amount of switching between sections/answers, particularly in the first few days when data (key notes, quotes and references) was distributed and responses duly scoped. This approach – an interview schedule without the formal parameters of the interview (interviewer and informant; a running order constrained by time; and live recording) – was found to enhance the process of reflection, while maintaining a sense of containment and overarching narrative, since there was a potentially overwhelming volume of material. This form of question and answer reporting also allows for more episodic reflections, as opposed to using prose, which necessitates a higher level of ‘smoothing’ the story. For ease of reference, the definitive interview schedule is set out below:

1. How do you understand your research positionality?
2. How do you define creative practice?
3. What did you know about housing for older people?
And what do you know now?
4. What have been the hardest aspects of your work?
5. Have there been any positive surprises along the way?
6. Do you have any regrets?
7. Are there other paths not followed by the research?
8. How have you developed as a result of the PhD project?

² A term originated by social scientists working in the field of ‘memory’ where the interviews were conducted by respondents at home, recording their responses on audio devices. See: Emily Keightley, Michael Pickering and Nicola Allett, ‘The Self-interview: A New Method in Social Science Research’, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 15.6 (2012), 507-21. My use of the term is somewhat different.

How do you understand your research positionality?

In 2015 I prepared a conference presentation reflecting on my position *in-between* the developer and resident owner, looking and listening in two directions and developing a sense of empathy for both sides of the ‘housing for older people’ discussion. To illustrate my position, I reflected on contrasting viewpoints around the provision of gardens. In one direction I was invited to *see* ‘quality, visual amenity space’, and in the other, I heard about the loss of a safe haven for ‘my late-night walk’. The viewpoints were not necessarily in opposition, and there was scope for a meeting of ideals. One director confessed he expected ‘more than three paving slabs to enjoy a glass of wine’, while a resident owner reported being pleased to have traded outlooks, moving from a private yard, surrounded by a tall fence, to a second-floor apartment with ‘a great view of the urban landscape’. In these terms, I have gathered data and constructed an internal dialogue about the design of housing for older people.

This dialogue was then externalised in the boardroom of Pink & Knight. For me, this is where the ‘fields’ analogy breaks down, since one is observable by the other (with privacy afforded to the developer). Regardless, I was *in-between*, occupying the neutral, permeable boundary of an imaginary hedgerow. I was free to visit both fields, going back and forth when conditions permitted. From the sanctuary of the hedgerow it was possible to see both fields, recall what it is like to inhabit them, and remember the phenomena encountered. In this way my actions map onto John Creswell’s description of data collection in a grounded theory study; ‘a zigzag process: out to the field to gather information, into the office to analyze the data, back to the field to gather more information, into the office, and so forth’.³ In the grounded theory approach data is collected and the hypotheses and concepts are worked out during the study, based on data analysis. Speaking as a designer – familiar with reflexive and intuitive ways of working – grounded theory feels like a more natural route to acquiring knowledge.

³ John Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2013), p.86

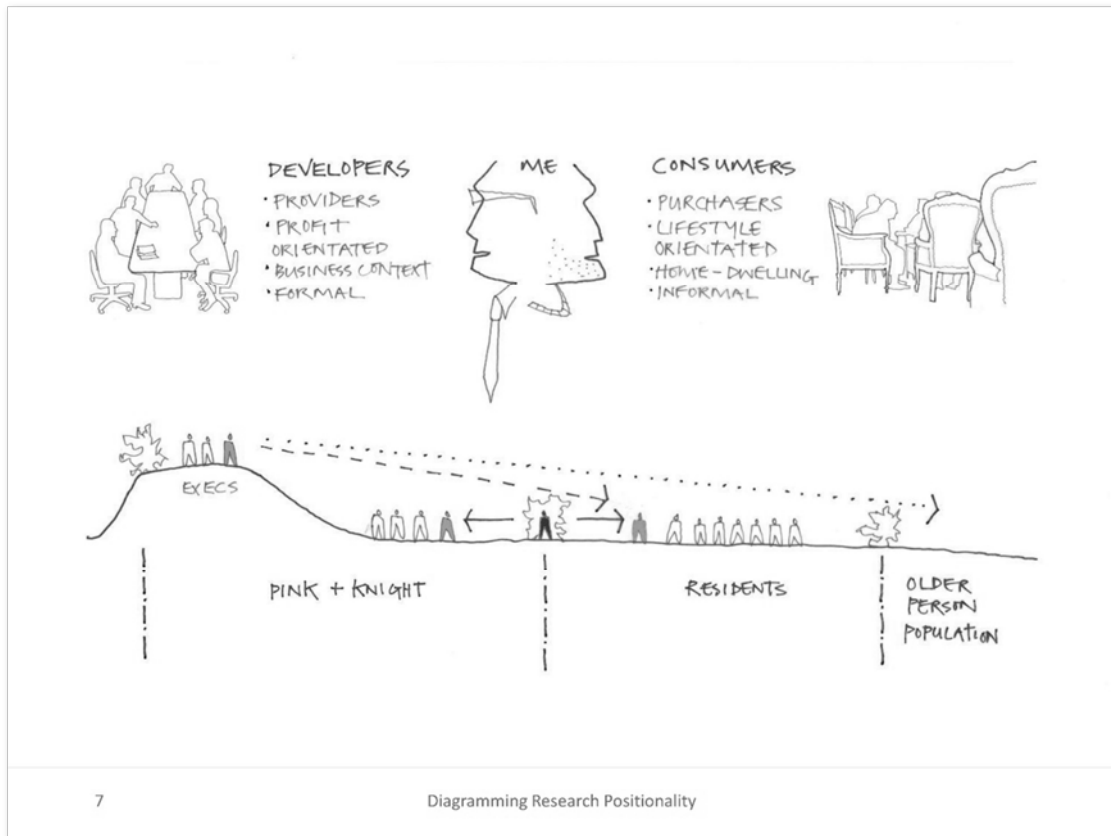


Figure 13: Presentation Slide on Research Positionality

Through my conference paper, I remarked on my changing research positionality, moving between fields, but also switching identities and roles:

*“I am an outsider that has been invited inside the office; participating in activities ranging from work placements in my student capacity, through observation as a researcher, to forms of architectural consultancy. By extension I have been invited into a number of retirement home settings. At some I have spent the night in the guest suite and had tea with residents in the shared lounge”.*⁴

With my researcher hat on I have taken note of how I present myself in each setting. This includes my clothing, be it a suit and tie or open collar. It also includes my vocabulary. I am aware that not everyone around me can read architectural drawings, and mindful of my bias toward spatialising phenomena. I can also appreciate that not

⁴ Sam Clark, ‘Looking Towards Retirement: Housing Older People & Moving Beyond Shades of Grey’. Presented at: *Housing – A Critical Perspective*, Liverpool, 08-09 April 2015

everyone holds the same ‘architectural’ values. For example, my ‘good news’ reportage of how residents are extending their home-making by placing personal door mats and signs within corridors was met with concern from Pink & Knight directors. For them, ‘inhabitation’ is ‘messy’ and it can become problematic from an ongoing sales and marketing point of view.

I have also become aware of how research is perceived by others. For example, in one approach to a case study setting I had to email staff and their superiors to confirm my identity was *not* that of ‘an undercover BBC journalist, looking to write an exposé’.⁵ And yet when I arrived I had to develop reporter-like tactics to solicit interviews, since potential informants felt they had ‘nothing much to say’. In this respect I sympathise with architect and academic Mel Dodd when she said the ‘idea that you’re somehow an *expert* because you design buildings always makes me feel a bit uncomfortable’.⁶ I had to find ways of diminishing my authority as architect and researcher. Techniques included avoidance of formal channels; chatting to people in corridors; feigning interest in the smallest details, and being introduced by trusted others, including asking informants to refer me to a friend (snowball/chain sampling).

Anthropologist Ilan Kapoor argues for self-awareness and the importance of turning the ‘anthropological gaze upon ourselves before we investigate the Other’.⁷ Clearly, I am the stranger in the shared lounge. I do not qualify for residency, nor do I self-identify as an older person. And yet my age (or lack of) can afford me different kinds of access to people and information, particularly advice on ageing. In this respect, I am ‘non-expert’. Although, it is hoped that through the development of a research practice and sustained periods in a research context, I move towards an expert position. In the words of another architect, and trained anthropologist, ‘my understanding of what I am looking at is changing, and of course I am changing too’.⁸ I reflect further on my professional and personal development under a later question.

⁵ See Story 5: Chalet Manager, p. 189

⁶ Mel Dodd, ‘The Double Agent’ in *Future Practice: Conversations from the Edge of Architecture*, ed. by Rory Hyde (London: Routledge, 2012), p.77 [italics are my emphasis]

⁷ Ilan Kapoor, ‘Participatory Development, Complicity and Desire’, *Third World Quarterly*, 26.8 (2005), 1203-1220 (p.1204)

⁸ Peter Kellet, ‘Living in the Field: Ethnographic Experience of Place’, *Architectural Research Quarterly*, 15.4 (2001), 341-46 (p.342)

Overall I have enjoyed my research positionality, and suspect it has afforded me greater freedom and creativity than if I were an appointed architectural consultant or commissioned researcher. There is something to be said for multiple personas and a changing positionality. In the book *Future Practice* architect and academic Mel Dodd talks of the importance of swapping places ‘backwards and forwards’ in a way that acknowledges some of the architect’s training, but also the special knowledge and experience of others. The interviewer Rory Hyde summarises Dodd’s practice as follows:

*“The ability to inhabit these different personas [local, educator, artist, policy maker] is itself a characteristic of a ‘double agent’, who infiltrates territories or organisations foreign to one’s own in order to collect intelligence, while actually serving the needs of that foreign organisation. By leaving the traditionally conceived role of the architect behind and embedding within a community, Dodd is able to better understand and serve their needs, even if they’re as humble as a bench”.*⁹

I have acted as a double agent towards Pink & Knight and its respective resident owners (present and future). I have gathered intelligence from both sides, and discovered each needs help with articulating and envisioning the physical characteristics of *quality* homes for older people. I also recognise that my research has taken me to multiple other fields and actors, not associated with the sponsor. Indeed, I consider the research context – ‘housing for older people’ – better represented as a cluster of fields connected by hedgerow. I think of the design drawings for Dominic Steven’s ‘Hedgerow House’ as an architectural metaphor or borrowed design diagram for my research positionality. In Stevens’ project the house sits in the hedgerow, positioned at the intersection of four agricultural fields so that each of the main rooms has a different aspect and view. Large floor to ceiling windows create a feeling of being especially close to the natural world around the house – almost as though the house and its inhabitants are part of the life of the hedgerow.

⁹ Dodd, p.75

How do you define creative practice?

Previous practice

Prior to undertaking this PhD by Creative Practice, I operated within the fields of teaching (and scholarship) and part-time professional practice. In teaching I found creative expression through writing project briefs for design studio, and preparing associated lecture slides and studio talks, as well as everyday interactions with students over their design projects. ‘Scholarship’ I understood to involve disseminating creative ideas and outputs from teaching projects, chiefly through exhibitions, installations and publications. I also attended discipline-specific workshops on pedagogy, though considered them a form of continued professional development (and distinctly non-creative). Scope for professional practice was limited by my teaching commitments, though I found creative expression through design competitions and small scale making projects (renovating a narrowboat and domestic interventions). In terms of research, my most significant works were two dissertations that explored the role of the architect within humanitarian disaster relief and reconstruction programmes. The latter involved a field-based pilot study conducted in Banda Aceh, eight months on from the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, including participant observations of several aid agencies and their respective approaches to attaining permanent homes for displaced persons.¹⁰ In these terms, I recognise a prior leaning towards qualitative research methods and being in the field.

With regards to my design practice, I subscribe to the phenomenological approach to architecture that was developed by Dalibor Vesely, Joseph Rykwert, Peter Carl and others, through the Universities of Essex and Cambridge from the 1970s (though its roots stem from American architects in the 1950s). I therefore find sympathy with phenomenography, which shares human experience as its object. However, social scientists Ferenc Marton and Shirley Booth make an important distinction:

‘phenomenology (in its pure form) is a philosophical method in which the philosopher

¹⁰ Sam Clark, *The role of the Architect within humanitarian disaster relief and reconstruction; using Banda Aceh after the 2004 tsunami as a case study* (unpublished dissertation, Cardiff University, 2006)

is engaged in investigating their own experiences, whilst phenomenographers adopt an empirical orientation and investigate the experiences of others'.¹¹

Phenomenographic data collection methods typically include interviews with a small sample of subjects, with the researcher 'working toward an articulation of the interviewee's reflections on experience that is as complete as possible'.¹² A phenomenographic data analysis sorts perceptions emerging from the data into specific categories of description. These categories become the phenomenographic essence of the phenomenon, and are considered the primary outcomes of the research. I believe these outcomes can be used to form a design brief, from which to develop drawings that further synthesise and test emerging ideas. In a sense this is something that I have always done, but have only recently been able to name or identify it formally. This understanding of how I practice has emerged as I have practiced. For me, academic Susan McLaren's words offer an appropriate touchstone: '[designerly thinking] raises questions and ignites the sparks of curiosity that instigate activity'.¹³ Components of my work have helped to instigate activity in the research field, including design changes to the sponsor's product, which I expand upon later.

Getting started

The initial PhD research proposal – the version I made my own – set out to determine the 'shape' of creative practice, in which design was thought to be a key research method. While acknowledging contingency on the research context, I proposed that creative practice could take one of three forms: a typological study, an ethnographic study and/or a learning journal (See Box 5).¹⁴ With the benefit of hindsight, I can claim that the creative practice – which I consider to be wider in scope than the thesis project – involved elements of all three 'forms'. Perhaps this is a feature of creative practice; it crosses perceived methodological boundaries and does not follow a prescribed course or form, in the way that say a scientific study can. To some extent creative practice can be

¹¹ Ferenc Marton and Shirley Booth, *Learning and Awareness* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997)

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Susan McLaren, *Designerly Thinking*, (Livingston: Education Scotland, c.2015) <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/Designerlythinkingarticle_tcm4-654736.pdf> [accessed 23 March 2015]

¹⁴ Sam Clark, *Research Proposal*, Newcastle University, 21 February 2014

claimed to bridge disciplinary *modi operandi*. Certainly, commentators have argued that design research can “blend into other more established research methodologies in the arts, humanities and science, with no intrinsic antagonism”.¹⁵ In the case of this project, my practice involved shifting personas from an architectural researcher to ethnographer and pedagogist. Architectural knowledge and skill was required to analyse buildings, including case studies, built portfolios and proposed schemes, to perform design orientated post-occupancy evaluation, and to undertake design review activities that extended to design propositions. Ethnographic knowledge and skill was required to observe human cultures and draw qualitative information from multiple informants within the field. Pedagogical knowledge and skill was required to reflect upon a learning process; to identify formative experiences and influential actors that have helped to bring about new knowledge. I drew upon this skill when writing this story.

Six months into the PhD project I noted that the form of creative practice remained ‘an open question (for the time being)’.¹⁶ This was a pivotal moment in the research since I was nearing completion on two so-called work packages for the sponsor, comprising a review of the UK older person context and an analysis of specialist housing provision, including historic precedent and contemporary planning issues reported in grey literature. These work packages represented a kind of contextual orientation, priming an extended period of field work. The direction of travel was less clear, particularly in terms of creative practice. Following an internal progress review, I questioned this aspect further,

*“Is it [creative practice] about establishing my own design brief, looking at constituent parts of ‘home’; an investigation of public/private thresholds on the high street; creative engagement with stakeholders through an ethnographic approach, using architectural artefacts within resident focus groups?”*¹⁷

¹⁵ Murray Fraser, *Design Research in Architecture: An Overview* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2013), p.2

¹⁶ Sam Clark, *ePortfolio Meeting Notes*, 16 June 2014

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

THE SHAPE OF CREATIVE PRACTICE

The proposed PhD research study is to be characterised by creative practice, in which design is a key research method. This aspect of the study could take one of the following forms:

1. Typological Study

Investigation of retirement housing typologies through evaluation and taxonomic classification of characteristics commonly found, according to their association with different categories, such as intensity of development, degrees of formality, degrees of interdependence or relationship with public realm. The study would include analysis of drawings, models and built precedent, including post occupancy evaluation and participant occupation. Investigation would lead to the design and evaluation of new and/or evolved housing typologies. Evaluation would take the form of peer review or design ‘crits’, involving recognised architects in the sector; invited feedback from relevant built environment professionals (including *Pink & Knight*), and table-top discussions with expert stakeholders or informants (e.g. a focus group of prospective retirees).

2. Ethnographic Study

Investigation of ‘parallel voices’ within the retirement housing sector e.g. designer–developer, buyer–seller or resident–provider. For instance the study could engage current or prospective retirees as informants, situating them within a commercial context in which standard ‘products and services’ are designed and ‘offered to the market’. An ethnographic study would involve close participant observations from within the business and residential premises of *Pink & Knight*. There are many possible informants within the company’s respective divisions (e.g. land, planning, technical, and sales), as well as the occupants and regular users of their estates portfolio (retirees, centre managers, and visiting friends, family, therapists, etc).

3. Learning Journal

Investigation of a wider field of practice, drawing upon the author’s unique position in and between respective architectural sectors: design, research and teaching. A learning journal approach would allow for ‘live’ reflections on a multi-faceted engagement with activities and informants, including students and stakeholders associated with teaching projects. Content could be harvested from fieldwork, including interviews, focus groups, workshops and seminars; personal research and reading, including any visual or design research; discussions with colleagues, including those met through work placements at *Pink & Knight*, and conversations with family and friends reflecting on their housing experiences. The learning journal could include a collection of notes, observations, thoughts, diagrams, sketches, drawings and other relevant materials built-up over the study period.

Box 5: Extract from Research Proposal

Assumed modus operandi

On several occasions the question was raised whether there needed to be a design project as part of this research. Indeed, during the discussion of my work at a research symposium it was noted that I ‘assumed’ there would be a design folio.¹⁸ Furthermore, I had assumed that any design activity would relate to buildings. I was blind-sighted by my professional position and failed to see other creative opportunities or alternative modi operandi. For instance, in a supervision meeting it was noted that there is a ‘missing language’ around descriptions of third age housing, with many people unwittingly referencing fourth age residential care environments. Designing this vocabulary could be a further opportunity for creative practice.¹⁹ And yet, I still feel an internal resistance to this endeavour; in part because I consider myself inexperienced in handling the building blocks of language, but also for the abandonment of visual thinking and architectural values that are very much attached to representing and witnessing the formation of physical buildings.

To some extent occupying an expanded, interdisciplinary field of ‘creative practice’ has brought into question my own professional values; to question the idea of what it means to be an ‘architect’, a professional status that I have worked hard to attain. One day a teaching colleague shared with me his conscious decision to ‘let go’ of the idea of returning to architectural practice. For him, practice involves a ‘complex equation’ that often results in long hours and little voice or recognition. He referred to former colleagues working for a ‘big name’ and seemingly ‘held to ransom’ by their idea of being an architect.²⁰ We discussed the motive force of ‘clinging onto’ the building project, acknowledging that there are other ways of being creative, and noted the Bartlett Design Research Folios that include non-building related outputs.²¹

Reflecting and projecting

Thirteen months into the research I was still considering what ‘creative practice’ might mean. At this point it was rapidly becoming a retrospective exercise, examining what

¹⁸ Sam Clark, *Looking Towards Retirement: Housing Older People & Moving Beyond Shades of Grey*, Newcastle University, 13 April 2015

¹⁹ Sam Clark, *ePortfolio Meeting Notes*, 09 December 2014

²⁰ Informant A [Senior Lecturer], pers. comm. [conversation notes], CSA, 11 November 2015

²¹ *Bartlett Design Research Folios* (London: The Bartlett School of Architecture, 2013) <<http://www.bartlettdesignresearchfolios.com/>> [accessed 27 July 2017]

had passed, making sense of work packages, and projecting into a strategic and theoretical framework. I had initiated a ‘product review’ involving mixed research methods (chiefly interviews, residency, design review) to examine Pink & Knight’s standard product. Avon Chalet was used as a pilot study and the resulting report included design proposals, synthesising and testing emerging ideas. Designs sought to work within existing frameworks – grids, layouts, unit mixes, strategies and so on – and were therefore presented as potential ‘enhancements’. They could be read as ‘interventions’ (proposals for retrofitting the existing building) or alternative design approaches to future developments. The designs were based on a simple logic that prioritises areas for ‘inhabitation’ in ways that have been advocated by architects such as Christopher Alexander, Aldo van Eyck, and Herman Hertzberger. This design-led approach to conducting a ‘product review’ was well received by the sponsor, such that directors requested it be repeated for two more chalets to verify findings. My workload expanded and the research project scope crept ever more so in the direction of *applied* design research; research contingent on the developer’s portfolio.

In March 2015, at an internal design research symposium, I presented the following potential ‘headlines’ for an emerging creative practice:

- Bridging the Gap [between consumer-provider; designer-dweller; architect-developer]
- Shaping a Reflective Developer [assumed sponsor’s commitment to innovation]
- Learning ‘Developer’ Values & Vocabulary [acknowledging my ‘outsider’ status]
- Creating the Missing Language [for specialist retirement housing products]
- Developing Designerly Forms of Post-Occupancy Evaluation
- Designing for the ‘In-between’ [or inhabitation of ‘third’ spaces within developments]
- Becoming Embedded in Multiple Fields [office, chalets, design studio and so on]
- Developing a Sense of Empathy for ‘Opposites’ [i.e. developer and resident]

From this list, I consider the last two options to most closely represent the creative practice that has shaped the research project (key words being multiple fields and empathy). At the time of writing I understand this creative practice to have involved a multi-sited ethnography through an architect lens; using mixed qualitative research

methods, including visual and design methods, particularly sketch design proposals. I have also found creative expression through the writing of research reports and the thesis, using the latter as a space to unpack research stories and explore alternative modes of representation such as poetic verse. I also adopted a creative attitude to research positionality by choosing to operate within an expanded interdisciplinary field – reaching into anthropology, environmental gerontology and planning – and moving between different research fields and audiences, ranging from the developer’s boardroom, through spaces of production and debate, to the private living spaces of older people.

What did you know about housing for older people?

And what do you know now?

Points of reference

Prior to starting the PhD, I had specific professional project experience designing sheltered accommodation for residents with severe and complex needs, alongside more general experience working for an architectural practice specialising in social housing. I had not designed housing specifically for older people, nor had I been exposed to retirement housing. I was obliquely aware of ‘elderly’ housing and residential care institutions, having grown up in a small market town where there was a high number of such schemes. Indeed, there was a large sheltered housing scheme that neighboured my primary school – its residents shared the school drive and we regularly passed shoppers with trolleys, walking sticks and frames. I also have childhood memories of waiting in the car parks of such schemes, while my mother visited vulnerable parishioners as part of her Eucharistic ministry, administering the sacraments of holy communion to those unable to reach church.

My attitudes about older people were shaped by what I observed in church, on the school drive and in the street, plus direct encounters with older family members. In many respects my knowledge base was not dissimilar to that of my students,²² whose default position was to think of their grandparents as a stand-in for all older people, and to make design assumptions based on vicarious experience. I drew primarily upon my

²² See Story 6: Architecture Student, p.233-4

experience of living with an older person, Nana, who lived with my family for over five years. I was sixteen when she died of cancer. I would also draw upon vicarious experiences of my grandparents growing older and frailer in Northern Ireland. I was acutely aware of their situations at the onset of this research project, since Grandad died in 2012, aged 98, and Granny was suffering from dementia and required daily care and support, provided at her home by my aunts and uncles, as well as professional care workers. Granny died, aged 93, in December 2014, one year into the research project.

Through the research I have met many more older persons and come to appreciate a wide spectrum of circumstances leading to a range of needs and aspirations, as diverse and dynamic as the younger person population. Through the fieldwork I observed informants in their everyday activities and interactions with others in the shared lounges of retirement chalets, and conducted in-depth interviews with up to twenty older persons in their private living rooms. I have had many chats over tea, heard several career and life stories, and toured an amazing array of private rooms featuring special corners, ornamental displays and significant pieces of furniture. I have listened to age-related health problems, particularly around mobility, but also private struggles with incontinence and mental health (namely loneliness and early onset dementia). I have also been taken into confidence, acting as a sounding board for one person coming to terms with a 'broken' family. Equally informants have made me smile and laugh out loud. I will remember something of their situations when I design residential environments in the future.

Housing product

The research has also taken me into new professional environments and opened my eyes to different ways of thinking about the design of housing for older people. I have come to know a developer's standard product for private, independent retirement-living and gained insights into its design, production and consumption. I now appreciate the retirement chalet's qualities, particularly its social architecture, as well as the sustainable benefits to individuals, communities and society as a whole. Nonetheless, through design review, I have questioned the quality of the architectural environments the product offers, and promoted specific design 'tweaks' that could enhance residents' everyday lived experiences. I have also come to question the very idea of so-called

‘specialist’ housing, especially products targeted at ‘older people’, given the inherent diversity and populous nature of this group.

In 2014 I conducted an interview with a teaching colleague with a background in housing, and specific project experience designing ExtraCare facilities, during which we exchanged some candid views on the long-term presence and marketability of Pink & Knight’s product. The following extracts from the interview transcript capture my thoughts, as the interviewer, reflecting on my research experience at the time:

“There are some things that are good about it [the Retirement Chalet; particularly its social architecture], but on the whole I think it falls short of what I would expect of decent [‘Lifetime’] housing, let alone specialist housing. Actually, that term [‘specialist housing’] I am not entirely comfortable with. I don’t know if we should be looking for specialist housing offers or whether there just ought to be bloody good housing that anyone can live in for as long as they like.”

*“It must be an incredibly niche market. This product [the Retirement Chalet] is not for me, it’s not for you, it’s not for my parents. It’s not for * [my partner’s] parents. It’s not for their parents... It’s a very particular demographic that buys into this. And, if you are selling it through an estate agents, your chances of success are fairly limited. I think also there must be psychological barriers for someone not coming through the sales office of * [Pink & Knight] but coming from an estate agent, and thinking, ‘What is this? This isn’t an apartment, this is something else. What is this community? Who are these people? Are they all “old codgers”? Are they all about to pass away? Where do I fit into this cohort? And is it performing like a cohort, are they all ageing together or is there a diversity in this?’ ...I think it would be a hard sell [the resale of a retirement apartment]”.²³*

I continue to feel at a distance from the developer and the consumers it supplies. As an architect I am particularly saddened by the low level of consumer knowledge in relation

²³ Sam Clark, [Semi-Structured Interview], Cardiff, 10 December 2014

to housing in the UK. I am particularly concerned for those older people that are moving from familiar housing typologies – private houses – to forms of communal apartment living, and not knowing what to look for in their new their home.

*“That’s my biggest concern in all of this. You ask people about the architecture and they say nothing. Then you ask them, ‘Well, what do you think about your apartment in terms of layout? What is the bathroom like?’ Then you get pages of feedback. You think, ‘You didn’t have this knowledge prior to the purchase’. That’s what concerns me. I do wonder... The question about the range of offers on the market for older people. I think in part the range isn’t there because of the [lack of] knowledge; the discerning consumer doesn’t really exist”.*²⁴

Of course, this is not an isolated problem, but symptomatic of a wider UK cultural unknowing or unthinking when it comes to housing design and respective property searches and purchases. Much has been written about this topic elsewhere. For me, the following remark from an architectural researcher describes the phenomenon rather well; a problem of consuming with the eyes, rather than taking into consideration issues of comfort and accommodating the whole body.

*“Research has shown that after location, external appearance – and in particular a period style – is cited as an important priority to the vast majority of [UK] homeowners, with more respondents rating the importance of these aspects of their homes than the size, décor and quality of the rooms. Newly built homes in the UK are also the smallest in Europe. Why do we value looking-at over being-in?”*²⁵

In conclusion, I am now familiar with the retirement housing sector, and a cast of older person informants that presented a wide spectrum of aspirations and needs with regard to their homes. I also have knowledge on a retirement-living product – the retirement chalet – and understand its attractiveness and relative advantages to residents, as well as

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Gillian Horn, ‘The Taste for Neo-Vernacular Housing’, in *Demystifying Architectural Research*, ed. by Anne Dye and Flora Samuel (Newcastle: RIBA Publishing, 2015), pp.109-113 (p.111)

areas where it could be improved. I am also aware that I carry design knowledge – in part gathered from resident informants – that prospective customers do not possess, though they will likely come to know, tacitly, post-purchase.

What have been the hardest aspects of your work?

Sponsored research

In practical terms, one of the hardest aspects of the research has been balancing the demands and expectations of an industrial sponsor with the need to develop material suitable for an academic thesis. Working with an industrial sponsor has brought many advantages in terms of ease of access to a research/practice context, including a portfolio of developments and population of potential informants (staff and customers). Equally, the sponsor had a genuine stake in the research and helped shape its scope and direction; implicitly, explicitly and through latent or subliminal affect, influencing me and the research informants. I can recall questions not raised or discussions unentered, due to self-censorship or more general need for professional tact. For instance, during my first meeting at Pink & Knight, when empathy was sought from directors faced with a refused planning application and appeal case, due to design challenges from the local authority which appeared justified (to me). The presence of a sponsor had an immeasurable impact on what could be facilitated for the research, and what could be imagined for it, as well as what could be discussed openly, be it in the board room or in public.

There was also an inherent expectation from the sponsor for regular reporting and timely progression toward its end goal: an industry-ready report. This was seemingly the most valued research output, judging by the budget made available for its publication and dissemination through a high-profile launch event and physical distribution of several thousand copies. The investment was also reputational for Pink & Knight, such that the copy for this publication was critically reviewed by its board of directors, as well as the marketing and legal teams, and an external Queens Counsel barrister specialising in planning. Whereas internal interim work package reports had a more spirited and unedited ‘voice’ and image. In fact, I made a conscious decision early in the research project to make these reports as graphic and reader-friendly as possible, such that the latter reports contained at least fifty per cent visual content. At the time of

production, I joked irreverently about striving to achieve an easy-reader ‘picture book for boys’.²⁶ On reflection, there was a subconscious motive to make these reports appear more ‘designerly’ – something less familiar or expected – and to slowly transition from textual to visual research outputs.

Finding an audience for design

Perhaps my greatest struggle was reaching an influential audience within the sponsor organisation, with regards to ‘design’. Within Pink & Knight it appears that architects have limited voice; their agency being limited to project-specific challenges, as opposed to evolving the design of the standard product. Indeed, I would go so far as to say they have limited license to hear critique, with individual enquiries from staff suggesting that dissemination of research findings occurred on a need-to-know basis. My experience is that information was filtered before travelling up and down management lines. This is to be expected, since the organisation and its respective communication channels exist to efficiently and productively serve business objectives. Within this culture continuity and certainty rule. There is little tolerance for unpredictable, resource-consuming exploration and innovation. Furthermore, external comment is regarded as potentially disruptive, unnecessarily challenging business intelligence (‘what we know’) and prescribed processes (‘what we do’) and tested products (‘what we do well’). In this environment, design operates at the level of the development site and making the standard template fit. Product review, or what I regard ‘real’ design, occurs at committee level.

In describing the design culture and activity observed at Pink & Knight, I will refer to a set of diagrams produced for a conference presentation – see figures 14 and 15 – regarding design scope, values and ideas, and measuring research impact. Regarding design scope, low-level design involves ‘tweaks’, such as moving elements (e.g. windows) or revising non-material details. Larger design changes, such as revising internal layouts, may be argued on grounds of ‘rationalising’ or ‘enhancing’ existing templates, though robust evidence and cost analysis is required. Material changes, such as reviewing product specifications, are more likely to come about as a matter of reflex, resulting from ‘value engineering’ or changes to the supply chain. Whereas re-

²⁶ Sam Clark, pers. comm. [email to Rose Gilroy & Adam Sharr], 24 July 2014

modelling will only occur in response to new fixed constraints, such as legislative changes to building regulations or nationally described space standards. Similarly, prototyping and exploring alternative models – for instance different types of sites or development strategies – is led by economic pressures, such as land availability and return on investment. Pink & Knight does not engage in polemic or speculative design that disregards its established operational frameworks. In these terms the organisation is observed to be conservative in its attitude towards design.

In my limited experience of presenting ‘real’ design ideas to Pink & Knight, I have observed that design change can only advance if sanctioned at the highest levels of management. Even then, an idea cannot survive on architectural merit alone. For an idea to translate into material change it must satisfy a business or financial case as well as offer a marketable benefit. For instance, the introduction of a coffee bar into the shared lounge represents a low-cost material and spatial change, and may offer possibilities for franchising in the future. The coffee bar is visually impactful, and gives prospective buyers an easy to digest manifestation of the lifestyle offer. It is also easy to photograph and include within marketing material. Architecturally, it brings the ‘tea station’ into an open plan environment, making it more accessible/user-friendly, and new possibilities for interior design. The coffee bar also supports a design narrative for ‘inhabiting’ space. Of course, the biggest impact is a social one; the coffee bar offers the shared lounge a familiar programme – meeting for a coffee – and goes some way to ‘defeminise’ the space and make it more flexible for large groups. In any case, design change is contingent on business thinking and the support of directors without design training. In this respect my role as ‘external architect’ involved some amount of design teaching or advocacy, as well as an openness to other ways of thinking. Plus, some amount of tact.

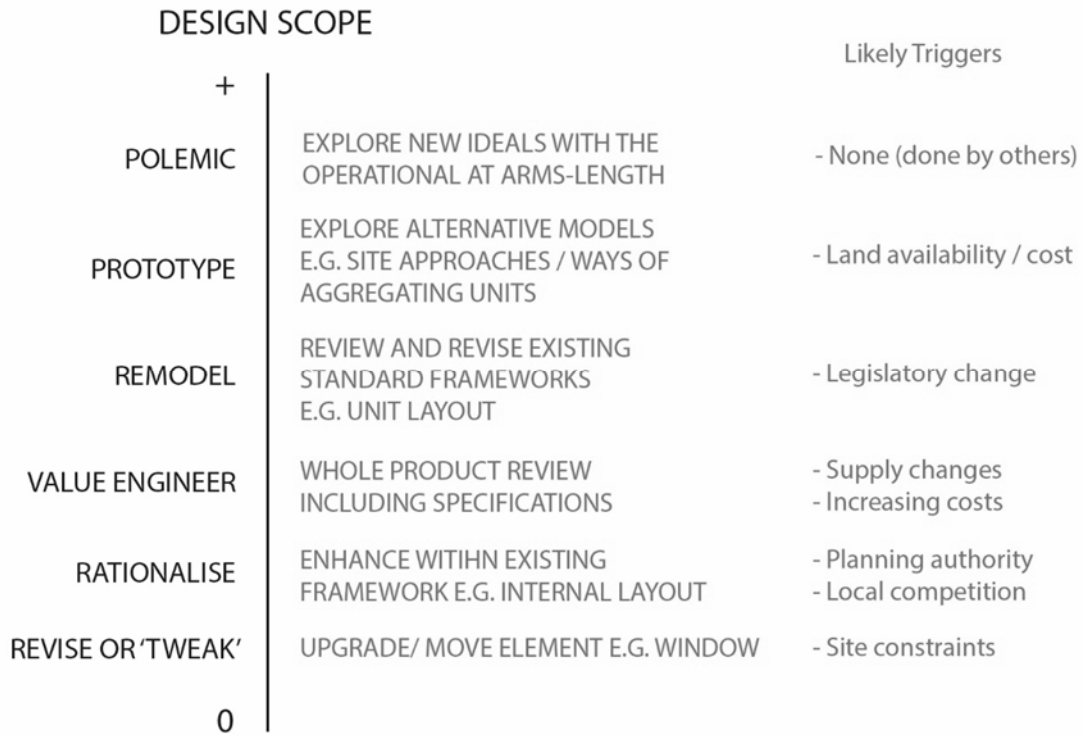


Figure 14: Research Diagram, exploring degrees of design or design scope for architects at Pink & Knight

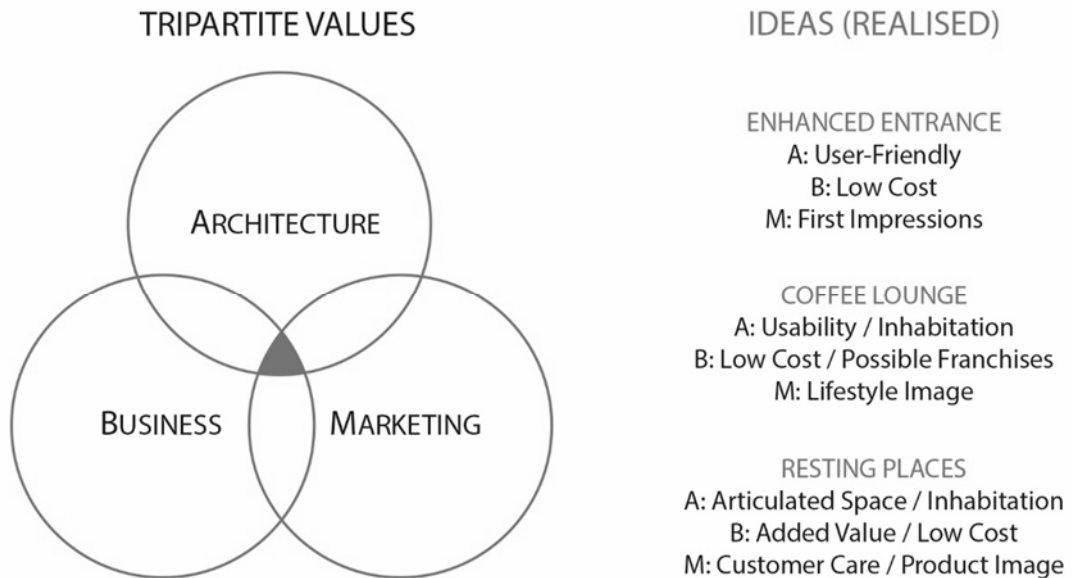


Figure 15: Research Diagram, reflecting on design ideas and potential design change to Pink & Knight's product

Thesis writing

The thesis aspect of the research project has been equally challenging for different reasons. In part because the engagement work and necessary orientation toward industry-ready outputs has occupied a significant proportion of my time. Academic outputs (conference papers, presentations and posters) have been more episodic; being developed in-between work package reports and other commitments. Latterly – particularly now that the sponsorship has expired – I have had more time to make sense of what I have practiced and to ‘translate the outputs’²⁷ into an academic language and argument. In this last phase of the research project I have encountered fresh challenges in writing. In brief these challenges concern the representation of a range of actors; disciplinary and self-censoring; narrative, and the academic voice or register; fact, fiction and truth; positionality and shifting narrative forms. The common dominator in these challenges is a concern for ethics; moral choices around the representation of the actors and their respective settings, as well as my relationship to them. I expand upon this issue later in the section.²⁸

Have there been any positive surprises along the way?

Making a friend

One positive aspect of the research has been the experience of discovering informants and coming to know their stories. In the case of Rose, I made a genuine friend. Indeed, in the beginning I had not thought of Rose as a significant research informant, of equal standing to those I was meeting in the formal research field (as framed by the research proposal). My early research notes identify Rose as an incidental ‘informant’ and ‘reference point’ for my design practice, and her situation being a ‘counterpoint’ to the sponsor’s product and operational context:

*“Discussed recent Befriending meetings with * [Rose]. Social visits, but informative nonetheless, particularly in terms of observing how an older person uses space. Such ‘friends’ could become useful reference points when designing.*

²⁷ Informant B [Senior Lecturer], pers. comm. [conversation notes], CSA, 16 October 2015

²⁸ See Thesis Reflections, p.375-381, including Figures 17 & 18 (Research Diagrams)

** [Rose's] home – a local authority flat on the ninth floor of a tower block – is a good counterpoint to * [Pink & Knight's] developments ”.*²⁹

In writing Rose's story, *The Befriended*, I arrived at the realisation that I am engaged in a form of longitudinal qualitative study, involving observation and active listening in the field over an extended period – weekly/fortnightly visits for more than three years. In part Rose's story acknowledges the messy reality of research; a befriending activity that became a research methodology; a home and series of care environments that became a research field (or series of sited micro-cultures); an informant that became a friend, and myself shifting between positions of friend, neighbour, researcher, architect and lecturer. Over time I have gathered rich insights, including multivariate meanings of home and everyday behavioural observations of an older person successfully ageing in place. But also much more than that. Rose's story, once committed to paper, had a significant influence on my thinking and writing practice. *The Befriended* became a benchmark for future research writing; the first attempt at storying the thesis was a success. The following research notes attest to the special status of this work:

*“I got such a strong sense of * [Rose]. I think you balanced the analytical narrative of * in her flat and your own reflection on how this adds to your practice very well”.*³⁰

*“Attached is the story of the architecture student, Autumn [Story 6]. This has been much more of a struggle than Rose [Story 2]. And I'm still trying to work out why!”*³¹

*“I've made a start on the planner's story [Story 8]. I'll take a different tack and avoid fictionalising. I'm now thinking that more direct reportage, including setting myself in the scene and relating to others could help i.e. making it a bit more like Rose's story [Story 2]. Maybe I should think of them less as 'stories', more 'encounters'...”*³²

²⁹ Sam Clark, *ePortfolio Meeting Notes*, 09 December 2014

³⁰ Rose Gilroy, pers. comm. [email], 02 April 2016

³¹ Sam Clark, pers. comm. [email to Rose Gilroy & Adam Sharr], 13 May 2016

³² Sam Clark, pers. comm. [email to Rose Gilroy & Adam Sharr], 07 February 2017

In August 2016, I noted – in agreement with my supervisors – that the recently drafted material (Story 5: ‘Chalet Manager’) was ‘not as successful as Rose’s story’.³³ At the time, I reasoned that Rose’s story demonstrated how she was an ‘actor’, making and breaking the home environment, and therefore an influencer in the broad sense of the research context. I had succeeded in capturing a situated life story, which offered rich layers of information; more so than my attempts at ‘event-based’ reportage used to capture other actors, such as the Chalet Manager. I had also managed to integrate external references, and included elements of literature review, without disturbing the flow or ‘plotline’ of the story. In these terms, I was surprised by what constituted research and how ‘success’ might be achieved outside the boundaries of the formally declared research project.

Another audience

The second ‘surprise’ came in the form of external appreciation for the co-produced industry guide, which I had considered to be a largely transactional piece of work in terms of fulfilling the research contract and meeting the sponsor’s needs. Nonetheless, Jeremy Porteus provided a complementary foreword to the work, stating that it ‘provides a fresh and compelling perspective’, and Housing LIN provided a platform for the work on its website:

“This comprehensive guide... provides a fresh perspective on exactly how retirement living should be defined, getting to the heart of the changing needs and expectations for this niche sector of development.”

Thereafter, *Housebuilder* magazine sent an eshot to its subscribers highlighting the ‘sustainable benefits’ of retirement housing.³⁴ *Planning* magazine featured a synopsis of the publication and launch event, headlining with the identified problem of poor retirement housing advice, and distributed a hard copy as a supplement to its subscribers.³⁵ In addition, industry magazine *Show House* featured an in-depth article within their retirement issue, and commented on the range of research methods:

³³ Sam Clark, *ePortfolio* Meeting Notes, 17 August 2016

³⁴ Suzie Mayes, ‘Retirement Housing Brings Sustainable Benefits’, *Housebuilder*, eshot, 10 April 2017

³⁵ John Geoghegan, ‘Planning Officers Struggle with Retirement Housing Advice, says Research’, *Planning Resource*, 10 April 2017

*“Clark certainly explored consumer needs in detail throughout the study by researching the subject, interviewing residents in scheme across the UK and, for a time, even living in a...development, an approach which was behind his appointment”.*³⁶

Furthermore, the publication was commended in the RTPI Awards for Research Excellence 2017 (Planning Consultancy Award). This is surprising, since I regarded our submission ‘a bit of a punt’,³⁷ and at the time expressed uncertainty around its merit. And yet, the media attention and wide dissemination of the work is evidence of research impact in a sector where I regard myself an ‘outsider’. In these terms, I feel humbled and my head turned to a different audience.

Do you have any regrets?

Not seeing the situation

One thing that I have struggled with throughout the project is my own expectation/mental image of the research outputs. I had imagined that the project offered a kind of ‘free space’ in which to develop a portfolio of beautiful drawings and models; an exhibition around which the viva voce would be performed. In short I imagined a kind of grand design project or series of projects that spoke to the ‘problem’ of housing for older people. Of course, in hindsight this notion appears naïve; to predetermine the research output in line with my personal tastes and disciplinary values, when the advert for the studentship made explicit ‘opportunities for broader professional development through placements with the sponsor organisation’. Furthermore, Pink & Knight were involved in the selection process, having shaped an outline research proposal and contract to deliver ‘milestone reports’, which were later referred to as ‘work packages’. It was also clear from my first visit to Pink & Knight’s head office that this study was to be situated in a business context where design was contested:

³⁶ Ginetta Vedrickas, ‘Defining the Grey Area’, *Show House*, July (2017), 55-58

³⁷ Sam Clark, pers. comm. [email to Rose Gilroy & Adam Sharr], 16 May 2017

*“I’ve been to * [Pink & Knight] and met various board members. All appear supportive of design research, albeit ‘design’ defined differently. Design scope ranges somewhat across the organisation, from moving windows through to alternative forms/formula for retirement housing. There is an apparent tension with respect to meeting their current client profile (characterised as a 79 year-old widower...) and developing up-to-date ‘products’ for baby boomers and subsequent generations with aspiration... Imagine,... a profit-orientated MD, alongside resident architect-directors looking to evolve a product that has remained more or less the same for 20 years...”³⁸*

On reflection, I now recognise that my internal struggle has been one of shifting from an imagined ideal of ‘practice-based’ research, where creative artefacts are the basis of the contribution to knowledge, to the actual ‘practice-led’ situation, where the research has led primarily to new understandings about practice.³⁹ One might say the research has been more about practice than through practice, though there have been moments where I have performed a practice-led role. For instance, through the production and explanation of sketch feasibility studies that accompanied the Product Review reports prepared for Pink & Knight. Of course, taken out of context these drawn studies do not appear to represent in-depth research, nor would they make it to the wall in the exhibition I had imagined being the viva voce.

“My ‘design’ work has been very process-led and is relatively light when considered in isolation. Taken out of context, the design work could be read as discrete feasibility studies – the sort an architectural practice would prepare quickly for an interior refurbishment project”.⁴⁰

³⁸ Sam Clark, pers. comm. [email to Adam Sharr], 19 November 2013

³⁹ Linda Candy, *Practice Based Research: A Guide* (Sydney: University of Technology, 2006) <https://www.mangold-international.com/_Resources/Persistent/764d26fd86a709d05e8d0a0d2695bd65fd85de4f/Practice_Based_Research_A_Guide.pdf> [accessed 04 August 2017]

⁴⁰ Sam Clark, *ePortfolio* Meeting Notes, 25 November 2015

Recognising contingencies

I suppose the defining characteristic of the design work is one of contingency; a practice that responds to or ‘depends’ on the real world, a problem articulated by Jeremy Till in his writing about the gap between what architecture actually is and what architects want it to be.⁴¹ If I am honest with myself, I sought an opportunity to design cart blanche and enjoy the production of architectural artefacts for a small audience – myself and some professional peers. Whereas Pink & Knight had sponsored the research, from which they expected specific answers and to collect a good public relations story and an independent publication for use in planning meetings and inquiries – words, not designs. The following extract is an email account of a telephone conversation I had with a director representing the sponsor, in the lead up to the publication,

*“ * [Pink & Knight] is interested in looking at the attitudes of local authority planners and forming a response to their concerns raised in pre-application consultations, decision notices, etc... Common issues include attitudes towards single-building development and single-aspect apartments. Ultimately * [Pink & Knight] is interested in ‘a document that can be tabled at pre-application consultations, explaining what they do and why’ [paraphrased comments from Pink & Knight director]. I rehearsed the line that this document could evidence a social architecture and commitment to a physical architecture that underpins and enhances community. * was reserved on the matter and we agreed to flesh out the detail in our [forthcoming] meeting. There was no mention of further design work. I offered an outline scheme for * [named development site], explaining how it developed from the student work [‘Ageing Town’ design studio] and design ideas presented within work package three. No comment. I suppose * [Pink & Knight]’s view is that design is not the problem; it is a problem of individual personalities within local authority planning departments (‘this urban designer at...’). I think the message is clear: ‘no more design/ideas’ ...”*⁴²

⁴¹ Jeremy Till, *Architecture Depends* (London: The MIT Press, 2009)

⁴² Sam Clark, pers. comm. [email to Rose Gilroy & Adam Sharr], 27 May 2016

Being silent on design

The above telephone conversation was followed by an email from the sponsor organisation that contained the line ‘I would like you to produce a document that we can use as part of the pre-application process explaining the reasons for our approach’.⁴³ This instruction posed three ethical challenges. The first being that it implied a master-servant relationship, whereby the researcher/university is commissioned for a kind of ghost writing service. Secondly, it presupposes that Pink & Knight has the correct approach; an approach the research found to be inflexible and in several instances wrong. Thirdly, the instruction came from an individual director, expressed as a personal directive. As an architect I was most concerned about defending poor design. In the end the report was somewhat silent on design. Three case study projects – identified as being ‘classic’, ‘heritage’, and ‘contemporary’ in appearance – were presented through basic plan drawings, visualisations and photography supplied by Pink & Knight. The report’s commentary focused largely on planning challenges and wider, societal questions, and highlighted sustainable benefits.

If nothing else, my take-home lesson has been the need to be invited to design. This was most apparent in the way feedback was framed. The design project I produced for Pink & Knight, while positively received in the boardroom, was regarded a ‘limited objective exercise’⁴⁴ that required a detailed and commercial assessment. The design director found many positive features though raised several points that counted against the proposal when assessed as a potential Pink & Knight project (see Box 6). In summary these matters were: an unknown six metre watercourse easement, limiting the development footprint; parking spaces accessed directly off the street being considered vulnerable to ‘fly parking’; a massing strategy already determined through pre-planning consultation; being ‘very close’ to the company’s target margin, due to the building form involving a section of single sided-corridor; ‘internal’ kitchens, including those with windows onto the corridor, being regarded ‘unpopular’ with customers; the apartments being nearly ten per cent larger than the company’s standard apartments, and respective impact on construction costs and sales price. Furthermore, the live scheme

⁴³ Anonymous, pers. comm. [email from sponsor organisation], 31 May 2016

⁴⁴ Anonymous, pers. comm. [email from sponsor organisation], 12 January 2017

had received planning permission. In these terms the uptake and progression of the design work was curtailed.

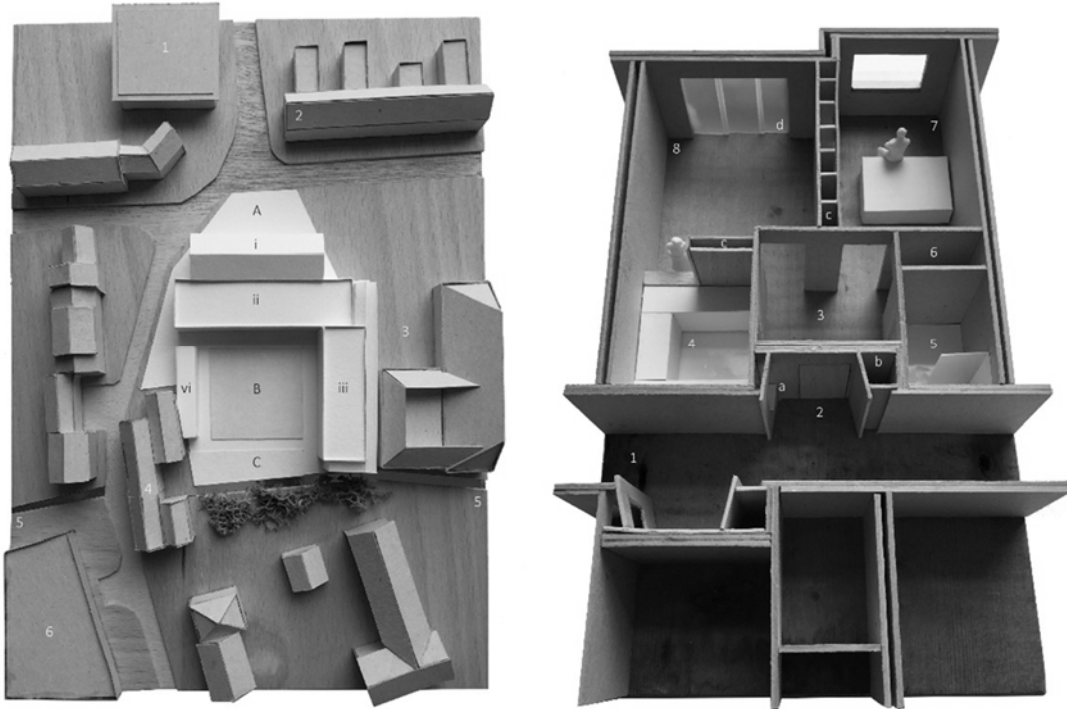


Figure 16: Design Models;
alternative site massing and apartment layout for a Pink & Knight development

Section 4

Hi Sam

I've had a detailed look at your courtyard proposal and noted all the positive considerations that come to mind, along with points which would count against the proposal, when considering it as a P&K project. I appreciate that this was a limited objective exercise for you, and your students, so please attach the appropriate weight to the different points as I have assessed the scheme generally against P&K's commercial requirements.

Taking the scheme on face value - as a limited objective exercise - it would definitely create an attractive courtyard development with apartments either having views into the Conservation Area or into a peaceful, formal 'quad'. It would also screen the views of the * [named supermarket] wall and noise of their servicing yard to a degree. In addition there are many positive features incorporated into the apartment designs, such as: a window on to the corridor in conjunction with a larger entrance door recess thereby creating an internal 'street'; the larger, rectangular entrance hall also works well and creates an attractive and practical space; the omission of kitchens from the apartment frontage allows for improved room shapes and larger windows - however, I refer to other consideration in this respect below.

After making a detailed commercial and practical assessment I've noted some points which would count against the proposal when assessed as a potential P&K project.

- the * [named stream] culvert diversion - and requisite 6 metre easement - requires accommodating. This would necessitate the reduction of development at both ends of the proposed building.
- security would be a problem for the 4 car parking spaces accessed directly off * [named street], and fly parking would be difficult to control.
- the LPA would not be likely to grant planning permission for full 3 storeys on the northern leg or 4 storeys on the eastern leg as we had to reduce our designs to 2 storeys with roof accommodation for the former and partly 2 storey for the latter. This in consideration of the adjoining conservation area and listed buildings, accordingly
- the single sided corridor on the eastern section, whilst not being unacceptable in principle, would not be cost effective and the scheme in its current form is very close to our target margin.
- although the kitchens would have a window onto the corridor we would still class them as internal kitchens and we try to keep these to a minimum on developments as they are not popular with our customers.
- the living rooms would appear a little tight as they are only 2.7 metres wide, also the furniture layout would be compromised by the run of storage doors.
- the apartments are nearly 10% larger than our New standard apartments and this would have an effect on construction costs and sales price.

I'm sure this is a more detailed assessment than you require so please pick and choose the parts you find useful for reference in your thesis.

Best wishes * [name]
Group Design & Technical Director

Box 6: Email from Pink & Knight Group Design & Technical Director, 12 January 2017

The bit before design

On reflection, there have been times when the research has been less about design practice; being arguably more for, or even before, practice. For instance, how sociological understanding of ‘meanings of home’, anthropological ‘thick descriptions’ of observed cultures, or gerontological analysis of home environments might contribute to the advancement of a research-informed design proposition. Or how these knowledge bases help architects to better understand matters of architectural consequence – how people inhabit space and perform everyday actions as a result of architectural design decisions. For me, ethnographic data or qualitative field encounters are likely to inform future design practice. For instance, the practice of befriending Rose and observing her everyday activities, will colour the way I think about and respond to design briefs that seek to accommodate older people in the future. In fact, I will carry something of the lived-experiences of all the actors I have met through my research, for each offer touchstone experiences or vignettes to remember when designing. In these terms, some might say that my research concerns the ‘bit before’ design and therefore I have been looking at matters of architectural ‘immanence’; the qualities or conditions that precede or frame an architectural response. Indeed, at times I have been conscious of self-censoring ‘non-architectural’ content or ‘that which sits on the edges of architectural discourse’⁴⁵ when reporting from the positions of research actors. What qualifies as being significant to an ‘architectural’ audience is inherent in my disciplinary positioning.

One last thought on the ‘bit before’ design. When explaining my research to a teaching colleague, it was suggested that I was concerned with ‘cultural change’⁴⁶ within the sponsor company, and to a lesser extent wider society (with respect to witnessing an aspirational baby boomer generation reach retirement). It was at this moment that I registered what it meant to evidence a design ‘tweak’ in the developer’s standard product; the result of ‘projecting a clear and consistent message’ in support of good design, particularly where it ‘cannot be easily quantified or measured as potential value added’.⁴⁷ Previously I had thought of ‘success’ as being an improvement in the material

⁴⁵ Sam Clark, *ePortfolio* Meeting Notes, 17 August 2016

⁴⁶ Informant C [Professor of Architecture], pers. comm. [conversation notes], CSA, 12 May 2015

⁴⁷ Ibid.

environment of the shared lounge within retirement chalets. But the introduction of the coffee bar also represented cultural change inasmuch that it was performed by others. For this feature to appear on the planning drawings, change had to be affected in the boardroom, then communicated to and through the in-house architect team, and to the external architects that prepared the drawings. Furthermore, for it to be materialised, the architectural idea had to be adopted, developed and owned by multiple people at different levels of the organisation, guiding it through the design and build process.

What other paths were not followed in the research?

Not getting inside

Perhaps the most surprising aspect is the relatively shallow depth of fieldwork conducted *within* the sponsor organisation and its headquarters especially.⁴⁸ The research proposal anticipated a nonprescribed number and length of work placements ‘involving regular meetings/ presentations with the [research] working group; observations, or shadowing of key actors within company divisions, and site visits, including for-sale developments’.⁴⁹ These activities did occur, albeit they tended to be arranged on days when I presented research findings to the boardroom. In this sense, there was always an agenda or rationale for my being there, and a relatively well-defined programme for the day. There was one formal ‘placement’ over four days in July 2014, which involved observing two ‘land, design and planning’ meetings and a planning inquiry, plus four semi-structured interviews with professional staff members. These were integral to getting to know the culture of the organisation – its people, management structures, work flows and processes – as well as identify sector-specific challenges for the developer. However, when writing up my ‘story’ of the company architect I noted,

“[my] visits were centred on presenting research plus work around these ‘performances’. I was never treated as one of the staff, left to my own devices; being either hosted or attending to a schedule of prescribed actions. In these terms, I was

⁴⁸ I had in mind Yaneva’s ethnographic study of OMA’s design practice as a model. See: Alben Yaneva, *Made by the Office for Metropolitan Architecture: An Ethnography of Design* (Rotterdam: 010, 2009)

⁴⁹ Sam Clark, *Research Proposal*, 21 February 2014

never 'in the field' with access to everyday activities and observing interactions, etc."⁵⁰

In these terms, I feel I failed to achieve an equivalent depth of ethnographic study of the developer's headquarters, compared with my research within retirement chalets. I have yet to understand why this 'path' was not followed. I might conjecture that the actions of observing, hanging around and reflecting are less understood pastimes in a business environment. What I do know is that *not* being embedded in this setting helped me to be present in other research fields, while maintaining a critical distance from the sponsor, and to some extent perform my role as a critical friend, using a variety of different personas (academic, student, outside architect) that did not equate to being a fully inducted member of staff.

Not reaching beyond

Another 'path' unfollowed is that into a broader field of 'older person' informants, be they prospective customers or altogether removed from private retirement housing providers. On completion of work package two – which marked the end of a period of contextual review, including literature and built precedents, and preceded the 'fieldwork' – I rehearsed a design rationale for some possible focus groups.⁵¹ We considered likely groups of older people, including participants from a society group such as a regional branch of the University of the Third Age (U3A) or South West Seniors Network (SWSN). In practice, I struggled to recruit participants from these groups. Furthermore Pink & Knight directors expressed nervousness around approaching prospective purchasers, or those thinking about moving and having visited a new development/sales office, for fear that such contact may jeopardise a potential sale. I also considered that casting the net further and recruiting a 'random' group of older people. This risked consuming a lot of time and overly broadening the research; too far from what felt like a natural centre of gravity around the developer's product, projects portfolio and resident population. Indeed, the latter offered a rich field in which a deeper level of cultural immersion could be achieved.

⁵⁰ Sam Clark, *ePortfolio* Meeting Notes, 25 April 2017

⁵¹ Sam Clark, Work Package Two Presentation, 11 August 2014

Not making a memory box

With respect to methodology, there were moments in the research when visual methods were deployed to elicit responses from informants, particularly the use of photography. I also used research reports and associated drawings and models as discussion prompts. For a time, I considered developing alternative artefacts, such as a 'memory box' containing made objects representing the different homes in which I have lived; the thought being that sharing these objects 'could lead to an exchange of home [related] memories and the identification of...meaningful architectural features'.⁵² At the time, I considered there to be insufficient common ground, or shared vocabulary, between my architect-self and resident owners when discussing 'what mattered' in the design of the home environment. The idea stemmed from a design symposium where an architect presented a memory box he had developed in 'anticipation of living with dementia' and, more immediately, as a tool to reflect upon his experiences of designing care environments for dementia.⁵³ I was therefore reflecting on how such a tool could be used to both elicit responses and act as a form of visual representation. For instance, how might the plan of a retirement chalet be represented as kind of memory box containing qualitative data collected from resident owners? I was also considering how a 'looser' form of representation – drawing/making and sharing presentation slides, as opposed to report writing – may be used to project into design work.⁵⁴ With regret, this idea did not progress further, in part due to pressures outside the research, and an expanding workload as the sponsor sought further review of its developments.

Not directing the directors

Through the course of the research there were three discrete and undeployed ventures that were developed in the background of the work packages: a design workshop, design away day, and 'linked research' project. The latter sought to bring together a small group of architecture students with a retirement community in a Pink & Knight development, with the intent of undertaking a 'lounge furniture inventory' that would inform the co-production of an additional 'alternative' piece of furniture sited within the shared lounge.⁵⁵ The idea of the Design Workshop was to target Pink & Knight

⁵² Sam Clark, *ePortfolio* Meeting Notes, 06 October 2014

⁵³ John Carter, presenting his 'Memory Box' at *The Reflective Practitioner Symposium*, Welsh School of Architecture, Cardiff, 19 September 2014

⁵⁴ Sam Clark, *ePortfolio* Meeting Notes, 13 October 2014

⁵⁵ Sam Clark, *Befriend & Build* [Linked Research Project Pitch], Newcastle, 23 November 2015

directors, by involving them in a participatory event designed to answer the question, ‘Can we make a place *you* would want to retire to?’ On reflection, I felt this workshop would be unwelcome in the boardroom. Similarly, *the Away Day* was conceived as an event that would bring together Pink & Knight’s design expertise ‘in conversation with external design expertise as a catalyst for the creative practice’ aspect of my work.⁵⁶ In the end there was not an appropriate/timely meeting to table this proposal. Nonetheless I wish to register these initiatives as tactics in a multi-method approach to creative practice, seeking opportunities to direct a design research agenda. Ultimately these ventures failed due to an absence of invitation and/or audience.

How have you developed as a result of the PhD project?

To my surprise, it was an online form-filling exercise for the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey 2017 that helped me to see that I have changed through the course of this project. It goes without saying, that I have learnt a good deal. But I have also developed a range of new skills, as well as honed some old ones. I have developed professionally, as an architect, and as a more rounded academic, better equipped to deliver research-led teaching. I have also experienced several new opportunities because of my studies.

Research skills

Firstly, I received training to develop my research and presentation skills. The latter was especially important in terms of thinking about the physical voice and speaking to an audience. A presentation workshop⁵⁷ provided me with the opportunity to reflect on my practice – a practice developed through design crits as a student, professional pitches in architectural offices, and academic design studio talks – and the habits I had picked up along the way. I tend to include too much material, particularly contextual information, and to speak in a positive or persuasive manner, as if selling a product. I have heard this criticism levied at other presenting architects in conferences, particularly when presenting their own work as case studies (‘it sounds like a sales pitch’). There is a modal difference that stems from the speaker’s position; the difference between an

⁵⁶ Adam Sharr, pers. comm. [email], 03 June 2015

⁵⁷ *Presentation Skills & Video Practice*, Led by David White (Whitehorn Consulting Ltd.), Newcastle, 02-03 June 2014

‘independent’ or neutral voice reporting on ‘what the research found’, and an invested voice reporting on an environment or product he or she helped to create. Of course, this denies any claim to research being a creative act – the dominant stance adopted by scientific research. Perhaps architects are not particularly good at being objective, having become hard-wired in their training to present persuasive design narratives and elegant design ideas, and to ‘defend them to the death’.⁵⁸ Of course, a good deal of architectural presentation is visual, and often expertly so. But what if we pay attention to the verbal? Would we hear anything other than polemics, sales pitches, anecdotes and autobiographical accounts?

I have learnt a great deal from attending research conferences and gaining exposure to other disciplinary modes of presenting, particularly from academics in the fields of gerontology and sociology. Through them I have discovered what it means to have a robust research methodology and to construct arguments based on solid evidence. Feedback from one conference – where I presented the idea of the ‘reflective developer’⁵⁹ – made me acutely aware that I was the one doing the reflecting, not the developer, and that I needed to do a better job of evidencing design/cultural change and reporting on research impact. These public exposures have also helped me to develop an academic voice and to explain or ‘story’ my research in better ways. In these terms, my understanding of research integrity has developed during my studies, particularly with regards to academic rigour and ethical considerations surrounding the representation of research informants and their viewpoints.

Furthermore, my skills in critically analysing and evaluating findings and results have developed during my project. Regular reporting to an industrial sponsor helped me to continuously make sense of what I was finding and to communicate it both to myself and others. I feel I have gained skill in handling large volumes of qualitative data gathered from multiple settings through a mixed-method approach, and have developed user-friendly forms or representation, including drawings and photographic media, to

⁵⁸ Rosie Parnell and Rachel Sara, *The Crit: An Architecture Student's Handbook* (Oxford: Architectural Press, 2007)

⁵⁹ Sam Clark, ‘Towards the Reflective Developer: Design Approaches Outside the Conflictive Context of Developer-led Gentrification’. Presented at: *Housed by Choice/Force: Homes, Conflicts and Conflicting Interests*, University of Cyprus / The Cyprus Institute, 21-22 January 2016, Nicosia.

disseminate interim and summary findings to a non-academic audience comprised of business people.

Professional development

In some respect the PhD project has facilitated a return to professional practice for me, albeit through different means (compared to industry norms of ‘going solo’ and developing a portfolio of built works). Certainly, it has provided a unique opportunity to interact with a property developer operating on a national scale, which for a variety of reasons I would not have considered a possibility at this stage and position in my career. Furthermore, the nature of the engagement and expectations framed by a research project has allowed me to operate in ways that are different from the roles performed by the sponsor’s in-house design team and its external consultants.

I have been able to exercise a little design muscle, and rehearse a form of consultancy, through design review and design feasibility studies. In these terms, I started to explore a research-informed design practice, albeit contingent on existing designs and an established business culture with relatively fixed ways of doing things. Nonetheless my confidence to be creative within this environment has developed during the project. This confidence, coupled with newly acquired skills and knowledge, as well as an expanded professional network, has prompted me to pursue other projects within the field of specialist housing. For instance, I recently prepared a project proposal, involving a multi-disciplinary design team, in response to a regional housing associating seeking to review its portfolio of stock-transfer properties, with a view to meeting the demands of its resident population of older persons.

Opportunities

Within the scope of the PhD project I have met many new opportunities, which have helped to shape my design research practice and develop my capacity for academic work, including research-led teaching, in the form of history-theory lectures, reflective practitioner presentations and a thematic design studio unit, involving engagement with ‘real’ problems and stakeholders. The following list comprises a broad view of the new experiences in my academic life since starting the PhD:

- Conducted 20 semi-structured interviews with older persons at home
- Conducted 9 mini-focus groups on the design of retirement housing
- Undertook 3 design research ‘residences’ in case study retirement developments
- Prepared 5 academic lectures based on research (delivered at two institutions)
- Attended 1 international conference overseas (plus 11 UK attendances)
- Facilitated 2 conference workshops
- Delivered 4 verbal/visual presentations at research conferences
- Presented 2 papers and 1 poster at multi-disciplinary research conferences
- Submitted 1 paper to an academic journal in another discipline (rejected)
- Published 2 chapters in an academic book on housing design
- Published and presented a research report to a non-academic audience
- Written 9 research stories

Personal development

Lastly, I would like to close this story with a short reflection on my personal situation and some changes witnessed. Perhaps the first register of change was becoming aware of what ‘home’ means to me and attempting to forecast what it might mean in the future. While interviewing a colleague, I reflected,

*“I think architects have a very particular relationship with home and there is always a project aspect to it... Probably most architects would say, ‘Home for me is something I have made or I can have an impact on’. It is a DIY project. I suspect with * [my partner] it is a very different attitude and home is a place of refuge and not a place of constant change and upheaval!*

*“I can’t imagine ever wanting to move into this [retirement chalet]. It is partly because I have an incredibly social career working in a place like this [architecture school] ...It [the chalet] feels like...halls of residences, and visiting * [named chalet] feels a bit like that environment. I find that ‘home’ for*

*me is often [about] retreating from that heightened ‘public’ urban experience [living in the city, and teaching]”.*⁶⁰

Home for me is a private domain and its qualities are distinctly ‘quieter’ than the social environments of the academic design studio, field trip or live project. At least for this working period of my life, home will likely be a place of retreat, though not necessarily from work, but different forms of work. I have also acknowledged how I think of home being ‘made’ or worked upon; a kind of hobby space where I can ‘architect’ more freely. And so, I wonder what will it be like when I am less able to work or physically adapt/maintain the home environment? Worse still, what would it be like to move into a new environment, where I have no record of or potential for architectural agency? Of course, it is difficult to forecast the future, especially across the life course. To imagine my older-self is nigh impossible. How will my attitudes change? How will my mind and body perform? I would like to think I am better prepared for ageing. Indeed, I hope to remember the informants and friends I have met through the research and to benefit from the information they shared.

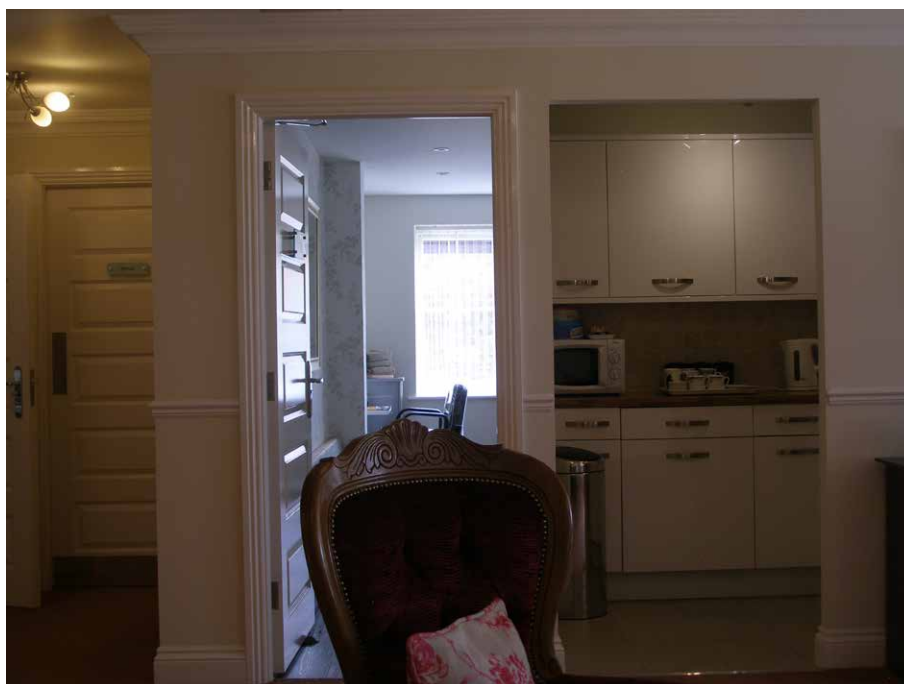
Since undertaking the PhD project I have registered some physical changes in myself – creaking knees, greying hair, failing eyesight – and some more acute ‘symptoms’ of ageing in my family members. Perhaps I was always aware of these things, but better able to ignore our state of impermanence. Today I regard the built environment around me, including the home adaptations I have made (to suit my younger-self), and consider what is the potential impact of architectural agency in supporting wellbeing in later life? How might architects better promote the kinds of homes where people want to live and successfully age in place? I hope architects can be influential actors in the provision of more housing choice for older people.

⁶⁰ Sam Clark, [Semi-Structured Interview], CSA, 10 December 2014.

Vignette X

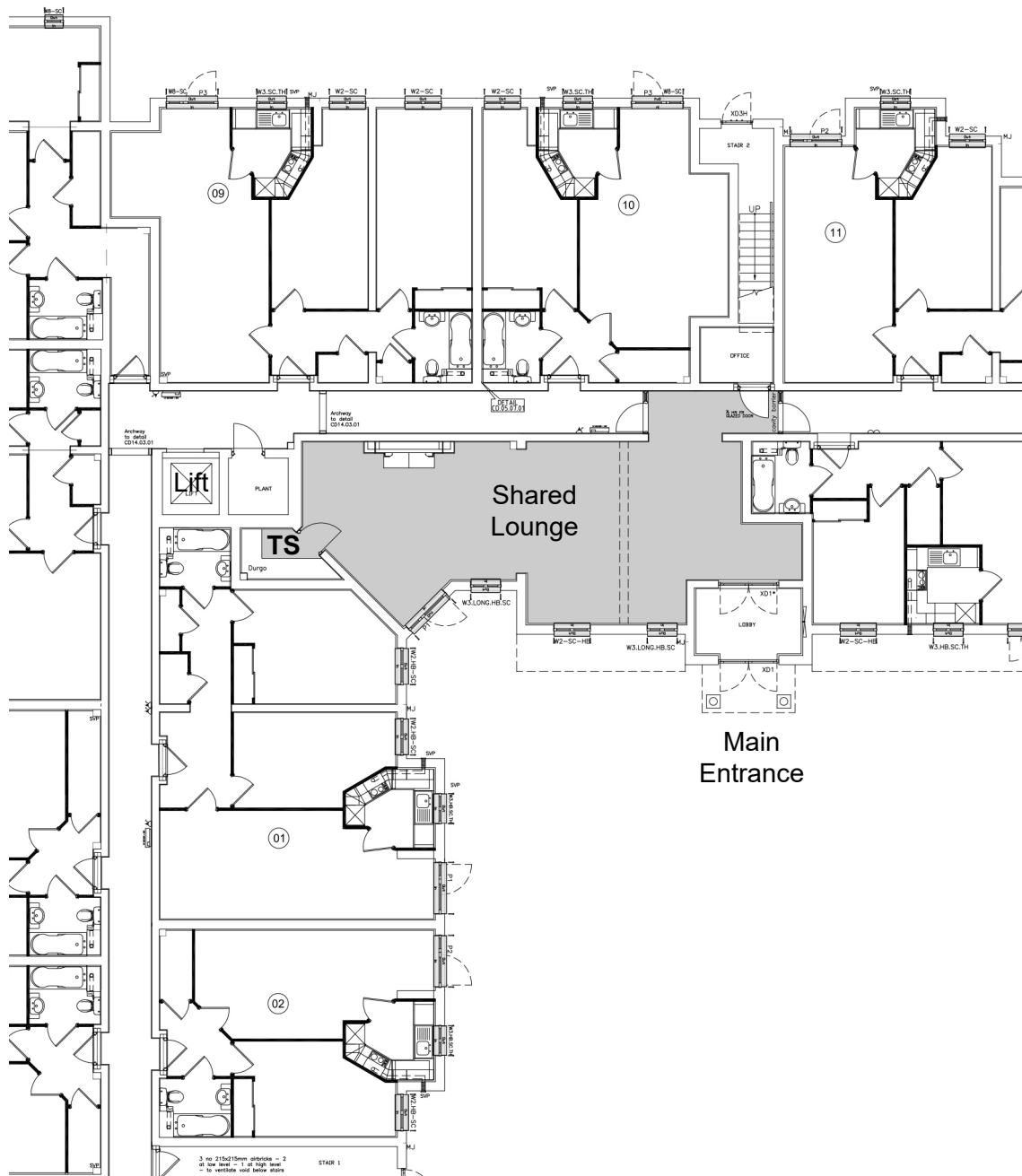
Coffee Bars

This vignette stories the impact of a design idea - the Coffee Bar (Pattern No.3) - in terms of the spatial and material differences it has made to the chalet product. Here 'before' and 'after' photographs and accompanying architectural drawings show the different design approaches deployed in old and new developments. In older developments small kitchens or 'tea stations' were placed in bays/rooms adjacent to the shared lounge. Whereas, today coffee bars are installed within lounges, making a positive contribution to the look and feel of this key space.



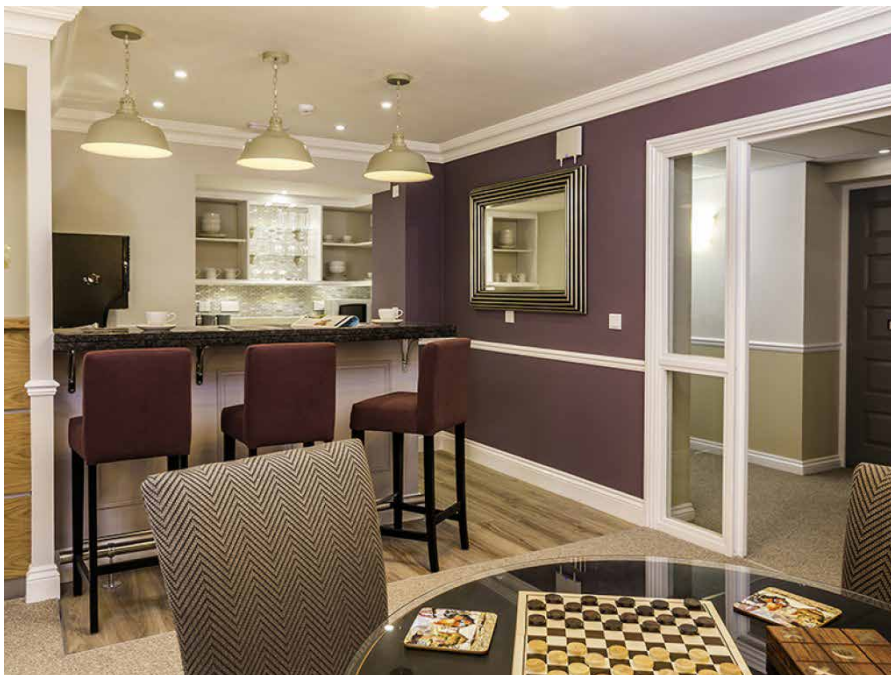
Photographs of kitchens associated with shared lounges within case study Pink & Knight developments. In older developments - prior to the research project - small kitchens or 'tea stations' were placed in bays/rooms adjacent to the shared lounge. Typically these accommodated a kettle, fridge, microwave, sink and glass-washer and could only be occupied by one or two people at a time.

Vignette X
Coffee Bars
~ Before ~



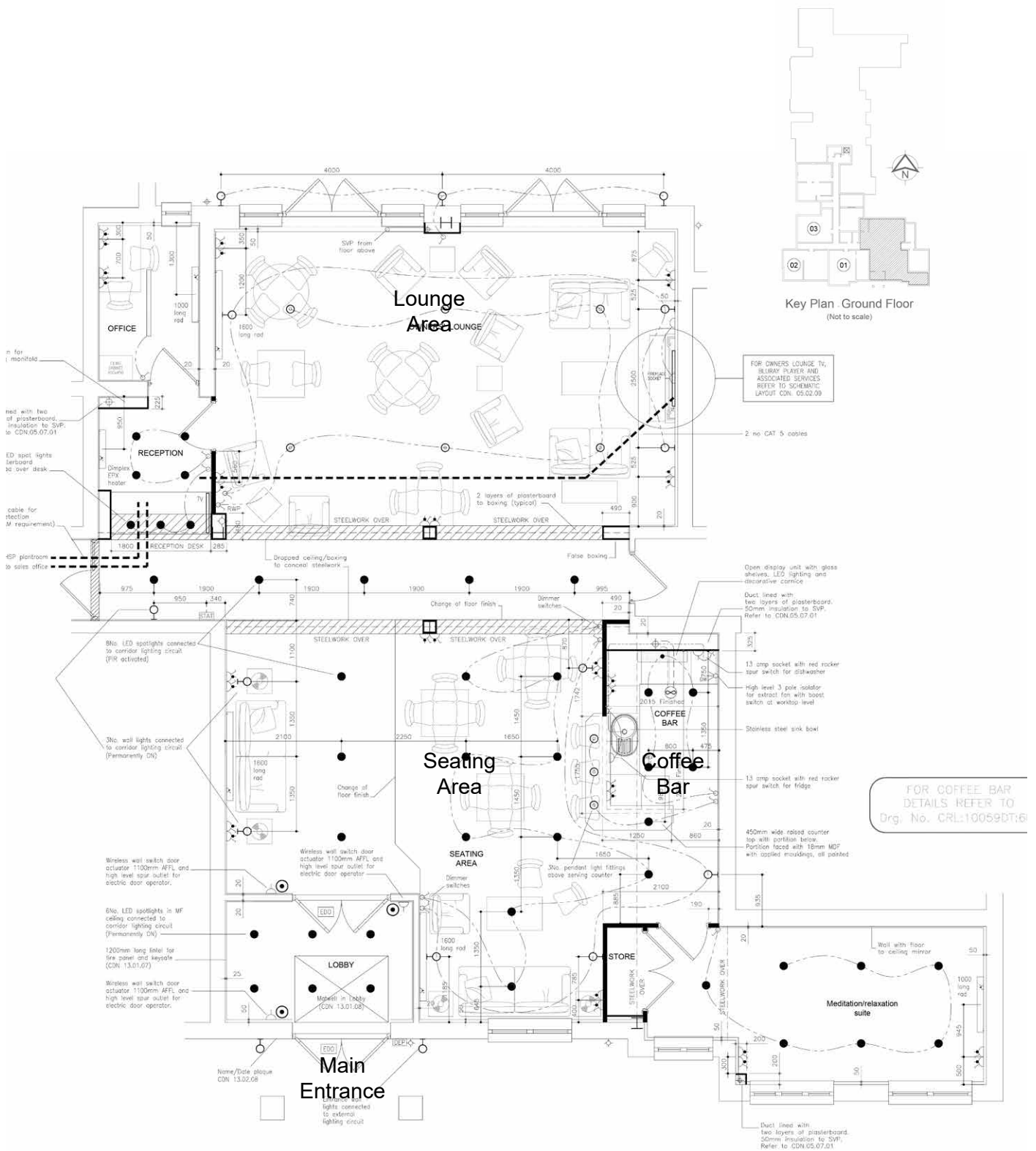
As-built plan of case study Pink & Knight development showing shared lounge in grey tone. Here the tea station - marked TS on plan - is an internal room with cupboard-like proportions, located towards the back of the lounge (or side furthest from the main entrance). The room occupies approximately six square metres on plan, in an area behind the central lift core.

Vignette X
Coffee Bars
 ~ Before ~



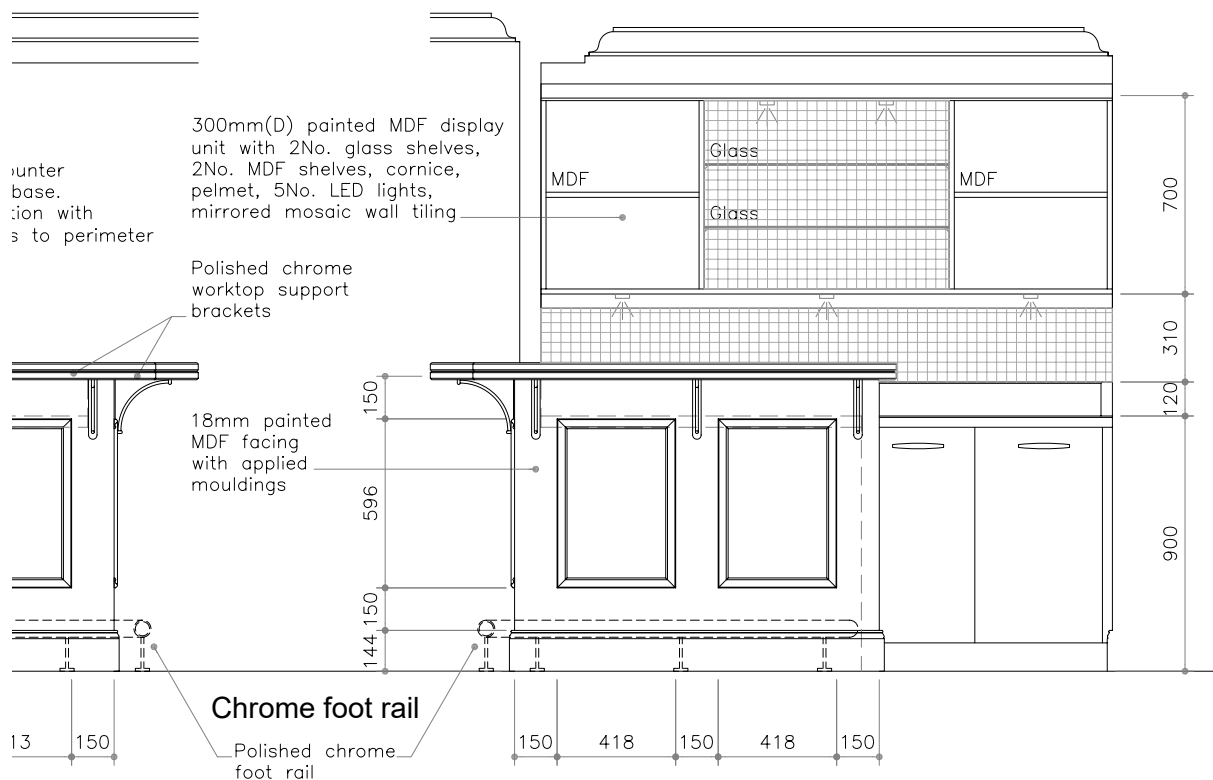
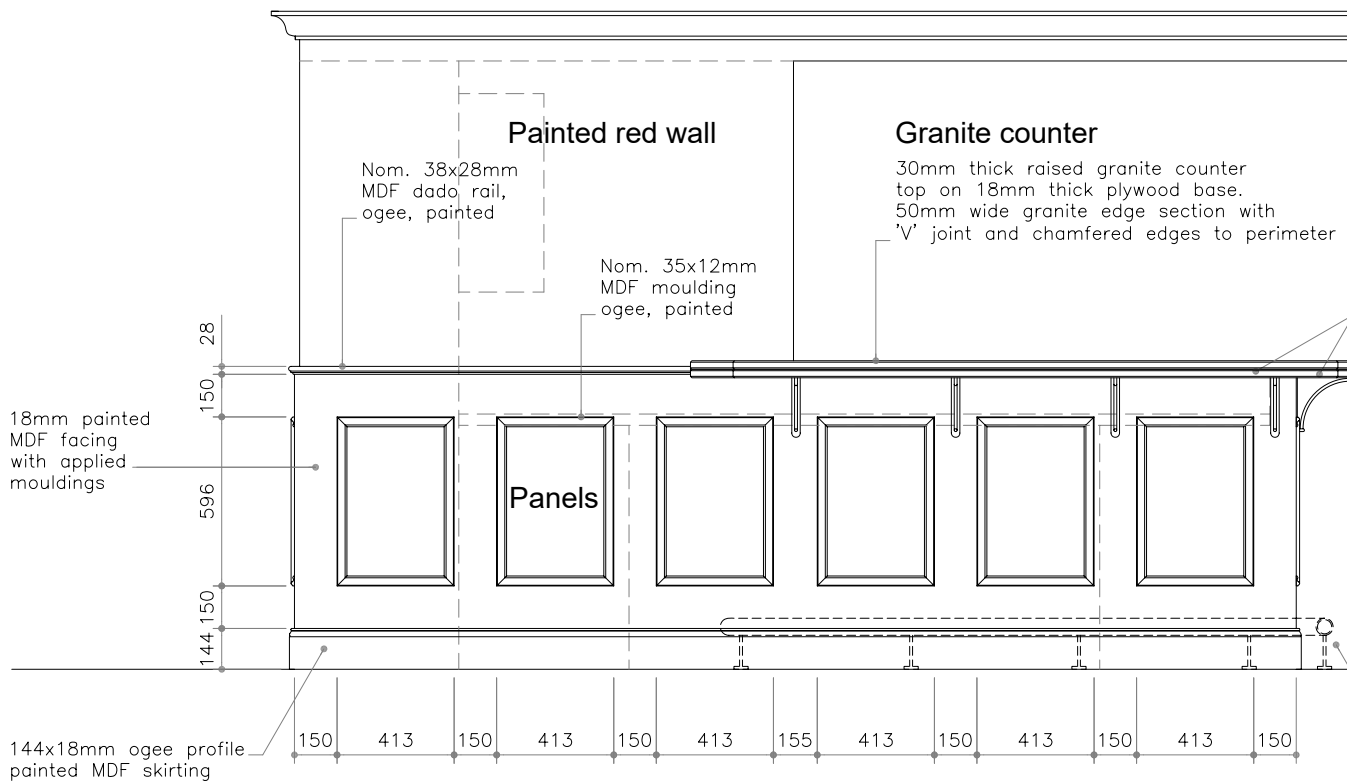
Marketing photographs of coffee bars within shared lounges of two recently completed Pink & Knight developments. It makes a positive contribution to the look and feel of this key space, helping to bring it up-to-date. The coffee bar is highly relate-able, it being a familiar architectural element - a bar - with a recognisable programme - having coffee with friends. Residents and their visitors have free access to a 'bottomless' coffee machine, which is proving very popular.

Vignette X
Coffee Bars
~ After ~



Detailed in-house architectural drawings for the first coffee bar to be built-out in a Pink & Knight development. Here the coffee bar is located on the right hand side of the shared lounge and is one of the first features visitors see when entering the chalet. This space has two distinct areas - 'seating' and 'lounge' - each with its own aspect and separated by a through route. In these terms it maps onto the 'through lounge' presented in Vignette VIII.

Vignette X
Coffee Bars
~ After ~

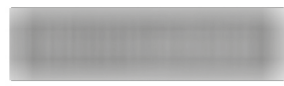


In-house architectural drawings for the first coffee bar to be built-out in a Pink & Knight development. Here the coffee bar is presented in elevation, with notes calling-off material specifications. Key features are the granite counter, polished chrome foot rail, panel mouldings and painted red wall. These are borrowed from the interior environments of high street coffee shops and pubs, and arguably contribute toward rebalancing what was previously considered a feminine environment.

Vignette X
Coffee Bars
 ~ After ~

Vignette XI
Industry Guide

This vignette presents a partial preview of a co-produced industry guide that was designed to explain Pink & Knight's product, highlighting the benefits of retirement housing and documenting common challenges experienced by the property developer. The guide is directed towards planning professionals and has ongoing utility for the sponsor as an independent point of reference in consultations, planning applications and planning inquiries. The pages presented here are intended to give a general overview of the guide in terms of its content and general image.



SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

1 Product definition – What do we mean by ‘Retirement Living’? - Page 6

- There is a bewildering array of names, labels and brands applied to accommodation offers for older people.
- Retirement living developments are primarily designed for independent living – they are not ‘residential institutions’ or ‘care homes’.
- Retirement developments offer communal living, with associated ‘soft’ services that help to sustain independence and mitigate loneliness.
- Twelve design characteristics are presented as key to successful private-sector retirement living schemes for older people.
- The size of development is particularly critical with respect to residents sharing the cost of the annual management and service charges incurred by the scheme.

2 Customer characteristics – Is there a ‘typical’ buyer? - Page 14

- The research identified 18 Experian consumer profiles that refer to older persons, amounting to 24.6% of the UK population.
- ■■■ customers map onto type E23 ‘Balcony Downsizers’ and E21 ‘Bungalow Quietude’, accounting for 2.3% of the UK population.
- ■■■ typical customer is a 79-year old widow moving after her husband has passed away; usually leaving an older, larger house for a one or two-bedroom apartment.
- Research is shifting from physical to cognitive set-backs associated with ageing.
- Retirement living products are evolving to meet lifestyle aspirations, with early signs of customers prepared to move ‘ahead of time’.

3 Policy landscape – How planning guidance is changing - Page 20

- Retirement properties are a small proportion of the UK housing stock (2% in 2013).
- Evidence suggests that there is significant and frustrated demand for retirement living products.
- There are no statutory definitions for ‘sheltered’ or ‘retirement’ housing, and labels are often misappropriated or misunderstood.
- Planning Use Classes are being tested by contemporary developments that blur traditional divides between dwellings and care environments, housing and health, public and private.
- ‘Retirement age’ is a bandwidth of 30 to 40 years and is increasingly meaningless as a term or group.
- Given the need, there is a good argument that retirement housing should be considered ‘sui generis’, or a sub-category of housing in the same way that affordable housing is treated as a sub-category of C3 housing.

4 Site matters – Securing sustainable locations - Page 30

- Retirement housing developers typically invest a lot of work in finding, analysing and testing development sites.
- Retirement housing developers face competition for sites from budget supermarkets that are not subject to the same planning obligations.
- Location is critical to sustainable development, particularly with respect to accessibility to local amenities and facilities.

5 Responding to context – [REDACTED] case studies - Page 34

- [REDACTED] retirement developments are contextually responsive, and sit comfortably within town centre, suburban and coastal town locations alike.
- [REDACTED] tends toward 'classic' designs, adopting traditional or vernacular building forms and materials, though adapting to 'heritage' or 'contemporary' approaches where the context demands it.
- [REDACTED] has demonstrated an ability to utilise difficult sites, such as former gas works and petrol filling stations and sites within conservation areas.

6 Planning process – Overcoming the obstacles - Page 40

- There are twelve significant areas of common ground between developers of retirement housing and local authority planners.
- The research found that local authority planners were hard-to-reach and apparently at a distance from expertise on retirement living.
- Developers continue to need to explain their products and are advised to use research platforms to do so.
- Assessing contributions toward off-site affordable housing through financial viability appraisals is accepted practice.

7 The benefits of retirement housing - Page 48

- Retirement housing offers wide-reaching benefits that meet the three pillars of sustainable development – economic, environmental, and social.
- Benefits of retirement housing operate at individual, communal and societal levels.
- Retirement housing regenerates the built environment and supports investment.
- Retirees make important economic contributions through local spending.
- Retirees are active citizens and help to sustain community cohesion.
- Older people make good neighbours.

1 PRODUCT DEFINITION – WHAT DO WE MEAN BY ‘RETIREMENT LIVING’?

Diverse Market

On just one street in a UK coastal town Google maps registers 22 residential ‘court’ developments, 4 ‘lodges’ and 1 ‘nursing home’. Here sits one recently completed retirement development; next door to a ‘home for clergy pensioners’; opposite a ‘luxury residential care home’ and ‘sheltered accommodation’ development; and along the road from a ‘residential’ care home and various for-sale ‘retirement’ apartments. Clearly demographic change has had a palpable effect on the built environment of this location, with ‘clustering’ of specialist housing and care institutions plain to see.

The range of accommodation offers for older people is bewildering to say the least, particularly when comparing associated service options – some with care, some without, and levels in-between. Indeed, it has been said that the waters are ‘muddied’ by increasingly specialist products that serve very particular segments of the ‘downsizer’ market¹.

In recent years, within the private sector, we have seen an expansion of developer-providers targeting different lifestyles and/or financial tiers of the market. For example, intentional LGBT communities, asset-rich former chief-exec and mid-market baby boomers. Furthermore, what was once regarded niche, and for others (‘elderly housing’), is becoming acknowledged as the new centre ground. Hence we are beginning to see a number of volume housebuilders take an active interest, including household names known for developing ‘general needs’ housing (so-called ‘starter’ and ‘family’ homes). When examining the physical nature of developer retirement products, one finds that they are broadly similar in design typology – grouped apartments – which suggests that it is the softer aspects – brand prestige, marketing, product identity, customer experiences and service packages – that lead to misconceptions of and within the sector.

“ the range of accommodation offers for older people is bewildering to say the least, particularly when comparing associated service options – some with care, some without, and levels in-between

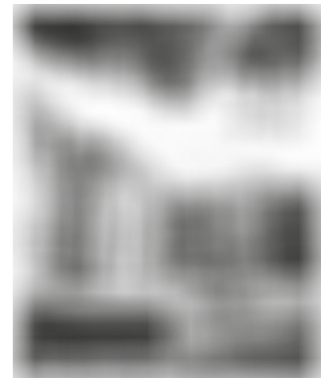


¹Friederike Zielger, ‘Developing Age-Friendly Housing: DWELL Findings’, presented at Fit for Ageing: Applying Design to the Production of Age-Friendly Places, Sheffield, 6 October 2016

“ characteristics are taken from Northern Europe, America and Australia, where retirement living is more established

understand the following twelve design characteristics to be essential to the success of retirement living accommodation for older people in the UK:

- 1 Single-building with internal level access (for reasons of economy and end-user accessibility);
- 2 Mainly single-aspect apartments (double-loaded corridors necessitated by land values/sustainable land use, though double-aspect achieved where possible);
- 3 Quality amenity space (quantity is less important where there is a shared garden);
- 4 Parking ratio of one space per three apartments (supported by precedent, research⁹ and appeal decisions);
- 5 Communal space or 'common room' (a central feature of sheltered accommodation, providing space for social interaction, helping mitigate loneliness);
- 6 Manager's office (and apartment for manager in developments over 50 apartments);
- 7 Guest suite (twin bedroom and shower room for visiting friends and family);
- 8 Plant room (plant is managed centrally, particularly air source heat pumps for energy-efficient heating);
- 9 One lift (essential for end-user accessibility, albeit developments promote independent living/active lifestyles i.e. not a residential institution);
- 10 Internal refuse store (for environmental reasons and end-user accessibility/comfort);
- 11 Mobility scooter store (for protected storage of mobility scooters and bicycles);
- 12 Target minimum of 30 apartments (to spread cost of management charge for end-users).



⁹Mott MacDonald, Parking Survey Results, (Southampton: Mott MacDonald, 2017)

6 PLANNING PROCESS – OVERCOMING THE OBSTACLES



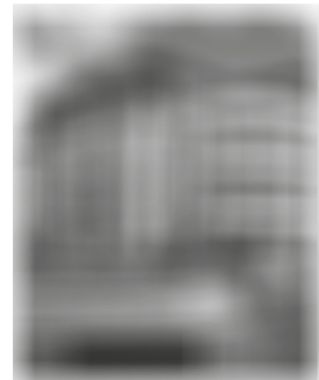
Common Ground

The research reviewed a number of [redacted] projects and associated planning application process, including scrutiny of planning correspondence, decision notices and planning appeal documents (Statements of Case, Statements of Common Ground, Proofs of Evidence and Appeal Decisions). Twelve areas of common ground – items of mutual interest/understanding between [redacted] local authority planners and Inspectors – were identified in relation to planning policy and decision making criteria.

- 1 Development – The principle that the site was suitable for retirement living residential development, including situations where there is loss of former employment use (garages, bus stations, light industrial units, etc.).
- 2 Demand – General acceptance that demand for private retirement living accommodation exceeds the current supply, and that demographic change will continue to add to that demand
- 3 Age-Restricted – Planning condition that the apartment owner, or at least one of the people living in the apartment, must be aged over 60 with the partner being 55+.
- 4 Property Market – It is becoming acknowledged through market assessments that ‘downsizing’ can generate movement by releasing under-occupied properties suitable for families.
- 5 Location – Sustainable site locations in relation to the town centre where a good range of shops and services are available within easy walking distance for older people.⁴⁴
- 6 Demolition – The demolition of existing buildings not considered to be of sufficient merit to warrant statutory protection or for inclusion within the local list.

⁴⁴On commissioning this research, representatives from [redacted] noted that from time to time local authorities will make suggestions for alternative or ‘priority’ sites, including next to or in place of former nursing homes, regardless of their proximity to shops and services. This approach was not evident within the selected case studies.

- 7 Enhanced Townscape – Uplift of blighted or problem sites where the ground may be contaminated or redundant/derelict structures are present, and the addition of landscaping e.g. trees and garden frontages
- 8 Amenity – The amount and quality of external amenity space is appropriate for the residents and the amenities and gardens are maintained to an appropriate standard in perpetuity through a management company.
- 9 Parking – Evidence suggests that the volume of on-site parking is acceptable, based on the operation of similar schemes elsewhere and the centrality of the sites.⁴⁵
- 10 Sustainability – The provision of renewable energy features within developments and general sustainability principles such as re-use of brownfield sites, benefits to the local economy and low-impact travel plans.
- 11 Local Spenders – It is acknowledged that residents tend to use local shops and services e.g. hair dresser, taxis, etc. (an indirect concern for development control).
- 12 Neighbourly – Developments bring many more ‘eyes on the street’, and some residents take part in civic engagement. Others may contribute to the voluntary sector or provide extra support to public services, helping to improve community cohesion.



⁴⁵Mott MacDonald, [redacted] Parking Survey Results, (Southampton: Mott MacDonald, 2017)

7 THE BENEFITS OF RETIREMENT HOUSING



	Economic (growth)	
Individual 	<p>A smaller home – reduced energy and maintenance costs.</p> <p>A whole home – no redundancy as all areas of the living environment are accessible/safe.</p> <p>A 'home for life' – many residents say the move to private retirement living accommodation is the last they will ever make.</p> <p>'Ageing in place' – premature occupation of residential care home facilities is avoided.</p>	
Local Community 	<p>Local spenders – residents tend to use local shops and services e.g. hair dresser, taxis, etc. Some also have part time 'bridge jobs'.</p> <p>Property market (local) – movement generated by releasing under-occupied properties for occupation by families.</p>	
Wider Society 	<p>Welfare savings – relieving pressures on publicly funded care homes, health and care services.</p> <p>Job creation – construction workers, [redacted] managers, cleaners, service providers, etc.</p> <p>Property market (national) – knock-on effects in terms of the whole housing chain.</p>	

Table 2: The Benefits of Retirement Housing

Environmental (balance)	Social (equality)
<p>Central location – reduced reliance on cars due to good access to town and public transport networks. Many residents give up car ownership/driving.</p> <p>Reduced travel – residents often move to be closer to family members.</p> <p>Energy efficiency – smaller, more efficient homes to heat (only one external wall, modern construction and economy of scale benefits e.g. heating system) and easier to manage.</p>	<p>Age friendly environment – communal living akin to university halls of residents.</p> <p>On-site support – wide range of organised on-site facilities and services, alleviating social isolation and associated depression.</p> <p>Own front door – residents retain identity / independence for as long as possible.</p> <p>Happy relations – greater mutuality where residents become less dependent on their children or carers.</p>
<p>Enhanced townscape – developments often return vacant or ‘problem’ sites to use (e.g. former petrol stations/ light industrial sites).</p> <p>Visual amenity – addition of maintained landscaping to town centre e.g. trees and garden frontages.</p>	<p>Neighbourhood watch – developments bring many more ‘eyes on the street’. Some residents take part in civic engagement.</p> <p>Active third agers – a number of recent retirees contribute to the voluntary sector e.g. charity shops, local community projects.</p>
<p>Efficient land use – density achieved through collective down-sizing and shared facilities.</p> <p>Reduced energy consumption – specialist housing reduces energy loads for heating.</p> <p>Reduced embodied energy – more efficient use of raw/building materials.</p>	<p>More choice – realising the Government objective of expanding choice for older people.</p> <p>Family life – many retirees offer ‘grandparental childcare’, which has potential benefits for three generations.</p>

THESIS REFLECTIONS

This section of the thesis has presented the voice of the researcher, and through story nine, *Creative Practitioner*, provided a space for wider reflection on the research as it was performed. The following passages turn attention to the construction of the thesis, and the thought processes involved in structuring it – through locating research actors or actor types – and some of the key challenges presented by writing research stories.

Casting Actors

The actors for this work were first identified in November 2015, at a time when the thesis structure was being considered. The original cast comprised nine named informants met within the first year of the project, each occupying different positions within the research field. My rationale for writing research stories was publicly rehearsed at a design and research seminar in 2016 when a series of diagrams were used to describe the identities of nine actors and their significance to and relative positions within the field.⁶¹ In order of appearance the diagrams were: ‘Actors A-Z’, a grid identifying the actors by pseudonym and position; ‘Thesis Running Order’, an attempt at sectioning the thesis and placing actors’ stories under research headings; ‘Age Model’, distributing actors aged 19 to 94 along a common life course; ‘Members Model’, casting actors into groups by association (e.g. those employed by Pink & Knight); ‘Product Model’, casting actors into and in-between producer and consumer categories; ‘Investments Model’, casting actors into groups based on their motive (e.g. for profit); ‘Relational Model’, placing actors within a web and indicating information flows to and from the researcher at the centre; and ‘Interactions Model’, placing actors on a matrix with the axes close-distant and low-high frequency. The ‘interactions’ and ‘relational’ models still hold some resonance and so are presented here as a record of a sense-making process and subsequent shaping of the thesis.

In July 2016, the ‘architectural critic’ was removed from the cast; his position was considered appropriately represented by the researcher, as an architectural educator-academic, and by the voices of architectural students engaged in design studio. In

⁶¹ Sam Clark, ‘Stories of Actors in Age-Friendly Environments: Architectural Reflections on Later Life’. Presented at: *APL Design & Research Seminar*, Newcastle University, Newcastle Upon Tyne, 16 November 2016.

March 2017, following a scoping study of work package four, the local authority planning /development control officer emerged as an important actor and thus ‘town planner’ became a cast member in the thesis. The range of actors is critical, for each actor brings his or her individual voice to the cast, as instruments do to a musical score or singers do to a choir. Range was achieved primarily through consideration of status/position (‘director’, ‘owner’, and so on) and physical setting (academy, office, and different home environments). Consideration was also given to individual actor’s relationship to the research/researcher, ranging from close friends and family members to distant others that became known through the research project. Similarly, consideration was given to the actor’s relative proximity to the research sponsor and its product, with some having in-depth lived experience of retirement chalets and others not.

Over time the actor names/pseudonyms were dropped and classifications or ‘types’ were adopted instead, and the stories became ‘based on real events’. There was a need to protect the identities of individual staff members working for the sponsor organisation, and in the writing of their stories it became apparent that the adoption of composite characters was more appropriate. Furthermore, the act of storying revealed the limits of individual pseudonyms. For instance, one cannot easily disguise the identity of the chief executive whose behaviours and powers separate him from others. Similarly, the project architect is closely associated with specific locations, developments and packages of work. There were also ethical concerns around the exposure of individual staff members and their candid or in-confidence remarks and viewpoints, particularly in terms of employment-related vulnerabilities and the possibility of being ‘called out’ by readers of the thesis. Hence some actor names were dropped, and the pursuit of a uniform set of stories featuring individual personas was abandoned in favour of actor types. Indeed, this is where the analogy of the musical score is helpful – the stories are those of soloists, duets and orchestral sections; together they make an orchestral piece that is subject to an amount of rehearsing parts in isolation and fine-tuning them to suit the whole. The thesis, presented as an anthology of research stories, is as much ‘worked’ as an orchestral score.

Section 4

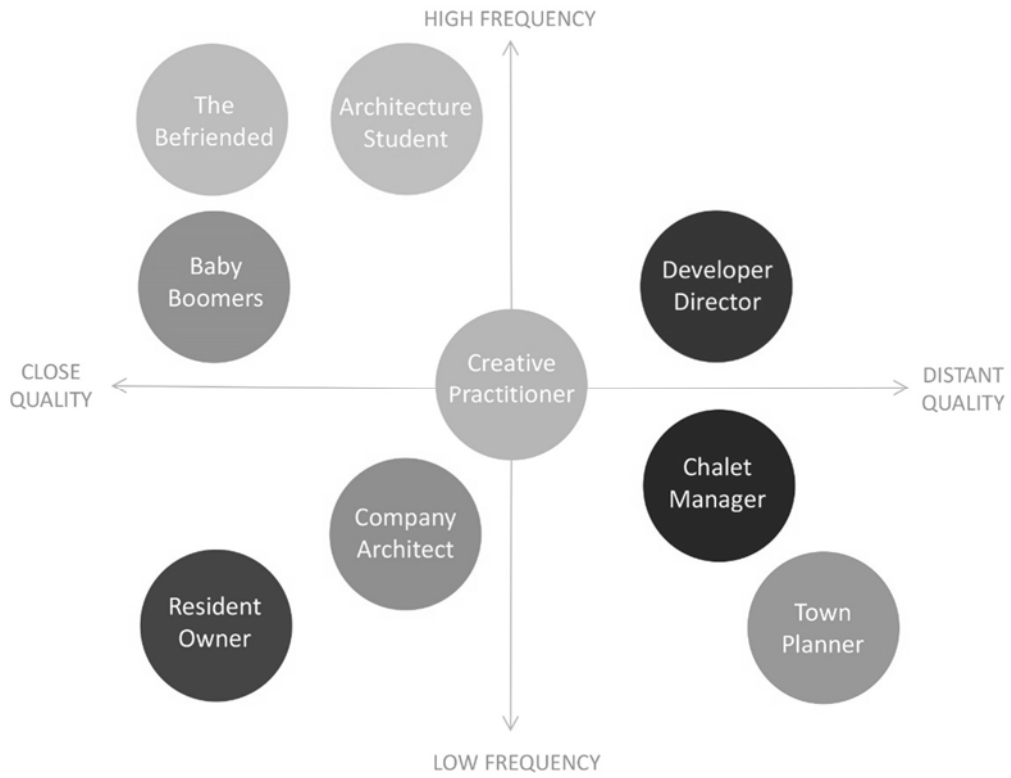


Figure 17: Research Diagram, showing actor-researcher interactions

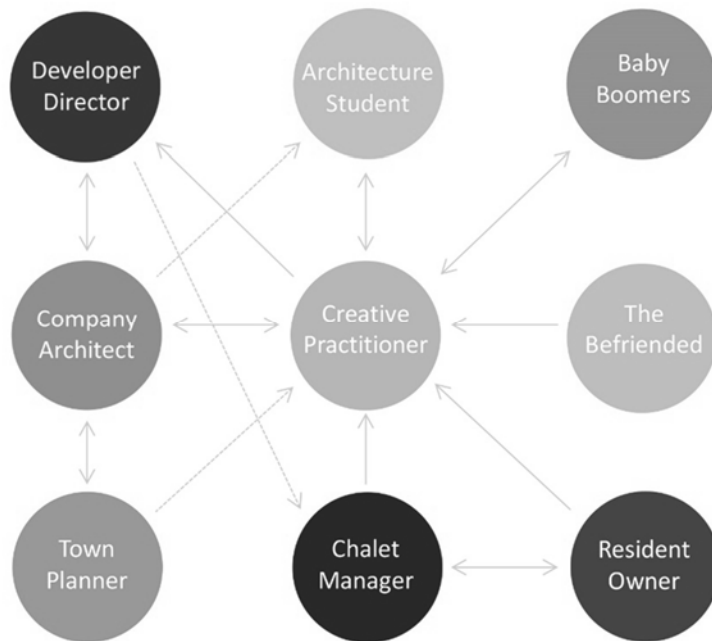


Figure 18: Research Diagram, showing actor-researcher relations and data flows

Continuing with musical analogies, the research-writer could be considered a kind of conductor, having a key presence in the work. I am part of each story, and the quality of my presence depends on the adopted narrative form. Sometimes I am positioned as a third-person narrator – invisible, yet omniscient. At other times, I am visible – centre stage even. I write about myself in first-person narrative when reporting as a situated or ethnographic researcher, but also when reflecting on my creative practice. Through writing my own story, I comment on my unique position in and between respective architectural sectors – design, research and teaching – and freedom to move between different research fields. The stories reflect my multiple personas and changing positionality, such that their delivery shifts from being ‘their’ story, the informants as observed by the researcher; to ‘our’ story, the informant(s) and myself interacting in the field; and ‘my’ story, me as researcher, making sense of relations with the informants and the research context. In these terms, the research acknowledges the validity of the ‘researcher’s experience’⁶² interviewing in the research field(s) and its variable bearing on the research inquiry. The researcher is a conductor of the research and its reportage, making editorial decisions about the representation of himself and the wider cast of actors.⁶³

Writing Challenges

Before summarising the research and its significance, I wish to briefly extend this reflective commentary by turning the reader’s attention to some key challenges encountered when drafting the research stories and considering them as a set. In particular, I recognise that the writing process led me to adopt a state of ‘wakefulness’; maintaining an ‘alert awareness of risks, of narcissism, of solipsism, and of simplistic plots, scenarios, and unidimensional characters’.⁶⁴ I became conscious of ‘storying’ the research; that is to say making a compelling story with clear take-home messages or ‘findings’, and the inherent dangers in this approach. My early attempts at framing the stories lacked academic discipline, travelling too far in the direction of fiction or script

⁶² Carolyn Ellis and Leigh Berger, ‘Their Story/My Story/Our Story: Including the Researcher’s Experience in Interview Research’, in *Postmodern Interviewing*, ed. by Jaber Gubrium et al. (London: Sage Publications, 2003), pp. 157-186

⁶³ Accepting the confines of the thesis – the research has been storied by others; namely the sponsor and trade journalists, but also by all the actors in aural form.

⁶⁴ Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly, *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research* (San Francisco: Jossey-bass, 2000), p.182

writing. I entered vulnerable waters by adopting what narrative inquiries call ‘Hollywood plots’,⁶⁵ in which everything works out well in the end. My state of wakefulness extended to spotting and deconstructing plots that were too ‘clean’ or presenting high levels of ‘narrative smoothing’.⁶⁶ I learnt that the plotlines for research stories should have ‘conditional’ and ‘tentative’ qualities, and that to acknowledge narrative smoothing is ‘to open another door for the reader’.⁶⁷ Indeed, I also adopted alternative writing forms, such as verse, acknowledging another writer’s view that ‘not everything of significance...fits neatly into a lengthy unfolding story’.⁶⁸

Closely related to the risk of constructing plotlines is the narrator’s voice or ‘register’, and the importance of striking an ‘academic’ or ‘scientific’ tone and form. For instance, the first draft of the chalet manager’s story read ‘as a blog in places’;⁶⁹ its register steered too far from academic norms and, crucially, failed to signify when it did so. The story also contained narration of unobserved events, such as the actor driving to work and thinking about observed events (observed by the researcher). This obviously involves an amount of conjecture on the researcher’s part and therefore raises questions about the validity of the writing, particularly where a departure from fact into fiction is not clearly announced – tentatively and with conditions. In reflecting on this mode of writing I recognised a tendency for narrative conjecture in my design practice as an architect. For instance, when designing and exploring speculative options before a private client (a kind of professional performance), I script ways in which the client’s family members might occupy their remodelled, extended or new home. This consultative performance involves a form of storytelling used to inspire, or sell an idea, as well as elicit feedback (‘ah, so the sitting room is a kind of snug, not an open plan space...’). In this context telling fictional stories instigates feedback.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Donald Spence, ‘Narrative Smoothing and Clinical Wisdom’, in *Narrative Psychology: The Storied Nature of Human Conduct*, ed. by Theodore Sarbin (New York: Praeger, 1986)

⁶⁷ Clandinin and Connelly, p.181-2

⁶⁸ Laurel Richardson, ‘Poetic Representation of Interviews’, in *Postmodern Interviewing*, ed. by Jaber Gubrium et al. (London: Sage Publications, 2003), pp.187-201 (p.190)

⁶⁹ Rose Gilroy, pers. comm. [email], 28 July 2016

Social scientists have observed that a key criterion of fictional ethnography is that the text ‘inspires something – research, action, a change in the reader’.⁷⁰ Here there would appear to be a parallel with my own reflections, as well as other academics commenting on ‘designerly thinking’, which is said to raise questions and ignite ‘sparks of curiosity that instigate activity’.⁷¹ Of course, work that is fictional or propositional in nature should be exposed to critical questioning so that new knowledge can be verified. But what sort of questioning is appropriate? Social scientist Paul Rosenbalt offers a healthy scepticism for research that pursues ‘certainty’ and ‘truth’, while psychologist David Bakan advocates different qualities of truth – literal versus real – and points to long-established practices of dreaming and poetry:

*“A critic of fictional representations of research might argue that something invalid or inauthentic in the fiction could inspire, and what it inspires might be invalid or inauthentic. As a postmodernist, I squirm when a discussion turns to matters of validity and authenticity, because those terms imply certainties, criteria, and truths that I think are at best questionable”.*⁷²

*“We all feel obliged to tell the truth. And indeed, in scientific writing, deliberately telling untruths is totally unacceptable. But perhaps we need to make a distinction between **literal** truth and **real** truth. There is an old tradition, going back at least to Plato, that there can be a truth in madness, dreaming, poetry, or prophecy, which is higher than literal truth. A metaphor or a fiction might open a door that cannot be opened by approaches that are too weighed down by duty to literal truth”.*⁷³

I have considered the issue of ‘verisimilitude’, or ‘truth-likeness’ and the production of reality-like effects within the stories, from my own position, taking into account the views of others (though perhaps time and further dissemination will be the true litmus

⁷⁰ Paul Rosenbalt, ‘Interviewing at the Border of Fact and Fiction’, in *Postmodern Interviewing*, ed. by Jaber Gubrium et al. (London: Sage Publications, 2003), pp.225-242 (p.226)

⁷¹ McLaren

⁷² Rosenbalt, p.226

⁷³ David Bakan, ‘Some Reflections About Narrative Research and Hurt and Harm’, in *Ethics and Process in the Narrative Study of Lives*, ed. by Ruthellen Josselson (London: SAGE Publications, 1996), pp. 3-8 (p.7) [Emphasis as per the source text].

test). On this matter I refer to Paul Atkinson and his position on ‘vraisemblance’ (literally ‘likelihood’ in French), which he determines as ‘the ways in which an account’s authenticity, grounded in an everyday shared reality, is guaranteed’.⁷⁴ By way of example, an early draft of the developer director story presented one of the board members as a golf fanatic, which was later considered unreal:

*“you have substituted golf for *. I can see that you need to do that because * is a definite give away but * is a sport entirely reserved for the rich whereas golf is much more egalitarian and exclusivity is determined by club membership and fees. So not easy. I suppose a more appropriate substitute might be yachting...”⁷⁵*

In these terms the sport substitution, made for the purposes of the research story, was found to be too far removed from the literal truth and somehow implausible within the constructs of the story itself, with golf appearing to conform to another reality – being too egalitarian. In fact the idea that all ‘high-flying’ executives play golf already appears out of date or at least out of fashion, inasmuch that the golfing sector has been described as ‘under pressure’ and in ‘structural decline’, and struggling to engage so-called millennials.⁷⁶ Furthermore, this early version of the story involved a high level of fiction with regards to conveying a character’s career history – taking care not to reflect an individual curriculum vitae – as well as general scene setting that involved a fictional geographic location and identity for the organisation. And while the story was founded on sound source materials, these could not be explicitly referenced for risk of exposing individuals and/or the organisation. The overall effect was one of an unconvincing and seemingly unreal story, which needed to be revised and brought into alignment with reality using a higher level of verisimilitude. I trust that the revised story meets expectations, though invite the individual reader to consider his or her own positions on fictional ethnography and reflect upon their engagement with the research stories presented here.

⁷⁴ Paul Atkinson, *The Ethnographic Imagination: Textual Constructions of Reality* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.62

⁷⁵ Rose Gilroy, pers. comm. [marginalia], 07 February 2017

⁷⁶ Roger Blitz, ‘Golf loses some of its lustre as sales decline’, *Financial Times*, August 22, 2014 <<https://www.ft.com/content/e62feadc-29e0-11e4-914f-00144feabdc0>> [Accessed 16 August 2017]

CONCLUSION

Story Findings

Besides methodological lessons – outlined in the previous section – each story presents a number of research findings that are summarised here in order of appearance. Stories one and two represented actors with and without financial resource, and therefore choice, respectively. In story one baby boomer couple, the Cees, were found to be resisting existing retirement accommodation offers, considered ‘not for them, at least not yet’. Yet their story revealed a level of unfamiliarity with retirement products in-the-flesh; a situation that led the Cees to misconceptions of retirement housing and inappropriate associations with residential institutions. The Cees also evidenced back-of-mind thinking around vulnerabilities, in terms of future physical and/or psychological setbacks, and the adaptability of their home environment(s) to meet their needs. Furthermore, the Cees expressed a clear preference for ageing in place – in a *house*, not an apartment. While in story two Rose was found to be rooted in her high-rise flat – in one ‘little corner’ especially – and her interactions with it were considered as rich and meaningful as a long-term friendship. For Rose, leaving home would engender a sense of bereavement and loss of identity and grounding. This story also portrays something of the changing state of home for a vulnerable older person, with Rose experiencing degradations of dignity and privacy due to increasing loss of control over who has access and what actions are performed in her home.

Story three questions the popular stereotype of the ‘villain’ developer, sympathising with the challenges of finding and securing suitable development sites; undertaking a volume of work ‘at risk’ within a complex planning environment; meeting resistance from local authorities, representatives and stakeholders that misunderstand its product (note implicit link to story one). This story promotes a level of respect for the ‘professional’ developer organisation that sustains livelihoods within a field crowded with amateurs. The developer director story – one that largely concerns productivity and production – is contrasted by two subsequent stories of consumption. Story four found that resident owners have literally and emotionally bought into a retirement chalet, and as such have a vested interest in making it work. It was hard for respondents to criticise their new environment and to some extent visualise alternatives. Furthermore, the story posits that prospective owners, and UK consumers generally, have limited exposure to exemplary housing. A key finding was that the retirement chalet offered a positive social architecture, which resident owners apparently valued over the physical

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environment. Story five portrays the chalet manager's central role in the promotion and maintenance of this social architecture, and asks if they are an 'untapped' resource – experts in the lived-experiences of the products they and others inhabit – waiting to be consulted.

Stories six and seven take the reader more directly into formal design environments by examining the settings and cultures in which architecture students and company architects are situated, including moments of interaction between the two worlds, facilitated by the research-practitioner. Story six portrays how architecture students operate within a quasi-professional context that focuses on and rewards artistry or a masterly handling of the formal aspects of architecture – form, space and material. Students were found to have a role within a situated research practice, involving dialogic work with emerging products of architecture, which were shared with external professionals. While story seven reflects on commercial pressures that crowd the available space for deep thinking, review and reflection, including getting to know the end-user. Much limits architectural agency, particularly where multiple professionals and business people act on and affect the design of market 'products'. The company architect was found to be 'shaped' by a strong business context, multi-layered management, and clearly defined production-oriented processes designed to maximise profit. Here poetic representation was found to offer a different kind of 'protective' space for informants and writers, as well as space for reader interpretation. Story eight found that town planners could play a more central role in the delivery of future housing choices for older people, provided appropriate resources and mechanisms allow for creative plan and decision making. At present there are clear indications of limited resource within local authority planning departments generally, and further evidence to suggest a lack of specialist expertise. Perhaps the most resounding lesson to emerge from the town planner's story is their collective distance and lack of voice. This is particularly concerning since these professionals occupy an important regulatory space in-between housing providers and consumers/end-users, and furthermore, represent the wider public.

Story nine presented the author as an actor operating in-between informants, and acknowledged a shifting research positionality; it is the meta narrative that relates to and connects all the others. The story also 'found' the creative practice within the research,

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locating it in relation to other practitioners and respective literature. It identified a practice-led approach that operated within an expanded interdisciplinary field – reaching into anthropology, environmental gerontology and planning – and moving between different research fields and audiences, ranging from the developer’s boardroom, through spaces of production and debate, to the private living spaces of older people. The story highlights how other disciplinary positions and methodologies might contribute to the advancement of research-informed design, suggesting ‘other’ knowledge bases that might help architects to better understand matters of architectural consequence – how people inhabit space and perform everyday actions resulting from design decisions.

Altogether the stories comprise a multi-sited ethnographic study, which presents ‘thick descriptions’¹ of multiple actors in the field of housing for older people in the UK. The author believes that the study could enable different stakeholders and/or disciplines within the (independent) retirement-living sector, including divisions within the sponsor organisation, to better relate to each other’s positions, knowledge and everyday practices. The study should be of special interest to architects, as the product of an alternative mode of ‘post-occupancy evaluation’ that helps to inform or provide feedback to designers. The stories could be said to fall into two categories: those relating to a production context (Development Director; Architecture Student; Company Architect; Town Planner), and those relating to the inhabitation of architecture (Baby Boomers; The Befriended; Resident Owner; Chalet Manager). The latter group could be said to meet Marco Frascari’s idea of stories as a means “for making sense of both individual experience of architecture and social interactions that take place in it”,² and therefore have potential to feed into future stories in support of making (age-friendly) architecture.

¹ Joseph Ponterotto, ‘Brief Note on the Origins, Evolution, and Meaning of the Qualitative Research Concept Thick Description’, *The Qualitative Report*, 11.3 (2006), 538-549

² Marco Frascari, ‘An Architectural Good-Life Can Be Built’, in *Reading Architecture and Culture: Researching Buildings, Spaces and Documents*, ed. by Adam Sharr (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), p228

Originality

The research offers fresh and varied insights for researchers and practitioners working to understand a major societal challenge – accommodating an aged UK population – and is considered to make a significant contribution by offering: (i) an original study due to a unique situation and shifting research positionality; (ii) a synthesis of design research and social science research methodologies, with examples of techniques applied in new contexts; and (iii) new knowledge and connections to knowledge bearers. It is also possible at this early stage to present a demonstrable case for research impact, measured through the dissemination and citation of an industry publication, design evolution of a developer's standard product, and engagement with multiple groups of university students.

The study is original inasmuch that there are no other known instances of a national property developer, operating within the UK independent-living retirement housing sector, sponsoring an architect to undertake a doctoral study by creative practice, and with full access to the company's board of directors, staff members, residential customers and portfolio of built developments. Furthermore, the study is made original by the researcher's unique position in and in-between respective architectural sectors – design, research and teaching – thus enabling a wider field of practice and reflection. A dynamic researcher positionality and shifting personas led to some unexpected interactions between research fields, making connections between unrelated actors and cultural settings (for example, bringing students' work-in-progress to a developer and vice versa). These aspects of the research will be of interest to ethnographers, particularly those engaged in multi-sited studies. For instance, it will speak to anthropologists that have presented an 'anxiety structure'³ and case for multi-sited ethnography being 'serious anthropology'.⁴

³ George Marcus, 'Multi-sited Ethnography: Five or Six Things I Know About it Now', in *Multi-Sited Ethnography: Problems and Possibilities in the Translocation of Research Methods*, ed. by Simon Coleman and Pauline von Hellermann (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), pp. 16-34

⁴ Kathryn Tomlinson, 'The Anxieties of Engaging in Multi-sited PhD Research: Reflections on Researching Indigenous Rights Processes in Venezuela', in *Multi-Sited Ethnography: Problems and Possibilities in the Translocation of Research Methods*, ed. by Simon Coleman and Pauline von Hellermann (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), pp. 161-173

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Methodologically speaking, the thesis presents a synthesis of methods emerging chiefly from design research and social science disciplines. A diverse range of methods were used at different stages in the research – during the capture, working and representation of research data. In terms of data capture, the study included innovative approaches adopted during short residencies at retirement developments; staying overnight and engaging in the social life of the shared lounge, as well as conducting show-and-tell home visits that were contextually-responsive and contingent on the hospitality of informants. These methods could be repeated by the design staff of retirement housing developers and/or speak to the work of other academics, such as the sociologists that developed ‘wardrobe interviews’⁵ to explore the stories of people with dementia through dress.

Furthermore, this PhD study may claim originality through the translocation of a social science practice – namely participant observation used in anthropological and sociology – to an architectural practice of post-occupancy evaluation that foregrounds ‘designerly’ forms of inquiry, resulting in design-relevant feedback to architectural designers working on the production of private, independent-living retirement apartments (a new research context). Similarly, the researcher made creative use of a befriending programme, which led to grounded research complemented by architectural survey, analysis and design techniques. Indeed, architectural techniques – measured and photographic surveys and behavioural mapping, as applied within the retirement chalets – could be of interest to visual anthropologists or those pursuing visual research methods generally. With regards to textual representation, academics engaged in narrative inquiry may be interested in the combination of alternative forms of writing, ranging from third-person narratives to poetic verse. Similarly, reflective practitioners may find interest in the creative practitioner story and the self-interview approach.

In terms of new knowledge, the creative practitioner story offers insights into a relatively new and rapidly expanding method of inquiry – the PhD by creative practice – as opposed to the somewhat compartmentalised disciplinary approaches within traditional architectural research (building science, social science, and humanities),

⁵ Christina Buse and Julia Twigg, ‘Materialising Memories: Exploring the Stories of People with Dementia Through Dress’, *Ageing and Society*, 36.6 (2016), 1115-1135

which are said to work ‘directly against what we realise is the multidisciplinary nature of architecture as a whole’.⁶ Readers can also find new knowledge, or new connections to knowledge, identified within the chalet manager’s story, which points to an ‘untapped’ resource – experts in the lived-experiences of the products they and others inhabit. This knowledge should be of interest to developers of retirement housing and their respective architects. Indeed chalet managers may represent an interesting sample of situated research informants for environmental gerontologists or those interested in the social worlds that are being promoted and maintained for older people. In addition, the town planner story captures contemporary issues surrounding the design and delivery of retirement housing in the UK, with findings that fed into an industry guide.

The above-mentioned publication became an important vehicle for disseminating a part of the research. A high-profile launch event was attended by over 70 industry professionals, and the report was distributed to 6,000 plus subscribers of Planning Magazine and made available to download from the Housing LIN website, which has over 40,000 subscribers. These platforms led to citations within other trade press and to a commendation in the RTPI Awards for Research Excellence 2017 (Planning Consultancy Award). Furthermore, the document has ongoing utility for the sponsor as a marketable publication and independent point of reference in consultations, planning applications and planning inquiries. Indeed, a senior board member and eminent figure in the sector, remarked,

*“I am absolutely certain this piece of research will help us in future planning applications going forward, but also as a general research document on retirement housing”.*⁷

These are early signs of impact the research is having within the retirement housing industry and planning sector generally. There is also a case to be made for claiming incremental design change to an industry product. Within the sponsor organisation, evidence has been collated that demonstrates how the research project – involving a

⁶ Murray Fraser, *Design Research in Architecture: An Overview* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2013), p.2

⁷ Anonymous, pers. comm. [email from research sponsor organisation], 07 April 2017

reflective and reflexive process – has affected the design evolution of the developer’s standard product in a few key areas, as highlighted by a director cited in a trade magazine:

*“It’s good to have a critical look and to challenge what we do...There were suggestions as to how we could improve, for example in circulation improvements... Sam [also] came up with the idea of creating a ‘man shed’ where male residents can just potter, which is a great idea”.*⁸

A testimony provided by a member of the sponsor’s architectural team corroborates a change in design approach to circulation, through consideration of ‘resting areas’, as well as general improvements in the common spaces, with alternative layout arrangements being explored for the shared lounge. The testimony confirms that future developments will have an alternative entrance sequence, separate from the shared lounge, and that shared lounges will feature an open plan coffee bar, with an accessible toilet nearby. The coffee bar has been found to be especially popular with resident owners and their visitors.

Furthermore, through lectures and workshops, as well as design studio teaching, aspects of the research (methods, field observations and design strategies) have been shared with over 300 young designers and creative practitioners within the research period, including personal tutelage of 50 undergraduate students in two leading UK schools of architecture. Through the Ageing Town studio, students gained early career exposure to a developer client, by adopting one of its development sites and appraising its standard product. Students were promoted as active researchers and co-authors of original design material, which was presented to the developer. The academic design studio provided a space for testing research methods and design ideas, with interactions within the studio contributing to the evolution of research outputs and a design proposal. In these terms, students participated in ‘lifting a developer’s gaze’⁹ from its product. Each student has

⁸ Ginetta Vedrickas, ‘Defining the Grey Area’, *Show House*, July (2017), 55-58

⁹ Sam Clark, ‘Designing Housing with (Older) People in Mind’, in *Housing Solutions Through Design*, ed. by Kirsten Day and Christakis Chatzichristou (Faringdon: Libri Publishing, 2017), pp.151-160 (p.152)

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also invested in their potential careers as young architects by getting to know an active and aspirational older person market.

Dear Sam,

I confirm that your research, disseminated through three Product Review reports (*[Avon Chalet], February 2015; *[Wealden Chalet], May 2015; * [Beachwalk Chalet], July 2015) has had an impact on the design approach to the communal spaces within the retirement * [chalets] developed by * [sponsor organisation]. This can be evidenced through the following documents:

Planning Application drawings for * [named development 1] (May 2015), indicating:

Main entrance part-separated from the * [shared lounge] by the reception desk and supporting office (as opposed to entering directly into the lounge proper); an open plan Coffee Bar in place of the tea station; means to divide the * [shared lounge] (bisecting dashed line on plan), and a nearby accessible toilet, within easy reach of the main entrance and * [shared lounge]. (Drawing Ref: *)

Construction Drawings and As-Built Photos for * [named development 2] (Oct 2015), indicating:

Double aspect 'through lounge' with secondary entrance (Drawing Ref: *); separate activity spaces designated 'Seating Area' and * [shared lounge] (Drawing Ref: *); an enlarged, open plan Coffee Bar in place of the tea station (Drawing Ref: *); nearby accessible toilet within easy reach of the * [shared lounge]; additional storage cupboards within the 'Keep-Fit/Meditation' room and a separate store off the corridor (Drawing Ref: *). On the upper floors, the corridors on the first and second floors have a 2.5 x 3.0 metre bay with a 1.5sqm smoke vent window to vent the corridor outside of Stair 2 (Building Regulations, Part B requirement). These may be furnished/utilised as 'Resting Places' overlooking the street/Western garden perimeter. (Drawing Refs: *)

The open plan Coffee Bar was well received and following its success in * [named development 2], the new design will be implemented on all new schemes.

Kind regards,
*
Architect

Box 7: Email Testimony from Pink & Knight architect, 4 December 2015

Future Work

It is hoped this research will encourage further multi-sited ethnographies as an approach to investigating a practice problem, befitting the fluid and multidisciplinary nature of architecture (architectural research engaging building science, social science,

humanities and so on; architectural practice engaging wide ranging built environment professionals and multiple stakeholders), and reaching beyond architecture. A parallel study could be undertaken to explore key actors and respective cultures around the delivery of a housing product or product range for older people within the ‘affordable’ sector i.e. homes that are provided, as opposed to purchased. Furthermore, researchers could ask what the architectural discipline brings to anthropology, particularly within the contested space of multi-sited ethnographies. Tim Ingold’s work around connecting ‘The Four As’ (Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture) would be a good starting point in such an inquiry.¹⁰ Alternatively, researchers may prefer to pursue a more traditional or single-sited ethnography in one of the fields presented here. For instance, the creative practitioner story rehearsed some ‘paths not followed’, including an opportunity for a deep ethnographic study of a property developer’s office; akin to Albena Yaneva’s study of an eminent architectural practice in The Netherlands.¹¹

Also filed under ‘paths not followed’, there is scope for a ‘sister’ study conducted *through* design as a primary method; research that is practice-based, rather than practice-led and contingent on a specific operational context. For instance, a research project that is positioned at a distance from existing business/delivery models for retirement housing could have a more direct bearing on design practice. Practitioners interested in this approach would be well advised to look at the work and findings of the DWELL project, Sheffield University, which presents six ‘downsizer housing typologies’¹² co-designed by researchers and participants, as well as an ‘Unapproved Document’¹³ that takes aim at the English Building Regulations. Indeed new models, and recently completed schemes, are emerging such that there may be sufficient

¹⁰ Tim Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2013)

¹¹ Albena Yaneva, *Made by the Office for Metropolitan Architecture: An Ethnography of Design* (Rotterdam: 010, 2009)

¹² Adam Park, Friederike Ziegler and Sarah Wigglesworth, *Designing with Downsizers: The Next Generation of 'Downsizer Homes' for an Active Third Age* (Sheffield: DWELL, 2016) <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/_assets/DWELL_DesigningWithDownsizers.pdf> [accessed 18 August 2017]

¹³ Sarah Wigglesworth, *Unapproved Document O: Design for Ageing*, (Sheffield: DWELL, 2016) <http://dwell.group.shef.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Unapproved-document_design-for-ageing_150908.pdf> [accessed 18 August 2017]

recourse to revisit the original HAPPI report with updated ideas, reference works and new knowledge.

Lastly, researchers could further explore the role of the architect, as an actor with a changing position within the construction industry. A recent RIBA study found that clients could see “design slipping further down the pecking order”, reasoning that,

*Increased sophistication of detailing and building technology and its associated risk management have led to a gradual residualisation of the architect in favour of the subcontractor who will continue to take on an increasingly large part of the design work over the next ten years.*¹⁴

How then might architects work to claim back or discover new territory by using research as a critical tool? One resounding and repeated comment heard at multidisciplinary conferences is the lack of attendance from architects. It seems obvious, but worth stating nevertheless, that architects need to become more involved in the discussion of the environments they help to shape, and to make sense of people’s everyday lived-experiences, post-completion. With particular reference to design for ageing, architects could benefit from working more closely with environmental gerontologists and vice versa. Indeed, there are some parallel characteristics in these two disciplines; both are relatively young – not being long established – and both afford a fluidity in terms of research positionality, methodology and practice. One research question that might prompt collaboration is what difference does design make to environmental gerontology? Or casting the net wider, and further along the life course, what contribution can the discipline of architecture make to palliative care and the design of fourth-age environments such as hospices?

Takeaway

This thesis presented a practice-led approach to conducting a multi-sited ethnographic study – in this case key stakeholders, and their respective cultures, within the field of

¹⁴ Claire Jamieson et al., *The Future For Architects?* (London: Building Futures/RIBA, c.2011) <<http://www.buildingfutures.org.uk/projects/building-futures/the-future-for-architects>> [accessed 18 March 2018]

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housing for older people in the UK – drawing upon a synthesis of design and social science research methodologies. It advocated the benefits of a dynamic researcher positionality, involving multiple personas, in and in-between sectors – in this case architectural design, research and teaching – enabling an expanded field of practice and reflection on theoretical and applied aspects of each culture. Furthermore, the study promoted a grounded and interdisciplinary approach to design, highlighting how architectural thinking can contribute to other disciplines, and vice-versa.

In this thesis storytelling was used to provide insight to different cultures, supporting a greater mutual understanding among stakeholders; making known everyday practices, tacit knowledge-bases and implicit value systems within each culture studied. Stories are universal in that they can bridge cultural, linguistic, jargonistic, disciplinary, and age-related divides; they help to make sense of a shared world and to pass on that understanding to others. Researchers from the health sciences remind us that,

*“Telling stories is grounded in the earliest forms of conveying cultural standards... Unlike other forms of communication, stories are a safe way to convey messages that engage the affective domain rather than only the cognitive”.*¹⁵

In these terms, this thesis offered a safe space to explore a range of different positions about housing for older people, and evoked connections that data or statements alone could not illicit. It is hoped that these stories will help support knowledge transfer between those providing homes for older people and those that occupy the retirement-living landscape.

¹⁵ Patricia Yoder-Wise and Karren Kowalski, ‘The Power of Storytelling’, *Nursing Outlook*, 51.1 (2003), 37-42 (p.41)

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