Localism and Neighbourhoods for all ages

Is Localism sounding a death knell or a wake-up call for creating neighbourhoods for all ages?

A Report and Think Piece

Dylan Kneale & David Sinclair

Acknowledgements

Contents

Executive summary

In this report, we examine the development and progression of communities for all ages reflective of an ageing population, as well as other demographic changes. 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' were one of the main strategies used the previous government for ensuring that neighbourhoods provided for residents of all ages. Here, we review the future of both the concept of 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' as well as 'Neighbourhoods for all ages' more generally in the context of recent policy changes, including the Spending Review and the Localism Bill. 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' were adopted into Department of Communities and Local Government policy in 2007/8, although 'Neighbourhoods for all ages' have virtually disappeared as a concept and ideology from national policy since then. We present some recent policy developments and examine how the Localism Bill offers both opportunities and obstacles in developing homes and communities for the future. We also question whether we should modify our understanding and definition of 'Neighbourhoods for all ages' and specifically 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' in order to facilitate their spread. This report also contains a summary from a recent ILC-UK event that brought together a panel of experts in the field to debate Localism and Lifetime Neighbourhoods. After presenting a number of arguments, ILC-UK make the following recommendations:

Recommendations for local and national government policy-makers and developers:

1. The **National Planning Framework should include specific provision and guidance for planning for an ageing society**, which Local Authorities would be required to incorporate in drawing up Neighbourhood Development Plans. If Regional Spatial Strategies are being abolished, then an **alternative legally binding mandate** needs to be imposed on Local Authority planners to ensure that it is explicit that local housing and community strategies account for an ageing population, a rise in single person households, and provision for young people's housing.

2. All **Local Authorities should undertake a needs assessment across services, planning systems, communities, and homes** to assess the impact of an ageing population. While this recommendation may appear at first unfeasible, and goes against the ethos of Localism, it is an example of guided localism, which is needed in this case to explicitly protect the needs of vulnerable people and plan for the future. Such a needs assessment will not only help Local Authorities plan ahead, but in the long-run, among other benefits, can help to ensure that resources are spent that help facilitate 'active ageing' which could in turn lead to a reduction in social care spending, and become a key facilitator for the Big Society. Revenue from the Community Infrastructure Levy fund could be used to help respond to the result of the needs assessments.

3. The Localism Bill includes statements about the value of community assets, although without specific provision for older people, we may see neighbourhoods where these assets transfer only to those causes and groups that are more popular or vocal. **The Localism Bill should include greater safeguards to ensure that the rights of**

marginalised or minority populations to access a full range of amenities and services locally are protected.

4. The Department for Communities and Local Government should expand their equalities impact assessment of the Localism Bill to include an **equalities impact of the proposed changes in terms of both building and construction,as well as service provision, on all marginalised groups including older people**, and respond accordingly. A 'Neighbourhood for all ages' is one with a full range of amenities. Furthermore, the government should reassess the impact of the Spending Review on marginalised populations including older people and disabled people. Decisions made because of cuts in funding, such as closing public toilets, have a disproportionate impact on older people and people with disabilities. Although the government claims to have undertaken an equalities impact assessment of the cuts, the cuts may actually represent reversals in the provision of neighbourhoods that are suitable for older people. We would call for a joined-up approach among bodies representing minority and marginalised groups to research and lobby for changes in the way spending cuts affect marginalised populations.

5. **Decent Homes Standards should include Lifetime Homes Standards and should be expanded to include the private sector.** As one of the few areas of the housing budget not cut in the recent Spending Review, the Decent Homes Standard represents one of the vehicles to ensure an adequate housing supply for an ageing population. However, the Decent Homes Standard only extends to public sector housing, exposing many others to poor quality housing that may also be unsuitable to their changing needs across the lifecourse. Given that Lifetime Homes are a crucial element of Lifetime Neighbourhoods, this appears one of the few remaining ways in which the state could continue to directly press forward with Lifetime Neighbourhoods. Poorly designed homes are known to be very expensive (CABE, 2010), and poor quality housing that is not warm or weatherproofed may also hold knock on costs in terms of health and social care budgets (Donald, 2009). In the face of population ageing, we argue it is short sighted not to incorporate Lifetime Homes into the Decent Homes Standards.

6. With the onset of Localism and greater community powers for planning, we would urge Local Authorities to be bound to a set of **minimum standards for the provision of accessible, relevant and timely information and advice to older people** and other groups on local development. At the same time, we support earlier calls for a presumption in favour of development to construct more neighbourhoods suitable for all ages.

7. We would also call for **on-going evaluation of the effects of the Localism Bill**, particularly in relation to older people. This follows concern that the Localism Bill could lead to wildly uneven provision of services, communities and homes suitable for people of all ages. This should happen from the outset; currently it is not clear how the effects of the Localism Bill will be assessed, particularly with the loss of the Audit Commission.

8. We would also repeat earlier calls from ILC-UK in 2009 for the **private sector to take a longer-term stake in developments and for greater use of Section 106 of planning laws**. We would also seek more creative use of Section 106 to include more provision for

community hubs, intergenerational spaces, and specialised older people services.

9. We call for the government to step up to the challenge of demographic change in the same way that it has stepped up to the challenge of environmental change. We propose a cross-departmental programme of research and policy across all government departments and all research councils to **ensure a coordinated approach to 'Living With Demographic Change'**. This programme would ensure that all organisations have the necessary tools and knowledge to plan for demographic change, including an ageing population. Part of this programme should ensure that homes and communities reflect the needs of an older population and allow older people the flexibility to remain part of the community for an optimal time.

Recommendations for academics and proponents of a neighbourhood for all ages:

1. All the components of a neighbourhood for all ages that we advocate should be clearly evidenced as beneficial to the health and wellbeing of people in the community. In particular, research should focus on plugging the gaps left by the current dearth of quantitative and experimental studies (where this is possible and appropriate). Prior to this, a number of systematic reviews into different domains of neighbourhoods for all ages should be undertaken to consolidate existing evidence. The ultimate goal should be to establish both consistency in the principles of neighbourhoods for all, as well as a sound evidence base.

2. Building on (1), the **criteria developed for neighbourhoods for all ages should be strengthened** to include more robust and specific (and evidence-based) recommendations as to what constitutes a neighbourhood suitable for all ages. While having equivalent criteria as Lifetime Homes may not be possible for Neighbourhoods due to the scale and variation and even lack of definition as to what constitutes a neighbourhood, 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' as a specific policy and 'neighbourhoods for all ages' as a concept may falter without the inclusion of specific criteria integral to community design.

3. The current guidelines for neighbourhoods for all ages should reflect not only the changing demographic structure but also the **changing roles we expect older people to assume in the future**. There should be provision for the greater economic and family (caring) roles we expect older people to assume, as well as their different household characteristics.

4. Advocates of 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' and neighbourhoods for all ages should consider **which criteria are relevant for smaller regeneration/remodelling projects and which for new developments**. Policy-makers should be made aware of small scale adaptations that work to make neighbourhoods more accessible to all ages as well as more ambitious proposals for new developments, but not necessarily within the same set of criteria; in keeping with (2) this would make the criteria more focused and fit for purpose.

5. We should aim to **put the 'Lifetime' back into Lifetime Neighbourhoods** and theorise and evidence how the proposals made for adaptations suitable for older people will also

benefit younger people; some elements may not have a direct benefit for younger people, but none should have a negative impact. 'Lifetime neighbourhoods', and neighbourhoods for all ages more generally, should be intergenerationally fair. We should also explicitly consider the needs of younger people in our proposals, as young people currently have the highest levels of dissatisfaction with neighbourhoods.

6. We should reject poorly designed neighbourhoods at the planning stage. The Commission for Architecture and Built Environment (2010) have a framework for poorly designed homes and a similar **standard for poorly designed neighbourhoods should also be established**. Cost-benefit analyses that illuminate the price of poorly designed neighbourhoods should be undertaken.

Introduction

There is abundant evidence that our population is ageing, as we continue to make gains in average life expectancy and fertility drops below replacement level. The previous decade saw the population balance tip so that there are now greater numbers of older people (65s and over) than children (under 16s) in Britain today; these trends are set to continue as the number of oldest old climbs. An ageing society represents many challenges for policy-makers, none more so than ensuring that homes and neighbourhoods reflect and can accommodate the changing population.

'Lifetime homes' and 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' have generally been viewed previously as two of the main vehicles through which policy-makers have made provision for housing an ageing population within the community. An aim of both Lifetime Homes and Lifetime Neighbourhoods is to keep older people with low or medium dependency needs part of a cross-generational community. For a number of reasons, upon which we speculate here, Neighbourhoods for all (through Lifetime Neighbourhoods), and to a lesser extent Lifetime Homes, were met with limited success. A combination of circumstances also conspired against the further progress of developing homes and communities for older people. The latest developments expected from passing the Localism Bill, and the fallout from recent dramatic cuts in public spending, could represent the final nails in the coffin for ensuring neighbourhoods work for all, the focus of this paper.

Nevertheless, Localism could also bring some opportunities in the development of communities that meet the needs of older people. Additionally, the recent challenging climate has also presented the opportunity to revisit the Lifetime Neighbourhoods agenda, and here we speculate on some of the changes to our notion of what makes a neighbourhood suitable for all ages that may be necessary in order to move forward. We also present the views of policy-makers, academics, the voluntary sector, and other interested parties, on Localism and Lifetime Neighbourhoods. Finally, we set out ILC-UK recommendations to ensure that communities reflect an ageing population, including changes we see as necessary to the way we think of a neighbourhood for all ages in itself. Although 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' per se are not exclusively our focus here, our discussion does often focus upon them given that former policies that attempted to ensure that neighbourhoods were suitable for all ages often did so under the banner of Lifetime Neighbourhoods. However, we do not use the term throughout, particularly in moving forward, in recognition that there were some gaps in the previous Lifetime Neighbourhoods agenda. With a change of government, there is now a real opportunity to set a new agenda that resolves some of the previous issues and makes a real commitment to developing neighbourhoods for all ages. In this paper, we present arguments that highlight the need to create new strategies to develop neighbourhoods suitable for all ages, especially in the context of Localism, and suggest some elements that should be incorporated into these strategies.

This report is split into five sections that address the following questions:

1. **Lifetime Neighbourhoods: what, where and when?**

   - Exploring the definition of lifetime neighbourhoods and their incorporation into national policies

2. **What can Localism do for neighbourhoods for life?**

   - An overview of the Localism Bill in the context of homes and neighbourhoods highlighting the obstacles and opportunities

3. **What do the experts say about Localism and Neighbourhoods for all ages?**

   - 'Localism and Homes and Communities for the future' from the perspective of policy-makers and practitioners based on our event in November 2010[1].

4. **Neighbourhoods for all ages: A lost cause and can we fix it?**

   - Highlighting some of the issues raised in incorporating previous Lifetime Neighbourhoods policy and areas for change in creating neighbourhoods for all ages.

5. **How should we move forward?**

   - Conclusions and recommendations for creating neighbourhoods that can accommodate older people.

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[1] In the appendix to this report, we provide a more detailed transcript of the November 2010 event.

Lifetime Neighbourhoods: what, where and when?

Definition and Development

Interest in the impact of community design and housing on the livelihood and independence of older people has grown in recent years. This initially stemmed from the early 1990s when the Joseph Rowntree Foundation issued its first set of 16 point-criteria for a 'Lifetime Home' – a home that could support different lifecourse stages from early adulthood and family building, to empty nesters, to older age (Hanson, 2001). These included specific design requirements (including prescribed measurements) to (i) ensure good access to the home, (ii) for moving about easily within the home and negotiating different accommodation levels, and (iii) for accessible environmental controls. Since then, the agenda has progressed to include the wider environment and 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods'. Lifetime Neighbourhoods were alluded to in earlier government reports on Neighbourhood Renewal (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001) and Sustainable Communities (ODPM, 2003), although older people were not featured at a strategic level (Help the Aged, 2008). However, since 2005, a large number of reports have been published by organisations such as the World Health Organisation, Help the Aged, Department Communities and Local Government, and the International Longevity Centre-UK, on the role of integrated community in older people's lives.

These recent reports are summarised in Box 1 and show a remarkable consistency in the constituent elements of a neighbourhood for life. Although not made explicit in some cases, all allude to the ultimate goal of keeping older people with no, low, or medium dependency needs integrated into local communities. A 'Lifetime neighbourhood' is generally defined as one that offers the best possible outcomes in terms of health, housing, wellbeing, and maximises the potential and participation of older people in the community. Specifically, this means making adaptations to communities to help support older people through developing:

- the built environment

- housing

- access to services

- aesthetic design and improving social cohesion and sense of place

- improving social capital

- working, planning and engaging cross-sectorally

- promoting sites for intergenerational usage

- information technology   *(taken from Harding, 2007)*

In practice, most strategies that plan for communities reflecting an ageing population tend to focus on the built environment, homes and services alone. Other elements sometimes included within definitions of Lifetime Neighbourhoods are adequate provision of: transport; economic opportunities; and support structures to ensure social inclusion and respect for older people. Allied international concepts also share many of these elements. In the US, a liveable community is defined as "one that has affordable and appropriate housing, supportive community features and services, and adequate mobility options, which together facilitate personal independence and the engagement of residents in social and civic life" (Payne et al, 2008, p2). In the UK, 'age proofing' is another term applied to design modifications to housing, services and neighbourhoods to support people of all ages.

Arguably the most important recent development for creating neighbourhoods suitable for all ages was the launch of the 'Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods: A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society' report by the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) (CLG, 2008) which outlined how the elements of Lifetime Neighbourhoods set out in earlier work (see Harding, 2007) were to be implemented. These included moves to use the 2012 Olympic Village to promote inclusive design, working with the Department for Transport to update mobility guidance to help support Lifetime Neighbourhoods, developing the National Home Improvement Agency, and incentivising good design of homes and neighbourhoods (CLG, 2008). This was a coordinated response involving both homes and neighbourhoods and was broadly welcomed, although not necessarily representative of an advancement in 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods',but of good community and home design in a broader sense. Moreover, even at this point of relative success, the report focussed on Lifetime Homes much more than Lifetime Neighbourhoods, and while broadly positive in sentiment in relation to Lifetime Neighbourhoods was not as strong on actions. In 2007/8, the financial downturn, resulting recession, and change of government, slowed the pace of progress once more.

Box 1: Recent Activity by Organisations on Neighbourhoods for all ages

Towards Lifetime Neighbourhoods: Designing sustainable communities for all Department for Communities and Local Government (2007)	- Definition of lifetime neighbourhoods as those which offer everyone the best possible chance of health, wellbeing, and social, economic and civic engagement regardless of age. - Focus on older people, but the features of lifetime neighbourhoods said to benefit all ages. Also highlights the role that older people can play in the community - Older people should play a part in the creation of lifetime communities - Adheres to principle of Health=wealth - Argues for cross-sectoral engagement in lifetime neighbourhoods and for recognised differentiation in strategies for urban versus rural areas and for intellectual leadership in the development of lifetime communities
Global Age Friendly Cities: A Guide (2007)	- Production of a guide to age-friendly cities suitable across developed and developing countries - Cities chosen over neighbourhoods because of the growing rates of urbanisation - Age friendly city defined as one that optimises opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age - Age friendly cities develop policies, services and settings to enable people to age actively - Active ageing includes: recognising the wide range of capabilities and resources among older people, anticipating and responding flexibly to ageing needs and preferences, respecting decisions and lifestyle choices, protecting those most vulnerable, and promotes inclusion in and contribution of older people across all areas of community life - Based on primary research with focus group respondents across 33 cities worldwide (n=1485) - Key areas for policy in developing age friendly cities identified as: housing, transport, civic participation and employment, community health services, open spaces, communication and information provision, respect and social inclusion
Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods: A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society (February 2008)	- Expanded on the points raised in the 2007 report - Discussed the challenge of an ageing population presents - Outlines actions proposed to take to promote housing choices (see discussion below as to the changes since the 2010 Spending Review) - Outlines actions towards building lifetime homes and what these should entail
Towards a Common Ground: The Help the Aged Manifesto for Lifetime Neighbourhoods (2008)	- A ten point manifesto for lifetime neighbourhoods - Includes: i) access to basic services; ii) safe, secure, clean streets; iii) realistic transport options for all; iv) public seating; v) information and advice; vi) lifetime homes; vii) older people's voices heard; viii) places to meet and opportunities to participate; ix) pavements in good repair; x) provision of public toilets - Highlighting the potential for designing-in ageism - This manifesto called for action from local authorities, financial institutions, central government and PCTs.
Weathering the downturn: What is the future for Lifetime Neighbourhoods (2009)	- Rallying call for promotion of lifetime neighbourhoods in times of fiscal crisis - Make the case for lifetime neighbourhoods not being a luxury but a minimum standard
Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation (2009) Homes and Communities Agency	- Raise the profile of Lifetime Homes and Neighbourhoods through 4 identifying four main issues: i) a national effort to build homes that meet needs and aspirations ii) plan for a greater range of housing options iii) older people housing should become an exemplar for mainstream housing iv) local planning authorities should ensure delivery of desirable housing in areas of greatest need based on analyses of needs and demands - HAPPI identified ten key elements: space and flexibility, daylight in the home and shared spaces, balconies and outdoor space, adaptability and 'care ready' design, positive use of circulation space, shared facilities and 'hubs', plants trees and natural environment, energy efficiency and sustainable design, storage for belongings, external shared surfaces and 'home zones'

Recession and Spending Review

During the recession years, the building trade experienced some of the lowest rates of new construction during the recession years (2008-2010). Figure 1 (below) shows the numbers of completed and new building projects in England; prior to 2006/7 the numbers of new projects outstripped that of completed projects for a number of years, before dipping below the level of completions as both completions and new projects declined in number. Mirroring these trends, the volume of property transactions declined precipitously as the housing market decelerated. The result for Lifetime Homes and Neighbourhoods was a deceleration in the pace of construction of specialist older person developments as well as more general homes and communities for all ages. Additionally, the deceleration of the housing market caused house prices to tumble, and the incentive for older people to release equity in their property or to move to a lifetime home and/or neighbourhood weakened.

Figure 1: Numbers of new and completed building projects in England (based on seasonally adjusted numbers (CLG 2010)); Volume of Property Transactions

In the same period, major regeneration schemes which incorporated elements of both Lifetime Neighbourhoods and Lifetime Homes began to lose funding. For example, the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders scheme was one such investment programme that was on course for 'choppy waters' (Harding, 2009). This scheme, based mainly in the North and Midlands, aimed to renew and rebuild communities and housing markets where

demand for housing was relatively weak. Since then, and despite positive evaluations from the Audit Office and from the charity Shelter, funding for the Pathfinders schemes has reduced – the 2010/11 budget stood at 90% that of the previous year and just 77% of the 2007/8 budget (Long, 2010). In October 2010, as part of the government's Spending Review, the funding for the Pathfinders scheme was cut altogether.

For Lifetime Neighbourhoods in particular, which were, in policy terms, only in their infancy, the combination of these developments effectively sunk the agenda before it had time to swim. Further measures that were detrimental for Lifetime Neighbourhoods were announced in the were announced as part of a package of £83 billion of cuts in public services contained in the Spending Review (see Berry & Sinclair, 2010 and Kneale, Berry & Sinclair, 2010). A disproportionate amount of these cuts were made at the Department for Communities and Local Government and effectively reverse several of the steps taken towards Lifetime Homes and Lifetime Neighbourhoods. CLG faced the largest budget cut of any government department with the CLG Communities section subject to a 51% budget cut and the CLG Local Government section subject to a 33% reduction (Treasury, 2010).

The key points of the Spending Review and earlier policies announced in 2010 in relation to the Lifetime Homes and Lifetime Neighbourhoods agenda are outlined in Box 2; it shows some investment in existing social housing, but a withdrawal from new public housing, and there is no provision made to explicitly protect or develop homes and communities for an ageing population. Additionally, initiatives such as the Decent Homes Standard, which have been protected in the Spending Review (applicable for those in social housing only), have not been explicitly linked to the Lifetime Homes standard in the past (CLG, 2007), while other initiatives such as Regional Spatial Strategies which were a vehicle for the Lifetime Homes and Lifetime Neighbourhoods agenda in some areas[2], have been abolished (or are in the process of being abolished). Despite enthusiastic rhetoric among policy-makers up until the recession, the outlook for Lifetime Neighbourhoods, and creating neighbourhoods for all ages more generally, after the Spending Review appears ostensibly bleak.

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[2]Regional Spatial Strategies provided long-term strategic planning guidance that was legally binding. However, only some Regional Spatial Strategies actually incorporated an explicit mandate for Lifetime Homes and Lifetime Neighbourhoods, while others made no mention.

Box 2: Recent Policy on Lifetime Homes and Neighbourhoods for all ages

Previous Policy (as outlined in CLG 2008)	Outcome after Spending review (October 2010)
Public Service Agreement to tackle poverty and promote independence among older people to raise their level of wellbeing	Public Service Agreements Scrapped
Homes for the Future Strategy that aimed to build 3 million more homes by 2020 and build sustainable communities	Not entirely clear. 150,000 affordable homes to be built. However, without specific allocation for extra care housing and housing for older people more generally, 'the housing needs of an ageing population will not be adequately met' (Age UK, 2010). Furthermore, 150,000 may be optimistic given the decrease in capital funding and reduction in capital investment (Shelter UK, 2010). Overall housing budgets slashed.
Provide a new approach to housing advice to older people through the National Housing Advice and Information Service	Unclear future after spending review – although overall CLG budget cut is likely to affect services across department unless otherwise stated
Developed National Home Improvement Agency (HIA) that supported handyman schemes to help older people make minor adaptations to their accommodation to keep them independent	Unclear future after spending review – although overall CLG budget cut is likely to affect services across department unless otherwise stated
Disabled Facilities Grant to help people to get adaptations carried out in their own home	Not cut in the spending review according to the Department for Work and Pensions with increased spending forecast (DWP 2010)
Decent homes programme to renovate homes to a decent standard and bring empty homes back into use	Not cut. £2 billion provided for decent homes and £100 million allocated to bring empty homes back into use
All public housing to be built to Lifetime Homes standard by 2011. Aspire that all housing will be built to Lifetime Homes standard by 2013	Not clear how reductions in the overall capital budget for building homes will affect the Lifetime Homes standard. As with Lifetime Neighbourhoods, Lifetime Homes have virtually disappeared from new government policy.
Incentivise good design and make ecotowns lifetime neighbourhoods	Unclear future after spending review but overall CLG budget cut is likely to affect services across department unless otherwise stated. Ecotowns, lifetime neighbourhoods and lifetime homes are virtually absent form new policy.
Put in as a requirement that Regional and Local development plans take into account ageing population	Unclear future ideologically. Drive to localism and abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies likely to mean that this requirement is enforced in patches only
Improve joined-up assessment, service provision, and commissioning. Boost preventative housing services by piloting a new approach to transform prevention using predictive risk modelling to accurately identify those at risk of a health crisis.	Unclear future ideologically. Drive to localism and local planning could theoretically mean that Local Authorities respond more dynamically to the needs of local population. However, localism could also result in the marginalisation of older people as a whole in some contexts or older people with specialised needs
Warm front scheme: allowing households access to free/low cost insulation	Warm front scheme scrapped in Spending Review
Other relevant policy developments	**Summary**
Housing benefit cap proposed in Spending Review intended to prevent families from claiming housing benefit of more than £20,000	Could result in the uprooting of some older people from their communities. Also the potentially the case for their support networks, carers or other community members. Could push up the price of care services in inner city areas
Housing Renewal Pathfinders Scheme	Cut altogether in Spending Review (see text)
Regional spatial strategies: government is attempting to abolish regional spatial strategies	Government is attempting to abolish Regional Spatial Strategies although this has recently been deemed illegal. Regional Spatial Strategies were intended to provide a framework within English regions (excluding London) for the development of sustainable communities and to target general areas for regeneration or development. They were a vehicle for the implementation of Lifetime Homes and Lifetime Neighbourhoods in some regions.
Localism bill	Localism bill included abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies and is intended to return planning decisions to Local Government level. Includes abolition of Standards Board scheme, allows local communities to take over delivery of local state run services and gives residents power to instigate local referendums on any local issue and the power to veto excessive council tax increases (see next section)
Development of new social housing	Budget cut by 60% in the Spending Review

What can Localism do for Neighbourhoods for all ages?

The Localism Bill includes a series of changes to national and local governance structures, and an ideological shift representative of the 'Big Society' agenda, where central government plans to devolve powers to local groups and individuals. At the time of writing this report the bill is almost certainly likely to become a reality; the bill has received a first and second hearing in the House of Commons and is currently (March 2011) being heard in the Committee Stage where amendments can be made before it moves to a Third Hearing, and it finally moving to the House of Lords for debate. For 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods', the bill contains mixed fortunes. Although 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' or developing neighbourhoods that reflect a changing demographic received no explicit mention in the Bill, some elements may lend themselves towards helping to develop communities for older people while some elements appear to pose challenges. While this section does not aim to discuss the merits of the Localism Bill as whole for older people, only with reference to creating neighbourhoods for all ages, it is worth highlighting at this point even that the impact of the proposed changes on older people have not been fully assessed by the CLG. The CLG's own equalities impact assessment, published earlier this year, failed to include any assessment of the impact of proposed changes on older people, although did recognise that the needs of some other minority groups could be overlooked as part of the bill (CLG, 2011).

Box 3 contains a summary of these proposed changes relevant to developing neighbourhoods for all ages introduced as part of the Localism Bill, and presents these as facilitators and challenges. From Box 3, two main advantages of the bill for developing neighbourhoods for all ages are apparent. Firstly, the removal of some planning structures that worked to decelerate the planning process could potentially allow more rapid development of age-friendly neighbourhoods. Secondly, the Bill could allow communities to respond directly to their needs, including an ageing population, and to be more reflective of local issues. Both of these points, however, are conditional on age friendly communities and older person issues in general being at the forefront of the planning and service delivery process. There is no legislation within the Bill to ensure that this is the case, and both of these potential advantageous points are likely to be lost without intervention or reworking of parts of the bill.

Box 3: Localism and Neighbourhoods for all ages

Action	Description	Consequences for Neighbourhoods for all ages
Local Authority Management and Services		
Giving councils a general power of competence	This allows Local Authorities including some parish councils - the right to do "anything apart from that which is specifically prohibited". This may allow Local Authorities to be run more like buisnesses, potentially more efficiently. The Bill allows Local Authorities to run some non-statutory services for commercial purposes, and exercise powers even if these do not necessarily benefit all residents (p14, s4b,4c). However, Local Authorities will still be bound by previous legislation governing the services that should be provided free of charge at point of delivery.	Access to services is a key tenet of neighbourhoods for all ages. If older people lose some of the services upon which they are reliant, or incur a charge at the point of delivery, then this may mean the neighbourhoods in which they reside can no longer be regarded as neighbourhoods suitable for all ages.\n\nHowever, raising levels of civic participation, as is the intention of other parts of the Bill, may mitigate some of these changes. Additionally, older people could see some other services transfer to the hands of local groups.
Instigation of Local Referendums on any local issue	People will be able to trigger referendums on any local issue, including council tax rises provided they exceed a set limit. Referendums will only be held from petitions that include 5% of the local electorate. The government believes that this is a key step to empowering local people. However, the Local Authority is not bound to take any steps reflecting the result of the referendum.	Civic engagement is a key principle of Lifetime Neighbourhoods and more widely in creating a neighbourhood suitable for all ages. Given that older people have higher rates of voter turnout than other groups, this could mean that older people not only have more opportunities to exercise civic engagement, but also may be able to disproportionately influence the local debate.\n\nHowever, voter turnout is not the same as civic engagement. While older people do have high rates of voter engagement, this does not equate to lobbying for services. Referenda may not necessarily be held in the interests of all in the community; older people issues may fall to the wayside in referenda, and may even be opposed. Referenda may reflect the popular, 'not in my back yard' views; the development of local older people services, such as specialist accommodation, may not be universally popular, and referenda may prove to be substantial obstacles in developing neighbourhoods for all ages.
Giving voluntary and community groups the right to challenge local authorities over their services	This bill provides a 'community right to challenge'. The community right to challenge allows voluntary groups, individual staff from Local Authorities, or groups of individuals who operate as charities the right to 'challenge' Local Authorities on the running of services. Voluntary groups, social enterprises, parish councils and others will be able to express an interest in taking over council-run services - the local authority will have to consider and respond to these challenges, although not necessarily relinquish control. It could prompt a bidding exercise in which the group could then compete. Services could, for example, include running community centres, social care services or improving transport links. Unlike some of the non-statutory services provided by Local Authorities themselves, these services could not be run as businesses – any surplus is expected to be directed back into the service.	In terms of developing neighbourhoods for all ages, these ambitious proposals could secure the provision of high quality local services for older people in their neighbourhoods, fulfilling one aspect of 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods'. These proposals could represent a lifeline to services at threat. These proposals could also increase the potential for civic engagement amongst older people, keeping them active members of the community.\n\nHowever, in the main, these proposals are potentially damaging to developing neighbourhoods for all ages. They may lead to a substantial destandardisation in the quality of services; arguably this is the current status quo between Local Authorities although this could take place within Local Authority boundaries. It is unclear how these services would be evaluated or regulated in the proposals, or what provision would be made to bring services back under the control of Local Authorities should the need arise. The criteria for defining a 'valid' challenge are only weakly defined in current proposals and are open for local interpretation. It is unclear how much consultation will occur with service users in the process of a 'right to challenge'. Finally, should a 'right to challenge' be successful, it is unclear what the level of expertise required to run a service would be. For example, Libraries are currently an often cited example of where a service could fall under the control of a voluntary group. However, the role of Library Assistant, which is touted in the media as a role requiring no skill, actually does require certification and/or training in IT, Information Management, Finance, Stock control and Customer Service;

		furthermore contact with children and vulnerable adults also often requires that they be CRB checked. Volunteers without these skills running the service may ultimately lead to a poorer quality service. More widely, and beyond the remit of developing neighbourhoods for all ages, these proposals devalue the skill set of large sectors of the workforce.
Giving voluntary and community groups the right bid for local assets	Similar to the 'right to challenge', local groups will be given the opportunity to bid for Local Assets when an opportunity arises, such as a proposed change of ownership. Local assets include, for example, shops, pubs, parks, and nurseries; Local Authorities will be required to draw up a list of assets in their area. Local groups will be given additional time and support in drawing up plans on how to run and finance local assets, to establish a more level playing field between local voluntary groups and the commercial sector. This additional support, however, would not guarantee a successful bid.	Given that older people through choice or necessity have shorter travelling times to reach services, these proposals could safeguard access to services, helping to prop up one of the central themes of 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods'. These proposals could also increase the potential for civic engagement amongst older people, keeping them active members of the community.

However, as stated above, these proposals could bring inequity among the provision and running of local assets between areas. Ultimately these proposals are unlikely to benefit and could damage the interests of older people in areas with weak social cohesion; these are likely to be areas where older people already encounter greatest difficulty in accessing the local neighbourhood through fear of crime or lack of transport. |
| **Housing** | | |
| Provide for a new form of flexible tenure for social housing tenants | This essentially signals the end of council homes for life and will be replaced by fixed-term tenure agreements. | For older people now, this change is likely to have little impact.

For older people in the future, this change is likely to mean that older people may be compelled to move house later in life. On the one hand, while this may mean that underoccupacy becomes less of a problem in the social housing sector, it could also signal that Lifetime Homes, in the strictest sense, become the domain of owner occupiers alone. Given that neighbourhoods suitable for all ages are essentially redundant without homes suitable for all ages, this could be damaging. |
Amend the way in which a social tenant can make a complaint about their landlord	The Localism Bill includes changes to the way complaints are made and dealt with in social housing. The current two separate ombudsmen (the Local Government Ombudsman and the Independent Housing Ombudsman) will merge to form the Independent Housing Ombudsman.	For developing neighbourhoods for all ages this will seemingly have little impact. However, if complaints also include the immediate local environment as well as the housing itself, then this move could be beneficial for developing neighbourhoods for all ages in social housing settings.
Housing targets	Housing targets to build an additional three million homes by 2020 are being scrapped, as part of the scrapping of Regional Spatial Strategies.	This development can only restrict the progress of neighbourhoods for all ages. These developments could have represented a way of ensuring that homes and neighbourhoods reflected an ageing population, both in numbers and design.
Planning		
Abolish Regional Spatial Strategies	Regional Spatial Strategies represented a mapping out of future development in GORs, and provided a strategic direction. Some individual Regional Spatial Strategies incorporated demographic change into developments, although others made scant reference.	The abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies essentially remove a tier of bureaucracy from planning, and may quicken the planning process. Theoretically, it will be easier for developers wishing to build neighbourhoods suitable for all ages, to do so.

However, the removal of Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) also removes the target for building new homes. Additionally, some RSS's did take measures to account for demographic change and their removal is potentially damaging in these areas. |
| Amend the Community Infrastructure Levy | This part of the Localism bill extends a levy on developers when they build new homes and businesses. This levy helps to build infrastructure developments and maintain existing developments, and was originally introduced in 2008. In the Localism Bill, the levy will be able to contribute to existing infrastructure developments, and will give Local Authorities greater power in the rate of the levy | This part of the Bill allows local people to take greater control over new developments in their area. This could include developments which benefit all ages.

However, while this local involvement ultimately extends the democratic process, as discussed in this table above it also may mean that some of the needs |

	imposed. In addition, it will give local people a greater say on what the levy is actually spent.	of marginalised groups are overlooked, which could include older people, particularly those minority older groups such as older Black and Minority Ethnic groups and older Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender groups. There is also some ambiguity as to the role of the community infrastructure levy alongside Section 106 of the planning rules. Previously, Section 106 allowed Local Authorities to enter into legally binding agreements with developers to help support the construction of infrastructure projects. It is unclear if this community infrastructure levy is intended to replace Section 106, or to be used alongside in certain projects.
Provide for neighbourhood development plans, which would be approved if they received 50% of the votes cast in a referendum	The Localism bill will introduce 'neighbourhood development plans'. These will allow communities (on a Local Parish Council Basis) to directly influence the location of homes and businesses, even dictating what they should look like. Provided a neighbourhood development plan is in line with the 'National Planning Framework', the strategic vision for the wider area set by the local authority, and with other legal requirements; local people will be able to vote on it in a referendum. If the plan is approved by a majority, then the local authority will bring it into force.	Neighbourhood development plans are intended to make it easier and quicker for developments to go ahead. They also have the potential to reflect community needs, which could include elements of Lifetime Neighbourhoods and developing neighbourhoods for all ages. However, Neighbourhood Development Plans also potentially share many of the disadvantages of other elements of the Localism Bill in that the most vocal voices will potentially dictate the course of the plans – Neighbourhood Development Plans may not look after the interests of all in the neighbourhood. As a result, they will potentially lead to widely differing provision of communities and homes that reflect an ageing population. It should be noted that Lifetime Homes are also conspicuously absent from all sections on planning in the Localism Bill.
Provide for neighbourhood development orders to allow communities to approve development without requiring normal planning consent	As part of neighbourhood planning, the Bill will give groups of local people the ability to bring forward small developments.	See above

Notes: References include CLG (2011a), CLG (2011b) Localism Bill (2010)

Many parts of the Bill are dependent on local participation and an assumption of social cohesion. As part of the Localism Bill, and under the ethos of the 'Big Society', many decisions of planning and the way that services are run could be transferred to local communities. The proposed local decision making processes will ultimately determine the quality of services and the development and redevelopment of future homes and communities. The presumed community social cohesion integral to the Bill assumes that older people issues, and issues facing minority groups within the older population such as older Black and Minority Ethnic people, older disabled people, or older Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people, will naturally be included within the decision making processes occurring in local communities. This fails to account or acknowledge that these are marginalised groups, and that marginalisation and exclusion processes are a detachment from communities and wider society through the exclusionary practices of those who are not marginalised (Burchardt et al, 2002). For those who are marginalised, the Localism Bill offers no explicit protection or guarantee that their interests will be represented on a fair and equal footing; for the development of neighbourhoods for all ages, this could potentially mean that access to quality

services, as well as the structural aspects such as the provision of age-proofed homes and transport, may only be provided on a wildly uneven geographic basis, if at all. This issue may not come to the forefront if guidance is given to local communities about the issues facing their area, including an ageing population. However, the Bill includes no specific mention of any guidance that will be provided to either community groups and other organisations, or to Local Authorities, in ensuring that demographic change is accounted for in planning and service provision. There is also no mention of how information will be communicated to marginalised groups – we know that older people and other groups access information in a different way to other groups (Everingham et al, 2009) although we do not know whether the changes proposed in the Localism Bill will account for this.

Many elements of the Localism Bill herald an 'X-factor' school of local politics, without ensuring that social issues and concerns that are not popular or do not receive coverage in the media also receive due consideration. Without legal mandate, 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' are unlikely to progress; however even beyond the specific guise of Lifetime Neighbourhoods, homes, communities and services may not adequately reflect the anticipated demographic changes. We would call for 'planning for an ageing population' to be incorporated as a key priority into the National Planning Framework (not yet launched) by which Neighbourhood Development Plans will required to abide. Local Authorities should be compelled to undertake a needs assessment across services, homes and neighbourhoods to assess the impact of projected demographic change, and to begin to utilise a substantial (set) proportion of the community infrastructure levy to respond to this need. Finally, we would call on the Department for Communities and Local Government to expand their current equalities impact assessment of the Localism Bill to include the impact on older people, disabled people, and other minority groups, and to respond appropriately to these impact assessments. This section represents the view of the author – in our next section we introduce a summary of the views of experts in the field of homes and communities for older people.

What do the experts say about Localism and Neighbourhoods for all ages?

In November 2010, when many details of the Localism Bill had been announced but prior to the publication of the full Bill , ILC-UK organised an event exploring the issue of 'Homes and Communities for the future and Localism'. Professor Elizabeth Burton (Warwick University) was our key speaker, and we had a range of invited experts as discussants; Sue Adams (Care and Repair UK), Jane Ashcroft (Anchor), Gemma Bradshaw (Age UK), Julian Dobson (NS+) and Nick Sanderson (Audley); in addition to an audience of policy-makers and academics. Baroness Sally Greengross (ILC-UK) chaired, and the event was introduced by Volker Buscher (Arup). Here, we briefly summarise their arguments, and present a fuller transcript available as an appendix.

Many of the speakers were cautiously optimistic about the Localism Bill and its implications for Neighbourhoods for all ages. For example, the opportunities of localism were felt to be 'great' if well used, but some standards should be implemented (Sue Adams); the benefits of Localism could be exploited if guided by research and evidence (Gemma Bradshaw); the Localism Bill provided substantial opportunities for older people to become involved in planning for demographic change from an early stage (Julian Dobson); and that local people may succeed where the government has failed in being able to work in a joined up way (Jane Ashcroft). Greater flexibility in the interpretation of planning rules was welcomed (Julian Dobson), as was the greater potential for intergenerational cooperation (Nick Sanderson).

However, most of these statements were strongly caveated. One of the main issues highlighted as a negative consequence of the Localism Bill by the speakers was the potential for older person issues to become marginalised. Older people were not necessarily valued in communities and were sometimes treated with some hostility, even by those in respected positions in the community (Jane Ashcroft). Older people view their environment differently from younger people, and many assumptions are made about the environment that older people desire, that are not corroborated by research working directly with older people (Elizabeth Burton). For example, older people are perceived as wanting to: (i) downsize, (ii) live in urban environments, (iii) live in high density environments; however, all three of these assumptions contradict the views of older people directly (Elizabeth Burton). In addition, the needs of older people can sometimes be directly opposed to the needs of younger people; for example while both younger and older people may desire green spaces, their different usage of this space may lead to conflict (Elizabeth Burton). A negative consequence of the Localism Bill could be the increased propensity of local communities to make planning decisions that either do not reflect the interests of older people, or make incorrect assumptions about the needs of older people (most speakers). While the Localism Bill was viewed as potentially

damaging because of the threat of NIMBYism (Not In My Back Yard), some thought that this NIMBYism could not practically carry on for very long (Sue Adams).

There were also some sceptical comments about the ideology of the Localism Bill in terms of abolishing national policy and standard setting (Julian Dobson) which could see all set standards disappear without a 'bottom line' (Sue Adams). Some concerns were raised about geographic consistency, accountability (Gemma Bradshaw), and the removal of structures as part of the Spending Review that were sustaining a 'Big Society' and that would help the Localism Bill work in a more equitable way (Julian Dobson). A further common theme from the speakers was that one of the central tenets of the Localism Bill in terms of involving (older) people was already in occurring in practice across the country. In fact, it was felt that the Bill should include greater provision for strengthening charities and civic institutions that already exist (Julian Dobson). This point is both a positive and negative aspect of the Bill; while extant community activities provide a basis for Localism and evidence that this approach can work, these activities currently underway are not spread evenly across the country and are occurring only in those areas where there exists a strong social fabric.

A more detailed account of the points discussed in the event is available in the Appendix. While no speaker objected to the ethos of neighbourhoods for all ages, or the principle of powers transferring to more localised institutions, there were particular concerns about the effects of the latter on older people in general, and no speaker necessarily saw both as being complementary without the implementation of greater safeguards. In the next section, we discuss some of the possible barriers that prevented greater adoption of Lifetime Neighbourhoods and identify possible solutions.

'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' and Neighbourhoods for all ages: Is it a lost cause and can we fix it?

In the previous section we briefly outlined the views on Localism and Neighbourhoods for all ages of a group of experts. It is noteworthy that none of these experts questioned the idea of developing neighbourhoods for all ages per se, although were concerned about the impact of the Localism Bill generally on building homes and communities reflective of an ageing population. In this section we briefly review some of the activities of proponents of neighbourhoods for all ages and outline some parts of 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' that may need changing to facilitate their incorporation.

In 2009, ILC-UK issued a rallying cry in the midst of the recession that the Lifetime Neighbourhoods agenda was alive and kicking (Harding, 2009). Other activities promoting Lifetime Homes and Neighbourhoods continued through 2010: the Foundation for Lifetime Homes and Neighbourhoods (a joint initiative between Age UK, RADAR, TCPA and Habinteg Housing Association) was launched in March 2010, while the 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods: Turning Vision into Reality' conference in February and a similar event in June ensured that the cause remained in the public eye among practitioners and policy-makers. Our own ILC-UK event in November 2010 also attracted a good deal of attention. However, this has not swayed public policy, and any mention of older people has been conspicuously absent in communities' strategies recently.

Harding (2009) identified four main ways to make the best of recession circumstances in terms of developing neighbourhoods for all ages: i) buy land at a cheap price (during the recession) for community use[3]; ii) not to accept poor quality design; iii) to reconsider local authority borrowing; iv) to move away from aspirations to reality and to implement Lifetime Homes and Neighbourhoods as minimum standards. In the same volume other contributors echoed these sentiments and suggested ways of advancing the agenda in an era of financial austerity. Davies (2009) proposed that in addition to the adoption of a Planning Policy Presumption in favour of specialist retirement housing, that specialist construction skills should be retained in the industry through regeneration projects and applied to new developments when the recession ends. Amos (2009) viewed the recession as a 'once in a lifetime' opportunity to strengthen planning and development and see a 'flight to quality' while Bolton and Hay (2009) took the view that developers needs to take longer-term stakes in the places they build.

Although the ILC-UK position remains broadly in support of most of these 2009 recommendations, recent developments do offer an opportunity to revisit the 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' agenda specifically and to raise broader issues on developing

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[3] However, it is questionable if land prices did fall significantly during the recession and also how feasible or wise purchasing land would be in financially uncertain times even if prices were cheaper.

neighbourhoods for all ages. 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' have not captured the imagination as much as Lifetime Homes, and it is worth questioning why this may be the case.

Definition and Purpose

At several points in the literature, it is argued that 'Lifetime Homes' without 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' are essentially meaningless (for example: Harding, 2009; Low 2009). Adapting older people's homes without also adapting their neighbourhoods may only have a minimal effect on imporving quality of life – older people need age friendly homes and neighbourhoods to stay independent. In addition, evidence suggests that older people are much more likely to be dissatisfied with their area than they are their home (Figure 2). This is a different trend compared to younger people, who are more likely to report an equal balance in dissatisfaction between homes and neighbourhoods, and are much more likely to be dissatisfied with both their homes and neighbourhoods than older people. However, it is worth considering why Lifetime Homes have been a focus for policy-makers when data suggests greater dissatisfaction with neighbourhoods: is the notion of lifetime neighbourhoods too ambitious?; are lifetime homes likely to improve the quality of life of older people more than lifetime neighbourhoods?

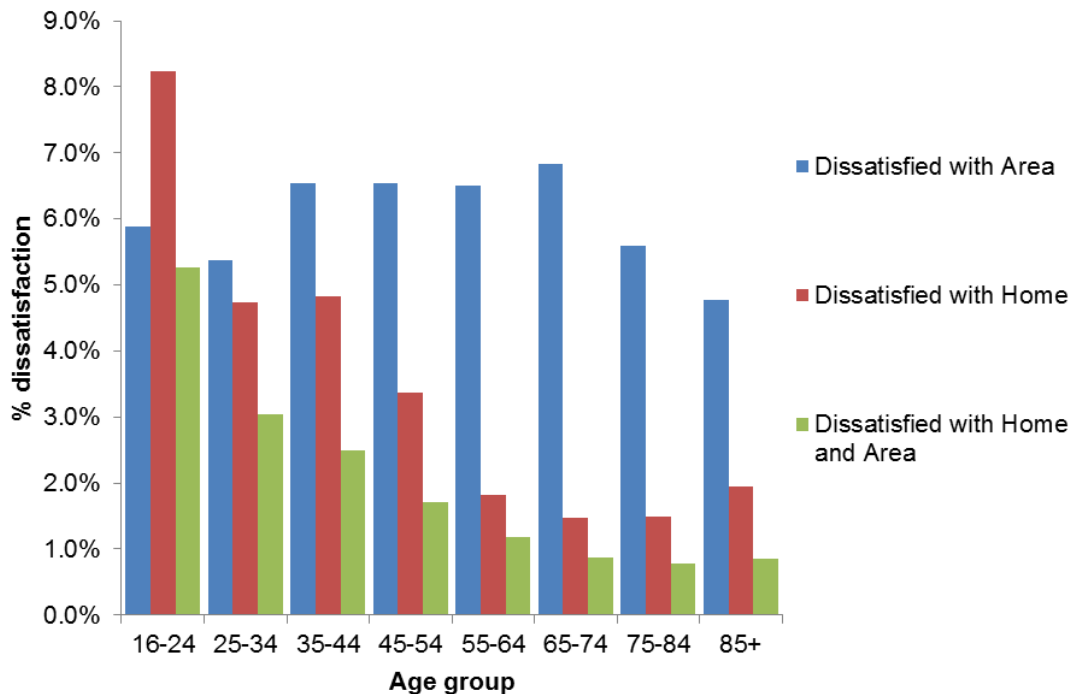**Figure 2: Dissatisfaction with Home, Area or both by Age Group of Household Reference Person in England (Survey of English Housing: 2007/8 weighted data)**

While these questions are beyond the scope of this paper, one distinction between 'Lifetime Homes' and 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' worth highlighting is the absence of clear criteria for what constitutes 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods'. Although there is general

consistency in the elements that combine to form a 'Lifetime Neighbourhood' (Box 1), these are difficult to operationalise in the same way as is the case for 'Lifetime Homes'. Lifetime Homes criteria 11, for example, requires that walls in all bathrooms and WC compartments should be capable of firm fixing and support for adaptations such as grab rails. Specifically, walls should be built that could support "adequate fixing and support grab rails should be available at any location on all walls, within a height band of 300-1800mm from the floor" (Foundation for Lifetime Homes and Neighbourhoods, 2010). However, similar stringent criteria for 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods', or more widely on what should be included in a neighbourhood for all ages, do not exist. The Common Ground Manifesto launched by Help the Aged in 2009 is one of the most comprehensive guides on 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' and includes several recommendations for policy-makers. For example, in relation to seating the manifesto calls on 'local authorities to ensure that all bus stops are equipped with seating, and that the seating is suitable for older people who are frail' (Help the Aged, 2009 p9). While such calls give strategic guidance, compared to Lifetime Homes criteria, they lack detail; in this example there remains uncertainty as to what constitutes 'suitable seating' in terms of materials, dimensions, location and frequency of bus-stop seating. In their current form, 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' lack specific criteria and minimum standards to assist developers in developing or regenerating areas to become lifetime neighbourhoods. While it could be argued that 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' are more of an intuitive concept representative of an ideology than a set of specific policies, without the development of specific criteria for measurement, it is impossible for researchers to firstly identify Lifetime Neighbourhoods and secondly if and how they 'work'. The Localism Bill and the Spending Review, which remove any framework for policing or incentivising good practice and inclusive design across large areas[4], pose further challenges to this.

A lack of specific criteria for 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' may also in part be due to the grey area that the elements of 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' appear to occupy between small scale regeneration (or remodelling) projects and new developments. Some elements appear to be suitable for smaller scale regeneration programmes, for example the provision of additional seating (although the detail of how many and which type may still be an issue). Others such as the provision of green spaces and access to public amenities (for example CLG, 2008, p105) are seemingly tailored towards new developments, such as the inclusive design of the 2012 Olympic Park[5]. A lack of distinction between actions for regeneration/remodelling or new development is also a critique that could also be levied towards Lifetime Homes, although most of the criteria for Lifetime Homes appear to be flexibly suited to either. Including features within 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' that could only be applied in a new development draws the whole agenda towards being idealistic and impracticable for Local Authorities who are considering remodelling existing neighbourhoods. Similarly, for a developer wishing to incorporate 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' into their development, the criteria could appear somewhat uninspired

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[4] Such as the removal of Regional Spatial Strategies.
[5] http://www.london2012.com/press/media-releases/2010/02/olympic-park-inclusive-design-hailed-as-setting-new-standard-for-industry.php

and uninformative. If we are going to ensure the homes and communities do reflect an ageing population, we are also going to need the support of developers. This means being clear about the criteria for 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' or more widely neighbourhoods for all ages, but also means showing that these changes work and are cost effective in the long-run. Such exercises have been undertaken to show the high societal costs of poorly designed homes (CABE, 2010, although not in the context of Lifetime Homes specifically), similar exercises should be undertaken to assess the societal costs of poorly designed neighbourhoods.

Given that we are emerging out of recession, albeit slowly, there is now a real opportunity to steer the construction industry and policy-makers towards creating neighbourhoods for all ages, once development and regeneration projects resume. However, in steering this agenda, we also need to equip those involved in advocating neighbourhoods for all ages with clearer guidance as to what is required, and this could mean producing separate (although overlapping, with many features replicated) criteria for regeneration and new development. Localism offers the opportunity for a more 'joined-up' approach to planning communities for older people, although without clear evidence as to what the necessary features are in neighbourhoods for all ages, and how they work, local groups making planning decisions are in danger of overlooking the idea of planning for demographic change.

Lifetime Neighbourhoods, Demographic Change, and the Evidence Base

Often, the issue of demographic change is compared to climate change in the magnitude of its impact. However, research exploring the impact of demographic change has not received the same prominence or funding as the issue of climate change. In the context of neighbourhoods for all ages, this means that although the elements included in any definition make logical sense, the lack of funded research means that certain specific details are absent from the criteria. If we return to the earlier example of general seating as an element of a 'Lifetime Neighbourhood', there is much evidence that the availability of seating locally is viewed as highly beneficial by older people. Older people value having somewhere to rest as it is difficult for older people to get around otherwise (WHO, 2007). This is evidenced in further qualitative work that shows that in the UK, the type of seating is important with older people preferring wooden seating with arm rests and of a suitable height (Newton et al, 2010). However, what is not clear in the current literature is whether or not having more seating actually does encourage older people to venture out and maintain their independence and quality of life. In other words, is increasing the number of benches a cost-effective method to keep older people independent, how many benches are needed and where should they be located?

Raising a question of (holistic) cost-effectiveness may be encroaching upon areas that are beyond the scope of this short discussion paper, as to whether we should be evaluating lifetime neighbourhoods in this way and more generally to the way we treat and value

older people. While there is general consensus on what older people would like to occur in their neighbourhoods, which is remarkably consistent across very different contexts (Plouffe & Kalache, 2010), there is less evidence as to whether these elements actually work – could the comparative absence of this type of evidence be responsible for the marginalisation of 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' and neighbourhoods for all ages to some extent? Or should the views of older people, who constitute one of the largest, wealthiest, and most politically active groups in the UK (Bolton and Hay, 2009) be enough for policy-makers to implement these changes?

In reality and against a backdrop of widespread and deep cuts in public spending, it is unlikely that any further public spending will be justified without evidence of efficacy; similarly if the private sector is expected to lead in developing neighbourhoods for all ages, without evidence of financial benefit this effort may stall. In addition to our earlier call for greater specificity, we would also call for a programme of evidence exploring if and how elements of 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' work. This programme should sit within a wider program examining the impact of demographic change. Looking at the issue of climate change, 'Living With Environmental Change' (LWEC) is a partnership of 22 public sector bodies including all research councils and central government departments aiming to ensure government, business, and society, are equipped with the foresight, knowledge and tools to mitigate, adapt to and capitalise on environmental change. In the case of demographic change, there is little scope to mitigate, although plenty of scope to adapt to living with demographic change. Currently, no such comprehensive programme exists.

Developing neighbourhoods for all ages falls within the remit of the Department for Communities and Local Government. However, the implications of failing to develop communities reflective of demographic change will be felt across many other government departments – notably the Department of Health. Despite the obvious consequences to the health budget of a failure to keep older people independent and physically active in the local community, just one document on the Department of Health website mentions 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods', and only 34 references are found when searching for 'neighbourhoods'[6]. Part of the cause may lie with the issues highlighted earlier in this paper – revolving around the evidence base and focus of 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' and neighbourhoods for all ages – although it also suggests a failure on behalf of central government departments to fully engage with the broader communities agenda. In order for the concept of neighbourhoods for all ages (or specifically Lifetime Neighbourhoods) to progress, we would urge for greater cooperation between government departments to reflect the cross-cutting nature of the Neighbourhoods agenda, and for all departments to incorporate communities and neighbourhoods for all ages into their policies and research agenda. If we are to get more people to be active across all ages, if we are to reduce the fear of crime, or if we are to encourage volunteering in the local community then all departments regardless of a direct communities remit need to engage with the communities' agenda. We would call for a wide ranging programme of research and policy

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[6] Checked February 14th 2011. However, the CLG 2008 report was in conjunction with both the Department of Health and Department for Work and Pensions.

involving all research councils and government departments to explore 'Living With Demographic Change'. Climate change appears to have captured the imagination of policy-makers and the wider public; demographic change has not had the same effect despite the far-reaching effects, although a joined-up initiative could go some way to remedying this situation.

Neighbourhoods for all ages and young people

'Lifetime neighbourhoods' are defined by some as offering the best possible outcomes for all in terms of health, housing, wellbeing and maximise the potential for civic engagement. However, much of the discourse on 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' has only examined the needs of older people, and proponents tend to be those involved in older people's issues. 'Lifetime' neighbourhoods often therefore present something of a misnomer, with younger people and families excluded from the discussion, with 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' are often only framed around the needs of older people. This is justified in the rationale that any of these modifications will have spillover effects onto younger people; similarly, 'a housing policy for an ageing society is a good housing policy for everyone' (CLG, 2008, p110). However, without clear thought as to what these spillover effects could entail, there is reduced incentive for planners, and local people in the context of Localism, to make potentially costly adaptations to the local environment. While keeping older people in the community, one aim of neighbourhoods for all ages, is beneficial to people of all ages, in its current form the 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' agenda does have some drawbacks in its failure to:

a) illuminate or detail how adaptations to the community, such as more seating, can be beneficial to people of all ages (beyond referencing the argument above that keeping older people in the community is beneficial in general terms);

b) to actually evaluate whether the 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' agenda, in its current form, is inclusive to people of all ages, including young people.

Arguments that support the benefits of neighbourhoods for all age groups are both unevidenced (returning to an earlier theme), but more fundamentally, completely absent from the 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' debate. Currently, the 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' agenda does not present itself as being either cost effective across generations, or intergenerationally fair. It also does not take into account wider demographic changes such as the postponement of parenthood, increases in single member households and delayed exits out of the parental home, which may also require some neighbourhood modifications. If we are to succeed in building neighbourhoods for an ageing society, then we would urge for greater theorisation and research into 'if' and 'how' adaptations could improve neighbourhoods for all ages. Failure to have done so may explain why there has been little interest from younger people's organisations into 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' and may also explain why Lifetime Neighbourhoods have virtually disappeared from recent policy.

Lifetime Neighbourhoods and a changing social profile

There is an abundance of evidence demonstrating the salient demographic trend of the new millennium – population ageing. One-fifth of children born now can expect to live to 100 (CLG, 2008) and the over 85s constitute the fastest growing age group in the UK, with number projected to quadruple by 2051 (Wright et al, 2010). However, what is distinctive about those who will become older people in the near future is that they are expected to continue to be economically and socially active. The State Pension Age is rising, the number of older people engaging in caring duties (of their own parents, their partners, children and grandchildren) is already sizable and is likely to increase (Smith-Koslowski, 2009; Breeze & Stafford, 2010). Qualitative work has found that older people are keen to have and to extend volunteering options, employment options, flexibility in arrangements, opportunities for civic participation, training opportunities, and entrepreneurial opportunities (WHO, 2007). On the face of it, we may experience higher older age dependency ratios in the future, although this may be in terms of age structures alone and not in terms of actual dependency per se. It is therefore reasonable that if we expect older people to remain engaged to civic and economic systems that our neighbourhoods enable them to do so. Planners and policy-makers should prepare not only for larger numbers of older people, but also that these older people occupy a different social profile to those currently of pensionable age.

In fact, the provision of neighbourhoods that can accommodate the needs of all ages, as well as the changing demands made on older people, may become a lynchpin of the 'Big Society'. Given that the 'Big Society' is an idea grounded in increasing rates of volunteering, and that currently older people (65+) volunteer on average twice as often as people under 65 years (12.5 vs 6.9 times a year)[7], having neighbourhoods that facilitate access to volunteering opportunities for older people is likely to be of vital importance. This may be in terms of: transport to access volunteering options; homes that enable older people to stay part of the community; neighbourhoods that foster a sense of community and lower levels of fear of crime; neighbourhoods that have a full range of services that are needed to keep older people active and volunteering; or neighbourhoods that have access to a community hub or base for volunteering.

Community Hubs, Lifetime Neighbourhoods, and Cuts

A key element to successful lifetime homes is the presence of a Community Hub or focal point (as outlined in Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), 2009). These are often multi-purpose spaces available for residents to meet, with facilities designed to support a range of activities. While in the HCA (2009) context, the notion of a hub was to be incorporated into retirement developments as a bridge between the elderly population and the wider neighbourhood, here, we advocate that a mixed use and publically owned space to also be an essential part of a Lifetime Neighbourhood. This is not necessarily an expensive measure, but the social (and economic) benefits are likely to improve the quality of life for older people and the wider community (WHO, 2005). We would also emphasise

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[7] Based on own analysis of British Social Attitudes Survey 2008. However, this result is based on the number of reports of volunteering and not reports of any volunteering in the past year, and largely reflects the higher rates of volunteering among those older people who perform some volunteering.

that the current planning laws and particularly the use of Section 106, a legally binding planning obligation that is used to support the provision of services and infrastructure, could be stretched to accommodate the development of community hubs and facilities for all generations. Including a mixed use space as part of a development could only be beneficial for all parties – particularly so for developers who could see the value of their developments rise. Section 106 could involve somewhat unconventional hubs being incorporated if the evidence supports the value to the local community; for example a small day care facility that would provide a service for older people, and employment or an after-hours space for younger people. It could also be used more conventionally, for example in the construction of a new nursery or educational facility that could also host activities for other groups in the evenings or weekends. Greater and more creative use of Section 106 does entail private developers taking a longer-term stake in their developments, a move that has been met with a degree of reluctance in the past (Bolton & Hay, 2009). Furthermore, the imposition of Section 106 on new developments has reduced over recession years (Amos, 2009). Additionally, as discussed earlier, the role of Section 106 alongside the Community Trust Levy is unclear at this point (introduced in 2008 and altered as part of the Localism Bill).

Community assets are a prominent feature of the Localism Bill, and community hubs may prove key in terms of promoting the 'Big Society' and fostering intergenerational relations. However, as discussed, there are some potential drawbacks through the Bill, in that their running may increasingly become dependent on local groups and not necessarily reflect the needs of marginalised populations. While Localism may increase the potential for shared intergenerational usage of assets (United for All Ages, 2011), this does depend on the perception of the asset itself. Lately, several local community assets have closed because of Spending Cuts. A recent example is public toilets in Manchester where the council closed 16 public conveniences, leaving just one open to the public in the city centre (The Independent, 2011). It is unlikely that public loos will attract interested local groups to take over their running, but do represent a necessary element of a neighbourhood for all ages in facilitating older people to retain their independence. Manchester City Council has also cut the funding for 340 homes across the city that allowed people with disabilities to retain their independence, as well as closing some public libraries, leisure centres and swimming pools. While some of these other services such as libraries and leisure centres may attract takeovers by non-profit organisations[8], it is other services, such as public toilets, which are important components in promoting accessibility for older people in local communities that are likely to fall to the wayside. Manchester City Council is among the first Local Authorities to announce the full scale of its intended cuts, and others are likely to follow suit.

Community hubs are vital in ensuring that people of all ages have the necessary facilities to access their local area. The Localism Bill recognises the value of these through an emphasis on community assets; however, identification of these assets is not the same as

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[8] Several leisure centres are already managed by non-profit trusts and organisations.

protection, and neither is offering to transfer these to public hands when Local Authorities are not able to continue their running, or in the case of assets when the opportunity to transfer these to public hands. As the example of the public toilets may come to demonstrate, those assets that do not mobilise the public, particularly in areas with low levels of social cohesion, are likely to be lost. There is no explicit statutory protection for these assets, and their loss would represent reversals in the progression of neighbourhoods suitable for all ages. Additionally, building new assets is transferring to the sole domain of the private sector, which is unlikely to protect the interests of marginalised groups in the same way that the public sector has historically. Recent developments following the Localism Bill appear to be in favour of strengthening community hubs and assets in rhetoric. However, we would call for the explicit protection by Local Authorities of hubs, assets, and amenities as part of the Bill. In its current form, the Localism Bill contains no safeguards to be implemented in the event that taking ownership of local assets attracts little interest among local groups.

Summary and Recommendations

In this short discussion paper, we have examined the development, definition and direction of 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods', but more widely neighbourhoods for all ages, in the context of the Localism Bill. Against a backdrop of continued demographic change including: population ageing and postponed transitions to adulthood, greater numbers of single-person households, higher levels of urbanisation, and migration; the need to plan, design and construct homes and neighbourhoods that reflect these changes has never been greater. However, the current Localism Bill contains no legally binding mandate to ensure that Local Authorities plan and respond to this demographic change. In its current form, the Bill is also in danger of further marginalising the needs of older people through transferring many decisions to the popular vote, without ensuring that the needs of those who are not socially included are protected. Devoid of explicitly incorporating demographic change and an ageing population into planning guidelines, we risk being unprepared to support a growing population of older people to retain their independence as long as possible. Ultimately, if neighbourhoods are unable to sustain the independence of older people for an optimum amount of time, the cost to the state is likely to be dear - several sources already show that the cost of housing older people with moderate care needs in an institutional setting is much higher than ensuring that older people retain their independence for longer (for example Curtis 2010)[9]. However, in this paper we also acknowledge that the 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' approach may need some modifications and we have made some suggestions as to what these could be. These modifications may mitigate some of the potentially negative consequences that the Localism Bill may bring, and optimise some of the more positive. As discussed earlier, there is now a real opportunity to develop a new agenda that resolves some of the previous issues and makes a real commitment to developing neighbourhoods for all ages.

Some limitations of our paper should be highlighted. Firstly, this was not a systematic review of the evidence for or against 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods', and was not intended to be. In fact, if anything, this paper reveals the needs for such reviews into the evidence to be carried out in order to clearly highlight gaps in the evidence. Nevertheless, although systematic review techniques were not applied here, a dearth of quantitative and/or experimental literature in particular was found. A second caveat is that our review of recent policy changes has focussed mainly on England, and we have not examined in any detail if differences are evident in the other UK countries although many of the points raised here are relevant across the UK and beyond. Neither of these limitations detract from the recommendations we make to policy-makers, academics and the wider research community that we have formed based on the discussions presented earlier:

Recommendations for local and national government policy-makers and developers:

1. The **National Planning Framework should include specific provision and guidance**

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[9] ILC-UK is also currently undertaking research to examine the costs and benefits of Extra-Care housing.

for planning for an ageing society, which Local Authorities would be required to incorporate in drawing up Neighbourhood Development Plans. If Regional Spatial Strategies are being abolished, then an **alternative legally binding mandate** needs to be imposed on Local Authority planners to ensure that it is explicit that local housing and community strategies account for an ageing population, a rise in single person households, and provision for young people's housing.

2. All **Local Authorities should undertake a needs assessment across services, planning systems, communities, and homes** to assess the impact of an ageing population. While this recommendation may appear at first unfeasible, and goes against the ethos of Localism, it is an example of guided localism, which is needed in this case to explicitly protect the needs of vulnerable people and plan for the future. Such a needs assessment will not only help Local Authorities plan ahead, but in the long-run, among other benefits, can help to ensure that resources are spent that help facilitate 'active ageing' which could in turn lead to a reduction in social care spending, and become a key facilitator for the Big Society. Revenue from the Community Infrastructure Levy fund could be used to help respond to the result of the needs assessments.

3. The Localism Bill includes statements about the value of community assets, although without specific provision for older people, we may see neighbourhoods where these assets transfer only to those causes and groups that are more popular or vocal. **The Localism Bill should include greater safeguards to ensure that the rights of marginalised or minority populations to access a full range of amenities and services locally are protected.**

4. The Department for Communities and Local Government should expand their equalities impact assessment of the Localism Bill to include an **equalities impact of the proposed changes in terms of both building and construction,as well as service provision, on all marginalised groups including older people**, and respond accordingly. A 'Neighbourhood for all ages' is one with a full range of amenities. Furthermore, the government should reassess the impact of the Spending Review on marginalised populations including older people and disabled people. Decisions made because of cuts in funding, such as closing public toilets, have a disproportionate impact on older people and people with disabilities. Although the government claims to have undertaken an equalities impact assessment of the cuts, the cuts may actually represent reversals in the provision of neighbourhoods that are suitable for older people. We would call for a joined-up approach among bodies representing minority and marginalised groups to research and lobby for changes in the way spending cuts affect marginalised populations.

5. **Decent Homes Standards should include Lifetime Homes Standards and should be expanded to include the private sector.** As one of the few areas of the housing budget not cut in the recent Spending Review, the Decent Homes Standard represents one of the vehicles to ensure an adequate housing supply for an ageing population. However, the Decent Homes Standard only extends to public sector housing, exposing many others to poor quality housing that may also be unsuitable to their changing needs

across the lifecourse. Given that Lifetime Homes are a crucial element of Lifetime Neighbourhoods, this appears one of the few remaining ways in which the state could continue to directly press forward with Lifetime Neighbourhoods. Poorly designed homes are known to be very expensive (CABE 2010), and poor quality housing that is not warm or weatherproofed may also hold knock on costs in terms of health and social care budgets (Donald 2009). In the face of population ageing, we argue it is short sighted not to incorporate Lifetime Homes into the Decent Homes Standards.

6. With the onset of Localism and greater community powers for planning, we would urge Local Authorities to be bound to a set of **minimum standards for the provision of accessible, relevant and timely information and advice to older people** and other groups on local development. At the same time, we support earlier calls for a presumption in favour of development to construct more neighbourhoods suitable for all ages.

7. We would also call for **on-going evaluation of the effects of the Localism Bill**, particularly in relation to older people. This follows concern that the Localism Bill could lead to wildly uneven provision of services, communities and homes suitable for people of all ages. This should happen from the outset; currently it is not clear how the effects of the Localism Bill will be assessed, particularly with the loss of the Audit Commission.

8. We would also repeat earlier calls from ILC-UK in 2009 for the **private sector to take a longer-term stake in developments and for greater use of Section 106 of planning laws**. We would also seek more creative use of Section 106 to include more provision for community hubs, intergenerational spaces, and specialised older people services.

9. We call for the government to step up to the challenge of demographic change in the same way that it has stepped up to the challenge of environmental change. We propose a cross-departmental programme of research and policy across all government departments and all research councils to **ensure a coordinated approach to 'Living With Demographic Change'**. This programme would ensure that all organisations have the necessary tools and knowledge to plan for demographic change, including an ageing population. Part of this programme should ensure that homes and communities reflect the needs of an older population and allow older people the flexibility to remain part of the community for an optimal time.

Recommendations for academics and proponents of a neighbourhood for all ages:

1. All the components of a neighbourhood for all ages that we advocate should be clearly evidenced as beneficial to the health and wellbeing of people in the community. In particular, research should focus on plugging the gaps left by the current dearth of quantitative and experimental studies (where this is possible and appropriate). Prior to this, a number of systematic reviews into different domains of neighbourhoods for all ages should be undertaken to consolidate existing evidence. The ultimate goal should be to establish both consistency in the principles of neighbourhoods for all, as well as a sound evidence base.

2. Building on (1), the **criteria developed for neighbourhoods for all ages should be**

strengthened to include more robust and specific (and evidence-based) recommendations as to what constitutes a neighbourhood suitable for all ages. While having equivalent criteria as Lifetime Homes may not be possible for Neighbourhoods due to the scale and variation and even lack of definition as to what constitutes a neighbourhood, 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' as a specific policy and 'neighbourhoods for all ages' as a concept may falter without the inclusion of specific criteria integral to community design.

3. The current guidelines for neighbourhoods for all ages should reflect not only the changing demographic structure but also the **changing roles we expect older people to assume in the future**. There should be provision for the greater economic and family (caring) roles we expect older people to assume, as well as their different household characteristics.

4. Advocates of 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' and neighbourhoods for all ages should consider **which criteria are relevant for smaller regeneration/remodelling projects and which for new developments**. Policy-makers should be made aware of small scale adaptations that work to make neighbourhoods more accessible to all ages as well as more ambitious proposals for new developments, but not necessarily within the same set of criteria; in keeping with (2) this would make the criteria more focused and fit for purpose.

5. We should aim to **put the 'Lifetime' back into Lifetime Neighbourhoods** and theorise and evidence how the proposals made for adaptations suitable for older people will also benefit younger people; some elements may not have a direct benefit for younger people, but none should have a negative impact. 'Lifetime neighbourhoods', and neighbourhoods for all ages more generally, should be intergenerationally fair. We should also explicitly consider the needs of younger people in our proposals, as young people currently have the highest levels of dissatisfaction with neighbourhoods.

6. We should reject poorly designed neighbourhoods at the planning stage. The Commission for Architecture and Built Environment (2010) have a framework for poorly designed homes and a similar **standard for poorly designed neighbourhoods should also be established**. Cost-benefit analyses that illuminate the price of poorly designed neighbourhoods should be undertaken.

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Appendix I: Meeting Notes

The notes below represent a summary of the event on Homes and Communities for the Future and Localism organised by ILC-UK in November 2010. Any inaccuracies or errors are the author's own.

Introductions

Volker Buscher welcomed the audience and opened the debate by highlighting three key drivers of change: changing demographic structures, climate change, and a drive towards urbanisation and noted that design was beginning to reflect these pressures. Despite the short term drivers of change, he urged for the need to consider these long-term challenges.

Baroness Sally Greengross welcomed the audience, and called for environments to be made accessible for all ages, highlighting the work of the three sponsors (Arup, Audley and Anchor) in helping to do so. She stated that older people, while having specialist needs, also wished to be integrated into the community and to the main debate. She noted the role of extra care housing as being one way of housing older people with moderate support needs. She also questioned why the potential for both intergenerational cooperation and mutualised approaches had not been maximised for service delivery in the UK, citing the example of the John Lewis approach to ownership and service delivery. Before welcoming the main speaker, she urged for greater research and analysis to help in the development of Lifetime Neighbourhoods.

Main Speaker

Professor Elizabeth Burton was invited to present the findings of her research examining inclusive design and older people as well as to discuss general points about localism.

Professor Burton began her presentation through stressing the importance of community design to prevent older people from becoming effectively trapped in their own homes. She emphasised three assumptions made about older people that were not corroborated by her own research: these were that (i) older people want to downsize; (ii) older people want to live in urban environments; (iii) older people want to live in high density environments. She outlined further some of her research on the I'DGO project (Inclusive Design for Getting Outdoors) which used a variety of methods to learn about how inclusive design worked for older people including in-depth interviews, accompanied walks, and a questionnaire. Older people were said to prefer more low density, mixed usage environments with plenty of greenery. In terms of layout, older people preferred gently winding streets, and an irregular grid form with plenty of landmarks was the preferred design. Elements that were not welcomed by older people were shared footways with cycle paths, and any pedestrian design should take into account that older people, even those who do not require a mobility aid, spend a longer

time moving about. The full results from the project are available on the following website: www.idgo.ac.uk. She also outlined the second phase of the project – I'DGO TOO – which included a greater focus on the design of gardens and outdoor spaces. It also examined the way that older people and younger people viewed their environments, using Google Earth to compare responses with reality, finding that older and younger people viewed their environment substantially differently.

In terms of Localism, she highlighted the overall benefit of a model of local decision making but also that this could present some disadvantages. One main benefit she identified was that the benefits of housing and community design as a preventative mechanism against ill-health could be extolled at the planning stage through a more joined-up approach.

Discussants

The discussants were invited to respond to Professor Elizabeth Burton's presentation as well as to make general comments on Localism and Lifetime Neighbourhoods.

Sue Adams

Sue began by spelling out her interest in inclusive design for neighbourhoods for those with Dementia. She outlined some of the context behind today's political climate highlighting that for the first time since 1949, there was zero national money for private sector renewal for existing housing and neighbourhoods. This was coupled with a massive reduction in the social housing budget. This represented a critical time for the state. The Localism Bill could potentially mean that housing and community design standards could go without setting a bottom line. She highlighted that Localism brought with it many opportunities and would be great if well used, although needed to have some standards.

Jane Ashcroft

Jane began her presentation through stressing some of the elements that older people looked for when choosing accommodation, based on research conducted by Anchor. These elements included having a wide choice on a range of tenures, services, mixed-models and locations. Similarly to Elizabeth Burton, she outlined how some of the stereotypes associated with older people's homes and communities were not corroborated by research; for example, contrary to the popular stereotype, older people in her research did not actively seek out living near the seaside. She highlighted the potential that the Localism Bill brought in terms of allowing older people to play a greater role and for local decision making to bring with it a more joined up style of governance, something that the current structures had failed to ensure. Greater involvement of older people could also strengthen intergenerational relations. However, she also outlined a few cautionary points including that older people, in her experience, were not necessarily welcomed in communities.

Gemma Bradshaw

Gemma began her presentation through presenting her view that she was cautiously optimistic about the Localism Bill. However, she also stressed that the process of shifting power from national structures to more localised structures should hold on to the evidence and research. In terms of the 'Big Society', Gemma stressed that this was already being practiced in communities across the country, and that a strength of older people was that they are very practical in getting things changed. She also outlined an initiative from Age UK - 'change one thing' - where communities were encouraged to come together to change one thing in the lives of older people with support from the organisation. In relation to Localism she raised three questions: (i) how would a consistent approach be adopted across the country in a way that was not dogmatic; (ii) how would the voices of older people be heard; (iii) how would accountability be maintained.

Julian Dobson

Julian began with a critique of Localism of how it could be perceived as an exercise in washing hands of national policy and 'standards setting' in the visceral belief that the government does not 'know best', but also disposing of evidence that would show if it did or not. He highlighted how the Department for Communities and Local Government was retreating from any kind of national role and how many of the structures that until now had been sustaining a 'Big Society' were being removed, such as discretionary funding, which would have a big effect on the lives of older people. He balanced these arguments with some of the opportunities that Localism could bring. He highlighted that it could allow people to learn from co-production and gave all in the community an opportunity to think what kind of housing and services were needed. He stated that in order for Localism to work, existing charities and civic institutions would need to be utilised. He finished by stressing that advocacy was becoming more important than ever but that this should shift from the behalf of older people to being carried out by older people.

Nick Sanderson

Nick began by outlining some of the work of his own organisation. He highlighted how his organisation dealt with older people on a daily basis who did not necessarily have a huge support network and weren't aware of their own options; he felt that some older people said that they wanted to stay in their homes because they didn't know their own options. Most older people in his experience desired flexible care and independent living, although didn't necessarily know that it exists and needed to be made aware of the range available. He felt that the principal reason why older people bought from his organisation was that they wanted security. He said that one of the main challenges of Localism was to foster intergerational relations; older people tended to see younger people as a threat and there is a role for Localism to combat this.

Debate

Andy Shipley raised the issue that there was much scope for urban design, sustainable development, green infrastructure and inclusive design to align together and that this should be reflected in networks that support local decision making. Elizabeth Burton agreed that a more unified approach would assist both agendas. However, Jane Ashcroft cautioned that both agendas were sometimes in conflict citing the example of cars and car parking - for example, there is an expectation that older people don't want cars but actually older people often need and want cars.

David Sinclair asked the panel their opinion on what citizens at the local level could likely regulate. He asked whether they thought, for example, residents could regulate on marketing and cold calling. He also asked whether the panel thought that Localism could bring with it a change in attitudes to planning retirement homes.

Gemma Bradshaw responded that it was difficult to anticipate what people would ask for and whether they would actually ask for what they wanted. She cited research that showed that the majority of people thought that the public should be involved in decisions on health, although when asked personally, they did not want to become involved themselves. She suggested that ambitions associated with Localism may have to be scaled back.

Noreen Siba questioned whether there were more dangers than benefits to Localism and also questioned where there were examples of local democracy working well. She said that currently in Local politics, it was the loudest who exerted the greatest influence. Julian Dobson responded that in a localist framework, the role of Local Councillors was likely to come to the fore and that the most successful developers could be those with the strongest relationships with Local Councillors. Jane Ashcroft supported this by highlighting the inconsistency in the Localist approach. However, Sue Adams also balanced this by saying that Nimbyism would not be allowed to carry on for very long and that a National Planning Framework should ensure that older person accommodation continues to be developed.

Bishop David Walker presented the viewpoint of the Church of England and highlighted the particular issue of older people in rural communities. In his experience, older people who became frail in rural areas were compelled to move to more urban areas. His experiences as a priest had demonstrated to him that it is important for older people to know that they are able to stay somewhere they are loved and respected. Elizabeth Burton supported this through stating that her research also showed the importance of social networks for mental and physical health. Sally Greengross added that the focus on rural poverty was in danger of overlooking rural isolation. Noreen Siba expanded on the issue of rurality through highlighting that some villages did have continuing care services that allowed older people to remain. Peter Richards, a Local Councillor from Devon, highlighted a further issue in that due to recent trends in migration, rural

communities were increasingly likely to have an older population that simply did not understand village life and may actually have a relatively weak social network.

Jane Ashcroft stated that what older people needed out of their communities was the help of people and time and that social care provision in a local area would have a massive impact on local communities and social cohesion. Julian Dobson supported this by stating that it is important for older people to feel they have a contribution to make. Andy Shipley cautioned that there was no guarantee that new legislation would include any provision for an ageing population.

Sue Adams stressed that one of her primary concerns was about disadvantage and that there was little room for manoeuvre among those on the lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder. Older disadvantaged people were most likely to be ignored by Localism. There was also a missed connection between health and social care which put a great swathe of people at risk of unequal access. Older disadvantaged people in rural areas were at particular risk of being overlooked. Sally Greengross asked whether an influx of richer previously urban older people into rural areas could help older people issues in rural areas, although Sue Adams responded that this was unlikely. Gemma Bradshaw also reminded the audience that spending cuts will have a disproportionate effect in rural areas.

Janet Sutherland introduced the subject of downsizing to the debate and cautioned that many older people simply would not have the equity to downsize into specialist retirement accommodation, meaning that it was vital that their homes and neighbourhoods could sustain their independence. Julian Dobson also questioned the wider private housing market and pointed out that housing equity was increasingly being used to fund care, where previously it had been transmitted directly to the next generation and the potential consequences of this shift were unknown. Sue Adams followed on by highlighting the gaping hole of intergenerational relations in planning homes and communities, but also cited positive examples of where the older and younger generation had developed an integrated solution to older people housing. Elizabeth Burton stated that good quality design could enhance the experience of older and younger people living side by side by using an example from Scandinavia where the choice of building materials had minimised the impact of noise from the younger generation on the older. Nori Graham highlighted that fostering successful intergenerational relations was partially dependent on the success of engaging younger people into the challenges facing older people including dementia and accessing new technology.

Rachel Rooney added a positive note by informing the audience that a new development London plan was being developed that would incorporate a framework for Lifetime Neighbourhoods and Localism. Gemma Bradshaw welcomed this development as it showed that national frameworks were not necessary to implement Lifetime Neighbourhoods. Gary Day added a voice of caution from the perspective of

developers by questioning how the seventeen recommendations for Lifetime Neighbourhoods would be implemented and stressed the importance of engaging planners in the debate.

As the debate closed, most of the speakers and discussants ended on a positive note. Julian Dobson highlighted the potential of older people to form and take charge of housing cooperatives, while Sue Adams stated that localism could help to counter national level negativity about older people - a point echoed by Jane Ashcroft. Finally, Elizabeth Burton reminded the audience that some of the recent changes in policy brought health and housing closer together. She cited a public health article published in the Lancet that showed that many of the health improvements of the last century were correlated with improvements in housing, and that improving community and home design could have measurable health and economic benefits.

Appendix II: List of Speakers and Attendees

The list below shows the list of speakers and attendees to the event on Lifetime Neighbourhoods and Localism organised by ILC-UK in November 2010. Any inaccuracies or errors are the author's own.
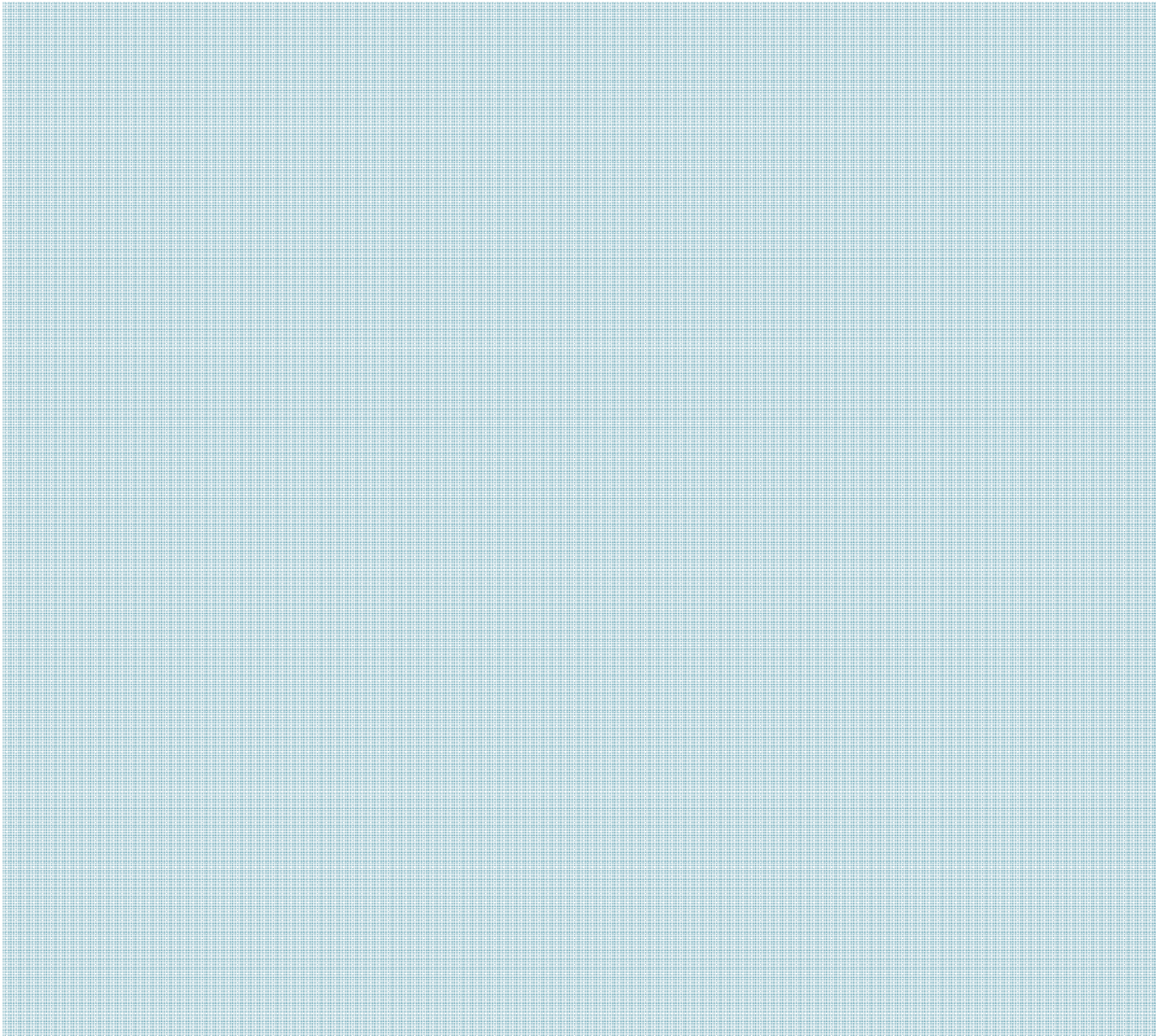
Speakers and Discussants

Sue Adams	Care and Repair
Jane Ashcroft	Anchor
Gemma Bradshaw	Age UK
Professor Elizabeth Burton	University of Warwick
Volker Buscher	ARUP
Julian Dobson	NS+
Baroness Sally Greengross	ILC-UK
Nick Sanderson	Audley

Attendees

Matthew Barac	South Bank University
Peter Barnett	Office of Baroness Greengross
Annette Bauer	London School of Economics
Laura Bennett	Sense
Craig Berry	ILC-UK
Michele Board	Bournemouth University
Claire Brine	Circle Anglia
Gillian Connor	Hanover
Ann Crawford	
Peter Davey	
Gary Day	McCarthy and Stone
Patrick Devlin	POLLARD THOMAS EDWARDS architects
David Driscoll	Audley Retirement
Alex Fenton	Cambridge University
Rhiannon Freeland	ILC-UK
John Galvin	EAC Housing Care
Roger Goss	Patient Concern

Nori Graham	
Martin Green	English Community Care Association
Nicky Hayes	King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
Jon Head	Hanover
Barbara Hobbs	Audley Retirement
Tessa Hodgson	Audley Retirement
Caroline Instance	The Actuarial Profession
Dylan Kneale	ILC-UK
Mervyn Kohler	Age UK
Ben Krauze	Audley Retirement
Janet Lewis	
Dave McCullough	Insight Public Affairs
Sally Moss	Foundation for Lifetime Homes & Neighbourhoods
John Nettleton	Audley Retirement
Clive Parker	ExtraCare Solutions
Jackie Richards	
Peter Richards	
Rachel Rooney	Greater London Authority
Michael Rugman	
Jonathan Schifferes	NEF Consulting
Becky Seale	TNS-BMRB
Valentina Serra	ILC-UK
Andrew Shipley	Foundation for Lifetime Homes & Neighbourhoods
Noreen Siba	ILC-UK
David Sinclair	ILC-UK
Anthony Slater	Thomas Pocklington Trust
Philip Spiers	First Stop Advice
Catherine Stubbings	Celandine Strategic Housing
Janet Sutherland	Housing LIN
Pam Turpin	ARUP
RT REVD David Walker	Bishop of Worcester
Jessica Watson	ILC-UK