



Prioritising both quality and quantity of housing for older generations



Comment 14.01.25 by Martyn Craddock

Designing for older people is designing for everyone, writes *Martyn Craddock*, chief executive of United St Saviour's Charity

By 2035, nearly 29% of England's population will be over 60. Addressing the housing needs of this growing demographic

isn't just a question of policy, it's an urgent necessity. The recent [Older People's Housing Taskforce report](#) outlines a blueprint to tackle this challenge, calling for the construction of at least 30,000 later-living homes annually, far above the current 7,000.

Integrating these recommendations into the government's housing strategy is vital to ensure the market serves everyone, not just families and first-time buyers, but also older adults whose needs are increasingly pressing.

Specialist housing for older people isn't about serving a single demographic. It has far-reaching benefits across the housing chain. At United St Saviour's Charity, our award-winning Appleby Blue project exemplifies this impact. With 57 homes housing 65 residents, it has freed up 128 bedrooms, directly benefitting families from the London Borough of Southwark waiting for larger homes.

The benefits extend beyond the housing market. Age-friendly housing reduces strain on public services by enabling older adults to live independently. At Appleby Blue, we've already seen [residents no longer require mental health services](#) after moving into well-designed, supportive environments. This is proof that good housing improves lives, reduces public costs and strengthens communities.

The tension between quality and quantity in housebuilding is often overstated. Both are achievable. Yes, we need more homes, but they must be the right homes.

"Age-friendly homes should offer choice, quality and accessibility, fostering a sense of belonging for all generations"

Good design isn't a luxury; it's essential. As the taskforce report highlights, designing for older people is designing for everyone. Age-friendly homes should offer choice, quality and accessibility, fostering a sense of belonging for all generations. To achieve this, developers must be incentivised to apply the same high standards to social housing as they do to private developments.

At Appleby Blue, we recently hosted a series of events that brought together architects, councils, developers and community groups to share knowledge and foster collaboration. These discussions

<https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/comment/prioritising-both-quality-and-quantity-of-housing-for-older-generations-89871>

highlighted the interconnected ‘three-legged stool’ of housing, health and social care – each essential to supporting thriving communities.

Just as we strive to break down silos across these sectors, we urge the government to consider the health and social care aspects alongside its forthcoming housing strategy to deliver truly integrated solutions.

Embedding specialist housing providers like almshouses into the National Planning Policy Framework is equally critical. Almshouses have proven their worth for centuries, offering not just affordable housing, but also a strong sense of community.

Research by Bayes Business School reveals that almshouse residents enjoy over two years of additional life expectancy, probably due to the social connectedness that reduces loneliness. However, many almshouse charities struggle to expand because of a lack of recognition as affordable housing providers, limiting their ability to address growing demand.

Appleby Blue was made possible through a Section 106 agreement linked to a high-end private development elsewhere in Southwark, reinvesting resources into properly affordable, high-quality social housing.

“By integrating the taskforce’s recommendations and ensuring housing for older adults is a central focus, we can address critical gaps while benefitting society”

This project exemplifies how public-private-voluntary partnerships can deliver transformative results. These homes aren’t just places to live, they’re community hubs where residents thrive, contribute and feel supported.

The government’s housing strategy must build on these lessons. Expanding Section 106 agreements, incentivising collaboration with specialist housing providers and prioritising age-friendly developments are essential.

The government’s ambitious housing targets present an opportunity to transform housing for older generations. By integrating the taskforce’s recommendations and ensuring housing for older adults is a central focus, we can address critical gaps while benefitting society.

Good housing is more than bricks and mortar. It is about creating spaces where people of all ages feel valued and supported. Let’s build a future that respects the dignity of older generations and delivers the quality homes they deserve.

Building better homes for later life is not just a moral imperative, it is a practical necessity. By prioritising both quality and quantity, we can create a housing system that respects and values every generation.

Let’s not waste this opportunity to build a future where everyone, regardless of age, has a place to call home.

Martyn Craddock, chief executive, United St Saviour’s Charity