

Contact Consulting

The evidence of need that supports the proposed development of a new retirement community comprising 80 assisted living apartments with community facilities and 44 bungalows at the former Burston Garden Centre, St. Albans, AL2 2DS Hertfordshire.

**PINS ref:
APP/B1930/W/21/3279463
LPA ref: 5/20/3022**

**Proof of evidence of
Nigel J W Appleton MA (Cantab)**

8th November 2021



1 Introduction

1.1 I am Nigel Appleton, Executive Chairman of Contact Consulting (Oxford) Ltd, a specialist research and development consultancy working at the intersection of health, housing and social care. My particular field of interest is in identifying the accommodation and care needs of older people, and the volumes and styles of provision that appropriately respond to those needs. I am the author of guidance on the estimation of the current and future needs of older people for accommodation and care and have supported a number of local authorities in developing strategies to respond to the needs of an ageing population.

2 Declaration

2.1 The evidence which I have prepared and provide for this appeal (*APP/B1930/W/21/3279463*) is true and I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinion.

3 The Scope of my Evidence

3.1 Referring to my report on need for specialised accommodation in St Albans appended to this Proof, my evidence provides data on the current and projected future population of older people within the City of St Albans. It offers data on a variety of needs among that older population, which evidences an increasing requirement for specialised accommodation and access to care.

3.2 I draw attention to substantial and increasing levels of owner-occupation among older people as a significant driver for the nature of future provision. The volume and profile of current provision is set out and the need for new models and increasing volumes of provision identified. The context in both national and local policy is explored, leading to a conclusion that a development of the type proposed is congruent with current guidance and policy ambitions.

4 Methodology

4.1 The methodology adopted to provide an objective measurement of need for specialised accommodation and care within the City as a whole draws on my own work for the Care Services Improvement Partnership at the Department of Health and the Department for Communities and Local Government¹, subsequent industry led guidance to which I contributed², and the work of others in this field³. These are the “toolkits” referred to in the National Planning Practice Guidance 2014 as suitable for estimating the needs of older people within a local population.

4.2 I explain why this methodology is to be preferred together with the reasons for the widely adopted alternative, the SHOP@ Tool (referenced in Planning Practice

¹ More Choice, Greater Voice: a toolkit for producing a strategy for accommodation with care for older people, Communities and Local Government, CSIP & Housing LIN, February 2008.

² Housing in Later Life: planning ahead for specialist housing form older people, Housing LIN, NHF et al, December 2012.

³ SHOP@, Housing LIN & EAC, 2013

Guidance June 2019) being withdrawn by the Housing LIN; calling into question projections developed using this on-line tool.

4.3 The method of estimating the need for specialised accommodation for older people differs from that used to calculate housing need in the population at large. The methodology for the whole population relies on the estimation of household formation, moderated by historic market data and takes account of economic drivers to arrive at a projected range of future need for housing. It may, for example, moderate the projected level of need for new housing by considering whether under supply may inhibit the prospects for future economic growth. Whilst considering the needs of a whole population, it is primarily driven by the factors such as the impact undersupply will have on the local economy.

4.4 Objective measurement of need for accommodation for older people looks at factors that dispose older people toward a need for specially designed accommodation and accommodation providing a range of support and care functions. Thus; an inability to manage stairs and steps indicates a requirement for accommodation that is accessible. The inability to shop for groceries and other essentials, indicates a low-level need for support, where as an inability to wash and dress oneself indicates a need or higher levels of personal care.

5 The changing age profile of the local population

5.1 St Albans has a substantial population of older people: in 2020 there are 25,600 people living in the District who were 65 years of age or older and this number will rise by a third to 34,100 by 2040.

5.2 Even more striking is the rise in the number of those 85 years of age or over through the same period when they will increase by almost 59% from 4,100 to 6,500. Those in the oldest cohorts will increase as a proportion of the total population at the fastest rate and in absolute numbers through the period to 2040. Table One sets out the detail.

Table One Population aged 65 and over, projected to 2040 St Albans

	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
People aged 65-69	6,400	6,900	7,900	8,200	8,400
People aged 70-74	6,600	5,900	6,300	7,300	7,600
People aged 75-79	4,700	5,900	5,300	5,800	6,600
People aged 80-84	3,800	4,000	5,000	4,600	5,000
People aged 85-89	2,500	2,800	3,000	3,800	3,500
People aged 90 and over	1,600	1,800	2,100	2,400	3,000
Total population 65 and over	25,600	27,300	29,600	32,100	34,100

(Source: <http://www.poppi.org.uk> Office of National Statistics 2020)

5.3 In relation to the age of its population the profile of St Albans sits below the national average, but those sixty-five years of age and over will continue to increase both in absolute terms and as a proportion of the total population. In 2020 those 65 years of age and over accounted for 17.31% of the population compared with a national average of 18.54%.

5.4 However, those eighty-five years of age and above made up 2.77% of the local population in 2020, compared with the national average of 2.50%. This is an aged population that will continue to age through the next two decades as the number in the oldest age cohorts increases.

5.5 In absolute numbers in 2040 there will be 8,500 more people in St Albans who are sixty-five years of age or over than there are in 2020. Of these 2,400 will be eighty-five years of age or more.

5.6 It has been suggested that the mortality rate among older people arising from the Coronavirus Pandemic may reduce the projected growth in the numbers of older people within local populations. As the note included as Annex Four to my appended report shows the key indicator is Excess Deaths, that is how far the Pandemic and collateral disruptions and delays in treatment for a range of conditions has led to a higher than average death rate. The average used is that for the years 2015 to 2019. At 0.6% for the whole population 65 years of age and over in 2020 the impact is, in statistical terms, marginal.

6 Indicators of need for specialised accommodation, care and support

6.1 Those having difficulty with one or more domestic tasks will increase between 2020 to 2040 from 7,532 to 10,381. A failure to manage these tasks often persuades older people, or their relatives, of the need to move to a high care setting when their needs would be better met in specialised accommodation, such as that proposed within this application.

6.2 Similarly those experiencing difficulty with at least one task of personal care are projected to rise from 7,446 in 2020 to 10,220 in 2040. This will contribute to additional demand for specialised accommodation and will have a direct impact on demand for care home places.

6.3 Inability to perform the tasks of personal care is a powerful indicator of need for assistance. That an additional 2,774 older persons in St Albans will need assistance by 2040 indicates that a major effort will be needed to provide appropriate support for these people if their quality of life is not to be diminished and they are not to be placed at risk.

6.4 St Albans has a predicted rise of 49% through the period 2020 to 2040 in those aged over 65 that have dementia. This significant rise will again place increasing demand on care and accommodation places.

7 Shaping an appropriate response to the identified need

7.1 Appropriately designed, accessible accommodation with access to flexible support and care services mitigates the risk, sustains independence and facilitates the delivery of care in a cost-effective fashion to moderate the demands that will otherwise fall on existing services as a consequence of these trends. A fully robust pattern of provision that matches the aspiration of individuals and of public policy that people should be able to age in place requires a number of elements: appropriately designed accommodation, a range of support and care services and specialised provision for those with the highest levels of need for care.

8 Responding to need among older homeowners

8.1 Turning from responses to the range of needs I have demonstrated exist, whilst public policy has traditionally focused on the needs of those older people who require socially funded rental accommodation, the trend among older people has been toward an increasing level of owner-occupation.

8.2 St Albans sits significantly above the national trend toward owner-occupation as the dominant tenure for older people. Levels of owner-occupation among older people in St Albans are high at above 83% for those between 65 and 74 years of age. In the oldest age group the level of home ownership may be depressed by lack of options for owner-occupation in specialised accommodation but remains significant at around 76%.

8.3 The current supply of specialised accommodation, including registered care homes, has been calculated using the Elderly Accommodation Counsel database. There may be some discrepancies between these numbers and those identified in other documents but the numbers are sufficiently robust to support the argument that levels of provision are, in most categories, below national averages.

8.4 Taking tenures together and comparing with the whole population of older people it is clear that levels of provision of specialised housing for older people in St Albans are significantly below national averages.

8.5 The provision of leasehold retirement housing is far short of requirements to achieve equity of options between tenures. For those older people who are owner-occupiers the ratio of provision for retirement housing for sale per thousand is 76.7. Whilst for those older people who are renters the comparable ratio per thousand is 134.3. Expressed in this way, as a standardised ratio, it is clear that older homeowners in St Albans are very significantly disadvantaged in securing the specialised accommodation they need.⁴

⁴ The calculations are shown in paragraphs 7.6 and 7.7 of my appended report and worked through in Footnote 19 in Section 7.

9 Guidance from national and local policies

9.1 The whole thrust of recent legislation and guidance from national government has been to encourage the delivery of care and support to people in their own homes or where a move to a more accessible, manageable environment is indicated, to a setting that provides the characteristics of home: self-contained accommodation with a tenure of choice.

9.3 Having examined the local policy and strategic context, I conclude that there is strong support for the further development of housing and care options. The model proposed in this development provides a robust variant of the model identified in local policies and offers options to older homeowners in St Albans equivalent to those proposed for social renters. I conclude that homeowners in St Albans are currently limited in their choice of such options. Accordingly, the proposed development will assist in meeting the very significant need for specialised accommodation which exists.

10 Summary and conclusions

10.1 Current levels of provision of Extra Care in the St Albans are inadequate for current levels of need and provide no basis for responding to the increasing levels of need now projected for the next two decades. The deficit is particularly acute in relation to that overwhelming majority of older people who are currently homeowners and wish to access an option that will allow them to maintain their chosen tenure.

10.2 It is unclear whether the Council will accept the extent of the need which I have identified, since the Council contested this at the last Appeal. Even so Inspector Searson concluded⁵:

“ even using the Council’s more modest figures, there is an immediate unmet and growing need which would not be met by the emerging LP in the short term (as evidenced by the trajectories set out in INQ23). Windfall provision is also not likely to address this. I also note the empirical evidence presented by the Parish Council, local residents associations and elected Members in terms of the need. “

The deficit in provision which the Inspector identifies has not been met in the interim. There is no evidence that the prospects for the future have changed for the better since Inspector Searson made that judgement; indeed, with the collapse of the Local Plan process the prospects of needs being met in the short to medium term have significantly worsened.

10.3 The consequence of failing to facilitate an adequate level of response will be a rising level of difficulty and risk for individuals but also a situation in which existing specialist services are overwhelmed by rising demand.

10.4 The development proposed the former Burston Garden Centre site will contribute to improving the situation by offering a viable and robust option for those older people within St Albans who will recognise an attractive and appropriate alternative to their current situation. But even with the proposed development built out and operating, there will still be a substantial need for specialist accommodation going unmet.

10.5 In conclusion I identify five key contributions arising from the proposed development:

- It will respond to the accommodation needs and aspirations of the substantially increasing number of older people in the area.
- Through sound design and appropriate facilities and services it will provide an environment in which quality of life will be enhanced, independence maintained and the conditions and risks characteristic of advanced old age will be mitigated.
- It will assist in the renewal of the housing stock designed to meet the needs of older people and in addressing the tenure imbalance found in the current pattern of provision.

⁵ Decision Letter of 9th January 2020, paragraph 70 (Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/W/19/3235642)

- It will offer a robust pattern of provision to maintain its care and support for the resident population as individuals age and exhibit increased levels of need.
- It will help deliver the policy aspirations of Hertfordshire County Council, its health partners and St Albans City Council in responding appropriately to the levels of need they have identified and which are substantiated in my appended report.