

Characteristics such as being within walking distance of shops or a doctor's surgery (given a mean score of 9.23 and 9.01 respectively by residents as of utmost importance), lift access (9.14) and links to public transport (8.95) cannot necessarily, or often, be delivered by adapting ordinary housing.

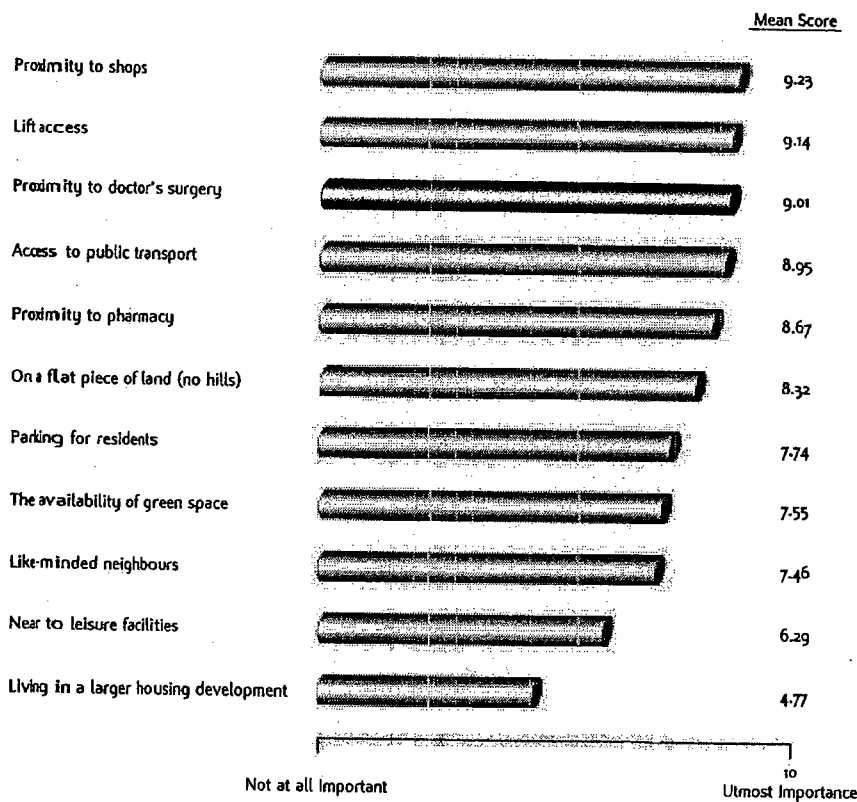
The majority of older people demand housing that is specially designed for access and mobility. And, whilst there have been huge steps forward in the provision of services to older people who remain in ordinary housing, significant doubts remain about the efficacy of it as a solution.

As our research demonstrates, "Stay Put and Adapt" does not necessarily offer older people what they require and demand. As a solution it does not remove concerns about security (of importance to eighty one percent of residents), nor remove responsibility for a garden or the responsibilities of running a house (sixty nine and sixty percent respectively). Neither, of course, does it offer a house manager (deemed important by eighty one percent of residents).

In an age where we have the capacity to offer older people meaningful choices about where they live, it is unfortunate if "Stay Put and Adapt" is promoted as a universally effective option. For many older people, (including the seventy one percent of prospective residents who think their current home is too big), "Stay Put and Adapt" offers little if anything to alleviate the worry and concerns that the responsibility for a larger house causes them.

The issues that influenced older people to move into private sheltered housing 15 years ago remain the major attractions today. In a study from 1989¹⁷, the availability of Careline (77%), the proximity to local shops (75%) and the supervision by a house manager (72%) were major attractions for those seeking this type of housing. The importance of security remains highest, but as an issue of concern, it has doubled in importance over fifteen years.

Residents were asked... Q. How important do you think the following characteristics are when considering the location of housing for older people?



Conclusion

Quality private sector sheltered housing is at a premium in the UK. Over the next two decades, demand will significantly increase as our population ages.

Unless this demand is satisfied by increased provision of this type of special needs housing, generations of older people will be denied the security, comfort and independence that they require and deserve.

¹⁷Harris Research Centre, The Facts and the Future: A Survey on Sheltered Housing for the Elderly, (UK: Harris Research Centre, 1989), p.1

