

An Economic, Social and
Environmental Impact Assessment
of a Typical Retirement Village

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Prepared by Letcombe Parish Council including a survey of existing residents' views on Richmond Retirement Village (page 34).

Executive summary

Background

Worcester Research was commissioned in late 2016 by English Care Villages to independently examine the economic, social and environmental impact of a typical retirement village. This study draws evidence from a range of published sources as well as primary evidence collected from a range of stakeholders involved with two existing retirement villages in Oxfordshire and Hampshire.

The rationale for the development of the retirement village concept is clear: England has a rapidly ageing population with the number of people over the age of 65 increasing from 10 million in 2010 to more than 17 million by 2035. The composition of those living in retirement is also continuing to evolve in terms of culture, wealth and associated support needs.

Policy makers are beginning to recognise the role that specialist housing can play in supporting older people to remain healthy and maintain independence. Retirement villages are recognised as being part of that specialist housing mix. The impact that they can have on helping free up family accommodation to address the chronic national shortage of such property is also increasingly beginning to be recognised.

Key findings

Economic

- Retirement villages contribute significantly as direct employers in local communities where they are based. An average 150-unit retirement village is likely to generate approximately 105 jobs (full- and part-time) or 72 full-time equivalent roles.
- Direct employment generated by retirement villages is likely to be composed of a mixture of full and part-time positions and offer opportunities across the occupational spectrum. Around one-third of all roles created are likely to require intermediate or higher level skills and qualifications and pay at or above the national salary average of £26,500.
- A majority of those employed at a retirement village are likely to be drawn from the local economy offering significant opportunity for wealth generated to be ploughed back into the local area. Based upon the situation found at Bishopstoke Park, a 150-unit retirement village is likely to benefit a local area's total economy by around £1.7 million per annum in wages alone.

- In addition to direct employment, retirement village operators such as Anchor make a significant contribution to indirect employment in a number of local companies that supply the village, such as refuse collectors and maintenance contractors. The indirect employment contribution of a 150-unit retirement village to service firms is estimated at around £160,000 per annum.
- Residents from retirement villages make a significant contribution to maintaining the economic vitality of local retailers, garages, service providers and eating establishments. Based upon evidence from Bishopstoke Park, residents from an average 150-unit retirement village would contribute around £1,012,000 per annum in the local economy. Once a multiplier is applied to this rate the net contribution is more likely to be approximately £1,316,000 each year.
- The construction of any retirement village will clearly generate investment in the local area and generate job opportunities for construction workers. A 150-unit retirement village has been estimated to be worth approximately £15 million in investment and provide work for around 187 people during the build phase.
- The development of a retirement village will generate substantial additional council tax receipts for the relevant local authority. The financial benefit of an average 150-unit retirement village would be between £152,000–£190,000 depending upon the local council tax rate and the level of discounts applicable.

Social

- Retirement villages clearly offer a number of psychological and practical advantages that aid well-being and reduce the likelihood of needing support from social services and other agencies. This research has established that residents of such accommodation find it: more easy to access for those with disabilities (92% agree); easier to maintain (83% agree); helps reduce social isolation (58% agree) and helps make residents feel more secure (50% agree).
- Residents at the case study retirement village made an average of just 4.7 visits to see their GP in the previous 12 months as compared with a national average of 6.7 visits for men and 7.4 visits amongst women aged over 65. These findings corroborate those from a previous study of retirement village residents, and would mean for a 150-unit village an annual saving of approximately £21,000 per annum for the NHS as opposed to what would have been expected had residents not moved to a retirement village.

- Overall just over two-thirds (69%) of those questioned stated that living in a retirement village had an impact upon their health and the vast majority (89%) stated that the impact had been a positive one.
- This study has confirmed that residents at retirement villages make a significant contribution to their local communities through voluntary work. Approximately one-third of residents currently volunteer and contribute an average of 3.5 hours per week. Aggregated up the residents of a typical 150-unit retirement village would be likely to contribute 242 hours of volunteering each week (or 12,612 hours per annum). At minimum wage rates, this contribution would be worth approximately £90,000 each year if it had to be paid for. Most volunteering identified as part of this study related to activity away from the retirement village in the wider community.
- Bishopstoke Park like many other retirement villages provides access to a range of services to non-residents. Typically neighbours are able to gain access to leisure facilities, restaurants and community venues that were not available in the locality prior to the development. This is very much the case at both Bishopstoke Park and Letcombe Regis retirement villages.
- The link between levels of happiness and improved health and well-being, especially mental well-being, are becoming more well established. This research has identified that a clear majority (62%) of retirement village residents believe their general level of happiness has improved since moving to their new property. While difficult to accurately assess how improved happiness levels will have impacted on demands for health and social care provision it is credible to state that benefits are very likely to have been accrued for both the individual and the state.

Environmental

- The provision of specifically tailored accommodation designed to meet the needs of retired people has helped free up much-needed family housing in the marketplace. Three-quarters of those who moved to Bishopstoke Park had immediately before moving lived in houses or flats of three or more bedrooms. Based on the rates seen at Bishopstoke Park, a retirement village of 150 units of one or two bedrooms is likely to release at least 75 large family houses and 38 other large types of accommodation suitable for family occupation.
- In addition to releasing under-occupied property onto the market, the provision of retirement villages is also likely to stimulate further economic activity as at least a third of new occupants of homes released have engaged in significant investment and modernisation activity.
- A majority of new occupants to retirement villages move into their new homes with their own car. Over time there is some evidence of residents using their own vehicles less, with some deciding to forego their own transport in favour of either public transport or shared private transport operated by the retirement village.
- Public transport appears to be used by only a minority of residents of retirement village schemes with only around 40% citing it as either important or very important to them.
- Retirement villages are in a number of ways seeking to minimise their carbon footprints through activities designed to reduce energy consumption; improve recycling; minimise waste; and reduce the demand for travel as well as the level of single occupancy travel undertaken. One study found, for example, that more than half of residents at a retirement village found their energy bills reduced since moving to their new home, clearly indicating reduced energy consumption and associated CO2 production.
- The provision of additional local employment opportunities in rural and semi-rural areas is also playing its part in reducing the total mileage of many local workers. Approximately 75% of staff working at Bishopstoke Park live within a five-mile radius of the site.

Introduction

Worcester Research was commissioned in late 2016 by English Care Villages in order to independently assess the economic, social and environmental impact of a typical retirement village similar to the model being developed by English Care Villages. Both Letcombe Regis and Bishopstoke Park were master planned by operators or consultants led by the Chairman of English Care Villages with a model previously developed by him at Richmond Nantwich and subsequently refined in the light of operational experience both there and at other locations.

The research is also intended to identify potential shortcomings in the planning, design, construction or operation of the model and take appropriate steps to improve or eliminate them.

The research brief specifically required the appointed consultants to:

- Undertake research with different stakeholder groups including: care village residents; other local residents; care village providers;
- Establish the nature and scale of the economic, social and environmental benefits a typical care village produces;
- Produce an estimate of the total value of a care village to a locality; and,
- Produce a report and accompanying executive summary of the key findings from the research.

The outcome of this report is designed to help inform the debate about the nature and scale of the impact of a retirement village on other local areas being considered for future development as well as the benefits to the local community.

In introducing this report the authors would particularly like to thank the operators and residents of Anchor's Bishopstoke Park for their support in undertaking much of the background research which is drawn upon in this study. Without their active support the production of this report would not have been possible.

Case Study retirement villages

The primary evidence used in this report has been gathered from visits and interviews with retirement village residents, neighbours and the Anchor management team at Bishopstoke Park in Hampshire and from local residents living adjacent to Richmond Villages' Letcombe Regis retirement village in Oxfordshire.

Bishopstoke Park retirement village is located near Eastleigh in Hampshire and is owned and operated by Anchor. Phase 1 of the village is complete and opened in September 2015. The phase 1 accommodation is made up of 91 individual one- and two-bed apartments which retail at between £250,000 and £780,000. The average occupancy per apartment is 1.4 people. In addition to the apartments the village has a range of services including a shop, library, café, restaurant, gym, swimming pool and a complimentary mini bus service within a seven-mile radius of the village. In addition to the retirement village there is an integral care home offering personal care for local people suffering from a dementia. It may also serve those who chose to stay as long as possible in the family home hoping that they would not need care but are now having to accept the compromise of a single bedroom with little private space. The care team is separately registered with the Care Quality Commission to deliver personal care in all apartments in the care village. Two further phases of the retirement village are planned which will take the village to approximately 220 apartments when complete.

Bishopstoke Park has only been open 18 months and therefore its usage patterns are continuing to evolve. Over time some further changes in the behaviour of residents are likely. For example, car ownership is likely to decrease as the average age of residents rises, reducing demands for facilities such as car parking. Care needs are also likely to rise increasing the number of carers required.

Letcombe Regis retirement village near Wantage, Oxfordshire is operated by Richmond Villages, owned by BUPA. The village opened in 2010 on a former chemical company headquarters site. The village offers a wide range of facilities including a shop, library, café, restaurant, gym, swimming pool and community meeting room. The local community outside the retirement village have access to a number of the facilities.

Policy context

Demography

England has a rapidly ageing population. The number of people aged over 65 will grow from 10 million to nearly 17 million by 2035. Approximately, 60% of all new household growth by 2033 will be by those aged over 65, and 21% will be by those aged over 85. There is also increasing diversity among older people in terms of age, culture, wealth and ability.

Health and social care policy

Specialist housing for older people has a key role to play in an integrated health and social care system, where the system prioritises preventative care and speeds recovery to independence. The White Paper *Caring for our future: reforming care and support* published in July 2012 argued that there is a particular need for housing for older people who are home owners; and the Care and Support Specialised Housing Fund aims to support and accelerate the development of the specialised housing market, particularly at a time when wider economic factors may place limitations on the growth of this market.

The government has stated that “Housing plays a critical role in helping older people and disabled adults to live as independently as possible, and in helping carers and the wider health and social care system offer support more effectively. However, evidence suggests that there are currently not enough specialised housing options available for these groups, especially for those who wish to own their own home”.

Planning and retirement housing

The National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG, 2012) sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It aims to provide a framework within which local authorities can produce their own distinctive local and neighbourhood plans, which reflect the needs and priorities of communities, and improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. The framework defines the role of the local planning system:

- **An economic role** – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure,
- **A social role** – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high-quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community’s needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and
- **An environmental role** – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low-carbon economy.”

Although there is wide recognition of the role of specialist housing for older people in contributing to their health and well-being (and in freeing up general needs housing) among those concerned with housing, care and support, the planning community appears to be somewhat less advanced in developing its thinking and understanding of the issue.

In 2011 the Centre for Social Justice was critical of how the current UK housing market does not reflect the types of choices older people aspire to. Their report noted a serious shortage of new housing specially designed for older people and called for a shift of culture amongst local planning authorities which recognises the value of new housing for older people and makes decisions accordingly: “Without any kind of overall strategy for older people’s housing, too many planning authorities treat each application on an isolated, case-by-case basis, with no real understanding of what provision is needed in their locality”.

Methodology

To obtain evidence about the local economic, social and environmental impacts of retirement village schemes, Worcester Research used a range of methods which aimed to capture both quantitative and qualitative data about the direct and indirect impacts of schemes.

The study involved obtaining data on both the construction and operational (including staffing) phases of the retirement village from scheme managers at Bishopstoke Park retirement village near Eastleigh. Face-to-face interviews were also conducted with a sample of owners residing in the scheme to obtain quantitative and qualitative data about their current spending and perceived changes in their circumstances following their move to the scheme. Efforts were made to ensure a mixture of households in terms of age and composition.

Scheme managers provided assistance with arranging interviews, and a letter and copy of the questionnaire was sent to each participant detailing the material to be covered, and the purposes to which it would be put in advance of the interview.

Face-to-face interviews were then conducted with 30 owners. Responses were provided on an anonymous basis and informed consent was sought before any interview took place. Circulating the topic guide in advance gave respondents time to reflect (and if necessary prepare) before the interviews took place.

Interviews were also conducted with more than 25 local neighbours to the new retirement village communities in both Bishopstoke and Letcombe Regis where Richmond Villages developed a retirement village.

The structure of the remaining report addresses the following questions about the impact of Retirement Village schemes:

- What are the economic impacts of retirement villages?
- What are the social impacts of retirement villages?
- What are the environmental impacts of retirement villages?

Each chapter reviews the existing published research evidence where appropriate, and presents the data obtained from the surveys and interviews with retirement village scheme residents as well as the management of Bishopstoke Park.

In order to aid analysis wherever possible the results from Bishopstoke Park where there are 91 apartments are also calculated and presented for a standard 150-unit retirement village. This is done to help standardise the outputs and aid those seeking to use the results to calculate the likely impact of other proposed retirement villages.

Findings

Economic impact

This section presents evidence on the economic impacts of the development of retirement villages and specifically considers: direct employment generated; indirect employment generated; the investment and employment generated in the construction phase; residents' use of local facilities and the economic value generated; and the value of new council tax receipts resulting from the development.

Employment

Research at Bishopstoke Park found that the retirement village employed 65 people of which 20 were employed on a full-time basis and a further 45 on part-time hours, averaging 20 per week. Converted to full-time equivalents,

Bishopstoke Park employs around 44 FTEs as part of its operation. Using that as a benchmark would suggest that an average 150-unit retirement village would employ approximately 72 FTE employees.

Table 1.1 provides details on the broad composition of the workforce by occupation and their average salary rates. The table shows that while most roles are among lower order occupations such as caring, catering and elementary activities there are also around one third that require intermediate or higher level skills such as chefs, maintenance engineers, managers and senior administrators. These roles frequently offer salaries at or above the UK national average salary of £26,500.

Table 1.1: Direct employment generated by Bishopstoke

Role/occupation	Number employed	Average salary	Total cost
Managers, professionals and associate professionals	8	£40,000 (FTE)	£320,000
Skilled manual, admin and clerical	12	£25,000 (FTE)	£300,000
Caring, machine occupations and elementary roles	45 (mostly part-time, average 20 hours)	£17,000 (FTE)	£408,000
Total	65 (FT & PT)		£1,038,000

As can be seen in Table 1.1 Bishopstoke Park's total staff bill is just over £1 million per annum before on-costs such as pension and employer's national insurance contributions. Using that as a benchmark it is possible to estimate that an average 150-unit retirement village would have staff costs of approximately £1,711,000 per annum before on-costs.

Approximately 75% of the staff at Bishopstoke live within a five-mile radius of the development and therefore at least 75% of revenue earned is likely to be spent within the local area. Applying the 75% figure and a multiplier effect of 1.3 it is possible to estimate that the economic impact of a retirement village of 150 units from direct employment would be £1,668,000 per annum.

Indirect employment

In addition to directly employing a sizeable workforce directly, Bishopstoke Park also employ the services of a wide range of local companies in the provision of services such as lawn mowing, woodland maintenance, equipment maintenance (such as the swimming pool, heating system and lifts), window cleaning, refuse collection and disposal, electrical and plumbing servicing, pest control, events and entertainment.

Collectively these services cost Bishopstoke approximately £100,000 per annum and are provided in the main by local providers within a five- to ten-mile radius. Using that figure as a benchmark and assuming that 75% of suppliers are local and a multiplier effect of 1.3 it is possible to estimate the indirect economic contribution of a 150-unit retirement village as £160,500 per annum.

Findings, continued

Construction

Data quoted in the Housing for Later Life report¹ estimates that an average scheme of 40 extra care apartments provides investment of approximately £5 million into older people's housing and the local economy. The report also found that around 50 people were also employed for the duration of the construction process. A retirement village development of 150 units would therefore be likely to mean a one-off investment of around £15 million and a construction workforce of up to 187 people during that phase.

Use of local shops, services and facilities

Research with retirement village residents at Bishopstoke Park found that all those interviewed make at least some use of either local shops or other local facilities.

Home owners were asked about the extent to which they used local services and facilities in their current home and as can be seen in Table 1.2, two-thirds (66%) of those in this study use a local supermarket at least weekly and a further 17% make use of them at least monthly.

Local shops such as newsagents and convenience stores were also used by approximately two-fifths of residents on at least a weekly basis and a further 17% made some use of these types of facilities at least monthly. A range of service providers such as local hairdressers, pharmacies, garages and leisure facilities are also used by more than a quarter of all residents at least monthly.

Table 1.2: type of facilities and how often used (% of respondents)

Service	Weekly	Monthly	Less than monthly
Local shop	42%	33%	
Local supermarket	66%	17%	
Local services such as taxi or hairdressers	8%	24%	4%
Local pubs, cafés, restaurants	8%	17%	17%
Library	8%	8%	4%
Local sports or exercise facilities	33%		
Other, please specify		42%	24%

¹Housing LIN (2013), Housing in later life: planning ahead for specialist housing for older people.

The internal provision of certain services such as an in-house restaurant and library were factors quoted as reducing the demand for external usage by a number of residents.

Residents' economic spend in the local area

Retirement village residents at Bishopstoke Park were asked as part of the research to estimate how much they currently spend on a weekly basis in total in local shops and facilities as described in Table 1.2. Estimates varied considerably from a low of just £20 per person per week, to a high of £200. The mean average spend per capita in local shops and facilities was calculated to be £92.72. Annually this equates to a spend of £4,821 per person and for an average 150-unit retirement village (with 210 residents) the total local spend within a local economy would be approximately £1,012,500.

The “multiplier effect” seeks to measure the further spending in the local area on supplies and services generated by resident spend through, for example, the purchase of a meal in a local café by a taxi driver who gets a fare from a retirement village resident.

English Partnerships guidance on additionality does not provide a specific local economic multiplier for housing developments. However, other similar studies to this one have suggested a multiplier effect in the range of

1.3 to 1.6 for housing schemes. For this current study, a multiplier of 1.3 is being used, based on the available evidence and its previous use in similar studies. Thus for every £1 spent locally there is an assumed additional 30 pence injected into the local economy from further rounds of spending.

Applying this multiplier effect to the direct spending derived from estimates of resident spend, it is estimated that total annual impact on the local economy from a 150-unit retirement village with 210 residents rises from £1,012,500 to £1,316,000.

Council tax contribution

Residents of retirement village schemes contribute sizeable sums to local authorities through their council tax payments. At Bishopstoke Park council tax varies depending on the banding of each property between bands C, D and E. Taking the average UK council tax Band D rate of £1,268 a 150-unit retirement village is likely to generate a total council tax receipt to the local authority of between £190,200 and £152,160 depending upon the level of single-person discount² applicable in a scheme. It will also depend on the level of council tax in the area concerned which can be more than £2,000 per annum in some areas.

²Single person homes are entitled to discount of approximately 20% off the total council tax bill.

Social impact

This section presents evidence on the social impacts of the development of retirement villages and specifically considers: the impact on residents' well-being; usage of medical facilities; impact on state of health; the contribution of volunteers from residential villages; linkages with neighbouring communities; provision of services to non-residents; and the impact on residents' levels of happiness.

Well-being

When people were asked about whether their retirement village apartments had a range of benefits related to their general well-being compared with their previous home, their answers highlighted a range of important benefits (Table 1.3).

Table 1.3: benefits of living in retirement village vis-à-vis previous accommodation

Benefit	% agreeing with statement
The present home is easier to maintain	83
I feel more secure	50
The present home is more accessible for people with disabilities	92
The present home is more accessible to local services	25
I feel less socially isolated	58
I have a better quality of life	42
I feel less lonely	42
Other, please specify	8

As Table 1.3 shows almost all of those questioned stated that their new home in the retirement village was more accessible for those with disabilities than their previous accommodation and more than four-out-of-five stated that their new home was easier to maintain. The clear social benefits for residents was also shown by the fact that almost two-thirds (58%) stated that they felt less socially isolated in their new home and half of those questioned stated they felt more secure.

Visits to the GP

On average, residents from Bishopstoke reported that they had made 4.7 visits to their GP in the last 12 months. By comparison, a paper by Polisson (2011) found the average number of annual visits to a GP in England was 7.4 for women aged 65 and over, and 6.7 for older men. This suggests that owners of retirement village apartments make lower demands on general practitioners than the typical older person.

According to the PSSRU's most recent analysis of the costs of health and social care, a brief consultation with a GP costs £43. This would mean for a typical retirement village scheme of 150 units with 210 residents, a reduction in costs to the GP services £20,769³ per annum as compared with those not living in such accommodation.

Use of other medical facilities

Residents were also asked about their use of other medical care facilities over the preceding 12 months. In total two-thirds (66%) of those questioned had made at least one visit to a medical facility other than their GP in the preceding year. Mostly this was to visit a local hospital for tests or treatment although others had visited complementary medical establishments such as chiropractors or osteopaths. Most of those who had to visit a local hospital had made just one or two visits although there were a few residents who had needed to make repeated visits (as many as 15 in one case) in order to receive treatment for on-going conditions.

³1470 - 987 = 483 less visits x £43 per visit

Impact on health of retirement village residents

Residents were also asked whether they felt that living in a retirement Village had an impact on their health, including both their physical and mental health. For those who stated there had been an impact they were also asked whether the impact had been positive or negative. Table 1.4 presents the results of these two questions and shows that just over two-thirds of residents believed that living in the retirement village

had impacted on their overall health and that for the vast majority who did perceive an impact that impact had been positive. Residents who felt a positive impact spoke about the benefits of living in warmer accommodation and the positive feeling of not having to manage a garden anymore. The benefits for mental as well as physical health were apparent from a number of the answers provided by residents.

Table 1.4: Impact on health of retirement village residents

Service	Yes	No	Positive	Negative
Has living in a retirement village had any impact on your health	69	31		
If yes, was the impact positive or negative			89	11

The results in Table 1.4 concur with those presented earlier regarding use of GP services and clearly indicate that there are health benefits (and associated economic benefits) from living within a retirement village scheme.

Contribution as volunteers

National research produced by the WRVS found that older people currently provide formal and informal volunteering services worth over £10 billion to the UK economy.

They forecast that this is to rise to just under £15 billion by 2020. The research estimated the annual average contribution of the over 65-year-old as:

- 104.6 hours of informal volunteering effort per person aged over 65
- 54.5 hours of formal volunteering effort per person aged over 65

If the current National Minimum Wage rate of £7.20 is applied to these average figures, this suggests a potential annual contribution from informal volunteering per capita of £753, and from formal volunteering of £392.

Data from the 2008-9 Citizenship Survey found that 30% of those aged 65-74 do some formal volunteering. Similarly some 20% of those aged over 75 do some formal volunteering. Research with residents at

Bishopstoke Park found that around one-third of residents (33%) contributed to their local area through their involvement in community activities. These ranged from: helping fellow residents out with shopping and looking after animals, to acting as a guide at a local National Trust property through to working in a local community library.

On average, those who volunteered did so for approximately 3.5 hours per week. Aggregated up over the entire resident population who volunteer (33% of 106 residents) this would equate to 122 hours of volunteering per week. At National Minimum Wage rates that would be worth £878 per week or £45,678 per annum. Based on a typical 150-unit retirement village with 210 residents the estimate of total volunteer hours would be 12,612 per annum with a value of almost £91,000.

A number of other residents at Bishopstoke Park were planning to get involved in some voluntary activity, but had not had time since moving in to their apartment and therefore this estimate of the volunteer contribution may actually under-value the true long-term contribution.

Overall, it would appear that retirement village residents are net contributors to the local voluntary and community infrastructure of an area.

Linkages with the local community

Residents of Bishopstoke were also asked to assess the strength of current linkages between the retirement village residents and those neighbours living nearby. Overall most respondents stated that they were independent of the neighbouring area and that while

relationships were good the retirement village was in many ways self sufficient, providing access to essentially shopping and care needs (hairdressers, library, restaurant). A number of residents felt that there would be greater linkages over time and that it was still too early to expect deep links to have been forged at this stage.

Table 1.5: strength of linkages with neighbouring community

Very well linked	Well linked	Neither well not well linked	Not well linked	Very poorly linked
	17%	8%	58%	17%

Provision of local services to non-residents

In addition to providing services to residents, retirement villages such as Bishopstoke Park provide access to a wide range of services to non-residents too. At Bishopstoke non-residents can use the shop, café, restaurant and are able to enjoy access to the woodland walks within the property. At other retirement villages such as Letcombe Regis non-residents are also able to access the leisure facilities such as a swimming pool and gym as well as hire community meeting rooms.

Happiness

There is significant literature on the linkage between a person’s level of happiness and their health and well-being, especially mental well-being. Residents at Bishopstoke were asked to provide details for how they felt their overall level of happiness had been affected (if at all) by moving to a retirement village. Overall, as can be seen in Table 1.6 almost two-thirds of those surveyed felt that their general level of happiness had improved to some degree since they moved to the retirement village. The remaining 38% felt that their level of happiness had been unaffected by their change in accommodation.

Table 1.6: Impact of retirement village move on level of happiness

Improved a lot	Improved	Stayed the same	Declined	Declined a lot
4%	58%	38%		

Reasons given for improved levels of happiness related to reduced isolation and loneliness, reduced concerns

about personal and property security and reduced concerns regarding property and garden maintenance.

Environmental impact

This section presents evidence on the environmental impacts of the development of retirement villages and specifically considers: impact on family housing provision; the use of private and public transport by retirement village residents; measures used to reduce the carbon footprint of residents.

Releasing family housing

There has been much recent debate about the potential impact of better designed housing for older people which enables people to move, thus potentially releasing family housing as well as stimulating spending

on the improvement of homes by new (frequently younger) occupiers.

A recent study by ORB found that 85% of those who bought private sheltered housing were downsizing from their previous home. This study with residents at Bishopstoke Park found similar evidence, with 75% of those questioned stating that they had previously lived in accommodation with three or more bedrooms immediately before moving to the retirement village and half of all those questioned stated that they had lived previously in houses with three or more bedrooms.

Table 1.7: Previous accommodation by type and size

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5 or more bed
House			17%	33%	
Flat	8%	17%	8%		
Bungalow			4%	13%	
Maisonette					
Other					

Based upon this evidence an average retirement village of 150 units would be likely to release 75 large three or more bedroom houses and 38 other large types of family-sized accommodation units with three or more bedrooms.

Wanting to downsize to more appropriate accommodation was the main reason for moving to a retirement village. Table 1.8 provides further details of the motivations for such moves and shows that access to care facilities (in the future if not currently) and the opportunity for greater social interaction were all key reasons for choosing to move to a retirement village.

Table 1.8: Main reasons for moving to retirement village (multiple choice)

	Reason (max 2)
Releasing equity	
Moving to more appropriate housing	61%
Improving health	
Access to care facilities	54%
Opportunity for greater social interaction	46%
Location of retirement village	30%
Other	8%

Where respondents knew what had happened to their previous home, approximately one-third said that it had been repaired or improved since they moved out. It is fair, therefore, to conclude that their move into a retirement

village contributed to freeing of under-occupied homes for larger households and renovation of the existing housing stock.

Environmental impact, continued

Private transport

Evidence from interviews with residents at Bishopstoke Park suggests that a majority (78%) of those who move into a retirement village do so owning and driving a car or living with someone who owns and drives a car. However, none of those interviewed who did own and drive a vehicle had more than one vehicle and a number of those who did currently drive suggested they were considering giving up driving at some point.

Data in Table 1.9 provides further insight into the travel patterns of those who owned and drove a vehicle or lived with someone who did. As can be seen from the table half of drivers were frequent users, making trips in their vehicle on a daily basis. A further 25% made use of their vehicle 2-3 times per week. There were, however, a quarter of residents who made fairly infrequent use of their vehicles using it between once a week and once a month it was often among this group that there was a recognition that giving up their vehicle might be the right thing to do.

Table 1.9: Frequency of use of car use amongst those who drive

Daily	2-3 times per week	Weekly	Monthly	Very infrequently
50%	25%	8%	16%	

Those who drove were also asked for details of the distances that they currently travelled on a weekly basis. The span of results were significant ranging from as few as 5 miles to as many as 250 miles. The mean average distance travelled weekly by car was 94 miles, although the median average was only 50.

Public transport

Only around half of those residents interviewed at Bishopstoke Park ever used any form of public transport. Among the half who did use it patronage was fairly infrequent with just 42% using it at least weekly and 43% stating that they only travelled by public transport very infrequently.

Table 1.10: frequency of use of public transport (of those who did use public transport)

Daily	2-3 times per week	Weekly	Monthly	Very infrequently
	28%	14%	14%	43%

All residents who used public transport currently were asked how important access to public transport was to them. Opinion was fairly evenly divided with approximately two-fifths rating it as important or very important and the remaining three-fifths stating it was either unimportant or very unimportant. While public transport was only of importance to a fairly small percentage of all retirement village residents it was clear from interviews with residents that the provision of a private mini bus service by the owners of Bishopstoke Park which will take residents anywhere within a seven-mile radius of the park for free was a highly valued and well-used facility.

Reduced carbon foot print

While difficult to objectively measure, there are a number of significant indications that the carbon footprints of residents in retirement villages such as Bishopstoke are significantly lower than was the case prior to their move. The key areas in which a reduced carbon footprint appear likely are:

- Energy efficiency;
- Recycling and waste minimisation; and,
- Reduced travel for residents and staff.

In relation to improved energy efficiency a number of residents stated that their energy and utility bills were significantly lower in their new home than had been the case previously. Improved building techniques and materials mean their new homes are much more thermal efficient than their previous properties and this was being evidenced through reduced bills. This anecdotal evidence is corroborated by work produced by Professor Michael Ball⁴ which found that 52% of respondents from extra care facilities reported that their utility bills were either “much less” or “notably less” since they moved.

The management of Bishopstoke Park play a full and active part in seeking ways to minimise the environmental impact of its activities. As part of that work they have been working with residents to minimise their waste and also sought to look at new ways to reduce, reuse and recycle. One initiative that they have brought in is the collection and recycling of food waste from their catering operation. This waste used to be disposed of along with general waste but is now collected separately and anaerobically digested reducing its impact on the environment. The provision of services in-house such as the shop, restaurant and library is also having a positive impact in reducing the need of residents of Bishopstoke Park to travel to access services.

The provision of a free-of-charge mini bus service within a seven-mile radius of the retirement village is also helping to reduce the need of residents to travel independently when they do leave the village. Again this result at Bishopstoke replicates the finding of the study undertaken by Professor Ball which found that 28% of extra care residents stated they now had to travel “far less” and 27% who stated they travelled “a bit less” since they moved.

The development of the retirement village at Bishopstoke has also provided a significant number of employment opportunities for local people than was previously the case. As referenced earlier, approximately 75% of staff at Bishopstoke Park live within five miles of the site and are now travelling less to work than was previously the case.

Together these measures are clearly helping to reduce the total volume of miles travelled overall and the efficiency of transport when it is needed.

⁴Housing Markets and Independence in old age: expanding the opportunities

Conclusions

This review of the literature and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data from existing retirement villages has considered the evidence of their impact on the economy, society and the natural and built environment.

This section seeks to summarise the key findings against the three key areas of analysis.

Economic impact

Where they are built, retirement villages clearly do have significant positive effects upon the local economy in a number of important ways including the provision of one-off investment in an area, providing new direct jobs as well as indirectly through supporting jobs among local service providers such as cleaners, groundsmen and those maintaining the property.

Residents of retirement villages also support the local economy directly through the use of shops, services, food establishments and transport providers. They also support the provision of local services through their contributions to council tax.

This research has established that a typical 150-unit retirement village will contribute economically:

- Around 105 new full- and part-time jobs (72 full-time equivalents);
- £15 million in initial investment in capital asset;
- Approximately 187 jobs during the construction phase;
- £1.7 million in on-going salary to local workers;
- At least £160,000 per annum in additional business to local suppliers;
- Around £1.3 million expenditure in the local economy from residents (including multiplier effect); and
- Between £152,000-£190,000 in additional council tax to support local service provision.

Social impact

In addition to producing a range of economic benefits this research has established that retirement villages do frequently offer a number of benefits for society, both those members of society living within the village as well as those outside. Retirement villages help reduce isolation, improve feelings of well-being, help create community capacity and provide access to a range of services that would not otherwise be available, especially in rural and semi-rural communities.

This research has established that a typical 150-unit retirement village will contribute socially by:

- Reducing access problems for those with disabilities;
- Helping to reduce feelings of social isolation;

- Making older people feel more secure;
- Reducing average GP visits and reducing the overall financial burden on the NHS by almost £21,000 per annum;
- Improving perceiving levels of health among residents;
- Providing an average of 12,612 hours of volunteer time per annum with a value to society of at least £90,810;
- Providing local non-residents with access to a range of services often not previously available in the locality such as swimming pools, gyms, meeting rooms and restaurants;
- Improving the levels of happiness in around two-thirds of residents with significant associated benefits for health, happiness and reduced service demands on social care and other state provided support facilities.

Environment impact

The final pillar of sustainability relates to the environment and in this area too this research has identified a number of important and significant ways in which retirement villages positively impact. These frequently revolve around the reallocation of previously under-occupied property; the reduction in journeys and single-person car travel; an improvement in energy efficiency and the provision of local employment opportunities that reduce the need for significant journeys.

This research has established that a typical 150-unit retirement village will contribute environmentally by:

- Releasing 75 large family houses and a further 38 large (3- or 4-bedroom) other types of family-sized accommodation;
- Stimulating regeneration and refurbishment of previously under-occupied housing;
- Reducing the demand for many short car journeys through the provision of on-site facilities such as shops, hairdressers and restaurants;
- Can help reduce energy consumption through the use of modern materials and construction techniques, lowering utility bills and associated greenhouse gas production;
- Providing a number of new employment opportunities in local (often rural) communities which can act as positive alternative to travelling large distances to access job opportunities in nearby conurbations. In Bishopstoke Park 75% of staff live within a five-mile radius of the site.

Annex 1

Topic Guide for use with existing Retirement Village Residents



Annex 1

1. Demographics

Are you? Male Female

What age bracket do you fit in?

Below 65

65-74

75-84

85-94

95+

How long lived in this retirement village?

How many bedrooms do you currently have?

How far away (in miles) did you live before moving here?

What type and size of property did you live in before moving to the retirement village?

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5 or more bed
House					
Flat					
Bungalow					
Maisonette					
Other					

Do you or anyone you live with have any serious health concerns that affected your decision to move to the retirement village?

Yes No Prefer not to say

2. Motivations for moving to retirement village

For what reasons did you decide to move to a retirement village?

What was the **key** reasons why you moved to a retirement village?

	Reason (max 2)
Releasing equity	
Moving to more appropriate housing	
Improving health	
Access to care facilities	
Opportunity for greater social interaction	
Location of retirement village	
Other	

What positive and negative factors did you consider before deciding to move to the retirement village?

Positive	Negative

3. Benefits of living in the retirement village

What benefits have you or anyone you live with had since you moved to the retirement village?

Do you think your current home has any of the following benefits compared to your previous home? (tick all that apply)

Benefit	Yes
The present home is easier to maintain	
I feel more secure	
The present home is more accessible for people with disabilities	
The present home is more accessible to local services	
I feel less socially isolated	
I have a better quality of life	
I feel less lonely	
Other, please specify	

Annex 1, continued

4. Impact on residents of living in retirement village

What impact (if any) has living in the retirement village had on **your health** or that of anyone you live here with?

Improved a lot	Improved a little	Stayed the same	Declined a bit	Declined a lot

What impact (if any) has living in the retirement village had on your **happiness** or that of anyone you live here with?

Improved a lot	Improved a little	Stayed the same	Declined a bit	Declined a lot

What impact (if any) has living in the retirement village had on your **care needs** or that of anyone you live here with?

Improved a lot	Improved a little	Stayed the same	Declined a bit	Declined a lot

What impact (if any) has living in the retirement village had on **how lonely or isolated** you or anyone you live here with?

Improved a lot	Improved a little	Stayed the same	Declined a bit	Declined a lot

5. Engagement with wider community

Use of shops and retail

Do you use local shops or other retail facilities outside the retirement village?

Yes No Don't know/won't say

If yes, what type of facilities and how often do you visit?

Service	Weekly	Monthly	Less than monthly
Local shop			
Local supermarket			
Local services such as taxi or hairdressers			
Local pubs, cafés, restaurants			
Library			
Local sports or exercise facilities			
Other, please specify			

If yes, on average how much in total might you spend weekly in local shops and other retail facilities?

Use of transport modes

Do you or anyone you live with own or drive a car?

Yes No Don't know/won't say

If yes, how often do you use your vehicle?

Daily	2-3 times per week	Weekly	Monthly	Very infrequently

If yes, how far (in miles) would you drive your car each week on average?

If no, did you or anyone you live with drive a car before moving to the retirement village?

Yes No Don't know/won't say

If yes, why did you or they stop driving?

Do you use any form of public transport?

Yes No Don't know/won't say

If yes, how regularly do you use public transport?

Daily	2-3 times per week	Weekly	Monthly	Very infrequently

If yes, how important is access to public transport to you?

Very important	Important	Neither important or unimportant	Unimportant	Very unimportant

Annex 1, continued

Use of care and medical facilities

Thinking back over recent years, how many times on average each year do you see your GP (either at the surgery or at home)?

Since moving to the retirement village have you had to use any other medical or care facilities away from your home?

Yes No Don't know/won't say

If yes, what were those facilities?

Do you believe the development of the retirement village has had any impact on the availability of access to medical facilities locally for local residents (e.g. is it more difficult to get an appointment now)?

Yes No Don't know/won't say

Has living in the retirement village had any effect on your health (mentally or physically)?

Yes No Don't know/won't say

If yes, was that a positive or negative effect?

Positively Negatively

Volunteering

Do you or anyone you live with do any voluntary work currently or since you moved here?

Yes No Don't know/won't say

If yes, in what ways do you or your partner volunteer?

How many hours per week do you volunteer for?

6. Impact on wider community

In what ways, if any, do you feel the development of a retirement village has had an impact on the wider community around this area?

How well linked do you believe the community within the retirement village is with those neighbours outside the village?

Very well linked	Well linked	Neither well not well linked	Not well linked	Very poorly linked

7. Recommendations for other developments

What are the best and worst things about living in the retirement village?

Best things	Worst thing

If someone was thinking about building a similar retirement village elsewhere in the country what difference or improvement or issue (if any) would they want to take into account from what is here?

Letcombe Regis community led plan 2015

A vision for the future

Introduction

Letcombe Regis is a beautiful downland village nestling at the foot of the Berkshire Downs in the valley of the Letcombe Brook. It was, for many years a Royal Manor of the Kings of Wessex but was formally made a Regis in the reign of Richard II. The village has seen gradual expansion and development over the years but its demography has changed radically since the last Parish Plan was published in 2006. A major increase in population and age factor has resulted from the occupation of the Richmond Retirement Village since this was first opened in 2010. The approximate population now stands at around 700.

Furthermore, recent Government targets for the construction of new housing in Oxfordshire have resulted in the village being threatened by housing development schemes despite its location within a defined conservation area.

These factors led to Letcombe Regis Parish Council setting up a Parish Plan Steering Group (PPSG) to formulate a revised Parish Plan with a defined objective: "To develop guidelines for the social and economic development of the village over the next 20 years, which are acceptable to, and agreed by the village community, taking into account District and County Council requirements".

The Steering Group was set up in 2013 and a number of villagers were involved including Murray Charlton (Chairman), Jeanne Lapsley (Chairman of the Parish Council), Ken Peach, Sophie Beauchamp, Sue Hannon, Derek Maurice, Diane Ockwell and Clive Philips.

The consultation process

In March 2014 the Steering Group invited each household to contribute to a new Community Plan which will help to shape the future of the village. A general questionnaire was distributed to every dwelling asking if the household was prepared to participate in the survey; those who responded were asked to provide address details, number of persons living in the household and a breakdown into 2 age groups, under 18 years and 18 years and over. Detailed questionnaires were distributed and those households who did not initially respond were contacted and further questionnaires issued. An on-line facility was offered for the subsequent questionnaires. The Steering Group was particularly keen to have the views of persons under 18 years and as a result they received separate Youth questionnaires.

Great care was taken in the design of the questionnaires and the Steering Group wishes to acknowledge the advice received from the District and County Councils. Specific thanks also go to the District Council for the collation of the survey data at no cost to the village.

A draft version of the plan was presented to the Parish Council meeting on 16th March 2015 and all residents of Letcombe Regis invited to a presentation of the plan on 18th May 2015. In addition, the draft plan was sent to the District and County Councils and ORCC before final approval for publication.

Summary of responses

The detailed questionnaires produced 257 responses identified only by a random code number to ensure anonymity and data protection. Full details can be found on the village web site and are available in hard copy from the Parish Clerk. The results showed that of the 257 responses:

- 32 were under the age of 18 years
- 6 were aged between 18 and 25 years of which 4 are male and 2 female
- 19 were aged between 26 and 45 years of which 9 are male and 10 female
- 71 were aged between 46 and 65 years of which 43 are male and 28 female
- 41 were aged between 65 and 74 years of which 21 are male and 20 female
- 88 were aged over 75 years of which 53 are male and 35 female.

Summary of findings

The survey dealt with a range of key areas which are summarised below. The totals recorded will vary according to the number of responses.

Population and employment

Recognising that the composition of Letcombe Regis population has changed radically since the last Parish Plan was published, residents were asked why they chose Letcombe Regis as a place to live as this gives an indication of the appeal of the village and the factors which should be considered in its future development. The main reasons given were:

- Enjoyment of village life 40%
- Retirement 25%
- Family reasons 11%.

Significantly, for 98% of residents, Letcombe Regis is their main residence.

The survey sought to identify how long residents had lived in Letcombe Regis. Of the 225 replies to the question, analysis showed that:

- 40 people had lived in the village for more than 20 years
- 62 people had lived in the village for between 5 years and 20 years
- 123 people had lived in the village for less than 5 years.

The high number of people moving into the village in the last 5 years is explained by the occupation of Richmond village.

Of those surveyed 33% were either employed or in full-time education and, of these, 23 people worked or studied from home and 53 people had to travel more than 5 miles to work.

The main destinations were Abingdon, Oxford and London, followed by Harwell, Didcot and Swindon. The increase in the elderly population of the village has significantly altered the proportion of residents who are of working age or in full time education.

Housing and development

Despite being in an area of outstanding natural beauty and a conservation area, Letcombe Regis is threatened at various times by housing development schemes which could change its whole nature. The overall subject of more housing and development is a major concern for residents. The advent of Richmond Retirement Village on a single site development has had a major effect on population, traffic throughput, parking and residents' needs and mobility. Consequently, an important aspect of the questionnaire was to determine residents' views on what they consider acceptable development for the future.

The survey asked residents to indicate what support they would give to the following types of additional housing and development. The response was as follows:

- The conversion of barns etc. into living accommodation: 80% of people were in favour and only 8% against with 12% unsure.
- The in-filling of spaces between existing houses: 38% of people were in favour but 41% were against with 21% unsure.
- The conversion of barns etc. into business use: 66% were in favour, with 34% against.

Several questions in this section sought to obtain views on future small scale development either within the village boundary or outside. 57% were against 5 or more dwellings on one site unless it was a development for people with a strong local connection.

Village amenities

Mobility and transport

There is much concern in the village about the increase in the volume of traffic, inconsiderate parking, the local public transport and the needs of elderly residents.

Mobility

The survey sought to identify mobility problems and of the 225 replies: 45 expressed a difficulty. Of these, 38 were aged over 75 years. 191 said they were still able to drive, with 60 aged over 75.

Positive suggestions were made:

- 21 people wanted a more frequent bus service
- 14 people wanted better maintained and readily accessible pavements.

Parking

The survey sought to identify car ownership and of the 177 replies:

- 81% indicated ownership of one vehicle
- 19% owned more than one vehicle.

Parking on the roadsides directly correlates to the lack of off-road parking in the vicinity. The parking of cars and vans on the highway came in for much criticism with many roads becoming single lane, generally clogging up the village and highlighting an overall inadequacy of parking.

Of the 66 comments made:

- 7 wanted restrictions placed on Richmond staff parking
- 6 wanted planning authorities to insist on adequate parking arrangements on new housing more parking areas are needed and 19 identified the Village Hall, Pavilion and Pub as potential areas that might be used.

Other interesting suggestions were:

- residents with garages or parking spaces should use them
- the shop/café area parking should be reserved for customers
- provision of a bicycle rack outside the café.

The suggestion that the Millennium Green might be used for parking is not practicable because it is designated as a 'village green' therefore this is legally not acceptable.

Bus service

The survey sought to identify bus usage and of the 225 replies:

- 4% used the buses weekly
- 22% used the buses occasionally
- 74% never use the bus.

People indicated they might use the bus more if:

- buses ran more frequently, 102 persons
- buses ran at more convenient times, 96 persons
- bus shelters were provided, 27 persons
- buses had easier disabled access, 20 persons.

Other suggestions included better and more direct access to Didcot and Oxford. However, there were complaints that the bus timetable was not readily available and that the bus stops were not identified.

St Andrew's Church

St Andrew's Church dates back to 1195 in the reign of Richard I and is a valued feature of Letcombe Regis. Of the 222 replies:

- 15 people attended church services weekly
- 16 people attended church services monthly
- 88 people attended church services occasionally
- 103 people never attended church services.

Of the comments, a small number questioned the convenience of access, heating and timing of services but there were a significant number of suggestions for increasing attendance and widening usage of the church as a village asset including:

- use for concerts, music recitals, visiting choirs, talks, charity events, Christmas tree festivals etc.
- promoting involvement of young people in the choir and bell-ringing
- arranging special services for specific groups e.g. disabled, elderly, children, families, working people, for blessing pets, a Christingle
- engaging children to lead services
- greater participation of the church in village events
- services more suited to modern way of life
- services with familiar hymns and hymn tunes.

People indicated how often they attend existing events:

- 33 people attend frequently
- 114 people attend occasionally
- 77 people never attend events.

Of the 174 people responding to the question asking if they would like to see more events in the church, 113 said yes and 61 said no.

Of those who commented on the widening the scope of church events, 68% wanted concerts, choirs and music recitals, 10% a Sunday school and 8% lectures, poetry readings.

Parish Council Burial Ground

The Parish Council Burial Ground serves the village for internments and is situated beside the recreation ground entrance, on the Bassett Road. As the village population is continuing to grow it is planned that this will be extended and the questionnaire asked residents what factors should be considered for its future development.

Of the 222 replies:

- 20% said they were likely to use it
- 45% were unlikely to use it
- 35% were uncertain

The significant majority, 92%, felt it already presented a good environment. However some further suggestions were to remove/prune the overgrown dark leylandii trees; plant more shrubs; improve landscaping and have fewer artificial flowers; provide easier access at the entrance; extend the burial ground; provide more seating and an improved water supply.

Shop and café

The village shop and café was opened in 2011 as part of the development of the Richmond retirement complex. The survey sought to identify the importance and use of the shop. Of the 225 replies, 96% considered the shop and café to be an important community facility.

- 57 people use the shop weekly
- 34 people use the shop monthly
- 124 people use the shop occasionally
- 10 people never use the shop.

Of the 110 who commented on using it more:

- 28% wanted the shop to stock a wider range of items.
- 17% felt it was too expensive
- 12% wanted better or longer opening hours
- 8% wanted the shop to sell newspapers
- 7% wanted it to sell fruit and vegetables.

Other suggestions were to use it for evening bookings for events and the introduction of a limited Post Office facility.

Most replies seemed happy with the café facility with 7% wanting a greater variety of food.

The Greyhound

At the time of the survey, the pub had been sold by the brewery to a group of private individuals who had plans to refurbish the premises and we discussed with them what information might assist them.

Of the 225 people who commented on the pub, 97% considered it to be an important community facility.

When it was open:

- 35 people visited the pub weekly
- 46 people visited it monthly
- 108 people visited it occasionally
- 26 people never visited the pub.

In reply to specific questions about would encourage more frequent visits, there was considerable support for traditional pub food, more upmarket food, theme nights and bed and breakfast facilities; there was no support for team games or sporting events on TV.

However, there was a clear message from the 98 suggestions made that a cosy decor and a warm welcome from the staff was very important. There was little support for the serving of coffee and tea which was viewed as unnecessary competition with the café.

Since the survey, the ownership of the pub has changed hands again and the present owners have recently submitted revised plans to the local authorities for approval; there is an expectation that the pub will reopen as soon as refurbishment has been completed.

The Millennium Green

The Millennium Green is designated as a village green. The survey sought views on its usage. Of the 183 responses, 25% considered it a well-used facility. 84% felt that they would use it if more village activities were held there and 80% indicated they would use it for picnics if suitable seating was available.

Of those who commented, further ideas included; Art displays or sculptures, comfortable seating, improved maintenance. Some views were expressed that it was hardly used so had no practical purpose or that it could be used as a car park but as its use is restricted, this is not possible.

Healthcare

Primary healthcare for most villagers is provided by two surgeries in the Mably Way Health Centre, Wantage which is located about 2 miles away. The Wantage Community Hospital offers maternity services and respite care. Currently, out-of hours services and minor injuries are provided at Abingdon Hospital which is 10 miles away. The nearest A&E is in Oxford 25 miles away.

The survey asked if people were satisfied with the local healthcare and medical facilities and of the 218 responses, 83% were satisfied with the healthcare service.

Of the suggestions made:

- 16 people wanted to see more and improved services
- 14 people wanted a closer A&E, minor injuries or x-ray unit
- 10 people said that transport was a problem.

Of those who commented many felt the Wantage Community Hospital could be developed and services expanded to meet local needs.

The mobile library

The mobile library comes to Letcombe Regis every two weeks and parks for 50 minutes in the Richmond reception car park. Of 225 responses on usage, only 19% used the mobile library the majority of whom are Richmond residents.

Rubbish collection

Food waste is collected weekly and recycling, garden or land-fill waste collected on alternate weeks. The survey asked if people were satisfied with the present arrangements for the collection of household and garden waste and of the 215 responses, 93% were satisfied.

Of the comments made by those who were not satisfied, a weekly collection of garden waste (brown bin) was suggested as was the return of bins to the correct house.

Crime

The survey sought to identify if residents felt the village a safe and secure place to live. Of the 217 responses, only three people felt it unsafe.

Social and recreational facilities

Local organisations

People were asked to indicate which local organisations they attend or use and the membership and age profile is shown below.

Age profile of club members

	Number attending	18-25	26-45	46-65	66-74	75 and over
Book Buffs	13	-	-	6	2	5
Gardening Club	24	-	1	13	5	5
Knitwits	5	-	1	1	-	3
Letcombe Singers	17	-	-	1	7	9
Letcombe Women's Institute	19	-	1	6	1	11
Cricket Club	16	2	1	3	4	6
Football Club	5	1	-	-	2	2
Riding Club	11	-	3	4	3	1
Table Tennis Club	3	-	-	1	-	2
Tennis Club	30	-	4	16	5	5
Childrey Parent and Toddler Group	3	-	1	-	1	1
Childrey Pre-School	5	-	4	-	-	1
Ridgeway C of E Primary School	8	-	3	-	4	1
Toddlers Music Group	3	-	2	-	1	-
Bell-ringing at St Andrew's Church	11	1	1	6	2	1
Ridgeway Handbell Ringers	4	-	-	-	2	2
200 Club	65	-	6	22	20	17
Allotments	20	-	2	10	5	3
Over 60s Lunch Club	36	-	-	-	9	27

Village Hall

The Village Hall is one of the most well used assets in the community. In 2010, money from the developers of Richmond was provided for various projects within the village, giving the opportunity to consider refurbishment or a new build. If the village is awarded a Big Lottery grant for development, it is likely a new hall will be built in the winter/spring 2015/16. If this is unsuccessful, then a refurbishment plan will commence in 2016. The survey sought to assess the actual usage of the present hall to find out whether improved paths and pavements would encourage target groups such as children and the elderly to make more use of it.

- Of the 205 responses, 14% used it monthly and 36% occasionally for a group activity.
- Of the 202 responses, 63% used it occasionally for a village event e.g. a race night.
- Of the 185 responses, 34% used it occasionally for a private function e.g. a family party
- 21% said they would make more use of the hall if there were improved facilities for the disabled and 26% if there was improved pavement access for the disabled.

Recreation ground

The survey sought to identify what usage was made of the recreation ground.

- Of the 186 responses, 3% used the pavilion monthly and 38% occasionally
- Of the 169 responses, 7% used the cricket pitch occasionally
- Of the 186 responses, 7% used the children's playground either weekly or monthly and 32% occasionally
- Of the 186 responses, 8% used the football pitch occasionally
- Of the 169 responses, 4% used the horse riding area weekly
- Of the 174 responses, 9% used the tennis courts weekly, and 7% occasionally
- Of the 186 responses, 13% used the area for other recreational activities weekly, and 24% occasionally.

In answer to the question of what would encourage more usage of the facilities:

- 77 people said if there were additional classes for hobbies and interests
- 46 people said if there were greater encouragement and opportunities for young people, the less skilled or beginners to join classes or teams
- 43 people said if there were improved play areas for children and more frequent updating of the playground equipment
- 32 people said if there were better practice facilities for games and sports.

Village profile

In describing the unique nature of the village, the top responses in order of popularity were:

- Friendly
- Quiet
- Peaceful

Also listed were: Attractive, Pretty, Beautiful, Rural, Convenient or accessible for Wantage/M4/trains, Small, and Picturesque.

In describing the most attractive features of the village, the top responses in order of popularity were:

- Church
- Diversity of architecture
- Recreation ground and its facilities

Also listed were: Nature Reserve, Letcombe Brook, Lovely setting, Attractive views, Shop and Café, Proximity to countryside, and Tranquillity.

In describing the least attractive features of the village, the top responses in order of popularity were:

- Traffic issues,
- Flats near the church,
- Poor state of pavements and footpaths

Also listed were: Village Hall, Lack of pub, Inappropriate developments, Old Bakery Cottages, Richmond, and the Garages in Chapel Street.

Volunteering

The distribution of the survey was seen as an opportunity to advertise the need in the village for more volunteers. Residents were asked if they could help and to indicate their interests. 26 people responded and these individuals have been contacted by existing village organisers. Many of those who replied were merely indicating the nature of their interest or that they were already a volunteer. However a number of new recruits were added to such activities as helping at children's parties and in the Nature Reserve. The advancement of an arts and crafts movement is proving a success.

Changes to the village

In seeking to identify what might be done to change or improve some aspect of the village, four specific actions were identified and residents were asked their views on whether they should be considered or encouraged.

- 109 out of 189 responses (58%) would support a public car park.
- 105 out of 180 responses (58%) would support an arts and crafts centre
- 63 out of 167 responses (38%) would support facilities for tourists
- 49 out of 170 responses (29%) would support more light industry.

The most popular suggestions for location of car parks were the Village Hall or Recreation Ground. There was no consensus where a craft centre or light industry could be located and this will require further consultation.

Other suggestions included an attractive pub and more bed and breakfast facilities, improvements to the roads, pavements, footpaths and bridleways.

Communications

In the survey residents were asked if they regularly read or had access to local sources of information. Of the 221 replies:

- 95% read the Letcombe Register
- 73% read the notice board near the Greyhound
- 63% read The Ridgeway Benefice Contact
- 25% accessed the Parish Council web site
- 13% used the Thames Valley Police web site.
- 50 comments were made on what would encourage more use of the information sources.
- 30% were satisfied with the information available while 20% thought the information on the web site should be updated more frequently and subscribers should be notified of an update. The broadband connection was also mentioned.

Community support

The survey sought views on community and voluntary support schemes in the village. Of the 150 responses, 38 people said they would like assistance with a variety of tasks such as shopping, transport and using computers.

Richmond Retirement Village

Richmond Retirement Village, was completed in 2010 and consists of 80 independent living units, and a main building catering for 66 assisted living units plus a care floor for people requiring nursing or dementia care. The development has provided a shop and café facility and is generally seen to be of benefit to Letcombe Regis as more of Richmond residents become involved with local activities. The biggest downside appears to be the increased traffic and parking problems.

The survey sought to identify the extent to which the Richmond development had integrated into the community. The questions were directed, firstly, to non-Richmond residents and then to Richmond residents.

143 non-Richmond residents commented on whether the development has been of benefit to Letcombe Regis and of these:

- 88% answered "Yes"
- 11% stated that it had caused a significant increase of car and lorry traffic
- 5% said it had caused parking problems 5% said that Richmond staff and visitors speed or ignore road markings.

140 non-Richmond residents replied to the question on whether they attended any events in the retirement village and of these:

- 36% answered "Yes".

The remainder of the responses commented that the events had no appeal for them, were at the wrong times, were age related and they were not in that age group or the events were not publicised enough.

Richmond residents were asked if they attended events outside the retirement village. 72 responded and, of those, 65% did.

Village environment

Roads, pavements and traffic

The survey sought to identify if particular roads or pavements within the village were of concern.

Of the 186 responses, 72% did not support a change in priorities at the junction of Main Street, South Street and Bassett Road.

The comments reflected a variety of concerns, but not all were in agreement:

- 30 people were concerned with the number of obstructions on roads; poor parking, overgrown hedges
- 26 people were concerned with the general traffic management through the village; priorities at junctions, better road marking and signage, double yellow lines, pedestrian crossings and drop kerbs for wheelchair access
- 14 people were concerned with the state of the road surface, particularly potholes
- 13 people were concerned about speeding.

Of the 202 responses, 65% did not see any problem with dog fouling.

Public footpaths

The survey sought to identify the usage of footpaths in and around the village. There were 220 responses to this question. The public footpath to Wantage was used by 141 people at least occasionally with just under half of those using it weekly. The main reason for not using it was mobility, although there were also comments about the need for better lighting and maintenance, and some concerns for personal security.

Of the other footpaths in the village:

- 103 people used them weekly
- 23 used them monthly
- 67 used them occasionally
- 27 never used them.

Of those who used them, three quarters found their condition and signage satisfactory.

Bridleways

The survey sought to identify the usage of bridleways. Of the 218 responses:

- 86 people used them weekly
- 21 used them monthly
- 60 used them occasionally
- 51 never used them.

The suggestions for bridleways were the restriction of their use by motor vehicles (particularly 4x4s) and improved surfaces in wet weather.

Further comments were the need for better signage, notices about points of interest along the way and for more information or maps.

Bridleways within the village were considered to be better maintained than those outside the curtilage of the village.

Nature reserve

The nature reserve is managed by The Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) on a 50 year lease from Richmond.

Of the 225 responses on the nature reserve:

- 96% considered it an important asset to the village
- 45% visited it weekly
- 7% never visited the reserve.

Of the 186 replies, 70% wanted the Parish to continue contributing to its upkeep.

Of the 206 responses on what people valued most about the reserve:

- 77% appreciated the wildlife
- 77% appreciated the walking trails
- 29% felt it should be child and dog friendly.

Other features were the peace and quiet, fresh air, flora and star gazing.

180 people would like to see more use of the reserve for education purposes.

The comments were contradictory. In general, it seems that the reserve is highly appreciated by villagers. While some would like to see it enhanced and made more accessible and to be used more, others would like to see it remain secluded and quiet.

Letcombe Brook

The Letcombe Brook is one of the world's rare chalk streams, 85% of which are in the UK. It is an important habitat for many different plants and animals.

The brook was considered to be an important natural feature of the village.

The suggestions of how to find out more about the brook were:

- 73 would like to see more talks about the reserve
- 59 would like to see guided walks
- 41 would like to see river dipping events
- 128 would like to see self-guided walk leaflets
- 122 would like to see information boards.

Of the 199 who replied, 80% wanted the Parish to continue contributing to its upkeep.

Youth

A number of attempts have been made over recent years to start up a youth club based in Letcombe Regis; they have not succeeded either because not enough youths were interested or because no adults were prepared to assist in the running of a club.

In preparing the current survey, it was recognised that the information required from the under 18s group was totally different from that required from adults; a different questionnaire comprising 17 questions was designed which would enable the Parish Council to judge the thoughts of, and what activities would engage, the under 18s.

There were 32 questionnaires returned.

Positives

- 29 youths answered the question “What do you like most about Letcombe Regis?” There were 22 expressions of pleasure for the countryside and the nature reserve and 9 for the recently created tennis courts.
- 21 youths used the footpath to Wantage, all bar one of the others did not need to.

Areas of concern and suggestions for improvement

In reply to the question “Would you like to be involved in setting up more activities, e.g. a youth club?” only 1 person said “Yes” In reply to the question “Is enough importance given to providing things for children and teenagers to do?” Half the respondents said “Yes”, the other half said “No” whose suggestions included better play equipment, badminton, free tennis, skate park, mini golf and a youth club.

When asked about their use of the following facilities, the results for attendance (either often or sometimes) were:

- Village Hall 50%
- Recreation ground 85%
- Children's playground 22%
- Millennium Green 19%
- St Andrew's Church 11%

In reply to the question “What would encourage you to use them more?” the more popular responses were more events and not just for the 13+ age group, better equipment in the playground and cheaper tennis.

In answer to the question “What do you not like about Letcombe Regis?” 7 youths said there was nothing they disliked, and 22 youths whose comments covered many topics, for example: not much to do, not a good bus service, isolated, dilapidated Village Hall, not many young children, no pub!, church bells in the morning, Richmond traffic and no ice cream van in South Street.

Progress achieved following the 2006 Parish Plan

The 2006 Plan listed three major actions for which s106 monies from the Richmond development were available and six other areas for improvement. In summary they concerned:

- The Village Hall where the present position is that there will be a new build if sufficient grants are forthcoming, otherwise a major refurbishment will be undertaken.
- The sports pavilion to which excellent alterations and improvements have been made.
- New tennis courts which have also recently been built and are well used.
- Setting up a village web site, this is up and running.
- Better bus service information.
- More dog bins installed.
- Traffic calming measures. A new 30mph speed limit has since been installed.
- Improvement to footpaths. These have yet to be addressed.
- Additional recreational facilities for under 18s. Much effort has gone in to this subject but, to date no youth or parent has been prepared to assist in this venture.

Action plan

The survey has highlighted a number of areas where action is required either to improve existing village facilities or to ensure that we can preserve the character of Letcombe Regis for future generations.

The Parish Council intends to follow up progress on the action plan on a regular basis and will use the register and the Council web site to advise residents of such progress. It will also make a full report on achievements at the annual Parish meetings.

In many instances the Parish Council does not have the authority for direct action and can only influence the other responsible organisations by bringing any shortcomings to their attention.

Housing and development

Report to the District Council that villagers are in favour of modest development such as barn conversions but the majority are against further small-scale housing unless it is for persons with a strong local connection. Action PC

Mobility and transport

1. A survey of pavements is required to identify improvements needed and for access to Village Hall.
2. Villagers to be encouraged to use their garages rather than park at the roadside.
3. Police co-operation to be requested to prevent illegal parking at road junctions.
4. Richmond to be asked to provide a cycle rack at the shop and café. Action PC

Bus service

1. Bus companies to be asked to produce localised timetables for Letcombe Regis.
2. Notify bus companies that better disabled access is needed.
3. Investigate possible sites for bus shelters. Action PC

St Andrew's Church

Communicate survey findings to the Parochial Church Council to encourage increased attendance at services and wider use of the church for secular functions. Action PC

Burial ground

1. Remove overgrown trees.
2. Investigate possible extension of the burial ground, landscaping and improved parking facility. Action PC

Shop and café

Findings to be notified to Richmond management with a request to enable the sale of postage stamps in the shop. Action PC

Greyhound pub

Survey findings to be notified to new owners with the request to incorporate villagers' views in the redesign and facilities planned for the pub. Action PC

Millennium Green

1. Investigate potential for improved and more comfortable seating.
2. Investigate potential for art displays on the green. Action PC

Healthcare

Communicate survey findings to appropriate health authorities. In particular the views that the Wantage Community Hospital should be developed and services expanded to meet growing local needs. Action PC

Mobile library

Discuss with library authority the possibility of a second location for the mobile library facility more central to the rest of the village. Action PC

Rubbish Collection

No action required.

Crime

No action required.

Village Hall

1. Report findings to Trustees to progress plans for a new or re-furbished hall.
2. Investigate possibilities for improved pavement access to hall.
3. Appoint a manager to promote wider usage and series of interests. Action PC & Trustees

Recreation ground

Report findings to Trustees, in particular the requests for

1. Upgrading of children's play area.
2. Creating better sporting opportunities for youths, beginners or less skilled players.
3. All weather surface area for adolescents.
4. Promoting a wider series of interests. Action PC & Trustees

Changes to the village

1. Organise further consultation on possible locations for developing an arts and crafts movement.
2. Investigate opportunities for further car parking at the Village Hall and at the Recreation Ground. Action PC & Trustees

Communications

1. Alter website design to incorporate a panel which identifies and links to recent updates on village activity and news.
2. Pursue better broadband facility. Action PC

Community support

Explore the feasibility of re-introducing a community support group. Action PC

Volunteering

Continue advertising in the Letcombe Register for more volunteers for local activities. Action PC

Retirement village

Communicate findings to both Richmond and non-Richmond activities groups to encourage greater integration and more participation in social events. Action PC

Roads, pavements and traffic

1. Request PCSO support in management of traffic issues.
2. Request highways action on road maintenance and overgrown vegetation.
3. Remind villagers to cut back hedges which obstruct pavement access. Action PC

Public footpaths

Ensure that regular maintenance is carried out by the County Council. Action PC

Bridleways

1. Apply to County Council to make bridleways prohibited for vehicular access.
2. Contact Vale and Downland Museum regarding the production of a site plan and village guide to points of interest in Letcombe Regis. Action PC

Nature Reserve

Communicate survey findings to Conservation Group and BBOWT. Action PC

Letcombe Brook

Communicate survey findings to Letcombe Brook Project. Action PC

Youth

1. Upgrade the children's play area.

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