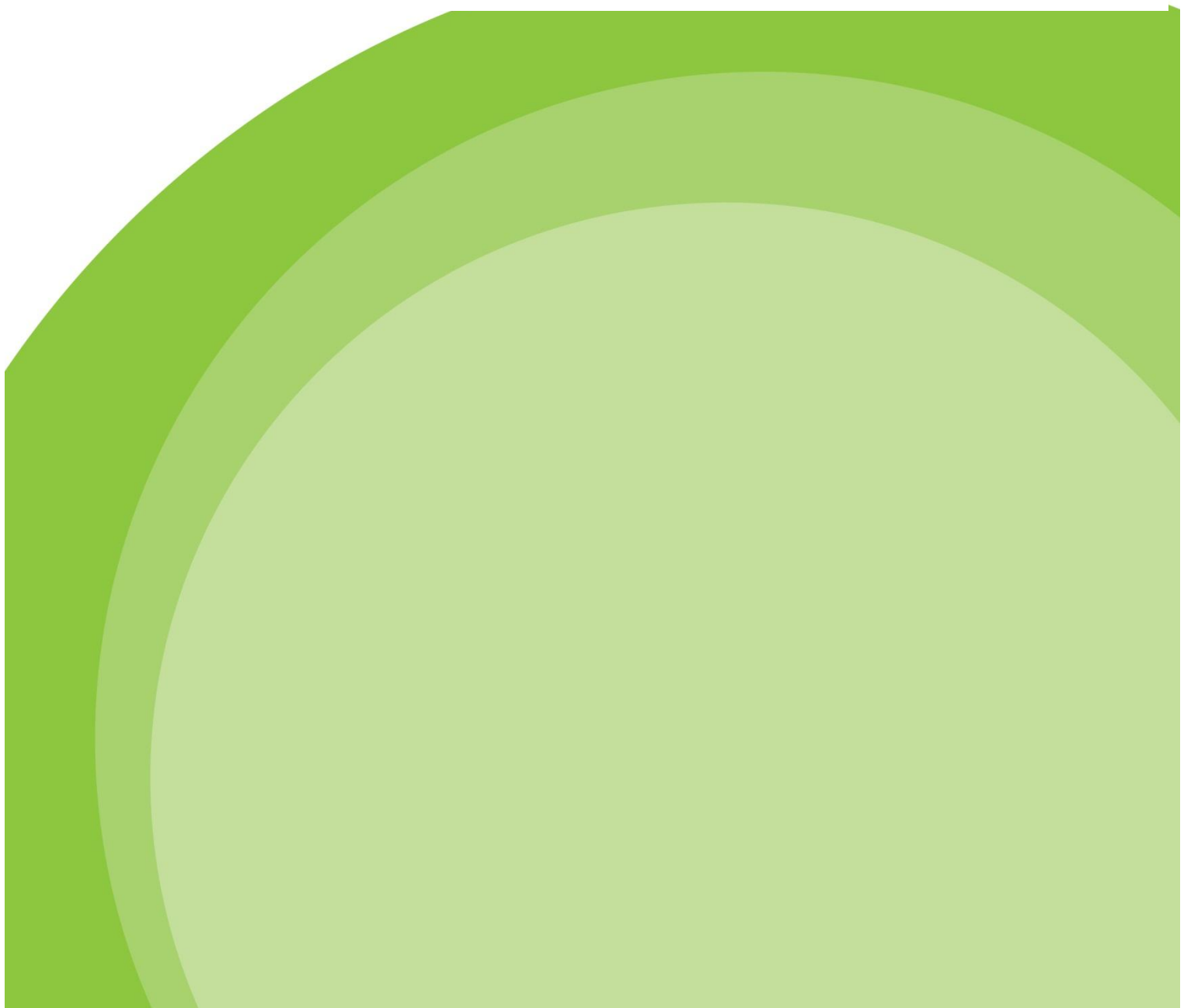


Park Homes in Central Bedfordshire – A unique environment and place to live 2015-2020



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Foreword

As the Council's Executive Member for Social Care, Health & Housing, I am delighted to introduce the council's offer for park homes residents in Central Bedfordshire. Its purpose is to set out our approach and commitment to creating a better offer and choice for older people.

Central Bedfordshire is a great place to live, visit and invest in. Housing has a central role to play in everything we are seeking to achieve in Central Bedfordshire and we recognise the unique nature of the park home lifestyle, which can offer an affordable housing option within attractive rural locations.



The Council would like to use this opportunity to raise awareness of the park home sector, the role in which it plays in the local housing market and in meeting the needs and aspirations of older people.

Over 400 residents have told us about what it is like to live in a park home, the things that matter to them and some of the challenges they face. The council's objective is to enhance and protect the positive aspects of the park home lifestyle whilst helping residents to meet the challenges of living in a park home.

We have identified the following four priorities to help us to meet this objective:

Priority one: To develop the park home environment into lifetime neighbourhoods where people can live independently in their home for as long as they wish to.

Priority two: To develop and provide good quality, accessible information for park homes residents.

Priority three: To improve the experience of residents living in park homes.

Priority four: To provide more opportunities for residents to become involved and to work in collaboration with residents to strengthen the development of the park homes communities.

Our vision is that all park home residents will enjoy an independent living lifestyle in a unique community environment that meets the needs and aspirations of older people in Central Bedfordshire.

We will look creatively at existing resources and assets to help meet the above priorities, including the use of sheltered schemes that might be suitable as wider community hubs for older people, including park home residents.

The council will be ambitious in our approach to the delivery of this offer; it is critical that we work closely with park homes residents, site owners and the wider communities to help make this vision a reality.

Councilor Ms. Carole Hegley
Executive member responsible for Social Care, Health and Housing

Introduction

Central Bedfordshire Council recognises the unique nature of the park home lifestyle, which can offer an affordable housing option within attractive rural locations.

This document aims to explore and gain a better understanding of the needs and aspirations of park home residents, and use this insight to set out how to improve the offer and choice for residents.

The document is structured to provide important contextual information and background about park homes, followed by the findings of the needs assessment survey and the council's initial response to these findings. Finally, the document captures the vision and priorities, and how the Council will work collaboratively with residents to improve the offer and choice.

The council will look to provide more opportunities for residents to become involved to strengthen the development of the park homes community whilst improving their ability to communicate and influence the council.

One of the key priorities of the offer is to develop and provide good quality, accessible information to residents and work in partnership across the council and with other organisations to ensure residents have access to support when they need it to enable them to plan their lives and their housing needs now and in the future.

The majority of park homes residents are over 65; the council aims to improve their health and wellbeing by encouraging collaborative work with the voluntary sector and within adult social care, health and housing services to enable residents to remain connected to local facilities and to live independently in their park homes for as long as residents wish.

The current arrangements for accessing utilities are some cause for residents concern; the council will explore options available to be able to give residents more choice and control in this area.

The council has developed four key medium term priorities to respond to the needs and aspirations of park home residents, the document contains an action plan, setting out key actions and the timetable for achieving them.

Background

Park homes are residential mobile homes that require licensing, the homes are normally owned by the occupier, who rents a pitch from the site operator. Residents have to pay a monthly pitch fee to the site operator; they are required to comply with rules and regulations, prescribed in legislation and by the site operator.

Park homes have proved attractive to retired people wishing to release capital from the sale of a house and find a pleasant and peaceful location with a sense of community to live in permanently

A key characteristic of the park home sector is the age profile of its residents, with the majority of park homes occupied by older people. Many sites have age restrictions in place with the most common minimum age limit being set at 50 or over.

At the last census (2011), almost 160,000 people were living in approximately 84,000 park homes across 2,000 sites in the UK.

| <i>Census 2011</i> | | |
|---|--|--|
| | Total Number of Mobile Homes in the UK | Mobile Homes as a Percentage of all UK |
| Total number of people | 160,000 | 0.3% |
| Total number of households | 90,000 | 0.3% |
| Total number of dwellings | 112,000 | 0.4% |
| <i>Berkeley Hanover Consulting (2002) Study for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister</i> | | |
| | Park Homes | All of the UK |
| Proportion of households that are elderly | 48% | 33% |
| Proportion of households with children | 4% | 29% |
| Average Monthly Incomes | £600 | £1,800 |
| Proportion of households with savings | 81% | 65% |
| Households with savings less than £1,500 | 45% | 58% |

The council is currently administering site licenses for 82 park home and gypsy and traveller sites across Central Bedfordshire with the total number of units across all sites exceeding 1200.

47 of these 82 sites are more traditional gypsy and traveler occupied mobile home sites, which are different in character and not generally recognised as “Park homes”. Many of these 47 sites contain single unit gypsy and traveler homes.

The gypsy and traveller sites differ from more traditionally known park home sites. Whilst licensing responsibilities for the council are similar for park homes and gypsy and traveller sites, there are significant differences in the residential occupation of the sites.

The intention of this document is to focus primarily on park homes sites, whilst recognising that some of the issues for older residents on gypsy and traveller sites are going to be similar in nature to residents on park homes sites.

The National and Legal Context

The Care Act 2014

The Care Act overhauls the social care system in England, reforming and streamlining much of the legislation on access to, administration of, and responsibilities for care services.

The new statutory principle of individual wellbeing underpins the Act, and is the driving force behind care and support.

The council (and partners in health, housing, welfare and employment services) has a duty to take steps to prevent, reduce or delay the need for care and support for all local people. The council will aim to provide high quality information and advice about services that operate in the community, or commission universal services that seek to promote well-being and improve people's independence.

The implementation of the Care Act in Central Bedfordshire will transform the way care and support is delivered for potential and current people in need of support and their carers.

Lifetime Neighbourhoods Concept

The Centre for Housing Policy at York University developed a concept known as Lifetime Neighbourhoods, brought together in a report, commissioned by the Department for Communities and Local Government. Lifetime neighbourhoods are places designed to be inclusive regardless of age or disability.

The report contributes to the government's commitment to help older people live independently. It should help to prompt thinking around how, for example, ageing; design, housing, transport, participation and green spaces can be linked when creating lifetime neighbourhoods.

Projects

Meeting the Accommodation Needs of Older People Program

The council will ensure the park homes offer lessons from good practice happening elsewhere in the council. Central Bedfordshire has developed a program approach towards the delivery of accommodation for older people. The vision for the program is that older people across all of Central Bedfordshire have access to a choice of local, high quality, value for money accommodation that enable them to lead healthy, independent lives within their community.

This should include a range of warm, safe and secure schemes where older people can live without losing touch with their family or community and will include:-

- Good quality sheltered housing, to rent or buy.
- Good quality independent living, to rent or buy.
- Good quality suitable general needs housing, to rent or buy.

- Good quality residential and nursing care homes, provided by partner organisations.
- Good quality community facilities at these schemes that bring in the local community.

Park Homes Site Licensing and Historic Breaches Standards

The council can attach licence conditions under the amended Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1906. Site licence conditions can include the following:

- (a) Restricting the total number of homes on a site;
- (b) Controlling (whether by reference to their size, the state of their repair or, any other feature, the types of homes on a park;
- (c) Regulating the positions of homes, regulating the placing or erection of structures and vehicles;
- (d) Securing, preserving or enhancing the amenity of the land, including the planting and replanting thereof with trees and bushes;
- (e) Securing proper measures for preventing and detecting the outbreak of fire and adequate means of fighting fire;
- (f) Securing adequate sanitary facilities and equipment.

The Government provides model standards with respect to the layout of, and the provision of facilities, services and equipment for, caravan sites or particular types of caravan site; and in deciding what (if any) conditions to attach to a site licence. The Council adheres to these model standards, the most recent of which are the Model Standards 2008 for Caravan Sites in England (Appendix A).

Many of the park homes sites in Central Bedfordshire have been in existence for decades. Prior to 2011 there were significant inconsistencies with regards the conditions on site licences due to the practices adopted by the legacy Councils and the changes in standards that occurred over time.

During the period 2011 to 2013 the majority of legacy site licences for sites in Central Bedfordshire were re-issued with conditions that reflected the 2008 Model Standards. Where standards became more onerous this led to what was referred to as “historic breaches”. The council developed a Historic Breaches Policy (HBP) in 2011 to give guidance on how such breaches should be dealt with, reflecting both risk and impact on site owners and residents. The 2011 HBP required certain issues to be addressed upon sale or transfer of a park home and introduced the flexibility of alternative measures to mitigate risk.

The Mobile Homes Act 2013 (MHA 2013) brought about a significant reduction in the role and influence that park homes site owners have in the sale and transfer of park homes. One of the most significant concerns that site owners raised during the engagement event held in September 2013 was that they would be unable to bring about the remedy of breaches upon sale or transfer in line with the 2011 HBP due to their exclusion from much of the selling and gifting process. Owners advised that this could result in the new owner of

a park home being unfairly penalised if they were unaware of the need to remedy a breach until after they had purchased the park home.

These concerns have been noted and the council has updated the 2011 HBP into a Historic Breaches Standards, to remove the instances where breaches are remedied at point of sale or transfer. The Historic Breaches Standards has been included as Appendix B alongside this offer document.

The MHA 2013 increased the enforcement powers available to local authorities to deal with breaches to site licence conditions. These new powers are covered by the Housing Solutions Enforcement Policy, which has been updated to reflect these changes.

Site Rules

Site rules are a set of rules that park homes residents are required to adhere to as they form express terms of their pitch agreements with the site owner. The Mobile Homes Act 1983 (as amended) allows for site rules to be made which relate to the management and conduct of the site plus those matters prescribed in Section 4 of the Mobile Home Site Rule Regulations 2014. These are those necessary to ensure that acceptable standards are maintained on the site, which will be of general benefit to residents, or to promote and maintain community cohesion on the site.

These regulations set out the procedure that should be followed from the commencement date of 4th February 2014 when new site rules are introduced along with prescribed forms that should be used and categories of site rules which would no longer be allowed and would have no effect. This procedure includes consultation with the residents and depositing the rules with the local authority at the end of the process. Residents have the right to appeal to the First-Tier Tribunal – Property Chamber (Residential Property) where site owners have failed to follow the prescribed procedure for making site rules or where the site owner proposes banned rules such as those that discriminate against any group of person or give the site operator discretion as to how they are applied. Local authorities have no legal authority to reject site rules or to check them for validity as part of the depositing process.

The changes brought about by the MHA 2013 meant that site owners would need to introduce new site rules through the new procedure before 4th February 2015 as on that date any site rules made before the introduction of the new procedure would become null and void.

The regulations introduced a requirement for local authorities to establish and keep up to date a register of site rules in respect of protected sites in its area and for this register to be published on-line. Whilst the local authority has a role with regards checking that site licence conditions are being adhered to, they do not have a similar role in respect to site rules, as these form part of the agreement between site owners and residents.

The Park Homes context in Central Bedfordshire

The council is currently administering site licenses for 82 park home and gypsy and traveler sites across Central Bedfordshire with the total number of units across all sites exceeding 1200.

47 of these 82 sites are more traditional gypsy and traveler occupied mobile home sites, which are different in character and not generally recognized as “Park homes”. Many of these 47 sites contain single unit gypsy and traveler homes.

The intention of this document is to focus on the unique issues and characteristics presented by park homes, those homes on parks generally occupied by an older population, and not gypsy and Traveler sites.

Key characteristics

The average number of homes on all licensed sites is 15, although sites range from 1 to 175.

The costs of Park homes vary as expected between double sized and single sized and new and used. Below is a summary of the typical costs of park homes:

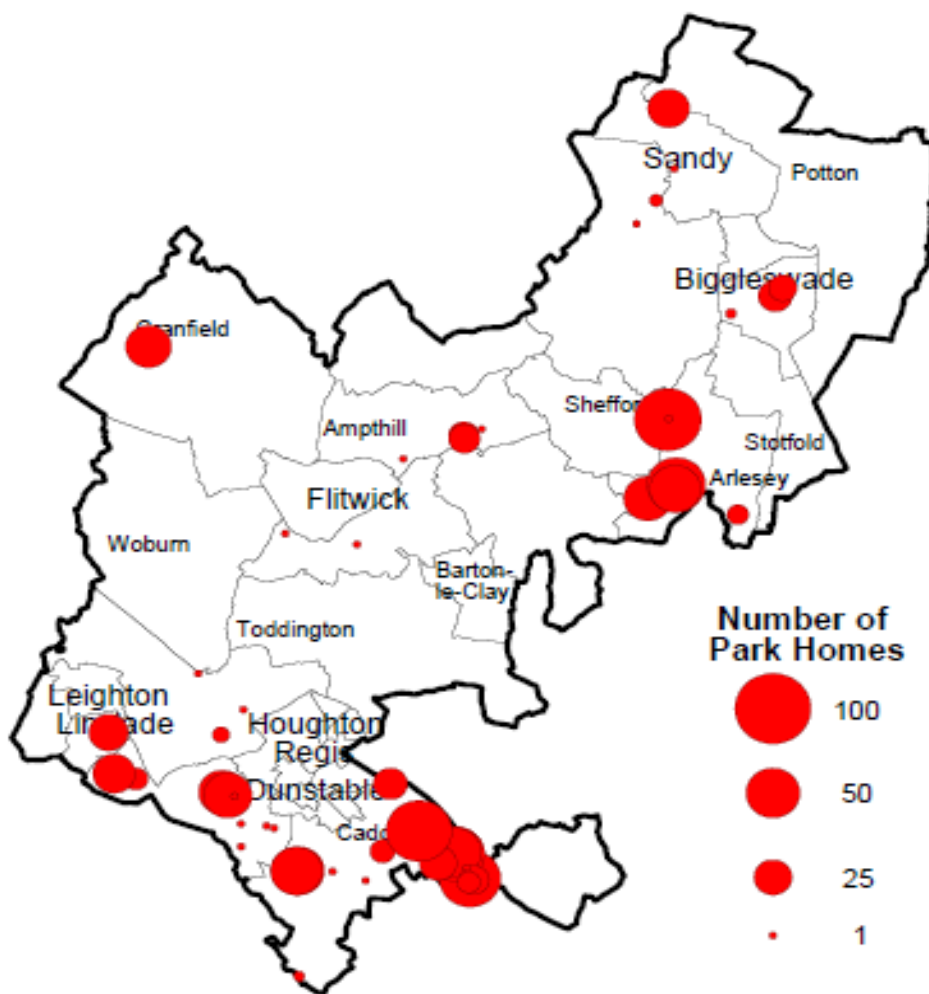
- Single home prices are generally lower and can be below £100,000.
- New double sized Homes range from around £164,000 – £235,000+ depending upon specification.
- Used Single Homes are around £35,000 to about £100,000 dependent upon location and condition.
- Used Double sized homes are around £78,000 to £235,000, again dependent on size, condition, & location

Park homes are built to comply with BS 3632 and from 2005 include the requirement for a minimum level of insulation. However some manufacturers now include ISO 12944 and BS3900:F4 1991(Anti-corrosion standard). They also include Double glazing with K glass in accordance with BS 6262 and BS 6206.

Local Planning Information:

Park homes sites are those that only include mobile or park homes (static homes) with permanent pitches on the site for residents. They specifically exclude touring units and those of a holiday/vacation type.

The map below shows where park homes are located in Central Bedfordshire.



The Adult Social Care and Housing needs of Park Homes residents

A review of all the adult social care interventions that took place between 2011 and 2014 was undertaken. 287 adult social care assessments leading to a service for park homes residents took place during this period. These services were received by 141 individual clients; this represents around 10% of park home residents.

42 of these residents received occupational health assessments,

As of December 2014, there are only 11 park home residents on the housing register waiting for re-housing. 7 of these require a move as their park home is no longer suitable. The majority of these cite health reasons whilst one applicant needs to move due to a breach of the rules around allowing children to reside in a park home.

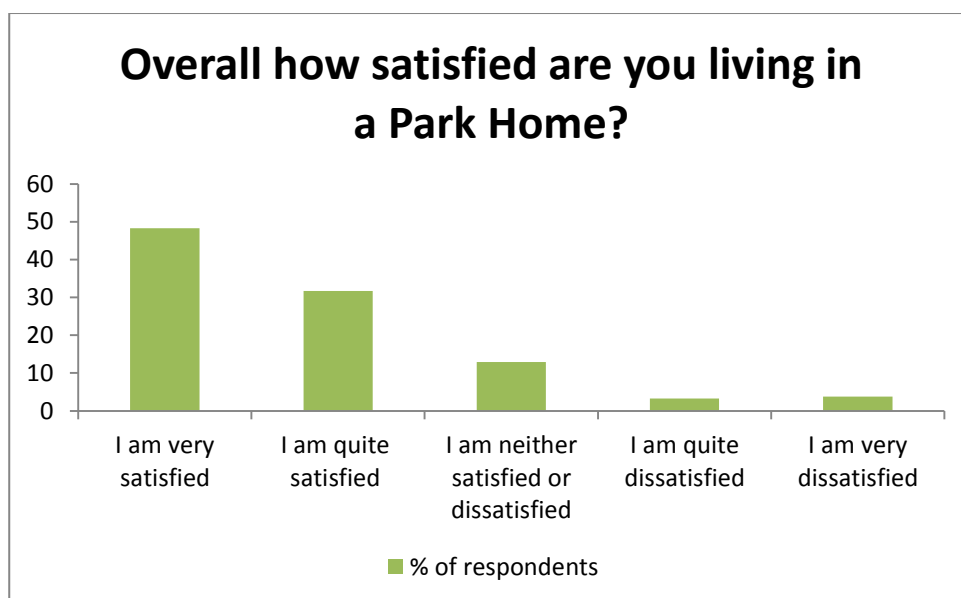
The Needs and Aspirations of Park Home residents

Park home residents were given the opportunity to provide feedback on their experience of living in a park home at an engagement event in January 2014. Concerns were raised about the changes in legislation and how residents might be affected. Residents were also concerned about how they might obtain advice and information generally. There were misunderstandings about the level of costs to be passed on to residents, highlighting communication issues. A copy of the feedback is provided in Appendix C.

A park homes resident's needs assessment survey was conducted in October 2014 to help explore these issues with residents in more detail; it also provided an opportunity to gain further insight and understanding of the customer base, their needs and aspirations. The survey provided 426 responses from residents, which provides good insight into the needs and aspirations. The results of the survey are provided below:

Overall Satisfaction

Residents are generally happy living on park homes; the overall satisfaction with living in a park home is 80%.



Reasons for moving to a Park Home

Residents chose to live a park home as they are more affordable in comparison to a bricks and mortar property in the same area. The relative low maintenance of the property is also a desirable feature. Many residents were attracted to the peace and quiet of the park home lifestyle.

Residents enjoy the friendship and the community spirit of park home living. In addition to the peace and quiet of the environment, many residents find their park home easy to maintain, safe and secure. Park homes in Central Bedfordshire are favoured for their rural location and are seen as an affordable alternative to a "bricks and mortar" bungalow.

Time spent living in a Park Home

Many park home residents have lived in their homes for a long period of time, 39.2% of customers lived in a park home for 11-20 years, 16.7% for over 20 years.

Moving on from the Park Home

Many residents view their park homes as a home for life and 31.8% customers had not considered moving from their park homes.

23.8% of residents felt that only ill-health or disability would prevent them from being able to live in their homes in the future whilst 18.4% residents only felt a windfall of a large amount of money would give them sufficient money to be able move on from their home.

Providing support to enable park homes residents to remain in their homes for as long as they wish is a key priority for the Council.

Information requirements

Residents would like to receive the following information from Central Bedfordshire Council. As residents were able to provide more than one answer, this total does not equal 100%.

| Park homes Information Requirements | |
|--|-------|
| Improved access to information | 61.7% |
| Financial assistance available to Park homes Residents | 59.9% |
| Fees information | 53.6% |
| Help available when moving on from Park homes | 50.3% |
| Opportunities for resident involvement | 36.2% |

The Challenges of the Park Home Lifestyle

Residents provided feedback on the challenges of living in a park home in Central Bedfordshire through the needs assessment survey. In many cases the concerns of residents were consistent with national findings, which are reflected below along with recommendations on how the council can help to meet these challenges

Residents were asked to describe the worst three aspects of park home living. They were able to provide free text to respond to this question, the common themes cited in the responses were:

- Charges
- Rules
- Park owners
- Park homes
- Location
- Utilities

Charges

21.6% of residents were unhappy with amount of the ground rent / pitch fees and the annual increases they are subjected to. Residents do not feel they receive value for money in relation to the service they receive from park home owners.

Residents were unhappy that they are required to pay 10% commission to owners on sale of their property with some feeling that the fee may be a barrier to them to moving on in the future.

It is not clear whether residents were aware of the existence of the rules when they first purchased the property.

Recommendations

The council has little influence over park home fee charges and commissions charged, other than the setting of Annual Licence Fee charges to owners, which are normally passed onto residents (but are controlled by the Mobile Homes Act 2013). The council, does, however, intend to improve the provision of information for residents and prospective residents. This will include provision of Lease Holder Advisory Service (LEASE) guidance on buying and selling park homes.

Rules

A variety of feedback was received about the park rules, some residents felt that there were too many and they were too stringent whilst others were unhappy with the lack of enforcement of the current rules. Site rules are a set of rules that park homes residents are required to adhere to as they form express terms of their pitch agreements with the site owner.

Family members not being able to stay and pet ownership were some of the more problematic rules cited in the responses.

It is not clear whether residents were aware of the existence of the rules when they first purchased the property.

A report by the Consumer Focus Group on park homes¹ shows that many residents do not take legal advice before buying a park home and are not carrying out adequate research before entering in to an agreement with a site operator or outgoing resident. The focus group evidence goes on to suggest that many residents have never received an agreement, in some cases false information is given to new owners insisting that they sign new written statements and new terms

Recommendations:

- The council needs to improve the information and advice offer to potential and existing park homes residents to ensure they are fully aware of their rights and obligation.
- The council (Trading Standards) should consider the use of consumer protection legislation available to them to pursue site operators who continue rely on unfair terms and who seek to impose unreasonable conditions upon residents.
- The council will ensure that the Park Home Site Rules Register is maintained and published on the council's website to enable residents and prospective residents to view.

Park owners

A large amount of feedback was received in relation to the park owners, residents complained that owners lacked visibility, were unfriendly and lacked respect towards them.

A general theme throughout the comments were around a lack of communication and help from the park owners

Recommendations:

- The council's primary focus with park home owners is that they comply with licence requirements. On occasion, however, the council will receive complaints from residents concerning the actions or behaviour of owners. In some cases harassment might be alleged, in which case, the council has a duty to investigate. In most cases, however, the council will explore the issues and mediate to resolve these issues as far as it can.

Park homes Construction and Comfort

Residents cited poor insulation amongst the problems with the park homes, they are too cold in winter and too hot in summer and some suffer from damp. The lack of space and storage was also a problem in some cases.

¹ Living the dream? An investigation into life on park home sites in England, Consumer Focus (2012)

These findings are supported by research² which also found that residents are struggling to heat their homes due to poor insulation. Many residents would benefit from external cladding and other energy efficiency measures and should be provided with information and support to enable them to do so.

Park home owners may be able to apply for Green Deal Finance, Green Deal Home Improvement Fund, or Energy Company Obligation (ECO) funding to help towards the cost of certain heating and insulation measures.

The council is piloting a Warm Homes Healthy People approach for the 2014/15 winter period. This work includes researching good practice and case studies for improving the thermal comfort of park homes.

Recommendations:

- The council should assist more residents to make their homes warmer ensuring lessons are learned from other successful energy efficiency schemes.
- The council has a framework contract with Climate Energy (an approved Green Deal and ECO provider), who will keep the council informed as to any changes in respect of ECO funding changes.
- Council Officers will keep abreast of DECC announcements in relation to park homes funding and will provide appropriate information.
- The council will continue to offer residents advisory “affordable warmth” type surveys to help residents identify priorities for improving their park homes. These will not be approved “energy rating” assessments for the reasons given above.
- In certain circumstances, the council can provide some grant assistance to vulnerable households at risk of cold conditions.

Location

The location of some park homes was cited as a problem for a number of respondents. The lack of transport provision in some areas mean that residents felt isolated are unable to access amenities without the use of a car.

This view was also supported by residents who responded to the survey in the park Home Living in England report³ which states “One negative issue was accessibility to shops and services, particularly for older people who could no longer drive. A feature of many parks is their rural location, and, just like any rural community, there is the potential for poor accessibility”.

Recommendations:

² Living the dream? An investigation into life on park home sites in England, Consumer Focus (2012)

³ Park Home Living in England: Prospects and policy Implications, Mark Bevan (2009)

- The council will engage with the voluntary sector to ensure park home residents are aware of and able to access support in the wider community to help prevent social isolation, such as village care schemes.
- The council will ensure the views of park homes residents are considered as part of the overall review of transport services in Central Bedfordshire.
- The council will ensure information and advice is provided to park homes residents about full range of transport services available in Central Bedfordshire.

Utilities

No mains gas running to the park homes sites is an issue for residents, as gas is very expensive and they find it too expensive to heat their homes in the winter.

Residents do not have a choice over utility suppliers, do not benefit from government schemes and many do not have their own individual supply for electric and water.

National research⁴ shows that park Home residents generally do not have a contractual relationship with their supplier of gas or water. Instead the site operator buys in services and then resells them to the resident. Many residents do not have their own meters and often do not understand how the gas, electric or water costs are worked out.

The Mobile Homes (Site Rules) (England) Regulations 2014 contain prescribed matters that are not allowed as site rules. This includes site owners no longer being able to demand residents obtain their gas/electricity from them.

The findings of the national study revealed the following:

- 19% had problems with their electricity supply, cost or billings
- 7% had problems with their gas supply costs or billing
- 19% had problems with their water supply, cost or billing.

Recommendations:

- The council needs to ensure park homes residents know how to exercise their choice and control in the purchasing of LPG gas at more affordable rates.
- The council will aim to ensure that park homes residents are fully aware of their rights as domestic users of gas, electricity and water.
- The council will explore the potential for the extension of mains gas network to park homes sites.

⁴ Living the dream? An investigation into life on park home sites in England, Consumer Focus (2012) p32

Key Characteristics of Park Home Owners in Central Bedfordshire

Age

A key characteristic of park homes is the age profile of its residents, with the majority of park homes occupied by older people. 80.2% of residents in park homes are over 65 years old.

| Age | |
|----------|-------|
| Under 16 | - |
| 16-19 | - |
| 20-29 | - |
| 30-44 | 0.7% |
| 45-59 | 9.5% |
| 60-64 | 9.5% |
| 65-74 | 43% |
| 75+ | 37.2% |

Carers

25.8% of park home residents identified themselves as carers.

| Caring responsibility | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| None | 74.2% |
| 1-19 hours a week | 13.4% |
| 20-49 hours a week | 2.3% |
| 50 or more hours a week | 10.1% |

Disability

25.5% of residents who responded to the survey have a disability.

Household type

| Park Home Occupancy | |
|---------------------|-------|
| 1 adult | 49.6% |
| 2 adults | 48.4% |
| 3 adults | 1.5% |
| 2 adults + child | 0.5% |

Employments status

| Employment status | |
|-----------------------------------|-------|
| Employed – Full time | 8.9% |
| Employed - Part time | 4.5% |
| Self employed | 1.7% |
| Unemployed and available for work | 0.7% |
| Permanently sick/ disabled | 3.7% |
| Retired | 79.5% |
| Looking after the home | 7.4% |

Vision Statement

Our Vision

All park home residents will enjoy an independent living lifestyle in a unique community environment that meets the needs and aspirations of older people in Central Bedfordshire.

The Priorities

Priority One: To develop the park home environment into lifetime neighbourhoods where people can live independently in their home for as long as they wish to.

Introduction

Lifetime neighbourhoods offer everyone the best possible chance of health, well-being and social, economic and civic engagement regardless of age. They provide the built environment, social spaces that enable all people to pursue their own ambitions for a high quality of life. They do not exclude people as they age nor as they become frail and disabled⁵.

The key components of a lifetime neighbourhood are:

- Working with residents to develop lifetime neighbourhoods
- Housing
- Social inclusion
- Access
- Services and amenities
- Transportation
- Communication and information
- Community support and health services
- The built environment and outdoor spaces

Central Bedfordshire will work with residents and site owners to explore the lifetime neighbourhood concept. The council will join up work across housing, adult social care, health and transport departments to improve the information, advice, support and services that we offer so that residents are able to plan their lives and their housing needs now and in the future.

To deliver priority one, the Council will do the following:

1. Develop the information and advice offer for adult social care support, through the implementation of the Care Act. The Council will provide comprehensive information, advice and advocacy to help older people make choices about their housing and support.
2. Explore with park owners opportunities for developing park homes sites into lifetime neighbourhoods, the development of community facilities, handyman schemes and assistive technology are possible areas to consider as part of this review.
3. Explore the possibility of providing targeted prevention work with park homes residents to help prevent care needs from developing.

⁵ Lifetime neighbourhoods

4. To explore and look to address issues that can lead to social isolation. This includes rural transport issues and potential solutions provided by the council, voluntary sector and local communities.
5. To ensure that council policies concerning park homes licensing are suitable and applied appropriately, in providing safe environments for residents and visitors.

Priority Two: To develop and provide good quality accessible information for park homes residents.

Introduction

It is important that residents have access to good quality information and resources about the areas that affect them; this includes information specific to living on park homes and information about care and support, transport and community resources.

This information needs to be made widely available to enable residents to make informed decisions in relation to their lives.

The council has an opportunity through the implementation of the Care Act to transform the way care and support is delivered to our residents, the provision of information and advice is key to this and the council will take a holistic approach to the development of information and advice resources.

To deliver priority two, the Council will do the following:

- As part of the implementation of the Care Act the council will provide the following information and advice about care and support:
 - Information about how the local care and support system works
 - How people can access care and support services
 - What types of care and support are available, and the choice of providers
 - Care and support related financial information and advice, including how to access independent financial advice
 - How to raise concerns about the safety or wellbeing of someone who has care and support needs
- Review the Housing Solutions team service standards to include an escalation process linked into the complaints procedure
- Develop the role of the Technical Officer specialising in park homes to provide a single point of contact for residents.
- To improve the information and advice offer to potential and existing park homes residents to ensure they are fully aware of their rights and obligations. This includes information on relevant council policies.
- Development of a range of leaflets and factsheets for park homes residents and ensuring these are accessible through a range of channels such as libraries, the council webpage and community centres.
- Publishing an approved list of park homes specialists.

Priority Three: To improve the experience of residents living in park homes

Introduction

Park home customers do not always benefit from national funding opportunities to help with heating costs and they are not always exercising their choice and control in the purchasing of LPG gas at more affordable rates. Park home residents have told us that they are unhappy with the current approach to billing for their utilities and they would like our assistance to bring about improvements in this area.

The council will work to ensure customers are better informed of their options and will work with partners and other agencies to ensure park home residents have the opportunity to take advantage of schemes which aim to reduce fuel costs.

To deliver priority three, the Council will do the following

Key actions

- The council will provide appropriate information and advice to ensure park homes residents know how to exercise their choice and control in the purchasing of LPG gas at more affordable rates.
- The council will provide appropriate information and advice to ensure park homes residents are fully aware of their rights as domestic users of gas, electricity and water.
- The council will look to explore the potential for extension of mains gas network to park homes sites
- The council will provide advice and assistance to residents impacted by cold homes and unaffordable heating costs. This includes keeping abreast of changes in national funding opportunities for park home residents.

Priority Four: To provide more opportunities for residents to become involved and to work in collaboration with residents to strengthen the development of the park homes communities.

Introduction

The community spirit is one of the unique characteristics of life on a park home. Residents have told us that they value the support and friendship of their neighbours who look out for each other and provide support to one another.

The council would like to help to enhance this positive aspect of the park home lifestyle and assist residents to form formal residents associations where they wish to do so.

Due to the rural location of park homes, residents can sometime experience difficulty accessing amenities, services and linking into the wider community. The council will work with local community organisations to help improve these links and work to remove the barriers to social inclusion for park homes residents.

To deliver priority four, the Council will do the following

Key actions

- The council will help residents where it can to set up qualifying residents associations as it is recognised that such associations can play an important role in building supportive communities and ensuring that information that may benefit residents is disseminated to all.
- To hold stakeholder events for park homes annually in order to bring important/useful information to site owners and residents and to give them the opportunity to raise concerns that they may have.
- The council will engage with the voluntary sector to ensure park home residents are aware of and able to access support in the wider community to help prevent social isolation, such a village care schemes.
- The council will ensure the views of park homes residents are considered as part of the overall review of transport services in Central Bedfordshire.
- The council will ensure information and advice is provided to park homes residents about the full range of transport services available in Central Bedfordshire.

The following Appendices can be viewed as Background Papers via the following link:

<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/modgov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=577&MId=4757&Ver=4>

Appendix A is Model Standards

Appendix B is Historic Breaches Standards

C – Feedback from Residents Engagement event Jan 2014

D - Feedback from Site owners Engagement event Sep 2013

E – Housing Solutions Enforcement Policy (updated)