

# A new concept in senior living



The North East will see the creation of the UK's first Ageing Well Village after planning permission for our ambitious scheme in Backworth was granted by North Tyneside Council.

A £40million development by Northumberland Estates, in collaboration with Age UK and NHS North East and North Cumbria, the village is designed to reduce the need for hospital admissions and provide longer-term care within a residential community.

Scheduled for completion by summer 2024, the 11.86-acre development has been heralded as the future of later life living, offering high-quality residential housing with integrated health, care and frailty services all in one place – breaking the mould of 'standalone' retirement complexes.

It is a concept that we, alongside our design partners P+HS Architects, have spent a lot of time thinking about and finessing to not only get this development right, but also to ensure we have a model that can be replicated elsewhere. Northumberland Estates is committed to pioneering later living developments - and we are certain that this scheme will raise the bar for decades to come.

## Why do we need a change in later living?

The UK has an ageing population, many of whom have benefited from improvements in nutrition, hygiene, healthcare, education, and working conditions and wish to live independent, active lives for longer.

This has prompted an overhaul in how we think about ageing, considering non-medical factors such as loneliness and environment alongside health and care services to transform senior living accommodation.

Whilst current later living developments can provide what some residents are looking for, there is undoubtedly a gap for those who do not want to move into traditional retirement accommodation – a model that has not been substantially altered over recent decades. We believe that by giving as much thought to the village facilities as there is to the accommodation, we can provide a community that enriches later living for years to come.

## What are some of the key concepts in the village?

Careful consideration of what factors influence health and happiness in later life and what amenities could be incorporated within the neighbourhood to support, rather than diminish, mental and physical well-being are central to the development. Evidence of the environment as a key factor in sustaining good health informed how we would approach the site, carefully choosing to create an area which will be safe and pleasant to live in, with good local facilities and access to green spaces. We have also considered how we can make the area more sustainable - green roofs, sustainable drainage ponds, tree planting and extensive landscaping.

Whilst the scheme is designed to have many everyday facilities within the village, it was also crucial to us that we make it as easy as possible to access existing local services along with ample pedestrian, cycle and transport links, thus allowing natural integration and connectivity to the wider area. A clear understanding of how people would interact with the development was essential to the design process and we visualised how residents, visitors, and staff groups would move and engage within the site.

## David Straughan, Northumberland Estates' Director of Development, outlines their exciting plans for the UK's first ageing well village



To ensure that the project is delivered to the highest standards, the concept and design stage required input from a range of partners for their specialist understanding of health and care facilities. Collaboration was critical throughout the scheme and we partnered with NHS and care specialists to ensure that the development offers the full range of facilities that help occupants live healthier, more independent lives supported by experienced health and social care professionals.

### How will these concepts become reality on the ground?

Backworth Ageing Well Village will see a variety of different accommodation options created, each with its specific purpose and style, catering to different lifestyle demands.

Thirty-five residential dwellings - comprising two-bed bungalows and two and three-bedroom two-storey houses - will be created for owner occupiers, with nine of those offered as affordable accommodation via a registered housing provider.

An apartment block accommodating 54 one, two and three-bedroom flats will also be built, with balconies, rooftop gardens and courtyards encouraging interaction, incidental meetings and the fostering of a strong community ethos. Fifty-two apartments in an extra care facility will also be constructed and will be managed by Age UK North-East. All of these accommodation options will be complemented by the on-site provision of 40 intermediate care beds, rehabilitation facilities and an NHS frailty hub, staffed by health and social care professionals, and the partners believe it will improve continuity of care within the home environment.

A Wellness Centre will provide a vibrant community facility cocooned at the heart of the site, with therapy rooms (for treatments such as massage, facials, chiropody etc.), a hydrotherapy pool, gym, and various multi-functional spaces which can cater for classes, talks and hobby groups. But importantly, one key feature of Backworth Ageing Well Village is the emphasis on intergenerational contact, with a nursery with capacity for 96 children to be built on-site and a community hub to be created with a range of facilities including a café, shops, salon and office spaces.

In total, more than 201,000 sq/ft of development will take place on the site, with the NHS facility extending to 54,350sq/ft and with Age UK occupying a 13,175sq/ft space.

We also expect the village to provide a significant boost to local employment, with 172 full-time and 44 part-time new jobs estimated to be required for the running of the site - all of which are in addition to construction jobs which may be created during the build phase.

Northumberland Estates is proud that it is leading the way in changing later living for the better and has also committed to net-zero development and utilising locally sourced, low-carbon materials as the village becomes reality. With just two years to go until the site is scheduled to open, we believe this period will usher in a huge step forward for ageing well villages - pioneered in the North East but with the potential to be repeated across the United Kingdom.