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CCH Case Study: Phoenix Community Housing | Researcher: Philippa Hughes | Date: July 2020

Phoenix Community Housing Meeting resident's changing needs





At a glance

- **Phoenix Community Housing is a resident-led housing association created from a stock transfer in 2007**
- **Currently has 6,280 homes and around 13,000 residents**
- **Non-mutual co-operative with 3,500 shareholding members**
- **Majority Board membership of tenants and leaseholders including the Chair and Vice-Chair**
- **Phoenix's model empowers tenants and leaseholders to take a central part in decision-making, its office is located in The Green Man community hub, alongside a community café, space for community programmes and other community amenities including a credit union branch**
- **Hazelhurst Court development consists of 60 one and two-bed extra care homes for affordable rent built next to existing properties**
- **Homes designed around the needs of older residents and include significant communal facilities, including a catered dining room for residents and local people**
- **Priority at Hazelhurst Court was given to existing Phoenix tenants to enable chain lettings within the co-op's larger properties, though any Lewisham resident over 55 can apply**



Photos



Overview

Phoenix Community Housing is a resident-led housing association based in south Lewisham. In 2017 it completed a new development of 60 one and two-bedroom 'extra care' homes for older people. The new homes have won multiple awards that recognise the high-quality design and architecture of the scheme.

The new development was designed in consultation with Phoenix's older residents and includes significant communal facilities alongside the flats which are designed to meet residents' mobility and care needs.

Construction was financed predominantly through Phoenix's own borrowing facility with additional grant funding from the Greater London Authority and Lewisham Council. Rent at Hazelhurst Court is London Affordable Rent and service charges include for the provision of support and on-site staff presence. Residents with care needs are charged separately for any additional care services that they receive.

Overview (Continued)

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The 'extra-care' housing model allows older people to live independently in their own home and to enjoy additional community facilities and support along with the reassurance that their existing and developing care needs can be met within the scheme. This allows older people to stay in their homes as their care needs change and contributes to a vibrant community. A two-course lunch is served for residents each day and is included in the service charge costs, and the on-site restaurant and dining area is open to other local residents – helping to create a lively community hub.

Some residents have very limited care needs, while others have higher needs. Care at Hazelhurst Court is delivered by one of LB Lewisham's preferred care providers and staff are onsite 24/7. All residents have access to a 24/7 care line.

Hazelhurst Court was Phoenix's first residential development and they have since embarked on an ambitious development programme to deliver more much-needed affordable housing in south London.

Phoenix's model is centred entirely on resident-involvement and leadership, with a strong and established culture of resident and community engagement. As well as the formal stakeholder structure, the co-op engages with residents through events, such as their "Chat and Chips" summer roadshows, annual community Festival and other resident and community events.

It was through regular resident engagement, that Phoenix became

aware that they had a number of older residents living in family sized homes and that their stock mix did not include attractive and appropriate options for these people to downsize into.

Phoenix's existing stock was predominantly low-rise two, three and four-bedroom houses. Many older residents have lived in their homes for many decades, having moved in when they had young families. These residents have not since downsized as they were settled in their homes, among their neighbours, and in the wider community.

Analysis conducted by Phoenix Community Housing on their stock showed that around 1,100 older people were living in two, three or four-bedroom houses on their own. Phoenix staff visited around 400 of these older people to discuss their current homes and needs and these visits showed that some residents were struggling to manage their larger homes.

Phoenix knew there was significant demand for these larger homes, given a chronic shortage of family homes in the area. With this in mind, plans for Hazelhurst Court were developed on the premise that they would benefit not just the new occupants of the 60 new homes, but also residents in the wider community who would benefit from the availability of the larger family homes that would become available.

A chain-letting agreement was established with Lewisham Council. While any Lewisham resident over the age of 55 and in need of extra care accommodation is able to apply to live at Hazelhurst Court, allocations priority was given to existing Phoenix residents who were under-occupying.

Therefore, the development would benefit not only the new residents but the wider community by creating a chain-let allowing an overcrowded household or a household in temporary accommodation to move into newly vacant larger homes. 20 of the 60 new homes were

successfully let to existing Phoenix residents, and these lets generated around 65 chain lettings, as larger households moved into more suitable accommodation, in turn making their previously overcrowded accommodation available for a smaller household.

Through conversations with residents, the Phoenix team knew that in order to entice people to move from the homes they had lived in for decades, the new homes needed not only to meet their needs but also to be desirable and attractive.

The whole scheme is intentionally modern and contemporary – with close attention made to ensure interiors do not feel 'institutionalised'. Prospective residents and Phoenix resident Board Members were involved in the design of the communal interior spaces.

As well as consultation with future potential residents, the development also required an extensive consultation process with residents living in the neighbouring block of 1960s flats. These residents were involved in the design process from the earliest stages and Phoenix delivered a series of consultation events and public meetings. A primary concern for neighbouring residents was the loss of green space and this was addressed by Phoenix in their plans.

The new development included broader environmental improvements that would benefit the existing residents of Hazelhurst Court – including hard landscaping, landscaping of existing green spaces and delivery of communal facilities and activities in the new building.

The involvement of some of Phoenix's resident Board Members during early consultation was particularly helpful, since they were able to speak directly with residents and were sensitive to their concerns, but also able to communicate the broader picture of housing need in the area.



Quotes

“It was important in designing Hazelhurst Court we prioritised building quality homes that people would be incentivised to move in to, rather than focussing solely on the quantity of homes we could build.”

“Because the quality and appeal of the homes at Hazelhurst Court is so strong, we had a very positive response and lots of interest from older residents, who we knew were under-occupying large family homes in the area. The quality of the new homes was a strong incentive to these residents to leave their existing homes.”

“And as a result, by building 60 one and two-bedroom flats, in practice we’ve released several dozen large three and four-bedroom family homes that have since been let to families in real housing need.”

Angela Hardman

Head of Development, Phoenix Community Housing



Learning points

- **Proactively engaging with residents through formal and informal channels leads to good starting points for understanding needs for stock**
- **People need a significantly attractive offer to downsize from homes they have lived in for decades and consideration should be given to the need to preserve community through any moves**
- **Good design has an active role to play in creating places to live that meets the needs of residents and neighbours**
- **Organisations must do significant work to balance the needs of current residents with new development across their properties**
- **Existing organisations with significant assets can finance new build through borrowing**

