Castleridge Resort Retirement Village: Redevelopment Proposal

Demand Study

Client: Stockland Retirement Living
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1 Introduction

Elton Consulting has been engaged by Stockland Retirement Living to assist in understanding the demand for a contemporary retirement community at the site of the existing Castleridge Resort Retirement Village (the Village), located at 350 Old Northern Road, Castle Hill, NSW (the site).

1.1 Background

Castleridge Resort is a retirement village consisting of 113 apartments alongside a communal facilities building and is set in landscaped grounds which include outdoor recreation facilities. The scale of the existing Village is shown in Figure 1. It is built on the northern and western sides of a natural gully which is retained as parkland. The Village is operated by Stockland Retirement Living.

Figure 1 Housing at Castleridge Retirement Resort

Stockland has considered the future viability of the Village and has concluded that a full staged redevelopment is required. Stockland believes the Village cannot meet the expectations of the emerging baby boomer market, which differs significantly from the more modest demands of previous generations. Additionally, redevelopment would allow a number of shortcomings in the design and condition of the Village to be remedied.

An indicative master plan (the master plan) has been prepared for the redevelopment. At this stage, the master plan is intended to show how redevelopment might occur based on a careful review of land uses, facilities, site features and circulation. The current planning controls for the site reflect its existing design and the built form suggested in the master plan would require revision of controls relating to height and FSR. An application is therefore being made to The Hills Shire Council (Council) seeking to amend planning controls for the site.

1.2 Purpose of Report

This report has been prepared at the request of Stockland Retirement Living to accompany an application to The Hills Shire Council for amendments to planning controls for the site. The application is intended as a first step towards finalising a development proposal, based on the master plan included with the application.

This report on demand issues looks at the changing demand for retirement village living both in terms of scale (the quantum of demand) and nature (the characteristics demanded).

The first part of the report considers wider demographic and cultural changes which are transforming demand for seniors living across Australia. The second part examines demand and supply in The Hills District.

The report looks in particular detail at the standards expected by the emerging 'baby boomer' generation and compares these to the standards found in the existing village and other villages in the area. The analysis also looks at the case for higher buildings and a larger number of dwellings.

1.3 A note on data

The Village is located on the fringe of The Hills Shire, on the western side of Old Northern Road. The opposite side of Old Northern Road lies in the Hornsby Shire. Consequently, most of the statistical data used in this report combines data for both The Hills and Hornsby local government areas (LGA), because this is the most useful geographical framework available from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

Other information in the report is based on the area popularly known as The Hills, or 'The Hills District', which excludes the northern, rural parts of The Hills Shire and also excludes eastern parts of Hornsby, which are part of the Upper North Shore.

In terms of planning controls, 'Seniors' housing' refers to housing which may only be occupied by persons aged 55 or over or by people with disabilities. However, people aged 55 to 65 rarely seek age-specific housing and in this report the term 'Seniors' generally refers to people aged 65 or over, unless otherwise stated (for instance, some data is only available for ten-year age groups).

2 Trends affecting demand for seniors' living

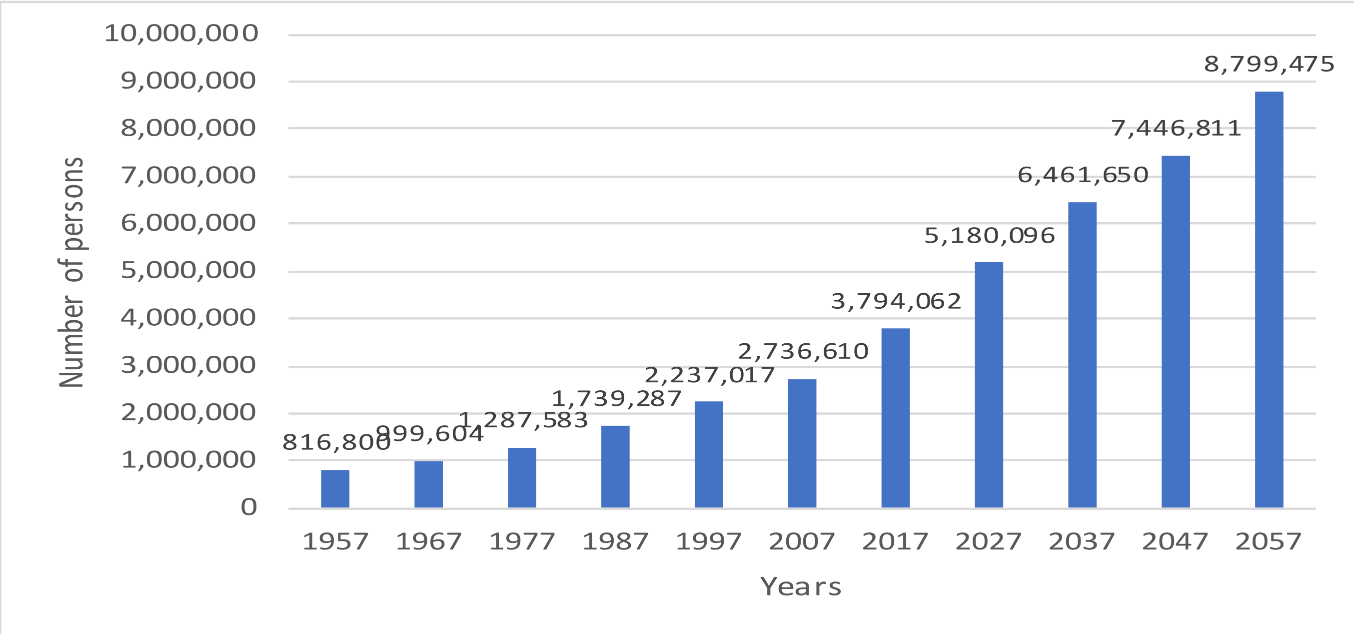
2.1 The underlying driver: the growing older population

In the past 50 years to 2017, life expectancy in Australia increased 13 years for men, and 10 years for women. Australians now have one of the longest life expectancies in the world. In 2055, life expectancy is projected to reach 95.1 years for men and 96.6 years for women, compared with 91.5 and 93.6 years today in 2015[1].

Whereas earlier generations could look forward to only a few years of retirement, those currently aged 65 can expect to live another 26.5 years (for men) or 28.6 years (for women). Hence the current generation is able to seek options for recreation, work, social participation and appropriate housing.

The population of seniors will continue to grow rapidly in future. The ABS projects that the number of people aged 65 or more will increase from 3.8 million in 2017 to 6.5 million by 2037, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Number of people aged 65 or over 1957-2057, Australia



Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, based on ABS 2016 data[2]

According to the ABS, in 2017 people aged 65 years and over made up 13 per cent of Australia's population. By 2056, it is projected that one in four Australians will be aged 65 years or older. In addition, the number of people aged 85 years or over is likely to increase rapidly, from approximately two per cent in 2007 to five to seven per cent by 2056[3].

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[1] The Commonwealth of Australia Treasury, 2015 Intergenerational Report

[2] Retrieved from https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/older-people/older-australia-at-a-glance/contents/demographics-of-older-australians/australia-s-changing-age-and-gender-profile on 19 December 2018

[3] ABS: 3222.0 - Population Projections, Australia, 2006 to 2101, retrieved on 19 December 2018

2.2 Cultural change: Baby boomers demand choice

Historically, older people were seen as dependent, and it was therefore seen to be appropriate for younger people to make choices for them. In the 21st century, however, independence in old age has become a key goal. The change is a result of the arrival of baby boomers as the new seniors. It has been clear for many years that this generation would not accept the traditional model for ageing[4]:

> *The baby boom cohort will have more resources and higher expectations than their predecessors in old age. They expect to set public agendas and are likely to demand change when they discover that 'ageing people' means them. They will bring to old age more superannuation and more large, debt-free and valuable housing in low density suburbs.*
>
> *Their housing choices are likely to be shaped by personal histories of more frequent housing moves, assertive consumerism, and varied housing earlier in life."*

More concisely, National Seniors' chief executive Michael O'Neill concluded[5]:

> *The key message is that baby boomers want choice*

Many services for older people are already being transformed. Under the banner of Consumer Directed Care (CDC), home care services for seniors have moved from a system in which the service provider decides what care should be provided to one in which older people make their own choices. Likewise, leisure and tourism businesses targeting an older market have introduced a host of new options like active travel and interest based travel for seniors.

For most adults in today's society, choosing where to live is the most significant choice they make. This choice typically has to balance the need for access to a workplace, schools etc. with the desire to live in an area that offers the preferred type of environment, facilities, housing etc. For many seniors, choices are less constrained by these factors. However, a lack of recognition of the housing preferences of older people has resulted in a limited range of attractive and appropriate choices for this important section of the market. For reasons like those outlined in this chapter, this situation is changing as seniors increasingly demand the right to housing choice.

2.3 Baby boomers generally enjoy good health

Older people not only live longer than in the past - they are also healthier for longer. This fact is often lost in discussions about the cost of health care for older people, which is rising due to increasing numbers (particularly the rapid increase in people 80 years or older when the prevalence of key forms of disease and disability increases rapidly), plus the costs of increasingly sophisticated treatments.

Figure 3 shows that previously on average, someone aged 65 could expect to live another 15 years (male) or 16 years (female) without a profound or core disability. The chart shows averages: in practice, many people will live out their lives without a severe or core disability while others are less lucky. In 2015, the likelihood of living with

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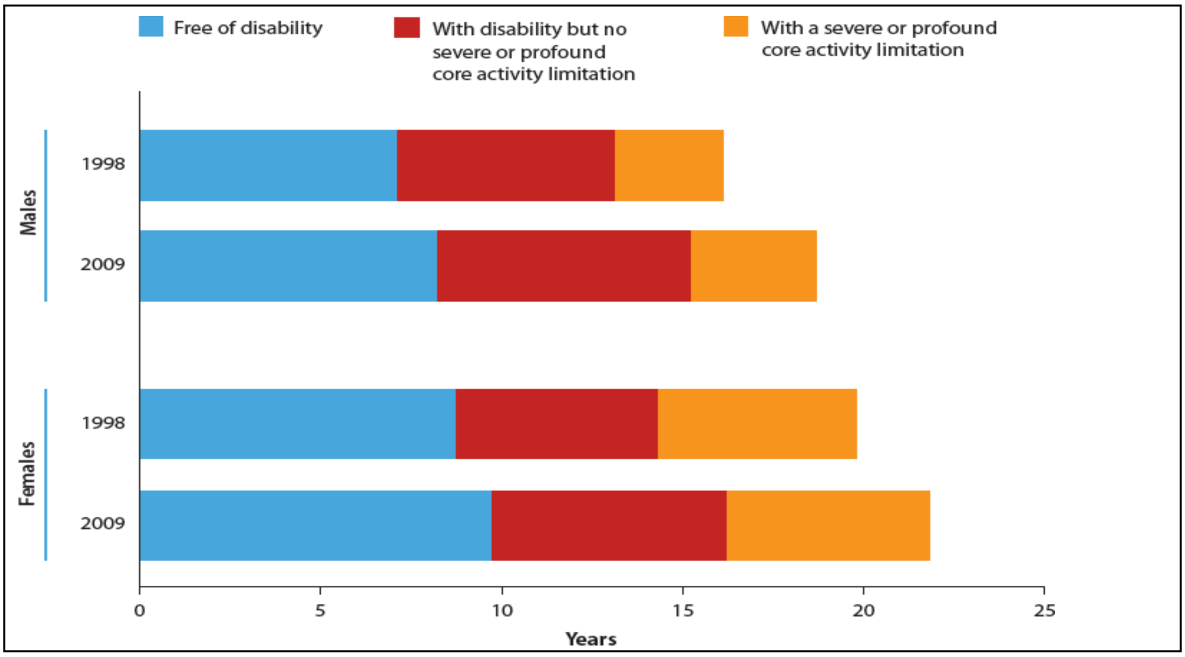
[4] Kendig, H. & Neutze, M. 1999. Housing implications of population ageing in Australia. Productivity Commission and Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, 435-450.

[5] Catholic Health Australia National Conference, Melbourne, 2009

disability was demonstrated to increase with age, as two in five people recorded as living with a disability were 65 years or older[6]

Figure 3 Average life expectancy and health outlook at age 65, 1998 and 2009



Source: AHIW: Australia's Health 2012

Health status profoundly affects the housing choices of seniors. Those with poor health or significant concerns are likely to want to live somewhere with good access to care and health services. Those in good health are more likely to prioritise recreational and lifestyle factors. This has led to some polarisation in retirement villages. At one end of the spectrum are the "first wave" villages, which were often simply an independent living adjunct to a Residential Aged Care home. At the other end, "retirement resorts" particularly in coastal areas, often have excellent recreational and social facilities but little or no provision for care.

2.4 Baby boomers have funds to pay for choice

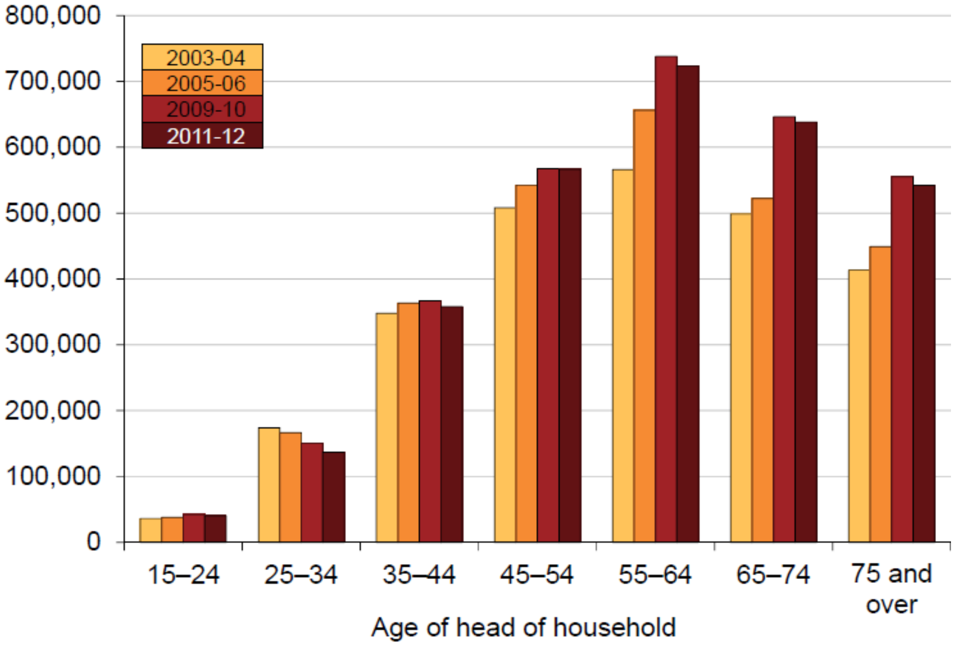
Baby boomers are by far the wealthiest generation of retirees in history, none more so than in affluent areas like the Hills.[7]

While all age groups are on average wealthier than they were in 2003-04 and 2011-12 (despite a temporary decline in the aftermath of the global financial crisis), the greatest beneficiaries from the increase in wealth over the last 20 years have been older households. For example, a 65 to 74 year old household was $215,000 better off over in real terms in 2012 than the equivalent household in 2003, as shown in Figure 4. This represents 2.7 per cent annual growth, despite the global financial crisis.

[6] ABS, 2015 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, retrieved 19 December 2018

[7] Despite this, poverty in old age is still a very significant issue, despite the fact that only a minority of seniors are affected.

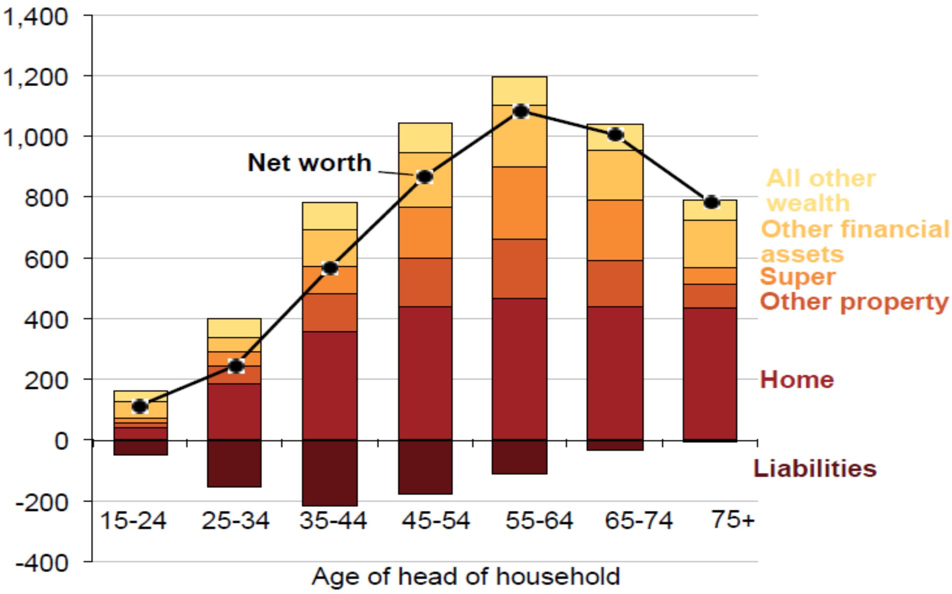
Figure 4 Median wealth by age group, 2012



Source Grattan Institute, Wealth of Generations 2014, analysis of ABS data 2011

By far the biggest driver of this increase in wealth has been the increase in the value of residential property, as shown in Figure 5. For those aged 55-74, the growth in superannuation has also made a large contribution.

Figure 5 Composition of household wealth, 2012



Source Grattan Institute, Wealth of Generations 2014, analysis of ABS data 2011

This wealth effect is particularly pronounced in areas where home values and household incomes are higher than the national average, which was the basis for the above analysis. Nationally, the average net home value was just over $400,000 in 2012 at a time when the median sale price for non-strata homes in The Hills District was almost double this figure[8]. The area also has higher incomes than the national average, suggesting that residents are likely to have been able to build significant additional wealth in other forms (investment property, super, etc).

[8] Quarterly NSW Rent and Sales Report, DoH, using Valuer General's data. See also Chapter 4 of this report.

The importance of this increase in wealth cannot be understated. According to social researcher Mark McCrindle, who runs the McCrindle Baynes consulting group[9]:

> *The average new retiree has a household net worth exceeding $1 million for the first time in our history. These Baby Boomers are redefining the retirement lifestyle, travelling more, spending more, and moving into retirement living in a manner never before seen. …. And the youngest Boomers, who are now turning 50 will redefine this further with a retirement household net worth expected to exceed $1.5 million on average.*

Some of this 'wealthy generation' of retirees have entered retirement villages. The McCrindle Baynes Villages Census Report 2013-2014 asked village residents about their individual net worth, and seven per cent indicated that the value of all their assets – excluding the value of their village home and subtracting the total of their debts – came to over $1 million. In 2013-2014, this equated to over 12,000 millionaire retirement village residents.

2.5 Baby boomers expect housing and lifestyle choice

Housing choice is a challenging issue largely because most of today's housing stock was developed to meet the needs of earlier generations:

» Mainstream housing stock was largely planned as detached homes for families. Almost none of the stock was designed to facilitate ageing in place, even in the recently built coastal suburbs that have become popular with retirees.

» More recently, the stock of units and apartments has grown substantially. The focus of this growth has been inner urban areas, targeting young working people. However, some locations, mainly coastal, have in the last few years seen a boom in apartment construction, often targeting active retirees. Again, these are rarely designed for ageing in place and are mostly located in areas where facilities for ongoing aged care and health care are limited.

» Purpose-built retirement housing has been built since the 1970s and until recently was simply meant to provide small, affordable independent units for those whose health or income meant they had to leave their existing home.

» Recreation-oriented retirement 'resorts' have spread out from SE Queensland and are becoming more common. Most are targeted to younger active retirees and unfortunately many do not address the care needs that may emerge as residents get older. They are often located far from families and facilities that many older people wish to remain in contact with.

Active older people are generally not well served if they want to live somewhere that offers a good quality of life and do not want to remain isolated in a family home which no longer meets their needs. Matusic reports that[10]:

[9] McCrindle Baynes, Villages Census Report, 2013-2014
[10] Matusic, M. 2011. How Boomers Could Burst the Bubble, accessed http://australianpropertyforum.com/topic/9277164/1/, March 2012.

> Among those within the over 55 household cohort that move house, 35 per cent of them move *primarily for lifestyle reasons*, and that this group of people place *a high value on living with others of similar background, age and interests*.
>
> For some, therefore, moving into a retirement community that offers such opportunities is about *making a transition to a new life … bypassing and resisting the negative expectations and stereotypes of what growing older is supposedly about*.

2.6 What about ageing in place?

Ageing in place is recognised to be the preference of a large proportion of older households, but there is a widespread misconception, particularly among policy makers, about what this means. It is assumed that, once he or she reaches retirement age, an older person will want to stay in their existing home and will not want to move.

Clearly this is true for a great many people, but it is certainly not true for all. Like any other population group, seniors have varying preferences and characteristics and expect choices to be available that respond to these. A large number of seniors choose to move to somewhere they see as more suitable or desirable, and for them, ageing in place means finding that place and if possible living out their remaining years there.

Around one in four of the senior households that were surveyed by National Seniors Australia[11] had moved house over the last four years and almost half had moved within the last ten years. The two most frequent reasons they gave for moving were:

1. *'Decision based on choosing where I want to live for the rest of my life'* .
2. *'Want a lifestyle change'. Retirement villages are a significant option for this latter group'.*

2.7 Choosing to move to a retirement village

Research for AHURI[12] found that over 60% of seniors would consider moving into a retirement village either now or at some stage in the future. The main reasons that lead people to choose to move into a retirement village can be classified into two groups: "Push" factors and "Pull" factors. Research has identified these key factors, which are in summary:

Pull factors (attractors):

» Social support potentially available in a community of people of similar age

» Conveniently designed housing in a pleasant environment

» Better access to services and facilities.

Push factors (pressures to move):

» Loneliness and social isolation

» Limited mobility and poor access to transport

» Existing accommodation that has an unsuitable or inconvenient design.

In many cases, these factors are experienced both directly and indirectly – the wishes of family members are a key motivator in many relocation choices.

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[11] National Seniors Australia: Moving or staying put: Deciding where to live in later life, 2014

[12] Bruce Judd et all: Dwelling, land and neighbourhood use by older home owners [AHURI], 2010

3 The changing demand for retirement village living

3.1 Scale of demand

In 2014, about 184,000 Australians lived in retirement villages, representing 5.7 per cent of the over-65 population[13]. The rate is higher among those aged 75 or more, at over 8%. Within NSW, the proportion of seniors living in retirement villages, at 4.9%, is well below the national average: indeed, only Tasmania has a lower proportion. In 2014, NSW had approximately 42,600 retirement village dwellings, housing around 62,000 people.

If the rate of growth of the retirement village sector continues at the rate experienced in the last decade, the penetration rate across Australia is projected to increase to 7.5 per cent of over-65s by 2025. This increased rate, combined with the growing seniors' population, would mean 382,000 people living in a retirement village in 2025, which is more than double the number in 2014. There is widespread confidence that this number will be achieved, so long as suitable sites can be found and appropriate products built. This confidence is supported by strong sales in new villages and research suggesting that at least half the older population is open to considering a move to a village.

The scale of potential demand in The Hills is considered in Chapter 4 of this report.

3.2 Changing nature of demand

In many areas (including The Hills) a large proportion of the existing retirement village stock was built between 20 and 40 years ago to modest standards of design and amenity. When it becomes available for resale, the price is quite affordable by local standards. Unfortunately, this is not the product sought by more affluent contemporary retirees, who wish to maintain their quality of life. As a result, this old-style retirement housing is starting to experience falling demand, while demand for more expensive options cannot be met.

3.3 The need for space post-retirement

Recent research challenges simplistic assumptions about downsizing by older households. While it is clear that many want a more compact and manageable home with a layout that meets their needs, this does not mean that they want a one-bedroom unit. Recent research by AHURI[14] found that the great majority of seniors prefer to live in a home with at least one spare bedroom.

Unfortunately, manageable homes on the open market rarely address this preference, while traditional retirement villages are dominated by one bedroom units.

The AHURI study found that 95% of the older home-owner survey respondents had one or more bedrooms not used for sleeping by permanent residents of the dwelling. The vast majority said that they needed this extra space, the most common reasons being:

» Accommodation for visiting family and friends, cited as they primary reason by over a quarter of respondents

» Space for home based activities (e.g. hobbies, office work, exercise), particularly as older people usually spend more time in the home. A third of respondents used a spare bedroom as a study or home office, and

[13] Property Council of Australia, National overview of the retirement village sector, 2014

[14] Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, What older people want: Attitudes to Options for Improving Housing Efficiency and Liveability, 2013

many more used the space for hobbies. Furthermore, an increasing number of older people are involved in home based employment

» A couple's need for individual personal space, including space for reading. In some cases, a spare bedroom was needed because of one partner's snoring!

Other respondents wanted a spare room for storage or because they had furniture they did not wish to dispose of. Among respondents with care needs and health problems, who were typically in the older age brackets, space for equipment, carer assistance and treatment, was also a priority.

Thus, the research shows that, just because bedrooms are not used for sleeping, it does not mean that they are not used for other purposes that residents see as important and supportive of active ageing.

Unfortunately, such preferences are not widely addressed by the existing housing stock, even within retirement villages. Existing family houses often have unused or unmanageable space including gardens, along with other drawbacks for older households including design and layout, and maintenance requirements. Recent single level unit developments can sometimes be more suitable, but a large proportion have only one bedroom, while two and three bedroom products often include stairs internally and for external access, narrow doorways, and other features that can present obstacles to ageing in place. Existing retirement village stock is predominantly small one-bedroom units which in places are becoming harder to sell, while demand for two and three bedroom units in retirement villages far outstrips supply.

3.4 Expectations about housing choice and quality

Many older home owners in areas like The Hills are accustomed to a high quality living environment, providing contemporary amenities, good quality fittings, and an attractive external environment. Understandably, they seek similar standards in retirement. Once more, many of them are in a position to pay for these features – if they can find appropriate housing that offers them. Key expectations include:

» Choice in the size and layout of housing options, with 2 and 3 bedroom homes preferred by most

» Top quality fittings and equipment in kitchens and bathrooms

» Digital connectivity

» Secure garages and storage

» A safe and attractive external environment.

3.5 Homes designed for adaptability when abilities decline

The AHURI research previously referred to notes that a large proportion of older people who relocate, want to move somewhere where they can spend the rest of their lives, ie. age in place. Survey respondents therefore said that it was important to move somewhere that would remain suitable if and when their abilities and mobility declined. This is referred to as Universal Design or Adaptable Design.

New seniors' housing in NSW must address these requirements but in most locations there is no requirement on mainstream housebuilders to provide for Universal Design, and in practice the great majority of homes will be difficult or impossible to adapt if handrails, wheelchair accessible doorways etc. become necessary. Many also have internal staircases and external steps.

3.6 Expectations about services and facilities

Many retirees spend most of their time in and around their home, and when they move to a retirement village, they therefore expect that the village will offer services and onsite facilities that meet their needs. Fundamental requirements include:

Access to services and someone to help organise them:

» Needs may range across domestic services, health and support, home-delivered meals and many more. In small villages, these are often arranged through the Village Manager using external contractors. Today's larger villages offer an increasing range of services directly, either through employed staff onsite or through a village contract that guarantees service levels and prices. A few premium villages offer concierge services, although these are mostly found in villages where residents seek five-star hotel-style services.

Access to health practitioners and assistance in arranging support services:

» Onsite practice rooms for doctors, podiatrists etc., are well used where they are provided, and, as they age, village residents expect help in arranging nursing or support services if they need them.

A seniors' friendly external environment:

» This includes footpaths with gentle grades, shade, ample seating, a sense of security, and places to gather and chat outside.

Walking options:

» Walking is the most popular form of exercise among seniors. Unfortunately, many existing villages were not designed with walking in mind. Villages that offer the possibility of onsite walks through landscaped areas or managed parkland are often favoured.

The specific facilities provided for residents, and their quality, depend on the market being served. It is expected that any substantial village will offer facilities that provide for socialising, sport and recreation, hobbies, and perhaps eating and drinking.

Research has found that indoor social spaces are the highest priority among seniors:

» At the most basic level, this may mean a community room or hall. In large modern villages, a range of social spaces are usually available, ranging from a lounge for quiet reading to function rooms and bar/café facilities.

A swimming pool, a gym and rooms for activities like yoga are used mostly by younger seniors, but are a key attractor to those choosing a village:

» Outdoor facilities are also significant. Bowling greens are less popular than in the past, while more and more villages set aside areas for residents to do their own gardening.

Dining facilities are increasingly offered:

» Some of the more prestigious villages offer an onsite restaurant with a chef who also offers home-delivered meals. A café is a priority, and kitchen facilities, for use by residents, facilitate casual functions.

Current trends include the provision of a residents' 'Clubhouse', deliberately evoking the sense of comfort and privilege provided by (for instance) the golf course clubhouse:

» The Clubhouse is expected to provide a bar, social and relaxation spaces, indoor recreation opportunities, activity spaces etc., and the preferred design approach ensures that the interior layout and use can be changed according to demand.

3.7 Location

NSW Government policy requires purpose-built seniors' housing to be located close to (or with easy public transport access to) local facilities like banks, shops, doctors etc. This reflects the preferences of most older people, who want to know that facilities are available nearby, even if a good range of options is offered onsite.

A large proportion of older people have family, friends, and links in their neighbourhood and the wider region. Most are able to drive (and a car is often seen as important because it represents independence) and are happy to drive a few kilometres, but often they prefer visitors to come to them. Location is therefore a key factor and moving to a distant retirement location may be seen as undesirable. This typically means finding an attractive location that is conveniently accessible both for them and for visiting family or friends.

Other locational factors also affect the level and nature of demand. For those concerned about deteriorating health or mobility, easy access to health services including a hospital may be a key locational consideration. The availability of a residential aged care facility in the area may also be an important factor.

From this point of view, Castle Hill is a desirable location, and Castleridge is very well located to take advantage of access to these locational advantages. (See Chapter 6.)

4 Retirement living demand in The Hills District

4.1 Rapid expansion of the older population

The older population increasing across Australia and this is particularly noticeable in The Hills District. The following data considers the LGAs of The Hills Shire and Hornsby Shire[15].

- In 2016, there were over 44,000 people aged 65 or more lived in the two LGAs
- Importantly, there were a further 35,800 people aged 55 to 64, and all of these will enter the 65+ age group by 2023.

Table 1 Number of residents in older age groups in The Hills and Hornsby LGAs, 2016

Age groups	The Hills	Hornsby	Total
55-64 years	18,613	17,195	35,808
65-74 years	13,578	12,165	25,743
75-84 years	5,652	7,078	12,730
85 years +	2,005	3,833	5,838
Total, over 65 years	**21,235 people**	**23,076 people**	**44,311 people**

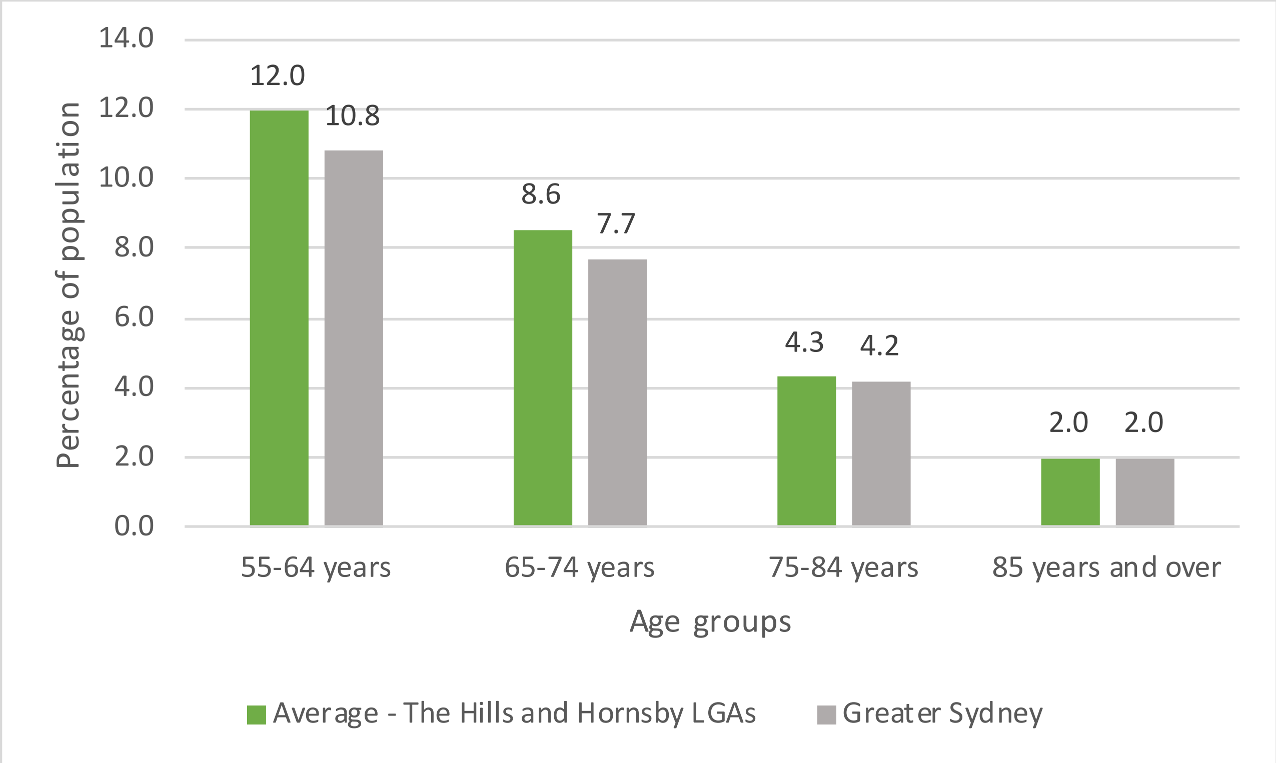
Source: ABS census data, The Hills LGA and Hornsby LGA, Table G04, 2016

Until quite recently, the proportion of seniors in the population was smaller in the Hills District than the Sydney average. In 2016 the percentage of older people in The Hills and Hornsby LGAs exceeds the Greater Sydney average. Seniors, persons over 65 years of age, made up 13.5 per cent of The Hills Shire population and 16.2 per cent of the Hornsby Shire population at the time of the ABS 2016 census.

The average percentage of seniors in The Hills and Hornsby LGAs compared to Greater Sydney is shown in Figure 6 on the following page.

[15] See Chapter 1 for an explanation of the geography used to analyse data in this report.

Figure 6 Percentage of residents in older age groups in The Hills and Hornsby LGAs compared to Greater Sydney, 2016



Source: Profileid data for The Hills Shire and Hornsby Shire, based on 2016 census data

Projections of population growth for the area indicate a large expansion in the resident population. According to the NSW Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) population projections data, the estimated growth of The Hills and Hornsby Shires was put at over 178,000 in the period from 2011 to 2036. The impact of the recent Hills Corridor Strategy[16] may add over 25,000 to this estimate.

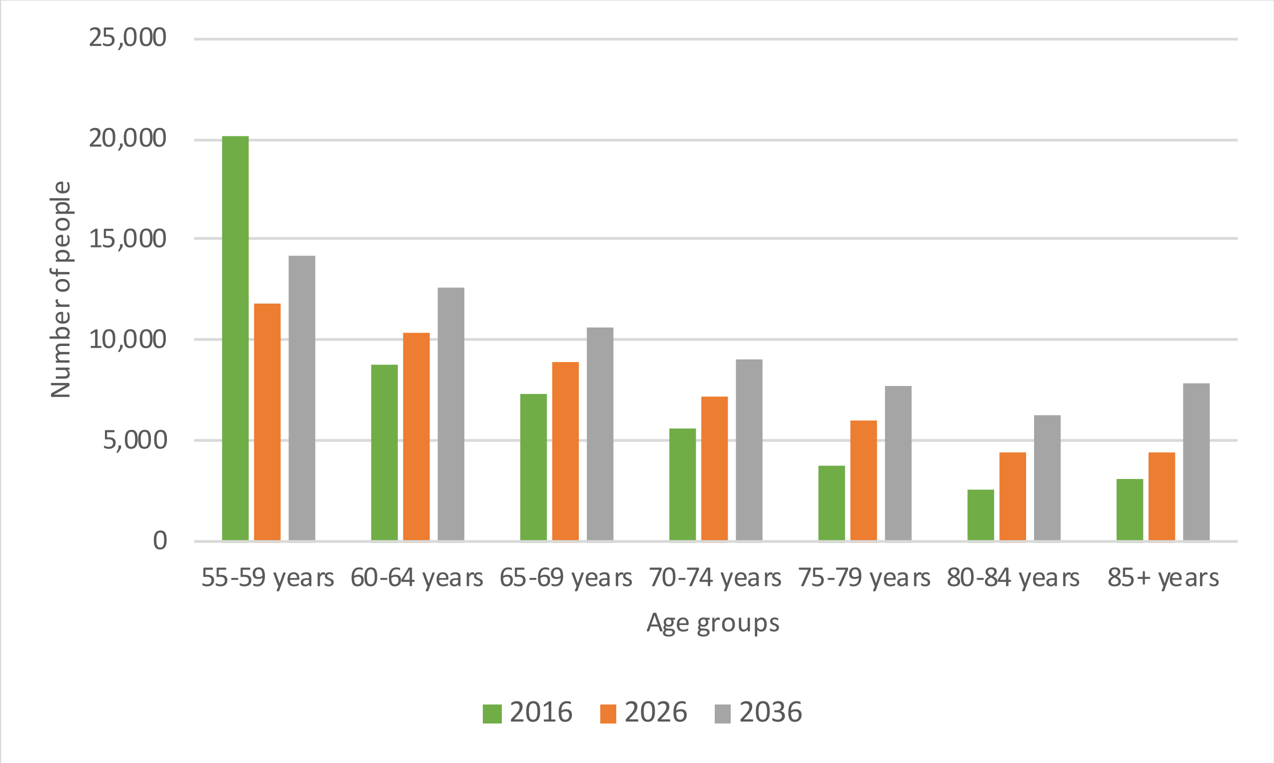
As part of this growth, the number of older residents is set to grow very substantially – almost doubling in number by 2031, representing an additional 48,000 residents aged 65 or more. Most of this growth will occur as a result of the ageing of existing residents, rather than inward migration. The growth will be particularly strong in the 70+ age groups – for instance the number of residents aged 80 or more will almost triple over the period.

Figure 7 on the following page displays the projected growth in older populations, taking an average from The Hills and Hornsby LGAs.

Meeting the needs of the rapidly growing older population is recognised as a top priority for both The Hills Shire Council and Hornsby Shire Council.

[16] The Hills Shire Council, The Hills Corridor Strategy, 2015

Figure 7 Average projected growth in the older population 2016-2036 for The Hills and Hornsby LGAs



Source: NSW DPE Population projections, 2016

4.2 Housing wealth in the LGA

Chapter 2 of this report noted that seniors are very likely to be owner-occupiers of detached housing, and many have reached a point in their housing career where they own a particularly high quality house. This means that if and when they move, they can afford to demand housing that addresses their preferences and specifications.

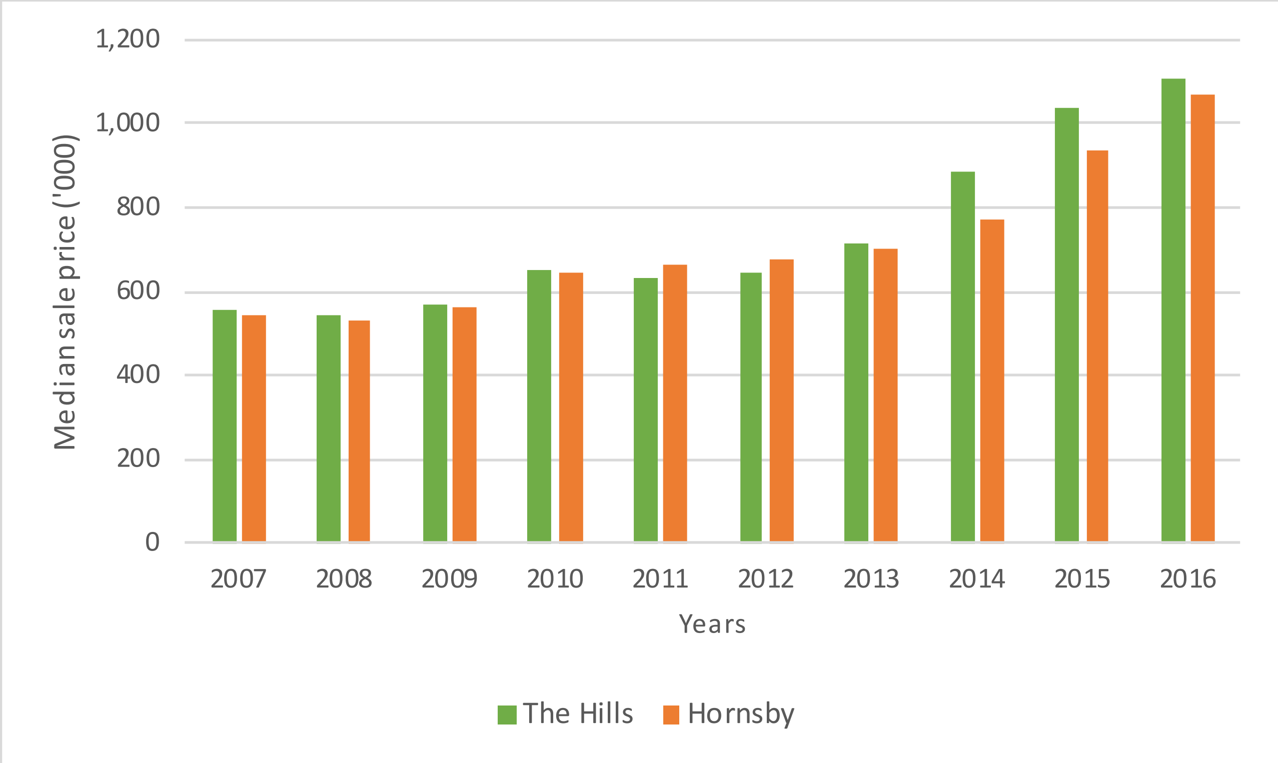
Over the last 15 years, the median sale price for a house (non-strata) in the Hills District has risen dramatically. Average prices are similar in both LGAs and have risen from approximately $540,000 in 2007 to almost $1.1 million in 2016[17]. The median varies from suburb to suburb, and in some areas is considerably higher than this.

Median sale price trends in each LGA since 2070 are shown in Figure 8 on the following page.

Although a large number of older people still choose not to leave their existing home, those who choose to move have, over a period of less than a generation, emerged as a significant and rapidly growing component of housing demand. There is a particularly notable market segment looking for high quality, manageable homes in their local district.

[17] NSW Department of Housing, Sales Trends March 1991-March 2017, accessed 19 December 2017

Figure 8 Median sale price yearly averages for non-strata houses in The Hills Shire and Hornsby Shire LGAs, 2007-2016



Source: NSW Department of Housing, Sales Trends March 1991 – March 2017, 2017

4.3 Drivers of demand

Chapters 2 and 3 of this report described the changing nature of housing demand among seniors. The research described may be summarised by defining three categories of seniors and their housing priorities – categories which are especially relevant in The Hills District:

a. **Staying put** – a large proportion of older people plan to stay where they are already living, and do not envisage having to move.

b. **Move for health reasons** – many older people recognise that they may have to move, in the short or long term, because their existing home and/or its location no longer meets their needs. They may need somewhere more manageable, or with better access to care and support services.

c. **Move for lifestyle reasons** – increasingly, younger retirees and those looking to retire choose to move to a home and/or a location that meets their lifestyle preferences.

Those in the second and third categories represent the growing demand for housing choices that are tailored to seniors. As Chapter 3 showed, common elements of this demand include:

- Good quality housing, to a standard that matches or exceeds their current home
- Space for guests, activities, storage etc. – in most cases this means a 2 or 3 bedroom dwelling is preferred
- Good dwelling layout, with the potential for easy adaptability if mobility declines
- Ease of maintenance
- Secure garage
- Attractive environment, preferably offering recreational opportunities
- Supportive community

» Access to services as required.

A proportion of seniors will choose to relocate to another area, for instance to a coastal community. However, a majority are likely to prefer to stay in the current district, especially if they have links to families, friends, services etc.

In addition, most of those who relocate wish to do so only once – that is, they hope to age in place in their new home.

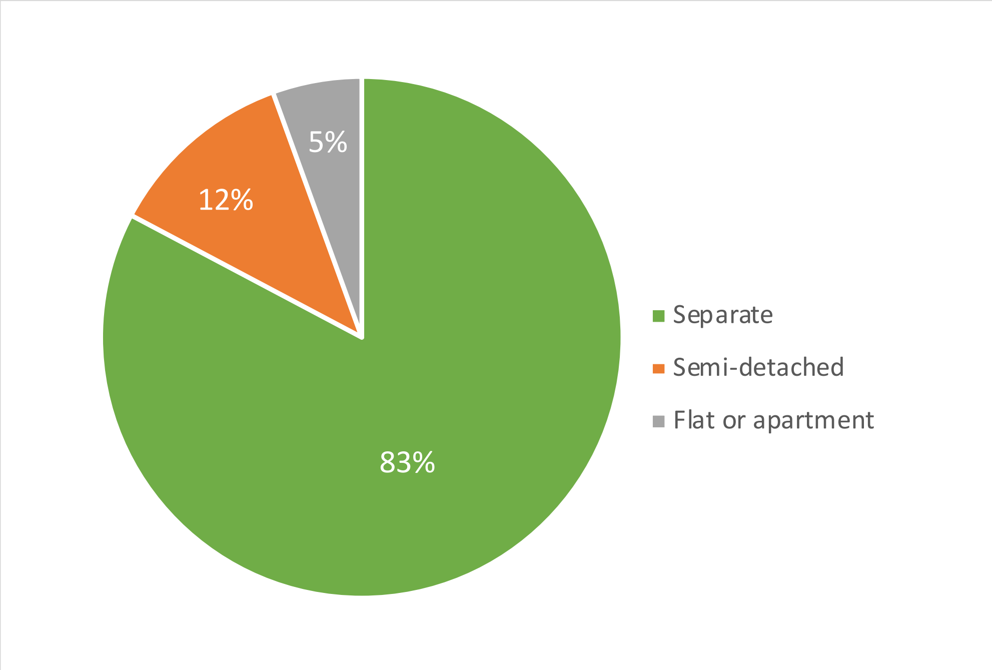
Unfortunately, the housing stock in The Hills District was predominantly built for families, local retirees may have difficulty finding somewhere suitable to move within the area. In theory the main options are a more manageable house or flat from the mainstream market; a dwelling in the community that is specifically designed for seniors' living; a place in a retirement village; or for those with limited means, a manufactured home or a granny flat. Chapter 5 considers the supply of housing suited to seniors in the Hills district.

5 Retirement Living options in The Hills District

5.1 Mainstream housing stock

Figure 9 shows that almost 85 per cent of all dwellings in The Hills are detached houses.

Figure 9 Private dwelling types, The Hills Shire, 2016



Source: ABS Census data, The Hills, Table G32, 2016

Furthermore, the great majority of homes were built with families in mind, and the number of smaller dwellings (one or two bedrooms) is small. Many of these smaller homes are located in retirement villages. Table 2 shows that 87% of seniors occupy a home with three or more bedrooms – indeed, over half occupy a home with four or more bedrooms. Nationally, this trend is continuing, as shown in figure 10.

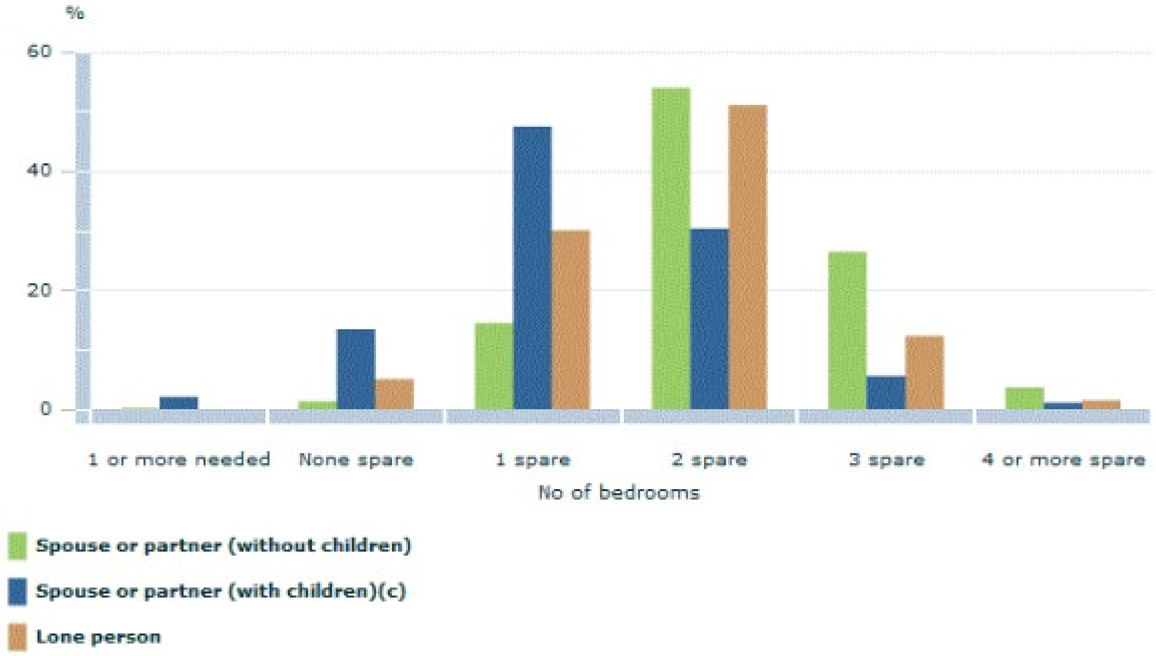
Table 2 Number of bedrooms in dwellings for people over 60 years in the Hills and Hornsby Shires, 2011

	1 BR	2BR	3BR	4BR	5BR	6BR
The Hills and Hornsby Shire LGAs	2.69%	10.42%	34.15%	40.38%	10.10%	2.27%

Source: ABS Census 2011[18]

[18] Housing suitability compares the number of bedrooms in a dwelling with a range of household demographics, such as the number of usual residents, their age and sex.

Figure 10 Number of bedrooms in dwellings, and by relationship, for people over 60 years in Australia, 2016



Source: ABS Census 2016, ageing population

Most seniors live in households of one or two people, and these figures raise questions about the match between the local housing stock and the make-up of the population. In relation to older households:

» While it is known that older households usually want at least one spare room for use by guests or for home activities, it seems probable that some of the space in a 4 to 6 bedroom house will be unused

» Much of the stock of large family homes is poorly suited to ageing in place, partly because its design rarely provides for declining mobility and partly because much of it is located in areas that are some distance from services and facilities, with consequential problems of transport and social isolation for many older residents.

Most of the older households owning large family homes can afford to move somewhere more suitable if they chose. Recently published research shows[19] that there may be wider benefits if they do so. It shows that across Sydney detached housing is increasingly held by older households and that in many cases they do not or cannot make use of some of the space in their home. If more of them moved to somewhere more suitable, this would free up some of the stock for younger family households. However, this is only likely to occur if there is a better choice of housing options suited to older households in the preferred area.

It has already been noted that the small stock of apartments and units in the District are largely designed and located to appeal to younger working households and have generally not been popular with seniors. A large increase in the supply of such housing is proposed in the current strategy for the NSW DPE's Sydney Metro Northwest (formerly known as the Northwest Rail Link), which propose significant new medium to high density development near the main stations. However, this is explicitly intended to meet the needs of a growing workforce and cannot be expected to have a significant impact on the demand for appropriate housing for seniors.

[19] Bob Birrell and David McCloske: The housing affordability crisis in Sydney and Melbourne (Report One: The demographic foundations), Australian Population Research Institute, 2015

5.2 Retirement villages in the LGA

From previous ABS Census data, almost 3,000 people lived in self-contained dwellings in retirement villages in The Hills and Hornsby LGAs in 2011. This number represents approximately seven per cent of people aged 65 or over. The likelihood of living in a retirement village increases with age, with a particularly large proportion of people aged 80+ in villages.

Table 3 Number of people living in retirement villages in The Hills and Hornsby LGAs, 2011

Area	Total persons in age group	Number living in retirement villages
The Hills LGA	22,639	2,020
Hornsby LGA	19,703	968

Source ABS Census data, The Hills and Hornsby LGAs, 2011

Although there are numerous retirement villages in the Hills District, most of these are very small. A handful of villages, and a handful of locations, dominate the retirement village market in The Hills District, as the next sections explain.

5.2.1 ARV Castle Hill Villages

By far the largest retirement village site in the District is Anglican Retirement Villages' (ARV) Castle Hill Villages, which comprise six villages and a range of aged care facilities. The site is very close to Castleridge Resort, in an area behind Old Northern Road and Castle Hill Road. The Castle Hill Villages have developed in stages, the first being among the earliest retirement housing facilities in NSW. A large proportion of the dwellings were built in the 1980s.

ARV, like Stockland, understands that the current generation of seniors has higher expectations than in the past, and has invested heavily in new village developments to contemporary standards. Recognising trends like those discussed in this report ARV has also embarked on updates to some of the housing on existing village sites, including some of the dwellings at the Castle Hill Villages. At Mowll Village, a recent project saw 32 new homes being built to replace older dwellings, and in the same village a new development of apartments is just being completed. This comprises 2 and 3 bedroom apartments in four storey buildings, adjoining new communal facilities.

5.2.2 Other major villages

Apart from the ARV Castle Hill Villages, other major retirement villages in the District are relatively modest in scale. They are listed in the following table 5.

Table 4 Major established retirement villages in the District (Over 100 dwellings)

Suburb	Name	Operator	Capacity
Castle Hill	Castle Hill Villages	ARV	700 dwellings
Castle Hill	Castle Ridge Resort	Stockland	114 dwellings
Cherrybrook	Woodlands	Cherrybrook Retirement Village	145 dwellings
Glenhaven	Glenhaven Green	ARV	152 dwellings
Glenhaven	Living Choice Glenhaven	Living Choice	236 dwellings
Kellyville	The Gracewood Retirement Village	BaptistCare	153 dwellings

Suburb	Name	Operator	Capacity
Kellyville	Moda, The Hills	Arden	200 dwellings
Pennant Hills	Lutanda Manor	LendLease	135 dwellings
The Ponds	The Ponds Village	Anglicare Retirement Villages	114 dwellings
Waitara	Kokoda Residences	Vasey communities	118 dwellings
Winston Hills	The Willows	Stockland	207 dwellings

Source: Villages.com.au retirement living, accessed 19 December 2018

With the exception of the Living Choice village in Glenhaven, all were initially developed several decades ago. As such, their style and primary markets are broadly similar, and it is understood that all have experienced some decline in demand for their studio and 1 bedroom units, while larger dwellings remain popular. However, all are large enough to offer a reasonable range of onsite facilities.

Slightly outside the core area there are a further two large villages which address a similar market with broadly similar products:

» Constitution Hill (Australian Unity), with 437 dwellings, a residential care facility and a range of facilities. This is a modern village (2004) offering traditional design and village layout.

» Alan Walker Village (Wesley Care) in Carlingford, with 217 dwellings, a residential care facility and a range of facilities. A traditional village with a strong focus on support and care.

Notably, both villages have recently built additional larger units in response to demand for spare bedrooms.

5.2.3 Other villages

An internet audit shows that the remaining villages in the District are generally small and most were built during the 1980s. For instance, there are numerous village sites operated by Uniting, but all are very small, all offer almost exclusively studio and 1 bedroom units, and all the units are very modest, based on a traditional 1980s template.

This listing only shows villages within the Hills District. Not all villages are promoted on the internet and thus there may be omissions.

» Baulkham Hills: Aminya, BaptistCare, 93 units

» Beecroft: Copeland Gardens, Uniting, 18 units

» Bella Vista: Aveo Bella Vista, 64 units

» Cherrybrook: Cherrybrook Gardens, RSL Lifecare, 42 units

» Cherrybrook: The Lakes of Cherrybrook, RSL Lifecare, 63 units

» Cherrybrook: Elouera Gardens, Christian Bretheren, 72 units

» Cherrybrook: Mawarra Independent Living, UCA, 43 units

» Dural: Oak Tree Resort (Luxury resort), Oak Tree, 70 units

» Eastwood MacDonald Homes, UCA, 5 units

» Eastwood Vimiera Village, Medi Aid Centre Foundation, Number of dwellings unknown.

» Epping: Carinya Self Care Units, Uniting, 28 units

» Epping: Coombah Self Care Units, Uniting, 27 units

» Epping: Epping Manor, Vasey, 55 units

» Epping North Kooloora Melaleuca Villages, Medi Aid Centre Foundation, Number of dwellings unknown.

- Galston Rowland Village, RSL Lifecare, 135 units
- Kenthurst: Kentgrove, Uniting, 49 units
- Kellyville: Golf Shore, Sarian Retirement Villages, 98 units
- Kellyville: Cranbrook Residences, Cranbrook Care, 50 units
- Normanhurst: Bowden Brae, Uniting, 83 units
- Normanhurst Karinya Self Care, Uniting, 26 units
- Normanhurst: Bramblewood, Full Strata Title, 60 units
- Round Corner: Mountainview Retreat, Private, approximately 80 units
- Wahroonga: St Ermes Court, UPA Sydney North – Aged Care Services, 24 units
- Wahroonga: Adventist Aged Care, 92 units
- Wentworthville: The Adrian, Beaini Projects 80 units
- West Pennant Hills: Mawarra Village, UCA 43 units
- West Pennant Hills: Wirreanda, United Church Australia, 49 units
- Winston Hills: Woodbury Village, Anglican Retirement Village, 50 units.

The Oak Tree in Dural is on the rural fringes of the area, and provides a modern facility offering contemporary dwellings. Several other villages have added more modern homes to their stock in recent years.

In addition to the above, there are further villages just beyond the District, notably around the North Parramatta area and around Hornsby.

5.2.4 New developments

New retirement villages are normally feasible only if large, affordable sites can be secured. A recently emerging alternative is high-rise villages within urban centres. Consequently, all four major new villages in The Hills have been built in Kellyville on greenfield sites (although for marketing purposes they are sometimes described as being in Bella Vista):

- Golf Shore by Sarian, 98 units
- Cranbrook Residences, 53 units
- The Gracewood, 153 units
- Moda, The Hills, 200 units.

The Gracewood has been constructed by the not-for-profit Baptist Care, while Golf Shore, Cranbrook and Moda are private. All describe themselves as luxury accommodation, offering high-specification two and three bedroom apartments along with a wide range of leisure and social facilities. Golf Shore describes itself as setting the benchmark in retirement living.

Although it is too early to draw firm conclusions, these up-market villages appear to address local demand very successfully, and have sold well in the regional market.

5.2.5 Capacity of existing villages to meet demand

Existing retirement village options in the District do not offer a good match with local demand. The following gaps can be identified:

- Contemporary demand is for a higher quality housing product than offered in many villages, which are largely based on a modest and dated design template from the 1980s.

» Demand is mainly for 2 and 3 bedroom dwellings with storage and garaging. There is, if anything, a surplus of small one-bedroom and studio units, while demand exceeds supply of larger units

» Older villages provide reasonable streetscape and some small patio gardens, but offer little in terms of quality urban design, high quality open spaces, or responsiveness to their setting. New developments are recognising this and responding with attractive master-planned design.

» The majority of local retirement village housing is aimed at a relatively affordable price. However, an increasing proportion of locals can afford something much more luxurious. Quality village accommodation at a price that matches local expectations is in high demand.

» Several new villages have been developed in the last few years offering high quality, well-designed accommodation and facilities, but these are located in new housing areas rather than in established suburbs.

» Based on projected population growth and existing ratios, local demand for retirement village accommodation will require a large increase in stock. However, the level of demand will in practice depend on the quality and appropriateness of the new supply.

5.3 Other Seniors' living options

Accommodation designed and built for seniors has been encouraged by the NSW Government for many years. It is characterised by its design and layout, which must meet minimum standards of adaptability.

A large proportion of approvals have been for retirement village development and redevelopment.

» Each year, a number of developments in the wider community have been approved. The great majority have been small infill developments, in many cases built to minimum standards.

» Purpose built developments of luxury apartments for seniors have been a feature of some coastal areas for some time, but only in the last few years have such projects begun to be planned for other urban areas (mainly on greenfield sites). One contemporary example is under construction in The Hills Shire: Green Views at Baulkham Hills.

Outside developments in retirement villages, this housing sector appears to be in its infancy in Sydney, and most available options in the Hills offer modest accommodation. The key issues in the Hills District may be summarised as follows:

1. Strong population growth will mean there is demand for a large amount of new housing across the board over the next two decades. Government projections suggest growth in the population of The Hills and Hornsby Shires of more than 178,000 over the period 2016-36. However, current strategic planning[20] indicates that the focus for residential development in the area will be low to medium density dwellings for working households.
2. The number of seniors living in the area is projected to double over this period, and unlike younger age groups, the growth will result mostly from the ageing of existing residents rather than from inward migration. A projected 38,000 additional seniors will require accommodation, with the size of all age cohorts from 65 to 100+ growing strongly.
3. Approximately four-fifths of the housing stock in the Hills District is 3 to 5 bedroom family homes. Many older people find as they age that such homes are less and less suitable, but the mainstream market in the Hills offers few opportunities to move to a more manageable home that facilitates a good lifestyle.
4. An increasing number of open-market apartments and units are being built but they only account for five per cent of dwellings in The Hills Shire LGA. More are likely to be built under recent Rail Corridor zoning proposals, but as with the existing apartment stock, the target market is mainly younger working households who are happy with their typically small size and their transport-oriented location. While it is likely that

[20] NSW Department of Planning Sydney Metro Northwest and The Hills Corridor Strategy, The Hills Shire Council 2015

housing industry will produce more apartments targeted to seniors in the coming years, but the impact on supply is not likely to be great.

5. Few mainstream homes are adaptable, and hilly topography also means that the entries to many homes are not easily accessible to people with limited mobility.
6. Most older people say they want to age in place, but for many this means moving to somewhere where they can see themselves living out the rest of their lives. Modern retirement villages offer an attractive option to this group.
7. The existing retirement village stock is quite large, but even at existing rates of market penetration there will be a need for around 1500 additional village dwellings within less than 20 years. The success of new contemporary-style villages and new homes in existing villages demonstrates that there is substantial unmet demand for up-to-date housing products, while demand for much of the older smaller units is falling. Reasons include the following:
    a. Most villages offer a similar product that is now dated. The quality of dwelling design, and urban design does not meet today's market expectations.
    b. A large proportion of existing dwellings are studios and small one bedroom units. Demand for these is declining quite rapidly and in some villages vacancies are hard to fill, while there are waiting lists for larger units. As this report has shown, older households typically want at least one spare bedroom.
    c. There is a mismatch between the buying power of a typical older household and the price of the majority of retirement village dwellings. This reflects the mismatch in standards between the two market sectors. A typical older household selling a detached home for a median price of approximately $1.1 million is unlikely to choose to buy a modest retirement village unit, at around $330,000-$450,000. There is a shortage of good quality, contemporary housing in retirement villages.
    d. Several recent developments are targeted to today's more affluent buyers. However, limited development opportunities in established areas mean that they tend to be located in greenfield or new release areas (e.g. current projects in Kellyville).

6 Meeting contemporary demand through the Castleridge Resort redevelopment

6.1 The existing village

The Castleridge Resort is a retirement village comprising 113 Independent Living Units, along with community facilities which are contained in a single building. Most of the village was built in the 1980s but there has been piecemeal development and upgrading since then. Buildings are 2 to 3 storeys in height. The village is built in a V shape along the sides of a shallow gully which is retained as open parkland. As a result, parts of the site have views across to the Blue Mountains.

The village's eastern boundary adjoins Old Northern Road, from which there is a main vehicle access. A further access point is from the west via Palisander Place, adjoining an area of large detached dwellings. The location is easily accessible and close to a very wide range of local facilities and transport, including being within one kilometre of Castle Hill town centre.

Figure 11 Aerial view of Castleridge Resort

Source: Architectus, Castle Ridge Resort Castle Hill, Draft Urban Design Report, December 2018

On the opposite side of Old Northern Road from the village is a large retirement housing/aged care site operated by ARV. Some of the housing on that site dates from as early as the 1960s but there has been ongoing development since then, most recently new four-storey seniors' apartments in Mowll Village.

6.2 The case for redevelopment

Castleridge is fortunate in having a very attractive site, leafy and with good views, and its location is excellent. It is close to facilities in Castle Hill, it has easy access to the Sydney-wide transport network, and there are key facilities nearby. These include a large private hospital nearby, a wide range of health facilities, fast access by road and rail to public hospitals, and several residential aged care facilities within the close-by ARV Castle Hill Villages. As a result, Stockland wish to ensure that the site is used to its full potential, by offering future generations a desirable place to age in place.

However, if Castleridge is to fulfil its potential it must offer housing, facilities and an environment that meet contemporary expectations – in this case the expectations of an emerging generation of affluent seniors from the local district.

In a recent report, leading international property consultants Colliers stressed the need to seize the opportunity to address this demand by redeveloping dated retirement villages. The number one question for village operators, according to the report, is, keeping up with the expectations of baby boomers in terms of product design and location:

> *Where does that leave existing product and what is the potential to redevelop villages to take into account these new expectations?*

Stockland Retirement Living is moving to respond to this challenge. Under former CEO Stephen Bull, Stockland Stockland undertook the progressive redevelopment of its Retirement Living portfolio, with Bull previously stating[21] "We'll incorporate medium density apartments to enable retirees to enjoy low- maintenance homes with a full range of amenities available in a highly sought-after location." The redevelopment at Cardinal Freeman Village is an example of this.

To secure the future viability of Castleridge Resort by attracting the emerging baby boomer market requires a higher standard of accommodation than at present. Stockland's preferred approach is a staged, master-planned redevelopment that repositions the Village in the contemporary market, in particular by addressing the demand for 2 and 3 bedroom dwellings, providing apartments with contemporary layout and finishes, optimising views and daylight, providing good quality usable outdoor spaces, and enhancing the range of onsite facilities. In addition, redevelopment would allow a number of existing site issues to be addressed, including:

» Poor legibility of internal circulation routes

» Uncoordinated urban design, which is a result of piecemeal development over the years

» Poor walkability of access stairs and some steep sections of footpaths

» Poor response to key site advantages, including views.

A master plan has therefore been prepared by project architects and urban designers Architectus. Implementation of the proposal would require modification of certain planning controls affecting the site. This report on demand issues is intended to accompany an application to Council to modify these controls.

[21] Media Release 28 May 2015

6.3 The indicative masterplan for Castleridge

Architectus' urban design report for the Village identifies opportunities and constraints, and from these offers an master plan[22]. It recommends revised planning controls to permit implementation of the proposed approach. Among the principal objectives of the master plan are:

» To redevelop the existing Village to meet future market demand from affluent baby boomers, based on a high quality, walkable, passive and community focused environment which encourages development that is durable and can be practically maintained to a high standard

» To improve the standard of living and quality of community and lifestyle facilities within the Village through new open space, community facility, and health and wellbeing facilities

» To provide flexibility to respond to future trends and needs

» To capitalise on the opportunities of the site including its topography, and to better integrate the existing parkland and new dwellings on site

» To ensure future development provides a walkable and accessible environment for the community, with opportunities for gathering, gentle exercise and community activities built into the public domain.

Like other new retirement housing developments in the Hills District, the preferred concept involves a number of apartment buildings which would provide a choice of mostly 2 and 3 bedroom apartments, designed to make the most of light and views, including views across to the Blue Mountains.

The master plan would increase the amount and quality of community open space, improve access and circulation, and permit an enhanced range of onsite facilities.

The proposed development would quite deliberately reposition the village in the local market, with appeal to a wide age range. It is anticipated that accommodation would nevertheless be priced well within the budget of the majority of seniors in The Hills District, most of whom own relatively high value detached homes.

As a first step, a revision of planning controls for the site is being sought (specifically relating to FSR and height). Once this is resolved, more detailed work on a development proposal can be carried out.

[22] Architectus, Castle Ridge Resort Castle Hill, Draft Urban Design Report, December 2018

Figure 12 Master plan for the Village

Source: Architectus, 2019

6.4 Key benefits for future residents

As a master-planned community that is designed to meet the needs and expectations of 21st Century seniors, a redeveloped Village would address a notable market gap in the area for a quality seniors' housing option that matches the budget of a large number of local seniors.

High level of amenity

The primary benefit for future residents will be the high level of amenity offered by the new village, in its housing, its grounds and its facilities. The key elements are more fully described in Sections 6.5 and 6.6 of this report.

Accommodation for ageing in place

The proposed village is intended to appeal across the age span from people in their 60s attracted by lifestyle and locational factors through to those who are older and less mobile. Importantly, it will allow those who were active and mobile when they arrived to age in place, which may ultimately mean that they receive care in their apartment. Apartments will be built to Universal Design standards, meeting the mobility needs of people who can no longer move around easily or who use wheelchairs.

In the Hills District as elsewhere, only a small proportion of the mainstream housing stock is suitable for people in wheelchairs or with limited mobility. Residents will be able to obtain appropriate support and care services or nursing, if they need it. The design of the apartment will facilitate delivery of community care into the home if and when this becomes necessary.

Better mental health

The prevalence of social isolation, which is one of the major causes of depression and mental illness in Australian seniors, is much lower in retirement villages than in the mainstream community[23]. Future residents will have access to social support through the presence of large numbers of neighbours of similar ages, and the redevelopment concept for Castleridge specifically seeks to increase opportunities for social contact, both informally (for instance by making entrance lobbies and open spaces attractive places to stop for a chat) and formally (in built facilities including a bar, café, activity rooms etc.).

National research has found that more than nine out of 10 retirement village residents participate in village activities and the larger resident population and the new facilities will permit expanded activity programs along with many informal options. This approach can be expected to minimise social isolation, although those who wish to limit or avoid social interaction will be able to do so in the privacy of their own dwelling.

Physical health and wellbeing

Retirement village residents make much less use of hospitals and doctors than non-residents[24]. This is in part because the design of the housing and the surrounding environment makes falls less likely, but also because villages offer opportunities for active and passive recreation. The benefits are greatest in villages with good facilities – onsite walking opportunities, a gym, a pool, facilities for activities like yoga and bowls, and onsite access to allied health professionals all help to promote health and wellbeing.

Deferring entry to residential care

Age-appropriate housing coupled with onsite services frequently allow residents to remain in their own home for longer, even if they are living alone. Age appropriate housing can therefore mean that a move into a residential aged care home can be deferred or avoided altogether. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's report, Patterns in Aged Care Program Use 2002-03 to 2010-11, found that retirement village residents enter residential

[23] Grant Thornton: National overview of the retirement village sector, 2014

[24] Ibid

aged care on average five years later than those coming from a family home. Grant Thornton has calculated that this results in a saving to government of $1.98 billion a year to the aged care budget[25].

Community participation

Retirement village residents have a high level of participation in the external community. In surveys, more than half said they were involved in external social and recreational organisations and a large proportion work as volunteers. Castleridge Resort is very well located for local people who wish to continue (or commence) their involvement with local organisations, clubs and churches.

6.5 Rationale for medium-rise design concept

The master plan for Castleridge Resort proposes to replace the existing collection of two and three level buildings with a series of medium-rise apartment buildings, with the highest buildings located furthest from the adjoining residential area. It is proposed that a range of architect-designed single-level apartments will be offered.

The master plan proposes that each building will provide full lift access, and circulation spaces, entry areas, etc. that are designed to be used for social interaction, through communal greens, gardens and lawns for gatherings and casual exchanges. Residents will therefore benefit from a high level of housing amenity.

» This design approach is a response to market demand, as illustrated by several recent local developments. Almost all the significant new retirement housing projects currently being constructed in the Hills District (such as the new projects in Kellyville) provide high quality apartments in architect-designed medium-rise buildings. Further afield, new prestige villages have sold very rapidly and several have won major awards. Good examples include the Waterbrook Village at Greenwich and Watermark at Castle Cove. Watermark was selected by the Urban Development Institute of Australia as the best Seniors’ Living Development of 2011.

» Replacing existing buildings with medium-rise apartments permits a co-ordinated urban design approach. Despite intensification of the use of the site, it will also allow an increase in the amount, the quality and, in particular, the usability of landscaped open space. The Village Green, located close to the proposed community facilities, is intended to be the heart of the community, and a space for relaxing and socialising that can also be used for community activities. Communal greens are proposed for each residential apartment block, and these will provide a space for residents to meet with neighbours, and will also offer opportunities for passive recreation including gardening. There will also be a Courtyard Precinct co-located with the Village Precinct and consisting of buildings organised around a green courtyard space where formal and informal activities and social interaction can occur. The existing parkland area below the apartments will be retained with improved walking access.

» The provision of apartments will permit the village to offer a greater choice of dwellings styles through the options of three to six storey residential complexes, with easy lift access. This is not feasible in a low rise village.

» As a result of site topography, many existing residents must climb stairways to reach the front door of their dwellings, and in some places these are steep. The network of stairways is in generally poor condition and does not comply with current building regulations. The master plan proposals do away with such mobility issues. Inside and outside the units, full mobility will be possible, with straightforward adaptability if required to assist with specific needs. Overall, therefore, the proposal will meet the mobility needs of residents much better than the current village.

» The apartments will benefit from better solar access than most of the existing dwellings, and the proposed disposition of buildings will be designed to minimise overshadowing and maximise privacy. Cross ventilation will be a design feature. Balconies and windows will feature shutters and louvres to allow residents to control

[25] Grant Thornton, National overview of the retirement village sector, 2014

the temperature environment to their liking. Detailed testing of these features will occur when plans are advanced to a more detailed stage.

» Most apartments will offer an attractive view, in many cases as far as the Blue Mountains. The new development will provide deep balconies that promote their use as outdoor living space on the upper floors, while the ground floor will offer loggias and garden spaces.

» Circulation routes in the village are currently confused. Most of the roads are narrow, often steep, and terminate into cul-de-sacs. The existing pedestrian pathway network is unsatisfactory, offering poor connectivity and difficulty in navigation. East-west movement is particularly precarious and many pedestrian routes are narrow roads shared with vehicles. The proposal provides for a simplified circulation network, including a pedestrian route linking all buildings and new graded walking routes into the parkland.

6.6 Economies of scale in a larger village

The Village will accommodate a significantly larger of residents than present. The number depends on the final design but is likely to exceed 500 residents.

The master plan seeks to accommodate this larger population in a manner that offers significantly better amenity than at present. By providing more dwellings on the Village site, a component of growing local demand for variety and high quality residential living options can be addressed as more people will be able to live in an attractive and desirable location.

Retirement villages must be larger than in the past if the expectations of the emerging market are to be met. Larger villages provide economies of scale and the population thresholds that are needed to support the services and facilities that residents expect. A larger village can:

» Provide a large enough customer base to support a full range of social facilities, including a café and a bar.

» Provide an adequate customer base to support comprehensive on-site services. Contemporary villages are expected to offer domestic assistance (e.g. laundry, housekeeping), personal care services, space to accommodate health and allied health practitioner facilities, nursing services, dining options, etc. Many of these are offered on a fee-for-service basis that requires minimum usage thresholds for viability.

» Permit an extensive program of onsite activities.

» Support onsite staffing.

» Reduce costs to external care service providers who can assist a number of clients in close geographical proximity.

On completion of development, it is planned that the Village will boast the best services and facilities in any retirement village in the vicinity. These will be viable thanks to the large customer base – seniors who have made a lifestyle choice that includes paying for access to these services and facilities.

elton consulting