

Thoughts on the draft brief:

As people age, their circle of activity reduces and for many of our oldest residents, the very immediate neighbourhood becomes their world. This brings to the fore the importance of pockets of sociable space. The waterfront development brief is encouraging in its vision for greenspaces which will be of value to the population as a whole, it should be noted that our very oldest residents may be drawn outside by a simple bench, located nearby in a sheltered spot of winter sunshine or a community raised herb garden in a public outdoor space. For these groups an achievable and realistic goal of 'being active' may consist of simply being motivated to get up from a chair and venture outside for some fresh air, so whilst cycle routes and walking routes are welcomed for encouraging activity in the wider population, to encourage active lifestyles at all ages this simple very local provision is necessary. **For the wellbeing of older and less mobile residents the brief should explicitly include provision for small sociable pockets of public spaces (not just decorative planting) to be woven into the fabric of residential areas at a very local level.**

Streets are considerably emptier of activity and less vibrant during the daytime than a few decades ago when it was less common for all adults in a household to be out at work. This contributes to loneliness and isolation of older people and others whose health or mobility means they may not venture much further than their immediate neighbourhood. **Consideration should be given to locating vibrant 'alive' environments – such as nursery schools and community hubs, close to housing for older people.**

The provision for active frontages is welcomed. **Rochester's Full Frontal project demonstrated beautifully how front gardens, even of a very modest size, provide opportunities for casual neighbourly interaction and improved community cohesion; something which is valuable in reducing loneliness and social isolation. Front garden seating may be appropriate for reducing social isolation in some settings.**

There is growing evidence of the benefits in co-delivery of elderly care and early-years care with a recent TV documentary illustrating fantastic benefits for both generations. Such models also have potential for delivering cost reductions through co-location or nurseries and care homes.

Consideration could be given to allowing for this style of delivery in the care setting proposed for redevelopment of Strood Waterfront. <http://theconversation.com/combining-daycare-for-children-and-elderly-people-benefits-all-generations-70724>

Rapid changes to local environment can be unsettling and problematic for local people with dementia. Whilst the finished development presents opportunities for greatly enhanced dementia friendly design, the impact of change on residents should be considered throughout the potentially disruptive redevelopment process, not just in the completed project. This will contribute to the sense of positive goodwill towards the process amongst these groups. **This could include dementia friendly communications about the plans and accessible wayfinding provision during the development phase.**

Retention of recognisable features and local landmarks, such as the submarine, pier and boatyard and maintaining key sight-lines to well known views help provide memorable 'anchors' for dementia sufferers and talking points for older generations in general who are at risk of feeling alienated by dramatic change to a familiar environment. **Older people may enjoy sociable areas that are located for the appreciation of these features; providing some continuity and ongoing relationship with a setting they may have grown up in.**

The redevelopment process will also be of keen interest and a source of excitement for many, especially older residents and helping them participate in the process of change, is a great opportunity to generate interest and anticipation. This may be particularly relevant amongst older men, who may have worked along the river front, or in building trades and related industries and for whom there is a lack of provision of local interest and activity. **Added value in the process of redevelopment could be achieved by enabling people to 'see what is happening' at viewing points throughout the process, instead of it happening behind high hoardings, or providing updates or 'tours' throughout the process. Local people could be involved, for example through a community project growing trees for use in the development in a set-aside temporary nursery, which again could appeal to older men, for whom there is a lack of provision.**

Older people and those with limited mobility may find tasks such as weekly recycling challenging, however, doing these tasks themselves is important to many in retaining dignity and independence, what is more, undertaking these tasks often brings contact with neighbours and should not be underestimated as a catalyst for stronger neighbourly relationships. When people start to struggle with these basic chores it impacts on the demand for social care and can ultimately contribute to residential care becoming necessary. **Design of dwellings should enable maximum ease for these tasks to be completed independently with suitably accessible storage areas located close to street side etc.**

Conveniently located bus stops and bus routes adjusted to serve new dwellings will be valued by many residents; however public transport is a particular lifeline for many who may not drive due to physical conditions, sensory impairment or older age. Bus access to Strood Station is welcomed. The challenge of trying to get off a bus with a mobility aid or wheeled shopping trolley is considerable and stopping at road level adds considerably to the height of the drop, discouraging many older users from attempting bus journeys, causing increased social isolation and dependence on care. **Bus stop 'piers' or similar arrangements at bus stops, to enable passengers to alight from buses at pavement level (rather from road level – such as where a bus stops alongside parked cars), is essential for many older users in maintaining their confidence in using public transport and avoiding isolation and falls and should be specified in the redevelopment. Proper seating at bus stops (instead of 'ledges' commonly used in bus stops) also encourages older residents to make use of public transport.**

Continence issues are another barrier to older people enjoying outdoor spaces for longer periods of time. **The brief could specify that the park café (mentioned in the brief) provide public toilet facilities.**