

'Silver saviours' can revitalise our high streets, Chancellor told

Report finds retirement housing creates more economic value than any other type of residential development, with residents contributing more to local shops, jobs, services and communities than any other group

The Chancellor has been urged to harness the spending power of older people as a new report shows how people living in retirement housing can help to revitalise our high streets after the Covid-19 pandemic.

With many retirees increasing their savings since the virus hit, the Homes for Later Living campaign group has said that "silver saviours" could come to the rescue of Britain's battered shops and communities post-pandemic if much-needed retirement housing developments are built in or close to town centres and high streets.

A new report from the group by a former government economist finds that people living in a typical 45 apartment retirement development generate £550,000 of spending per year - with £347,000 going to local shops on the high street, supporting retail jobs and keeping amenities open.

John Slaughter, chair of Homes for Later Living, said: "Spending by older people in specialist retirement developments can help maintain shops and services from the newsagents and the butchers to the flower shop and the local cafe - in other words the shops and services which make up the heart of our local communities.

"That's why the Prime Minister should act now to harness the spending power of older people who can serve as silver saviours for local high streets as part of a post-Covid recovery plan. The best way of doing this is by paving the way for more specialist retirement developments in town centres up and down the country.

"Building more specialist retirement housing in central locations would also relieve the pressure on green field sites and it would free up more family homes for younger buyers."

Alongside the high street spending figures, the new report shows that retirement housing creates more local economic value and more local jobs than any other type of residential housing. A new standard-sized retirement development would bring 85 temporary construction jobs and a further six permanent jobs on average, the research finds.

The report findings mean that if the UK were to build 30,000 retirement properties every year, the quantity needed to keep pace with our ageing population, it would result in around £2bn of additional economic activity every year across the country - or £20bn over 10 years, roughly equivalent to 1% of current UK GDP over a decade. Just c.8,000 were built in 2019 pre-Covid.

Homes for Later Living is asking the Government to set a national target of delivering 30,000 retirement properties per year, consistent with the level of demand. This would amount to just 10% of the national house building target.

The group is also calling on Chancellor Rishi Sunak to make the stamp duty holiday announced last year a permanent arrangement when he delivers this year's Budget. This would encourage more older people to downsize into suitable retirement accommodation, freeing up homes for families and first-time buyers.

UK-wide polling commissioned by Homes for Later Living indicates that new retirement housing would be welcomed by the majority of people. It also shows that the generation of local jobs is the most important factor in people's support for new developments.

Bob Blackman, member of the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee said: "With Covid-19 still at large and much of the economy still closed, the Chancellor should give serious consideration to extending the stamp duty holiday. By doubling down on reducing stamp duty, he could fuel economic growth by addressing serious structural problems with the UK housing market, creating local jobs and unleashing the spending power of the grey pound where it is most needed, on our local high streets."

NOTES TO EDITORS

[Research by the Bank of England](#) published in November 2020 found that 36% of retirees had increased their savings during the pandemic.

Savanta ComRes polled 2178 adults across the UK from 27-29 November 2020 asking whether they would approve or disapprove of certain developments being built within a mile of their home. Across the UK, retirement housing scored a net 68% approval rating - significantly higher than the 45% rating given to a conventional block of flats. The polling asked people what, if anything, they thought was particularly important in any new building development in their local area. The highest scoring answer here was "creating jobs" with 50% of respondents opting for this.

