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An almshouse for the 21st Century - Intergenerational Sheltered Housing within an urban environment

It is imperative that the built environment begins to respond to the current demographic shifts within its population and that cities and urban environments adapt to cater for and appeal to people of all ages and differing levels of mobility. The vibrancy and culture of urban life has a lot to offer elderly people and the city, its community and social fabric undoubtedly benefits from having a mixture of generations inhabiting it's fabric.

This proposal aims to explore how the design of urban sheltered housing and it's connection to the existing local amenities, infrastructure and public realm, can help to encourage the development of strong urban communities capable of supporting elderly people to remain living independently through informal networks of care. Having a network of support and companionship surrounding oneself becomes even more important as one grows older, as does the importance of having a role within society. Older people have a lot to offer young people but the city needs to be designed with accessible spaces integrated into its fabric that are designed specifically to help encourage and initiate this intergenerational exchange.

With the rise in popularity of internet shopping and the expansion of out of town shopping centres the UK is witnessing a demise in its high streets and this creates a huge problem for elderly people who can no longer drive and rely on being able to walk short distances to amenities. The daily act of walking, interacting with the community and experiencing a change of environment helps elderly people to remain healthy and independent, consequently the wider public realm should be part of the design scope of new sheltered housing.

Elderly people are ideal candidates for compact urban living environments since their often reduced levels of mobility mean they require shorter daily travelling distances, and appreciate having less space to clean and heat. However, even with high density planning it is important to achieve the feeling of space, with high ceilings, plenty of natural light, views to greenery and large spacious communal areas.