

Edgar A. Rose, *Housing Needs and the Elderly*, Gower, Aldershot, 1982, £13.50, ISBN 0 566 00586 7.

This book reports the findings of a small case study of older people's housing in the Hall Green area of Birmingham. The objectives of the study were to 'identify, describe and assess'

- the characteristics of the elderly population in Hall Green, their housing conditions, and the extent of their felt needs in respect of housing, related services and facilities.
- the extent of provision of housing for elderly people in Hall Green.
- the state of repair of the homes of the elderly and the 'fit' between elderly households and dwelling size and suitability.
- the changing role of private, voluntary, housing association and public agencies in providing shelter and meeting the needs of the elderly for independent living, especially in improving housing 'fit'.
- those policy issues which need to be addressed if housebuilding agencies are to contribute to securing a better fit between supply and demand in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

And make recommendations on

- directions for further investigation and research.

One of the major conclusions to emerge from the study was that because of the relative prosperity of the area and the highly developed ethos of self help, statutory services were relatively underdeveloped. Most of the respondents appeared to be quite happy to stay put and maintain their existing homes. However, beneath the surface the author detects changes which may have considerable implications in the longer term: 'a reversal in population structure and consequential misfit between household and dwelling size; an ageing community with low and falling levels of occupational mobility; consequential falling disposable incomes; some initial indications of a housing stock that could become unfit and prematurely obsolescent without adequate maintenance.' The solution proposed is for more effective schemes to facilitate the rehabilitation of existing housing, together with appropriate information services to be developed. Rose would also like to see the housing associations freed to play a fuller part in the housing strategy for the elderly.

The book is at times a little parochial, and insufficient effort is made to relate the case study findings to the national picture. For example, four pages of appendices are devoted to listing the addresses of voluntary agencies active in the Hall Green area, and yet no reference, in the body of the book, is made to any national survey of the elderly or of housing conditions.

At £13.50 for scarcely 50 pages of text it seems likely that only reviewers, or visitors to specialist libraries, will have the opportunity to read it.

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