

# Creature comforts built in



Moving to a retirement estate doesn't mean having to give up your furry friend, so choose a property that offers independent living, friendship and support for you and your pet, says DEBORAH STONE



AFTER the loneliness of lockdown the desire by over-55s to live among like-minded people, with a good social life and support network, has rocketed. Sales and lettings at retirement developments are up by at least a third compared to this time last year, with some reporting a 50 per cent rise.

It's no surprise to anybody connected with this property sector whose trade body, the Associated Retirement Community Operators, is lobbying for a Government task force to improve good quality housing-with-care for older people.

"This is a seminal moment the sector," says ARCO chairman Nick Sanderson, who is CEO of Audley Villages. "We can see clearly now that older people want to make the most of their retirement and stay healthy, connected and independent for longer."

But while coronavirus has come as a wake-up call to people previously putting off downsizing, there remains the quandary of how to fit your old life into smaller



**PET PROJECT:** Cognatum welcomes four-legged friends

accommodation – and it's most problematic for people with pets.

Some leasehold properties, whether retirement apartments or not, forbid pets, especially dogs. However Cognatum, which has 60 estates for over-55s in England, positively encourages owners to keep their pets when they move.

*"Owning a dog encourages health and wellbeing and brings joy, companionship and laughter,"* says managing director John Lavin. *"It reduces stress and can often help owners of properties on our estates find a regular routine. We understand what an important part of life a dog can be."*

He advises choosing a new home within walking distance of open space and says: *"When viewing new homes, go and check out the locale with your dog and an OS map or app."*

*"Walk the local area and talk to dog owners when you're out and about. Dogs are a great asset when it comes to socialising and forming new friendships – dog walkers are a friendly bunch."*

Most Cognatum estates have around two acres of grounds, including Bluecoat Pond near Horsham, Sussex, which is almost a self-contained village with a railway station and shop, plus health and fitness club.

There are currently two two-bedroom houses for sale from £525,000 leasehold (01491 821170; cognatum.co.uk), with an autumn moving package that includes the stamp duty above the current £500,000 stamp duty holiday. Legal fees and removal costs are also included, along with carpets, curtains and blinds.



**DOG DAYS:** Enjoy life at Petersfinger Farm, above, or Bluecoat Pond

Cognatum also has four renovated barns in 37 acres at Petersfinger Farm near Salisbury, Wiltshire, with wildflower meadows and orchards leading down to the River Avon.

The barns have three double bedrooms, three bathrooms, exposed timber frames, woodburners and open-plan living. They're for sale from £699,950 (01491 821170; cognatum.co.uk).

Cognatum is a member of the Cinnamon Trust, a charity that fosters pets whose owners face a spell in hospital, or offers long-term care for owners not able to keep their pet.

Residents with pets are encouraged to register with the trust, says Lavin: *"If one of our pet-owning residents has a problem, our estate manager will get in touch with the trust and within a few hours a volunteer will provide the necessary care."*

[www.cognatum.co.uk](http://www.cognatum.co.uk)  
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