

# Bungalows are not the only option in later life



Bungalows have historically been a popular choice for those seeking a retirement property as they are suitable for property owners at any age due to their suitability for the less mobile.

But bungalows make up less than 7% of the housing stock in the UK, and supply outweighs demand. Retired buyers are in competition with developers and private buyers looking for a renovation opportunity and single storey properties are often replaced with two storey houses, further increasing the rarity value.

Bungalows now come at a substantial premium, anything from 10% to 50%.

Richard Williams of Cognatum says, *“The price per square foot of single storey accommodation is significantly higher than for a property set over more than one floor, and the price of single storey properties is set to continue its march upwards.*

*“Retired buyers who want to plan for reduced mobility but don’t want to compete in this playing field can take comfort from the fact that there are many other options.*

*“Properties set over two storeys can often be adapted to suit a less mobile homeowner.*

*“Stairs come in all shapes and sizes. Some staircases in period properties are extremely steep and narrow having been shoehorned into the available space when a property was built in order to maximise living accommodation. But more recently built properties that have had to meet building regulations requirements mean that modern staircases are much less precarious.*

*“In the early 2000s it was unusual to find a passenger lift in a residential property, but these days a lift can be retro-fitted for as little as £20,000. Cognatum’s newer two storey properties come with the electrics in place, and the space available, for a through-floor lift to be installed if and when it’s required. Stannah of stair-lift fame now offer a homelift installation service. Lifts*

*come in a variety of sizes and take up surprisingly little space and there are a multitude of providers.*

*“Aside from the ease of mobility issue, it’s hard to see the attraction of a bungalow. Since their heyday in the mid ‘50s, ‘60s and early ‘70s, building standards have improved dramatically, and aesthetics have changed. Those that haven’t already been improved and developed are likely to require a significant amount of work. Some homeowners feel uncomfortable from a security point of view, the potential for rearranging or increasing accommodation on a single floor is limited, and bungalows can lack good natural light.*

*“Retired buyers will have a much wider choice of property if they don’t feel the need to restrict their search to a bungalow.*

*“Don’t forget there are other single storey options – a ground floor apartment or an upper floor apartment with an external lift.*

*“And, in addition to installing a lift, there are a huge array of options for making a two storey property more accessible for those who have mobility difficulties:*

- *Some properties will lend themselves to replacing the existing staircase with one that is wider, has lower rises, deeper treads, and has good bannisters on both sides. Consult an architect for professional advice.*
- *An existing staircase can be dramatically improved with good lighting (including step lighting) and the addition of hand and grab rails.*
- *Re-arranging the accommodation to decrease the number of times it’s necessary to go up and downstairs can make a dramatic difference. A downstairs bath or shower room; an extra room downstairs that can be used as a bedroom occasionally or permanently; or a small lift that allows for heavy items to be transported without the need for struggling manually.*

- *Don’t discount the old-fashioned stair lift. They have become more comfortable, more sophisticated, and are less obtrusive.*

*“Homeowners can resist fitting properties with grab and handrails, and other fittings that help with mobility challenges on the basis of aesthetics. It’s entirely possible to find attractive options, or to commission custom versions that suit the style and décor of the property.”*

At Cognatum’s new Salisbury development, Howarth Park, there are ground floor apartments, first-floor apartments with communal passenger lifts, and all the houses are designed with electrics and space for retro-fitting an internal lift and a separate downstairs room with adjacent shower room. Prices start at £450,000.

<https://cognatum.co.uk/retirement-estates/howarth-park/>

Two-storey properties at Cognatum’s Minchinhampton development, Stuart Court, also have a lift-ready layout.

<https://cognatum.co.uk/retirement-estates/stuart-court-minchinhampton/>

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*Cognatum, an independent not for profit company, has 60 retirement estates across central and southern England. All are in prime locations within vibrant market towns or villages, within walking distance of shops and restaurants. Each estate benefits from thoughtful architecture, landscaped grounds, and a dedicated estate manager.*

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