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# NEW VILLAGE FOR CITY OAPs OPENS DOORS

**By Jane Tyler**  
STAFF REPORTER

**BIRMINGHAM'S new £22 million retirement village has opened its doors.**

Pannel Croft in Newtown is the second Florida-style pensioners' complex in the city and there are three more in the pipeline.

The £22 million village has 180 apartments for the over-55s centred around community facilities and is due to open early next year.

But now the first show apartments were opened for potential residents to have a look around.

Pannel Croft is the second in a series of five villages being built by Extracare Charitable Trust and Birmingham City Council.

The first, in New Oscott, opened nearly two years ago and there is a waiting list for its 260 homes.

Construction has started on the third in Hagley Road, Edgbaston, and two more are planned in Bournville and Acocks Green.

All have facilities including a community hall, bar and restaurant, shop, gym, health centre and hair and beauty salon.

Unlike the others, 80 per cent of Pannel Croft's apartments will be for rent, reflecting the fact that virtually all of its residents will be in receipt of housing and care benefits.

Typical rents for those on benefits will be £28 per week for a one-bedroom apartment and £32 for a two-bedroomed one. The cost of buying outright will be from £114,950, but part-ownership options are also available.

The show homes were opened by former Midlands footballer Cyrille Regis who grew up in a London council flat so is

a big advocate of affordable housing. Among those looking around was the first resident to have a confirmed place at Pannel Croft Village.

Linda Harewood, aged 68, is living in a three-bedroom council house in Newtown where she has been for 43 years. "I've got arthritis so wanted somewhere on one level because I struggle with the stairs," she said.





Grand opening: Coun John Lines, Cyrille Regis and Linda Harewood at Pannel Croft Village, Newtown.



Brand new: The complex has 180 apartments for the over-55s.