

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Detailed below are answers to many questions that have previously been asked. This is not an exhaustive list and will be added to over time.

The Property

- Q. Can I add dormer rooms later?
- A. Yes. The windows and basic structure are already there. Middleton Hall can arrange for quotes for this.
- Q. What sort of warranty do I get?
- A. There is a 10 year structural warranty backed by the LABC (Local Authority Building Control) insurance scheme from the date of build. See Key Facts for date applicable per property.
- Q. I currently live in a detached property. Will I hear noise from my neighbours?
- A. You shouldn't! The majority of the properties are semi-detached (with some link detached) but given the high levels of insulation, they are also very well sound proofed. With triple glazing throughout, the experience of our residents is that it is very quiet – even next to the road, it is hard to hear traffic noise.
'The sound engineer found The Waterside to have the quietest homes he has ever tested...'
- Q. Can I add a conservatory?
- A. No. This is for the property to meet the planning permission requirements for zero carbon homes.
- Q. Can I make internal alterations?
- A. Often, yes. Permission must be sought from Middleton Hall for any structural alteration.
- Q. How does the parking on site work?
- A. Each property has a parking space outside (in addition to any garage) for cars only (not vans or caravans). There are parking spaces for visitors around the access road and we ask residents to restrict any car parking outside their property to only one car to avoid cars blocking neighbours' views.

The Price

- Q. What is included in the price?
- A. Please see the individual sales details, key facts sheets and purchaser information for full details of properties available.

The Community

- Q. Middleton Hall is part of an Integrated Retirement Community – what does that mean?
- A. Integrated Retirement Communities are designed to offer older people the opportunity to live independently in their own home as part of a wider community. You live in your own property in The Waterside which is linked to a wide range of amenities and activities at Middleton Hall that are designed to support the well-being of people living here.

Care

- Q. If I need a greater level of support or care in the future, do I get preferential treatment for a place at Middleton Hall?
- A. Yes – all existing residents automatically get priority on the waiting list. We also keep a short stay suite in Middleton Grove that residents can book on a short term basis.

Re-sales

- Q. If I decide to move from the Waterside, how do I sell my property?
- A. Middleton Hall has an exclusive right to market the property for the first 6 months. We currently charge a 2% plus Vat commission.
- Q. What if you can't sell it?
- A. After six months, an external agent can be appointed alongside Middleton Hall on a joint agency basis to market the property. The 2% plus Vat charge will still apply, plus any fees charged by the estate agent, whoever sells the property.
- Q. Can I have a normal estate agent sell my property?
- A. Not initially. Due to a planning condition, external agents can be asked to sell a Waterside property only if Middleton Hall has failed to sell it within six months.
- Q. Do you have a buy back scheme?
- A. No. However, in circumstances where someone wanted to sell quickly and we were in a position to be able to do so, we would informally look at doing so.

Energy Efficient Features

- Q. Do I own my PV panels and how does this FiT work?
- A. You own your own PV panels. This ensures that you receive the highest rate of Feed in Tariff (FiT). The FiT is a government incentive for renewable energy that is paid for each unit of electricity generated – you will receive this directly. The electricity can either be used in the property (or to charge your electric car!) or sold back to the grid. It is best to use as much as you can to avoid buying electricity when the panels are not generating. The panels are insured for the first two years by the manufacturer and then through the service charge for all residents.
- Q. How long do PV panels last?
- A. No one really knows but they are expected to last at least 30 years. The panels do degrade over time so will become slightly less efficient eventually.

- Q. How much will they cost to replace?
- A. By the time they need replacing, technology will probably have changed and there will hopefully be new more cost effective systems for generating electricity.
- Q. How does this MVHR work?
- A. The mechanical ventilation and heat recovery system (MVHR) extracts the warm air from the house (kitchen and bathroom fans) and passes it through a heat exchanger in the loft that uses the heat to warm incoming fresh air that is ducted back into the house automatically. This means it is not necessary to open windows for ventilation.
- Q. How does the heating work?
- A. The properties are designed so that they should not need as much heating as a normal house. Most of the properties have energy efficient, Rointe Radiators to the ground floor. As well as being thermostatically and time controlled, the Rointe heaters have a fluid filled core that gradually releases heat and provides a more stable room temperature.
- Q. Is the heating system the same in all the properties?
- A. In some of the properties there is an air source heat pump fitted with underfloor heating. Underfloor heating is fitted in each ground floor room with a 'wet' radiator system in the Dormer, these are heated by the air source heat pump and each room has its own individual thermostat.
- Q. How much will my electricity bill be?
- A. This will depend on how you use the property. Living in a carbon neutral property there are plenty of ways to minimise your electricity purchases – using appliances and doing your ironing when the sun is shining for example!
- 'Our Energy Assessor pointed out that they are the most energy efficient buildings he has ever tested ...'*
- Q. Do I have to have a wood burning stove?
- A. Yes. This is for the property to meet the planning permission requirements for zero carbon homes. You don't have to use it however, it could make a considerable difference to your electricity usage in the winter.
- Q. Where do I get wood from?
- A. You can buy it from various sources including Middleton Hall. Each property has storage for wood in either their garage or an external shelter.
- Q. Will any wood do?
- A. For the stove to work most effectively, you should use wood that has been allowed to dry out (three years is ideal).
- Q. What do I do with the ash from the wood burning stove?
- A. As the stove is very efficient, if you use dry wood, there should only be a small amount of white ash that can be vacuumed out of the bottom.

Services

- Q. Can I have a pet?
- A. Yes – subject to Middleton Hall’s assessment. We make sure that any pet will not disturb other residents or wildlife.
- Q. Can I bring my own cleaner?
- A. Yes. You can also book a cleaning service from Middleton Hall.
- Q. What transport is available if I don’t drive?
- A. Middleton Hall runs regular trips in our minibus to Darlington, Northallerton, Teesside Park and Yarm amongst other destinations. This is included in the service charge.
There is also a bus service to Darlington from the rear entrances to Middleton Hall and a train that runs from Middleton St George (Dinsdale Station, 1.4 miles) to Darlington station and Middlesbrough station.
There are also local taxi companies.
- Q. Is there a burglar alarm?
- A. The emergency call system can act as an alarm using the motion sensor if set when leaving the property. This detects any motion within the property, in the unlikely event of any intrusion and sets off the alarm that is sounded in Middleton Hall for an emergency response.
- Q. Is there a fire alarm?
- A. Each property has a smoke detector fitted that will sound inside and notify Middleton Hall via the call system in the event of smoke or fire. Occasionally burnt toast might set this off, but we will call you to check you know your toast is ready!
There is also a carbon monoxide detector fitted in the living room.
- Q. Do I need an aerial and can I have Sky TV?
- A. There is a communal aerial and satellite dish fitted. You will need your own subscription for Sky.
- Q. Do I have to get a window cleaner?
- A. No. External window cleaning is included in the service charge.
- Q. Will I have a telephone line?
- A. You will need to apply for your own telephone service.
- Q. Is there a good mobile phone coverage?
- A. It is possible to use a mobile phone in The Waterside and throughout most of Middleton Hall.
- Q. Do I arrange my own broadband?
- A. Yes, alongside your phone line you will need to have your own broadband package in your apartment. Alternatively, there is Wi-Fi in Middleton Hall.

Q. Are there restrictions on how I can personalise my patio/balcony/garden area?

A. A sensible amount of garden furniture, pot plants and a bird feeder would be considered, for any other items please ask first.

Q. What happens if I need help in an emergency?

A. Each property has an emergency call system that can be activated by pressing the call button or by using a neck pendent or wrist band. The system will also work immediately outside their property. We recommend that everyone uses one of these for peace of mind.

Q. If I am on my own, will anyone check on me?

A. The emergency call system has an automated system by motion sensor (PIR) fitted that can be programmed to tell us if someone has not got up in the morning, for example. This can be activated on request.

Q. What happens if I am taken ill?

A. Middleton Hall offers different types of residential care services. In the unfortunate event that you require care due to recovery from illness, accident or a hospital stay, Middleton Grove has a guest suite that can be booked for short stays. This facility is charged according to needs.

Q. What kind of temporary or one off support can I have?

A. We do not currently offer care packages for residents in The Waterside. There are a number of local home (or domiciliary) care agencies that can provide this service. A list is available from Reception or see the Care Quality Commission web site for details where inspection reports are available.

Q. What do I do if I have a complaint?

A. We would encourage you to speak to a manager first, there is a full complaints procedure on display within Middleton Hall, your information guide as well as a link on the website.

Lease

Q. Are there any restrictions in the lease?

A. The main restriction is that at least one of the purchasers needs to be 55 years or older. Middleton Hall also expects prospective purchasers to demonstrate their financial ability to buy the property and pay the service charge. We will also carry out a health assessment to ensure all residents are able to live independently, that we are aware of any health issues and know who to contact in an emergency.

Q. Can I have lodger?

A. Subject to approval from Middleton Hall. There are schemes running for younger people to provide help around the house in return for free lodging and we would obviously approve this as a means of someone continuing to live independently.

- Q. Can I have family and friends to stay?
- A. Yes. There are no restrictions. We ask that you let Reception know when you have visitors staying overnight for security purposes.
- Q. Can they use Middleton Hall facilities including The Health and Wellbeing Centre?
- A. Yes. We have guest fees for using The Health and Wellbeing Centre and sessions when guests can use the pool/gym (over 18 years only).
- Q. Can I change from paying the infrastructure charge on re-sale to annually or the other way around?
- A. Once you have selected to pay on re-sale it is not possible to change to annual payment. For people opting to pay annually who later decide it would be preferable to pay on resale, it should be possible to change. In these circumstances, the amount already paid annually would be deducted from the final payment on re-sale.
- Q. I play the trumpet - is it ok if I practice at home?
- A. At least during the day, it should be! Given many properties are semi-detached, we might suggest that you discuss with your neighbours and choose an appropriate room if you play any instrument loudly, but given the levels of insulation, we would expect your music practice should not disturb your neighbours!

Running costs

- Q. Is the service charge reduced if there is just one person living in the property?
- A. No. We have found that the vast majority of service charge costs are dependent on the number of properties not the number of people living in them.
- Q. What if I don't use The Health and Wellbeing Centre?
- A. You still have membership automatically and this does entitle you to other forms of exercise and advice from our Health and Wellbeing team.
- Q. How much is the council tax?
- A. It will depend on if and how the dormer is fitted out. Darlington Borough Council has assessed each property individually. Please see the Key Facts Document for individual properties.

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