

Some people just shouldn't...

I was minding my own business the other day, happily driving down a country lane, coasting towards a roundabout when I was suddenly snapped out of my reverie by a red-faced, pot-bellied middle aged man in Lycra on a bicycle. He was gesticulating wildly and, I assume, shouting obscenities (to be honest, I had Creedence Clearwater Revival playing at full volume so I can't be entirely sure).

In any event he seemed to think I should have given way to him, whereas I was equally confident of being far enough ahead of him to enter the roundabout, signal and exit long before he even got near. I pulled over, wound my window down and gently explained that, whilst I found it admirable that he had decided to take up a sporting activity, it may be that, given his obvious high blood pressure, anger management issues and his not inconsiderable girth that perhaps a gentler re-introduction to the world of exercise might be in order.

I suggested fishing perhaps, or maybe scrabble, before working his way up to cycling. Actually I didn't say any of that: it only occurred to me about two hours later but it's my article and so I get

to say the exact thing I wanted to say at the exact moment I wanted to say it.

But this leads me neatly into this month's ramble. There are a number of operators and developers coming into the care sector who - like my puce-faced cycling friend - should really think about doing something else. This tends to occur when the housing or hotel market takes a nosedive. We find the care sector is suddenly infiltrated by developers who are looking for a less volatile, safer market in which to invest. Their rationale is that care homes are the same as hotels or student housing; build the building, sort out a sale and leaseback deal, build up the occupancy and then flog it off to a pension fund that will be glad of the long lease and

Certain would-be care facility developers lack credence, says Creedence fan **DANNY SHARPE.**

the steady income stream. The 'care' element is very much an afterthought.

Over the years, I have worked for a number of developer/operators who really shouldn't be in the care sector. You know who you are! - just in case you don't I will provide a list of names at the end of this article to avoid any uncertainty.

I had a phone call just last week from one such developer who wanted to pick my brain

I am pleased to report that this time; I did say exactly what I wanted to say at exactly the moment I wanted to say it. Only good manners and the laws governing obscenity prevent me from repeating it here.



on the extracare market and the C2 Use Class in general. He listened to me for a while and when I got into some of the intricacies of designing for people with limited physical abilities and, more often than not, some form of cognitive impairment, he rudely interrupted me in full flow saying ...

"I'm not bothered about any of that. We want to just build some apartments and utilise the C2 Use Class to avoid paying any affordable housing contribution or Community Infrastructure Levy. We'll just find some nursing agency and bung them few quid to carry out some homecare visits and that should do it! It'll be much cheaper doing it that way than having to pay the CIL and affordable housing money."

On the flipside, I also work with some very good care operators and I was talking to one of them recently about his insistence on vastly exceeding the minimum floorspace requirements and standard of finishes.

I was querying whether he might consider some economies as he wouldn't be able to generate any additional income in the particular market he was venturing into.

He simply smiled and said 'don't worry about the money: if the design is the best we can do and the quality of care is the best we can give, the profit will come.'

Happily, I have no reason to doubt him given his superb track record and very successful business.

As an industry we need to weed out the pretenders and make sure that the spotlight is shone brightly on to their businesses so that they can't simply use the badge of elderly care to avoid section 106 levies.

Finally, I'm sorry to report that I have run out of space, so I am unable to bring you the list of the top ten worst care home operators as promised. Perhaps next month. ct