



A park-home village is the ideal environment for a relaxing retirement

'I love coming home now'

PAULINE STURLEY, 66, lives with husband **Fred, 72,** in an over-fifties park home at **Kings Park Village, Canvey Island, Essex**

Our grandchildren, family and friends love visiting us here in the "village". With a fishing lake, swimming pool and social club on site, they say their visits feel like mini-holidays. Moving here is the best thing we've ever done, and I look forward to coming home in the evenings from my job as a team leader in a call centre, to see my friends and neighbours.

It all started four years ago when my husband Fred retired from his job as a transport manager, and we decided to downsize from our three-bedroom semi in Rainham, Essex, to free up some capital. Our sons, Paul, 45, and Darren, 40, had long left home, so we didn't need the space. We'd

first heard about park-home living eight years ago at the Ideal Home Exhibition and liked the idea, so we visited Kings Park Village – and fell in love. The bungalows were set in idyllic green surroundings with a shop, launderette and social club on site, plus 24-hour security. Everything was clean, well-kept and quiet.

We sold our house for £230,000 and bought our brand-new, two-bedroom, 40ft by 20ft, fully-furnished bungalow for £175,000. We also pay a monthly ground rent of £209. It should have been a wrench leaving our home of 38 years, but things had changed since we'd moved there in the late 1960s when your neighbours were your best friends.

We've recaptured that old community spirit in our new home, though, and we've made some great friends. We use the social club a few times a month for quiz nights, bingo and dancing. We also drop in on elderly single neighbours (there are a few women in their eighties) for coffee, and Fred often does odd-jobs like fixing taps or mending tiles for neighbours. We're always in and out of

GATED PARK-HOME COMMUNITIES IN A NUTSHELL

- The legal definition of a park home is a mobile home, but in reality, they are modern, timber-framed bungalows that sit on a steel chassis, with luxury fixtures and fittings.
- You can buy a home already on site, or have one built to order. Most parks only allow people aged 50+ to buy.
- Parks should be members of either The National Park Homes Council (www.theparkhome.net) or British Holiday and Homes Parks Association (www.bhhpa.org.uk) – these organisations abide by the Park Home Charter.
- Find more information on parks such as Kings Park Village at www.britanniaparks.com and www.parkhome-living.co.uk.

one another's homes – nobody should ever feel lonely here. There's the feeling we're all looking out for each other, too – when I went into hospital with a hernia last year, so many of my neighbours visited me.

There's no battle over parking spaces and no loud music. In fact, it's pretty much perfect. Fred is enjoying his retirement, fishing on the nearby lake, and I'm looking forward to retiring this year so I can spend more time at home. I'll join the dance and art classes at the social club, and do more gardening – we won Garden of the Year last year, so we have a reputation to keep up!

THE BEST BIT: 'The 24-hour security. It's good to know there's a guard on duty through the night if you hear a noise or even if you can't fit a lightbulb.'

THE DOWNSIDE: 'House prices appear cheap at first sight, but the ground rent is something to watch out for. Ours has risen slightly every year, and I'd like to see it capped.'



Fred often pops round to do odd jobs for his neighbours