

### CONTENTS

Specialist Housing Design at WWA Studios	3
Introduction	4
Future Trends & Need For Change	5
Lessons Learned from Isolation During a Pandemic	6
Trauma Informed Design	8
Project Examples	10
Gracewell	11
Maidment Court	12
Quarry House Extra Care	13
The Hythe	14
The Boltons	15
Castlemaine Court	16
Progress Mews	17
Charlie Ratchford	18
Ashton Court	19
Beechwood Grove	20
Two Bridges	21
Meet Our Expert Team	22

# SPECIALIST HOUSING DESIGN AT WWA STUDIOS

WWA Studios are at the forefront of design innovation in accessible environments and specialist housing design. Our research led approach that underpins our design strategy and philosophy helps our clients to know their project will be based on the latest thinking in the sector.

Our integrated town planning and architecture teams give our consultancy offer a broader scope, advising development teams on the strategic development of assets, right down to the detail that makes a difference to the resident's experience of their home.

WWA Studios have designed and delivered a range of specialist housing facilities including;

- > Maidment Court, Poole Integrated Retirement Community
- > Beechwood Grove, Reading Integrated Retirement Community
- > Ashton Court, Camden Retirement Housing
- > Patching Lodge, Brighton Extra Care Housing
- > Castlemaine Court, Surrey Intergenerational Housing

We are proud sponsors and collaborators with the Housing Learning and Improvement Network (LIN), a learning network for people working in specialist care. We are also proud to be an affiliate of The Associated Retirement Community Operators (ARCO) who represent the Integrated Retirement Community sector.

### INTRODUCTION

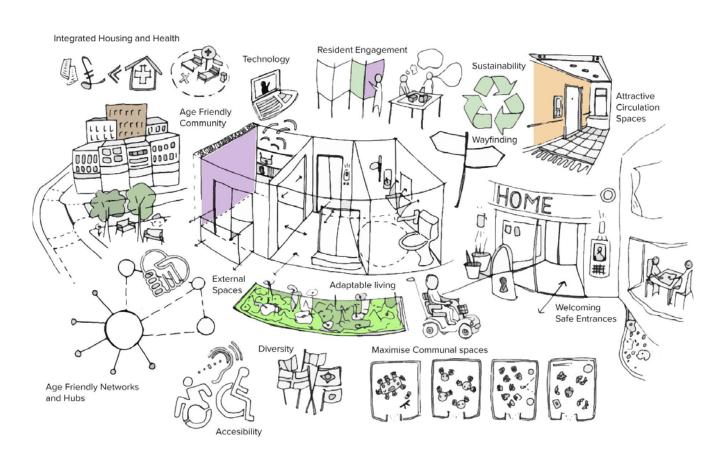
Building progressive **design** solutions that **enable** people to live with dignity.

WWA Studios is a leader in the built environment; with a team of architects and town planners, we offer an innovative multi-disciplinary practice ensuring our clients' development needs are provided at a single point. We use our cross-sector expertise and wealth of experience in development to deliver personal, professional, and consistently high-quality projects on time and on budget.

With extensive experience in delivering specialist housing, our knowledge base covers many different housing typologies including those for older people and people with disabilities. Our wide exposure in this sector and inclusive design process gives us a valuable understanding of our clients' needs and operational methods, enabling us to find our way through often complex and challenging planning issues that will enhance the lives of all involved.

Many of our clients are large housing associations and several of our specialist housing projects have won awards:

- Castlemaine Court Inside Housing Best Designed Development
- > The Boltons Best Larger Development New Forest National Park Authority's Building Design Awards
- Lea Springs Harpenden Society Award
- Castlemaine Court RICS Residential Awards Shortlist
- > Beechwood Grove Inside Housing Best Older People's Housing Development Shortlist
- Charlie Ratchford Court Housing Design Awards Shortlist
- > Beechwood Grove What House Awards Best Retirement Development Finalist





As a practice they fully understand the clients requirements and also how to design specifically with older people in mind.

Alastair Holland - Formerly with Hanover Housing

# FUTURE TRENDS & NEED FOR CHANGE

Population growth over the next few decades in south east England is predicted to be significant and there is an aging population across the UK.

Alongside new homes, communities will need new and upgraded primary healthcare facilities to meet the aspirations of the government's Integrated Care System.

Additionally, according to the ONS by mid- 2045 the number of people of pensionable age in the UK will grow to 15.2 million, an increase of 28% on the level in 2020. Therefore, housing supply must specifically serve the needs of an ageing population, ranging from adaptable homes, to integrated retirement communities, and specialist care accommodation.

Health, housing and social care are often not linked until they are forced together to meet an individual's needs. The current blueprint and standard housing typologies are outdated and not reflective of market demand, nor of the type that residents will find attractive. This innovative market niche is where we are targeting our research-led design approach to deliver a joined-up approach to health, housing and social care.

We believe in designing integrated communities in which healthcare facilities are embedded in the fabric of society, supporting older people and people with care requirements, in a way that breaks the stigma around what is perceived by many as an out of touch sector to allow people to live with dignity.

WWA Studios has worked on over 100 Specialist Housing related projects in our 137-year history. LONDON **+4.9%** ~~~ EAST +**5.0%** ^^^ SOUTHEAST +**4.4%** ^^^

% growth from 2018-2028 - according to the OFFICE FOR NATIONAL STATISTICS

# LESSONS LEARNED FROM ISOLATION DURING A PANDEMIC

During the COVID-19 Pandemic we experienced a testing time in history in the care sector where operators had to deal with a plethora of guidance impacting the day-to-day workings within these settings.

COVID-19 has highlighted several problems with the care setting: from workspace arrangements to social distancing. There was guidance on how to cope with outbreaks in existing buildings, but how can we design better spaces moving forwards to ensure the resident's lives and the staff's daily routines can be less impacted by a similar pandemic in the future?

At WWA Studios we focussed on looking at how we can redesign the 'traditional' floor plan to create COVID secure buildings without reducing people's freedom to go to shared spaces and see family and friends. We undertook this original piece of work during the first lockdown where little was known about the pandemic and some of our findings are not relevant as scientific research has evolved. However, the majority of the questions we originally asked remain relevant should another pandemic sweep across the UK.

#### Can we reduce loneliness and isolation through our design but maintain privacy?

We explored different arrangements for sheltered accommodation and care homes which was informed by government guidance and our own isolation lessons.

With the recent trend towards retirement villages, COVID-19 has tested our tenures, design and housing stock. It has made a case for lower density or smaller clusters of houses or rooms, which could help reduce loading on staff and the threat of illness spreading. The advantages to small-scale group living include:

- > Reduced stimulus to people
- > Less intense on staff and higher quality of care

- > Choice/control of numbers of interactions, and
- > Domestic scale

These advantages can be achieved by creating clusters of rooms numbering fewer than ten people. Each person would have their own en-suite facilities, provided just for their own group, in a homely, domestic scale environment.

#### Will care homes have the resources to continue to operate in their current guise?

With residents being consigned to their rooms for much of the pandemic it begs the question is the minimum area in the CQC standards acceptable? One such solution could be to create larger homes where possible; by combining rooms we can create a similar footprint to a one bed apartment or create a studio. This would provide larger homes for residents should they need to isolate.

#### How can we keep staff and carers safe when extending houses and designing care homes?

At WWA Studios we believe in a person-centred approach to design, this is especially important in domestic environments which are also workspaces.

Traditionally staff areas have been grouped together, but since the spread of COVID-19 we have needed to limit interactions. By dividing up staff areas into smaller groupings across the home; having several touch points could assist with vigilance over ill residents as well as create zones of care.

#### Can we reduce loneliness and isolation in the care home?

In many cases when elderly people move to a care setting away from their homes, it often means they have lost connection to their area and support network of friends and relatives. We therefore need to look at integrating our care homes into the wider community, creating shared spaces that encourage interaction. Again, we need to

focus on the domestic scale and creating scenarios for safe interactions.

#### What procedures can be integrated to allow visitors?

Any suggestion will depend on how infectious the illness is and the vulnerability of the resident. Although technology has kept us all connected, seeing people is also important especially when feeling isolated or lonely. WWA Studios have been researching into prefabrication and off-site technology to meet the needs of COVID-19 and have been reviewing the possibility of using visitors' "Pods" to care homes to allow an area that can be easily sterilised prior to visits and removes the need for visitors to enter the home.

#### Can we incorporate outdoor space into the design in a way that takes finances, staffing and the safety of the residents into consideration?

In the care setting having balconies, gardens and views is paramount to wellbeing and happiness. These areas need to be designed so that they are safe to use for multiple care needs and provide access to fresh air and sunlight. A fantastic option for care homes is the winter garden which provides the benefits of being outside but provides protection from the elements. COVID-19 highlighted how important external space is and we believe private outdoor amenity space should be mandatory in all care homes.

COVID will forever change our perception of the care setting. If we can safely accommodate visitors and create homely environments, then care settings can reduce loneliness. We need to consider all solutions as a whole and finding a balance between these themes could help reduce infection transference and increase wellbeing and help prepare for a new post pandemic world.

Original research piece can be viewed here: https://www.wwa-studios.com/wp-content/uploads/Care-Homes-Isolation-Document-2020-12-07.pdf



# TRAUMA INFORMED DESIGN

#### What is Trauma Informed Design?

Trauma impacts a number of people with many suffering from at least one adverse childhood experience which could lead to long-standing trauma. The concept behind trauma informed design is creating an environment which promotes healing and well being in order to mitigate the impacts of trauma. Each person and their experiences are different and this means trauma informed design is incredibly personal and a user centred approach is required. A thorough understanding should be gained of each person's cultural and environmental context as well as their lived experiences.

Design decisions need to be made to reduce potential triggers, build physical, psychological, and emotional safety and security and rebuild confidence and independence which may have been lost as a result of the trauma.

There are a number of elements to consider including:

- > Control over immediate environment
- Acoustics
- > Lighting
- > Connection with nature
- > Interaction with staff
- > Personalisation
- > Circulation

The consideration of the elements above will help to create an environment which, over time, will help to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment, reducing stress and tension aiding the healing process.

#### **Trauma Informed Design Framework**

In their paper "Designing for Healing, Dignity, & Joy - Promoting Physical Health, Mental Health, and

Well- Being Through a Trauma-Informed Approach to Design" Shopworks Architecture, Group 14 Engineering, & University of Denver Center for Housing and Homelessness Research, have created a set of core values to be prioritised during the design process:

- > Hope, Dignity and Self-Esteem
- > Connection and Community
- > Joy, Beauty and Meaning
- > Peace of Mind
- > Empowerment and Personal Control
- > Safety, Security and Privacy

The design brief should apply these same core values to the design framework to relate the physical building to the human requirements of a trauma informed space. It should also assess the following spaces and put forward recommendations on how best to design these in a trauma informed way:

- > Communal Areas
- > External Gardens
- > Private Spaces
- Staff Areas

The diagram to the right demonstrates how the spaces are woven together, they can be seen at micro level isolated but must also be viewed in the macro within their context.

It suggests what steps to take whilst also giving visual examples of how this may be achieved. In addition, the brief makes suggestions on how to differentiate between communal and private spaces to provide clear way finding for people using the building. It also provides two case studies which showcase examples of how plan layouts can also be designed in a trauma informed manner.

#### The 3 C's of Designing for Health and Healing

There are also three key concepts of trauma informed design:

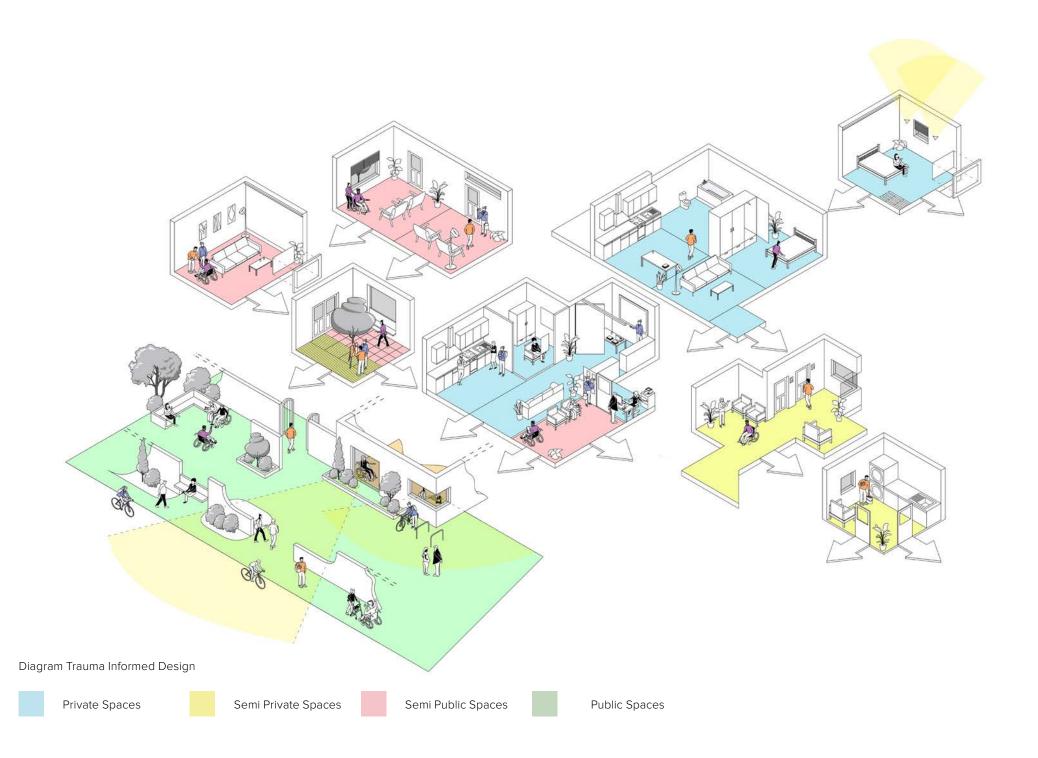
- Choice: Emphasizes individual access, agency, and ownership; describes elements of personalization and level of resident engagement with the space.
- Community: Responds to the ways that residents may engage— with staff, other residents, and guests through placement and design of programmatic spaces, office spaces, and public gathering spaces that facilitate relationship-building.
- Comfort: Includes aspects such as the quality and variety of materials; sensory experiences of light, sound, and smell; and elements such as nature and artwork that bring calm or spark joy.

These three C's are fundamental to the recommendations of the design brief when looking at the different individual physical elements and the overall aim will be to create a building which facilitates and enhances them.

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At the broadest level, traumainformed design aims to promote healing and improved physical health, mental health, and overall well-being of individuals and their communities.

Designing for Healing, Dignity, & Joy



### PROJECT EXAMPLES

WWA are experts in a wide range of specialist and supported housing, from care homes and extra care to design for autism and profound, and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD).

Our design ethos is centered around the end user and we design inclusively to create innovative solutions to allow people to live independently and with dignity.

Many of our specialist housing developments have won awards and we featured in the RIBA's book, Age Friendly Housing: Future design for older people which highlighted exemplar design in the sector. We are experts in dementia friendly design and accessibility.

We have published research in the field and are members of the Housing LIN, Associated Retirement Community Operators (ARCO), Access Association and Housing and Dementia Research Consortium and are constantly evolving our knowledge.

The following pages show a few of our most recently completed extra care housing, residential care and retirement living accommodation.









## GRACEWELL High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire

#### **RESIDENTIAL CARE**

This site, in the heart of a village near High Wycombe, was originally used for chair manufacturing, which ceased use in the 1980s. The buildings were subsequently used for various marginal warehouse and industrial uses, however there had been insufficient investment to develop the site. With a great deal of industrial space available in the High Wycombe area, WWA's submission at the Local Plan stage was to consider a mix of uses on the site including other employment uses in addition to industrial.

Our proposal incorporated refurbishment of the best of the remaining industrial buildings, allowing some of the existing users to remain on the site, a new seventy bed care home (also an employment generating use) and a new doctors surgery. The local GPs surgery was in premises elsewhere in the village. Its building was too small to provide the additional services primary care now seeks to provide. A timely contact by WWA was fruitful in involving them in the project.

In order to develop the site, a new access has been opened up from the road at the back of the site which allows access to the refurbished industrial units and surgery to be separate from that of the care home. A new public footpath across the site provides an important pedestrian connection within the village which is of strong community benefit.

Through the combination of WWA's planning, architecture and urban design expertise we were able to identify the potential of a decaying industrial site and through Local Plan promotion transform the site into a thriving mixed-use development.



#### MAIDMENT COURT

Poole, Dorset

#### INTEGRATED RETIREMENT COMMUNITY/ RESIDENTIAL CARE

Our Maidment Court scheme in Poole replaces an existing outdated care home. The new scheme comprises two buildings: one providing 47 assisted living apartments and the other 40 care suites plus staff offices, a bistro, coffee lounge, activity room, shop and hairdressing salon.

The spacious apartments allow wheelchair use and are dual aspect with stacked south facing balconies providing shade and private outside space. To break down the scale and bulk, there are glazed links, deep recesses, varying heights and a palette of complementary colours resulting in the appearance of a cluster of buildings rather than one large mass.

Careful programming and site layout design prevented the need for existing residents to vacate their homes, reducing the impact on their health and well-being and allowing a smooth transition to state-of-the-art residential care accommodation.

The scheme meets both Lifetime Home Standards and the HAPPI Report.



state-of-the-art retirement properties in landscaped grounds, along with a superb range of facilities and amenities designed to make retired life easy and enjoyable.

MHA



#### QUARRY HOUSE EXTRA CARE Aldington, Kent

#### INTEGRATED RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

On a rural exception site in the South East, the completed scheme, built by Bouygues, is for 33 extra care flats and associated communal facilities. The objective behind the proposal was to offer older people the choice of remaining in a rural location when they are no longer able to manage in their own home, encouraging them to remain part of the village community.

The scheme was developed to maximise the views over the countryside and is divided into three linked blocks which allow flats to have east-west aspects. The majority of the apartments having dual aspect ensuring that all flats receive direct sunlight into the main living areas.

Due to the open nature of the existing site, new planting is mainly to be restricted to the courtyards and at the entrance from Calleywell Lane. The remainder of the site, to the east running up to the wood, and between the building and the lane, was sown with a meadow flower mix and planted with groups of trees. This allows the 'garden' to blend in with the open countryside beyond.

In designing the overall mass and the exterior of the scheme consideration was given both to the locality and to the wider area in terms of style and form. Reference is made to typical larger clusters of buildings such as farms with the roofscape articulated with simple gables and the facades divided into units by the use of bays. The accommodation areas are linked together with lower sections to break up the mass when viewed from the surrounding area.

Following careful analysis of the client's brief WWA created a 'lite' version which still provided the residents with all the required communal facilities but reduced the construction cost to make the project viable.



Quarry House has been carefully designed to create a welcoming community.

**EAC** Website



#### THE HYTHE

Egham, Surrey

#### **RETIREMENT HOUSING**

The Hythe in Egham is an Anchor Hanover development of 30 high specification apartments exclusively for the over 55's built to HAPPI guidelines with a mixed tenure. Situated adjacent to an existing Anchor Hanover sheltered scheme, it is a contemporary development built as Anchor Hanovers first 'downsizer' homes providing high quality housing for the over fifty-fives.

Designed to be sympathetic to the surrounding area, good quality red brick has been used together with areas of buff render and light oak Rockpanel cladding. Whilst there are three storey sections, the design makes use of differing heights and orientations to maintain privacy between the scheme and its neighbours.

Being on a flood plain, it was necessary to raise the ground floor by two metres. To ensure accessibility for all there is a 13 person lift that serves all levels including the car park. There are pleasant, landscaped gardens to the rear and all apartments have a private balcony with an eye-catching triangular design.

Apartments are designed to meet wheelchair accessibility standards and are spacious, airy, naturally lit and flexible, giving high performance for comfort, energy efficiency and lower living costs. Each material and feature has been carefully chosen to achieve the finest quality finish. Besides meeting the HAPPI recommendations, it features in the HAPPI3 2016 Report as a fine example of HAPPI design.

With a previous extant permission on the site placing a restriction on the building height the contemporary flat roof design allowed an increased density on the site when compared to the existing pitched roof design maximising the development value for the client.



#### THE BOLTONS

Lyndhurst, Hampshire

#### **RETIREMENT HOUSING**

The Boltons is a Anchor Hanover development exclusively for the over 55's in a conservation area within the New Forest. There are 26 one and two-bedroom high specification apartments and each unit offers plenty of privacy and security, with large open-plan living space, generously sized rooms and top of the range appliances providing high performance and reduced living costs. WWA Studios worked very closely with the New Forest National Park Planning Authority to produce a development that blends in with the character of the area.

The greatest challenge was to make sure the quality envisaged at the design stage materialised through the construction phase to promote the final product. This was made possible by intricate detailing and a very strong working relationship with both the local authority Building Design Officer and a very cooperative main contractor.

Delivering a project in a National Park setting leads to exacting design requirements. Through good communication and collaborative working with the planning department WWA used its construction detailing expertise to design The Boltons in line with the prevailing character to deliver much needed retirement housing.

The Boltons won **'Best Larger Development'** in the New Forest National Park Authority's annual Building Design Awards.



Each apartment is unique and it's a testament to WWA's vision for a development that would fit within the gorgeous surrounds of Lyndhurst.

Anchor Hanover



# CASTLEMAINE COURT Byfleet, Surrey

#### INTERGENERATIONAL HOUSING

A new-build scheme of one and two-bed flats with a proportion aimed at the over 55's, providing much needed multi-generational affordable housing. The scheme, designed to meet Lifetime Home requirements, Code for Sustainable Homes 3 & 4, and HAPPI recommendations replaces a building of 25 studio flats that fell short of current housing standards.

WWA Studios were lead consultants and took the project through the planning, tender and site stages. The project was undertaken on a partnering basis working closely with the client, contractor and design team.

The development consists of a cluster of three blocks comprising twelve two-bedroom and four one-bedroom fully accessible energy-efficient quality apartments designed to give the appearance of individual houses with front gardens and off-street car parking spaces in line with the character of the surrounding area. The dual-aspect flats have either a private patio or balcony and any issues of overlooking have been carefully addressed with the use of timber screens, angled bay windows and translucent kitchen windows.

The extensive community engagement undertaken at the design stage led to WWA delivering a fantastic, contemporary development where residents are extremely proud to live and create their own community through the clever courtyard design.

Inside Housing Best Designed Development 2015 Award and Housing LIN - Case Study. Castlemaine Court was also short listed for **RICS Awards 2016** in the Residential category.



The attention to detail was demonstrated in the use of light and space both indoors and out, being mindful that these two elements are crucial to happy healthy living.

Cllr Melanie Whitehand



#### PROGRESS MEWS

Surbiton, Kingston-upon-Thames



'setting new standards for affordable social housing'.

Sir Ed Davey MP

#### **FUTUREPROOF HOUSING**

We worked closely with Kingston Churches Housing Association to develop a garage site behind one of their existing flatted properties in a conservation area in Surbiton, Kingston-upon-Thames to provide affordable accessible housing. The site is tightly constrained with a narrow access leading to the existing garages and residential gardens bounding all sides of the site.

Through a clever design which combined two storey and single storey elements we were able to develop three houses (2 no. 2 bed units and 1 no. 3 bed unit) which retained the privacy of the surrounding properties whilst providing large levels of natural light to the new houses. This was achieved through an L-shaped house plan which created a private courtyard for each property and a more open garden space to the front. The design is future-proofed with a fully accessible ground floor which allows use by older people with carers or those in wheelchairs.

The houses are highly insulated and have green roofs to mitigate the drainage problems which the existing site faced. Standardised bathroom and kitchen layouts were used to achieve economies of scale at the construction stage.

The development makes excellent use of a redundent brownfield site to provide inclusive and affordable homes and shows how our design and town planning skills have created value out of an underused asset.



#### CHARLIE RATCHFORD

Camden Town, London

#### INTERGENERATIONAL EXTRACARE HOUSING

WWA Studios was appointed as the Client Design Advisor and assisted Camden Council on the delivery of this Extra Care development. Our role was to advise the client on the proposed architectural design and ensure it met their brief and delivered the type of accommodation envisioned.

The scheme is designed as a community hub for local people and includes 38 extra care apartments and communal spaces. At ground floor there is a large café and other communal spaces include multi-use activity rooms, hair salon and a therapy room. The scheme is intergenerational and not solely for older people which is often the case in extra care housing.

Our expertise in the specialist housing sector allowed us to assist Camden Council to manage the design process from the inception of the project. We were able to advise on design matters, procurement, assessment of tender proposals and also on matters arising during the construction process. This enabled the client to maximise the potential from this brownfield site and assisted the project team in designing a contemporary building imbedded in the community.

The development was shortlisted in the 'Completed Scheme Categories' for the Housing Design Awards 2022.



Photography by Adelina Iliev

#### **ASHTON COURT**

Camden Town, London

#### **RETIREMENT HOUSING**

Situated within a conservation area in a well-known location in Camden, Ashton Court was built in the late 1970's and was in dire need of renovation and a comprehensive upgrade to improve the standards of accommodation and well-being of residents.

The building was remodelled to accommodate 24 homes including balconies for better accessibility. This was undertaken through clever re-planning of the internal layouts to enlarge the current flats to meet modern accessibility standards. The communal facility was also rebuilt as part of the development with doors leading onto a private landscaped garden for residents to enjoy.

Each unit consists of one bedroom, with some individual requirements being met for residents to improve accessibility. Five new private residential mews houses were developed to the rear of the site for sale to fund the upgrade and remodelling. These were designed to maximise natural light and took a 'fabric first approach' to sustainability.

WWA Studios were responsible for securing the planning permission at the site and navigated difficult Conservation Area constraints to deliver a sustainable re-use of an existing building whilst providing accessible accommodation for residents.

Through drawing on our expertise of older person's housing and remodelling of existing buildings WWA were able to update the building to provide vastly improved living conditions for residents.

# BEECHWOOD GROVE

Caversham, Reading

#### INTEGRATED RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

Beechwood Grove is a collection of 43 one- and twobedroom apartments designed to offer independent living for over 55's in tranquil surroundings. WWA Studios worked closely with A2 Dominion and Feltham Construction to deliver the project which offers hotel-style amenities that make life easier and more enjoyable.

At the heart of the community is a stylish lounge – a place to connect with other residents and guests. There are a number of other communal facilities including a bistro and library. Apartments are designed to the highest standards to match the lifestyle choice of prospective residents, with the added benefit of access to personalised on-site care should this be required. Central to community life at Beechwood Grove are the landscaped gardens. Set among mature trees, these are idyllic spots to relax and are also where the popular lawn bowls take place.

The scheme, designed in close collaboration with the Local Planning Authority, blends in with and complements local context and character with a subtle contemporary twist. The materials are chosen to harmonise with those used in the surrounding vicinity. We have ensured we retain most of the mature trees on site and the project achieved BREEAM 'Very Good' energy standards.

WWA's specialist knowledge of dementia design provided residents with a future proof, high-quality integrated retirement community leading to the project reaching two finals of national prestigious awards.

The development was a finalist in the "Best Older People's Housing Development" category at the Inside Housing Awards 2019 and shortlisted for the "Best Retirement Development" at the What House Awards 2019.



#### TWO BRIDGES

Brentford, London

#### SUPPORTED HOUSING

WWA Studios assisted the London Borough of Hounslow; development partner Lampton 360 and EcoWorld London to create a new supported housing scheme. The project delivered 29 new homes, a mix of purpose-built supported housing, shared ownership and build-to-rent units. We were appointed from RIBA Stage 4 onwards and took the previous architect's design through the technical design stages.

The development is comprised of two blocks: one for general housing and one for supported housing. The second building adjacent to the new supported housing block, provides new residential homes in line with the London Housing Design Guide. The high-quality new homes are much needed in the area and deliver contemporary affordable and supported homes to the segment of the community most in need.

Our technical team delivered the scheme including detailing the fire strategy which was complex owing to the layouts of the buildings. The detailing and design of the two-tone brick facades were undertaken with great care to ensure the concept was delivered and included bespoke detailing of the part-brick, part-metal balustrade.

The landscaping around the building provides a natural setting for the buildings and as the vegetation matures it will provide various health and well being benefits to residents associated with the natural environment.

The technical design skills WWA used on this project enabled an efficient build and realisation of the concept design.

Photography by Adelina Iliev



## MEET OUR EXPERT TEAM

WWA is a an innovative multi-disciplinary practice of Architects, Urban Designers and Town Planners with a rich pedigree of successful projects delivered over our 137 year history. We offer outstanding client focussed services embracing the natural crossover between built environment disciplines and we consistently deliver high quality projects on time and on budget.

Our team of town planners offer added value to clients with an exceptional success rate in achieving planning consent.

Find out more about our team and the outstanding projects they deliver, via our website and social media.





wwa-studios.com





#### OXFORD STUDIO

THE MALTHOUSE 60 EAST ST. HELEN STREET ABINGDON, OXFORD OX14 5EB

O123 552 3139 OXFORD@WWA-STUDIOS.COM

#### LONDON STUDIO

ASHLEY HOUSE 58-60 ASHLEY ROAD HAMPTON TW12 2HU

0208 941 5161 LONDON@WWA-STUDIOS.COM