



“A place of my own”. Co-designing independent living for people with a learning or physical disability

NHS England’s ‘Building the right home’ provides a framework to encourage commissioners and providers to expand the housing options available for people with a learning disability, autism or both, who display behaviour that challenges.

This case study features Enham Trust’s Bradbury Place in Andover, Hampshire. The award winning development enables the Trust to fulfil its mission to provide support to disabled and disadvantaged people to live the life they choose with care support, access to work and an accessible home.



Written by **Rod Graham**, Director, Design Engine Architects Ltd and **Victoria Leesam**, formerly Property Regeneration Executive, Enham Trust, for the Housing Learning and Improvement Network

November 2017

Project Background

Bradbury Place offers a secure environment for its occupiers, providing 8 one and two bedroom wheelchair accessible apartments, within 500 meters of the town centre of Andover, Hampshire. They benefit from flexible facilities that includes live-in care, couples and single occupancy.

At the heart of this project lies Enham Trust's driving ambition to help people with disability to progress through a transition programme from supported living towards greater independence. This programme enables people who have relied on 24-hour or intensive care to have greater confidence to live their own lives in their own home with reduced reliance on others.



Enham Trust identified this site as one which, when developed, would offer choice for disabled people to access shops, services and public transport independently, giving greater opportunity to find suitable work and therefore achieve greater self-reliance.

Transforming lives through co-production

The success of the project was largely influenced by the Enham Trust client design panel. The group of clients, all with varying disabilities, were key influencers in each aspect of the development, from its location, its design and importantly its functionality and flexibility for people with a range of disabilities.

The client design panel have:

- Influenced the design of bathrooms to be positioned next to bedrooms, allowing dignified hoisting from one room to another
- Designed entrances that are both shared and independent to reduce loneliness
- Ensured real level access
- Influenced access to both private and communal gardens
- Influenced footpath improvements, including smooth drain covers
- Demonstrated the need to widen the footpath to the local community by meeting local residents who also needed a wider path for pushchairs.
- Influenced local residents to lower their garden fences that appear to be 6ft tall to someone in a wheel chair. Neighbours now have an eyeline that's not intimidating and give opportunity to talk and socialise.

Enham residents have also met the wider community and together are working in partnership with numerous agencies to improve disabled access and the environment for everyone that passes through this impressive building.



Through excellent communication with user groups and paying attention to detail, Bradbury Place is an inspiring place to live. Apart from the innovation and green credentials it is a most impressive building totally fit for its purpose.

Since completion of the project, Test Valley Borough Council's Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport, Councillor Martin Hatley, said: "Working in partnership with Enham Trust and Design Engine has resulted in an outstanding design, which contributes positively towards providing high quality and truly life changing accommodation for residents."

Victoria Leesam, former Property Regeneration Executive, Enham Trust, said "We wanted to design Bradbury Place with disabled people. They wanted an inspiring place to live that didn't look disabled but still accessible. The design process was about how people

feel in their home, what they can do, not what they can't. We encouraged disabled people to have a say, this helped us to develop homes which truly catered for their needs."

A place of my own - Tom

Tom, 26, joined the team at Radio Enham in June 2015. At the beginning of January 2015 Tom took a huge leap and moved out of the family home for the first time to live in his own flat. Tom moved into one of the eight flats in Bradbury Place, our first town-centred housing project purpose-built to suit people who need supportive living. Tom has autism and is happy to have taken the step to living in his own 'pad' and is enjoying having even more independence, which he feels is very good. Having moved out it was important that he maintained social links. With this in mind, his Mum suggested he try volunteering for Radio Enham and since joining he hasn't looked back!



Design features

The site presented a number of constraints. It had no vehicular access and was truncated by a Public Right of Way. A tree belt to the north-east provided good protection from noise generated by the nearby highway but also restricted development owing to tree root protection areas and canopy spread. To the east and presenting itself to the Winchester Road is a nondescript two-storey development.



Form became an important consideration and in terms of townscape the building was used to 'bookend' Winchester Road in order that its presence on the corner site was tangible when viewed from the nearby town centre. Two accommodation 'blocks' were created with strong gable ends to achieve this intent.

The two accommodation 'blocks' span the Public Right of Way to physically connect common areas and improve resident interaction and to enable all apartments to be serviced from a single lift. The Public Right of Way dissects the site but does not dissect the community living here.

To achieve commercial viability, the site needed to support 8 apartments. The height of the gables restricted the accommodation 'blocks' to three storeys; therefore two single-storey 'chalet' apartments were developed between the three storey blocks and the adjacent existing community of 'bungalows', creating enclosed entrance courtyards. These also assisted with the transition in scale and typology between the three storey 'blocks' and the existing 'bungalows'.

The buildings are clad above ground floor in anthracite zinc. Brickwork forms the walls of the ground floor storey and these are built to a datum which reflects the scale of the existing bungalows of the adjacent community. The zinc is intended to minimise maintenance and provide a strong material presence, reinforcing the 'bookend' concept.



All of the apartments are fully accessible and cater for the needs of wheelchair users according to current design standards for this type of accommodation. In addition, the project was designed in accordance with the DDA provisions, Building Regulations Approved Documents Parts B and M, and the Wheelchair Design Guide.

Lessons learned

The development of Bradbury Place was hugely successful, with all apartments fully occupied by people with disabilities enjoying their new found independence. However, as with any project, there are lessons to be learnt:

- The involvement of family and friends is critical to a successful transition to independent living. It isn't a short process, and their involvement provides reassurance and support, aiding the transition.
- Engagement with Local Authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups ensuring changes to care packages are agreed and in place to fit the transition timescales is paramount.
- Moving from a residential care home or supported living environment to independent living can be a very daunting time, full of unknowns. The benefit of peer support from individuals who have moved to independent living was invaluable, and it has been identified that peer support networks for this purpose would be beneficial for future developments.

Note

The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Housing Learning and Improvement Network.

Additional information

Design Engine are a multi-award winning architecture practice founded in 1999 and based in Winchester, Hampshire.

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They work across all scales and sectors

and are proud that their work has been recognised by critics, awards and, most importantly, repeat commissions from clients.

In 2015, Bradbury Place won the Richard Feilden Award at the prestigious Housing Design Awards; this recognized the best example of housing enabled by the HCA (Homes and Communities Agency).



Enham Trust is a disability charity based in North Hampshire which has been supporting people with disabilities since 1919. Enham Trust sees the possibilities - not the impossibilities. They want to make life more positive for the thousands of people they support every day.

Enham Trust are proud to support disabled people to live the lives they choose, wherever they live. Their variety of housing accommodation and support services range from a stepping-stone approach to progressive and changing levels of independence.

And their residential care living options enable them to meet and reflect individual needs and budget.

About the Housing LIN

The Housing LIN is a sophisticated network bringing together over 40,000 housing, health and social care professionals in England and Wales to exemplify innovative housing solutions for an ageing population.

Recognised by government and industry as a leading 'knowledge hub' on specialist housing, our online and regional networked activities:

- connect people, ideas and resources to inform and improve the range of housing choices that enable older and disabled people to live independently
- provide intelligence on latest funding, research, policy and practice developments, and
- raise the profile of specialist housing with developers, commissioners and providers to plan, design and deliver aspirational housing for an ageing population.

For more information about our housing and learning disability resources, visit the Housing LIN's dedicated pages at:

www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/HousingLearningDisabilities/

Published by

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