



Getting HAPPI - A review of the winning 2015 design awards

Since 2010 the Housing Design Awards have championed a handful of developments that each year highlighted what good senior housing could be. But 2015 was the year design quality went mainstream with winners that were not just 'best in class' but the class acts across all housing development.

This paper reviews key trends across shortlisted entries in all categories, both HAPPI and non-HAPPI, and highlights how HAPPI characteristics are informing a new generation of housing.



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Introduction

However you try to sweeten the message, the 2009 HAPPI report¹ warned that most people with choice would choose not to move to the homes targeted at them. Beyond the default to small inflexible flats with a lack of storage, developments needed to move on from tired communal amenity and provide facilities for meals and recreation of the kind the “boomers” would expect as they began to retire.

If it sounded expensive, it was because it was predicated on data showing the ballooning market potential of homeowners over 60. This rich mine of equity, valued at £611bn by Prudential in 2006 in England and Wales and now estimated to be over a trillion pounds in 2015, along with the ambition and commitment by a growing band of architects, developers and operators, are surely some of the reasons why homes designed for the HAPPI market have since risen to become the outstanding developments across all housing provision, proven by their domination of the 2015 Housing Design Awards (HDA).

The 10 key HAPPI design principles²

- Generous internal space standards
- Plenty of natural light in the home and in circulation spaces
- Balconies and outdoor space, avoiding internal corridors and single-aspect flats
- Adaptability and ‘care aware’ design which is ready for emerging telecare and telehealthcare technologies
- Circulation spaces that encourage interaction and avoid an ‘institutional feel’
- Shared facilities and community ‘hubs’ where these are lacking in the neighbourhood
- Plants, trees, and the natural environment
- High levels of energy efficiency, with good ventilation to avoid overheating
- Extra storage for belongings and bicycles
- Shared external areas such as ‘home zones’ that give priority to pedestrians



Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation (2009)



Housing our Ageing Population: Plan for Implementation (2012)

A winning formula – HAPPI all round!

The Winner of Winners in 2015 showed how fine the line is between good ‘open market’ apartments and homes designed specifically to HAPPI principles, as captured below:

Parkside is a 4-storey building of 10 leasehold apartments located in the heart of the Peak District town of Matlock, Derbyshire, by Barncroft Homes. Its central location, off the High Street en route to the town’s main green space, made it a natural location for ground floor mixed use, including a charming café that has provided convenient catering support for those living independently above. Apartments are generally much bigger than average, some reaching

¹ Wood C (2013) *Top of the Ladder*, DEMOS

² Homes and Communities Agency (2009) *Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation*. HCA

90sqm for a 3 bed with large terrace. The result: one of the few developments outside of London to sell out without any Help to Buy “leg ups”, with 9 of the 10 apartments sold for cash to pensioners, the last to a downsizing couple. Besides adaptable plans and an ideal location, the Matlock developer went for striking architecture with a patterned sandstone stone façade designed by Evans Vettori which, according to the residents interviewed for a film, was also key to their interest.³

A preference for bold architecture is not unique to the market for Parkside. Developer PegasusLife entered 4 of its developments to the Awards this year and had all 4 shortlisted, an unprecedented success rate which was crowned with 2 Project Awards. PegasusLife brought in consultant architects with proven flair in general needs housing to create original, bespoke-designed schemes, under the guidance and guardianship of their in-house design team. The management has talked openly about their aim of opening up the sector to a younger demographic, wealthier too, in so much as they may already have a second home.

Each PegasusLife development is foremost about the strength of bespoke architecture, backed up by an interior design and a service package that reflects an emergent corporate branding designed to give comfort to those that might have baulked at ‘retirement’ communities.

One Bayshill Road in Cheltenham is such an example. It links two converted Grade II listed villas with a shallow Bath-stone-and-glass insertion that replaces a post-war office block and carpark. In the Regency neighbourhood of Montpellier, well known for its Palladian grandeur, the aspiration is to compete head on with the grandest, but using contemporary insertions so that residents get better daylight and access to fresh air through generous glazing, balconies and terraces. The town’s historic attractions are also revisited with an onsite spa to compete with facilities offered by ‘spa hotels’.

Tetbury, just 27 miles south of Cheltenham, shows how PegasusLife’s approach is site specific. Whereas One Bayshill Road is about urbanity, Steepleton is bucolic, a cluster of low-rise apartment buildings ringing community features such as allotments. But here the architecture is not pastiche. Whereas a decade ago developers such as English Courtyards perfected repro rustic, PegasusLife unleashed Proctor Matthews, architects noted for invention. Their inspiration appears to be Scandinavia, the layout focused on the type of stone-clad ‘common hall’ often found there which overlooks the development’s remarkable recreation facility, an open air ‘swimming pond’ enveloped by a cloistered boardwalk. The open-air theme continues with the apartments, some first-floor units served by a central access deck that is sheltered but not enclosed.

Of course, these head-spinning developments, though wonderful for growing the market by changing perceptions, have high valuations. But the sectors dependent on grant, rent subsidy and shared ownership had their triumphs too.

St Bede’s in Bedford, designed by PRP Architects for the Orbit Group, was recognized by the Awards as the best Completed development 4 years after it won a Project Award. One of the scheme’s chief innovations was in pioneering shared ownership for the sector, with 53 of the 102 homes offering up to 75% shared ownership equity alongside 49 for rent in a mixed tenure scheme where you could not identify tenure differences. This was in part owing to its layout which wraps a series of different 3 and 4-storey buildings – converted school block, new-build apartments disguised as terrace of villas and more conventional apartment building around a ‘hub’ where there is a range of shared and most importantly popular facilities.⁴

³ See the film at: www.hdwards.org/archive/2015/winning_schemes/supreme_winner/

⁴ Mansfield L et al (2014) *Converting to HAPPI at St. Bede’s, Bedford*, Housing Learning and Improvement Case Study No.100. Housing LIN



St Bedes, Bedford



St Bedes, Bedford

A similar layout has been proposed for two extra-care schemes in Lewisham - Hazelhurst Court in Beckenham, by Levitt Bernstein Architects for Phoenix Community Housing; and Campshill Road by PRP for the council. In Campshill Road, the communal core is a home-zone mews street flanking an E-shaped building whose wings enclose private courtyards.



Hazelhurst Court, Lewisham



Campshill Road, Lewisham

St Bede's conceit of hiding apartments alongside villas was also applied to two other shortlisted schemes. First, the PRP designed Smithy Croft for Your Housing in Cheadle where apartments sit comfortably in a tree-lined suburban street of Victorian villas. Second, in Netherley in Liverpool, the Joseph Williams development by DK Architects for Riverside spreads 70 apartments between two principal groupings of buildings, a 3-storey apartment block with gable ends that makes it look like a modern almshouse block and a row of linked houses. The latter contain sizeable 2-bed apartments for 3 and 4 person occupancy.



Smithy Croft, Cheadle



Joseph Williams, Liverpool

The focus of each scheme is on how buildings present themselves as bright additions to the general housing stock rather than how they function as secure and sealed apartment buildings. Though they are all designed to function for the HAPPI generation, the design emphasis is on the approach to home rather than age group.

New heights

In denser neighbourhoods, 'senior living' is going highrise, with landscaped podium gardens providing secure communal amenity.

Taking inspiration from deRokade housing in the Netherlands, Mae Architects are planning an L-shaped tower called Lisson Arches for City West in Westminster, London. Arcades at ground level connect the new tower (which includes care facilities and an independent guest suite) with a neighbouring health and community centre, a first floor enterprise space, café, hair salon, and resident's roof garden above. Designed for people with dementia, it includes memorable features like memento holders near front doors, CNC-cut motifs in wall panelling, and graphic handrails.

This scheme creates a mixed tenure Lifetime Neighbourhood, with some of the best views in town, a sense of community, and considerable regeneration benefits for the locality.

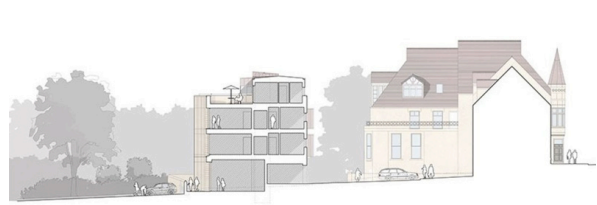


Lisson Arches, Westminster

CASE STUDIES - THE 2015 WINNERS

Parkside, Matlock

HDA Overall Winner



Parkside used to be the carpark of a stone-clad Victorian hotel building in central Matlock, and sits just uphill of river valley parkland.

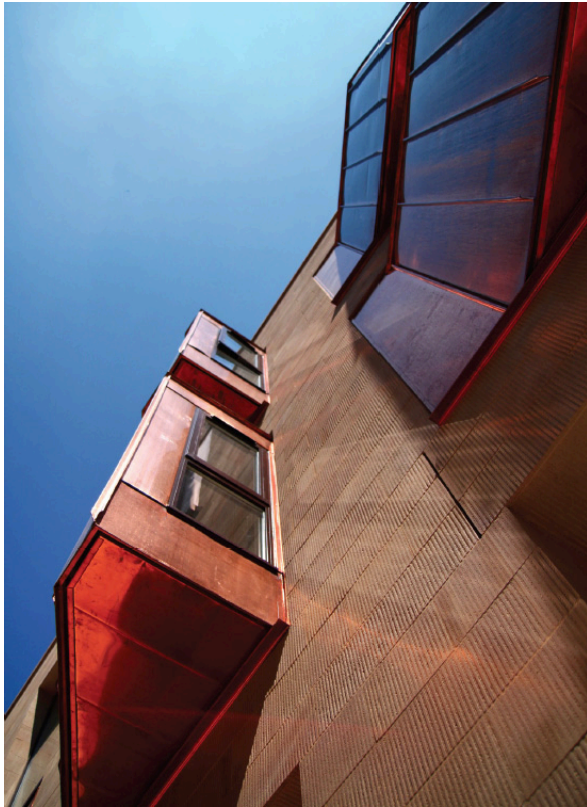


Locating retirement homes close to commercial and natural amenities, and blending with the surrounding buildings (in this case by using stone from the same local quarry), allows residents to integrate with the surrounding community, instead of feeling isolated in an institutional building.

Parkside's stone-clad grid form, with shadow gaps that repeat the proportions of the expansive balcony recesses even where windows are narrower or not necessary, is both simple and monumental, and expresses the building's dual function as domestic and civic space.

The ground floor houses four commercial units open to the general public, including a café, which ensures liveliness and security for the 8 apartments above, because there are usually people around.

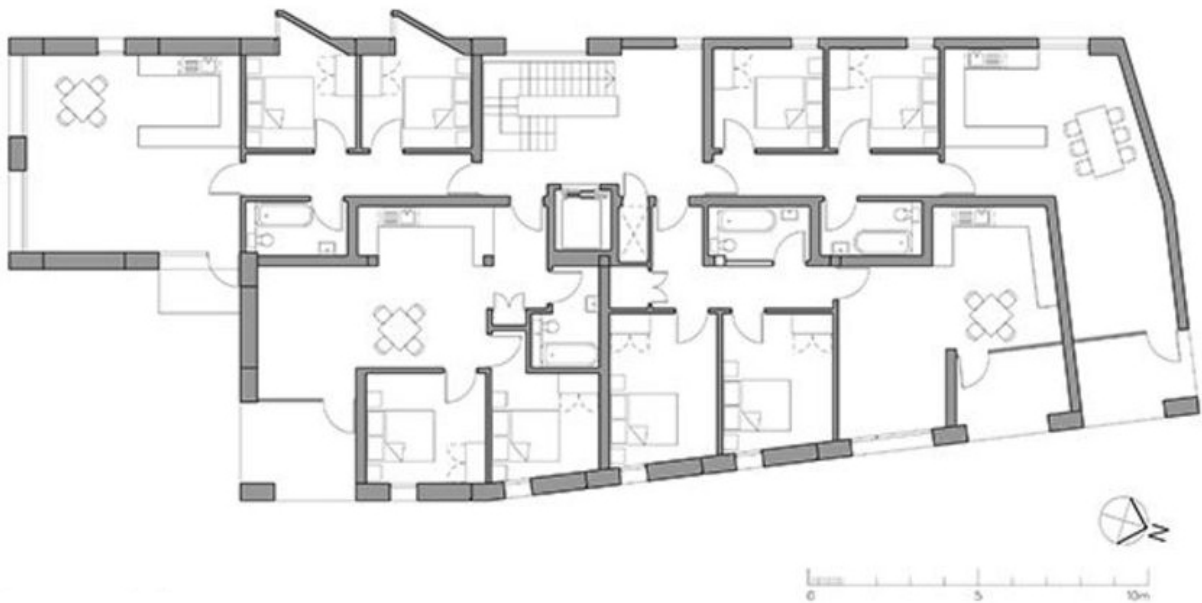




Large south-facing balconies and wall-to-wall windows make the most of views over the Edwardian Hall Leys Park that leads down to the Derwent River, and are large enough to entertain friends in.

Windows on the northern side are overlooked by other buildings and sit above parked cars. They have been angled in copper projections to preserve resident privacy while offering the benefits of dual aspect through ventilation.

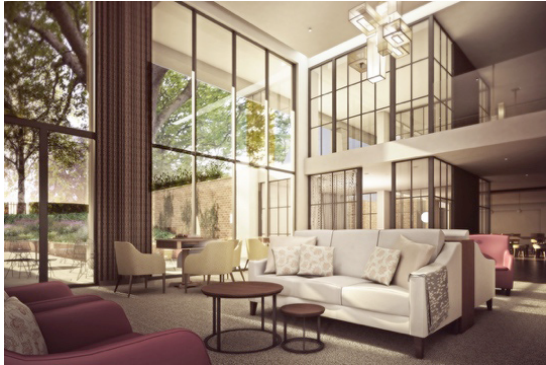
Homes have two good sized bedrooms and a large open-plan living room cum kitchen. The second room can be adapted as a study, store room, or residence for guests or carers.



One Bayshill Road, Cheltenham

HAPPI Project Winner

Holding its own between two Palladian villas, the building offers a dramatic double-height entrance lounge, front and side gardens, and several rooftop terraces with views over Cheltenham.



The dining lounge's hotel-style interior and room delivery service indicate the burgeoning importance of high quality leisure spaces and services alongside the homes themselves.

Flats are spacious and dual aspect, with private outdoor space often open to both living rooms and bedrooms, and sliding partitions that allow rooms to be flexibly combined.



Steepleton Retirement Community, Tetbury

HAPPI Project Winner



This is high quality contemporary design, for older people, in a Cotswolds market town neighbouring the Prince of Wales's residence. 112 flats are clustered around several courtyards and open but covered walkways containing informal seating and community facilities.



Powerful, simple forms made of concrete feature sundials, arcades and drystone walling. The layout borrows from vernacular farmsteads, with informal squares planned along meandering paths and with attention to picturesque sequences of views.



The central cluster includes a natural bathing pond. Other courtyards house a village hall, communal kitchen/dining room, library, allotments and farm shop, some of which are open to the public. Galleries alongside the communal spaces have sheds and benches between their piers, for potting, reading or games of chess.



Final thoughts

We've moved on from the clichés of 'age appropriate' and care-dependant retirement housing, and there is a bold new freshness to the lifestyle concepts driving architecture and support services – whether in historic towns or inner city neighbourhoods.

People of all ages expect new homes to be stylish, convenient and efficient; marrying spacious and adaptable layouts with good light and ventilation, and opportunities for walking, shopping, a thriving social life, and enjoyment of the outdoors. In response, this year's winners display a myriad of inventive approaches that provide residents with every reason to aspire to a modern home.

HAPPI principles are now an accepted component of mainstream, well-designed living spaces, and their transgenerational appeal commands a market premium. But as we've seen with council housing schemes, these expectations are not limited to high-end private sector purchasers.

Design and liveability are implicit in the Homes and Communities Agency's (HCA) grant awarding criteria, particularly when it comes to the Department of Health's Care and Support Specialised Housing Fund (CaSSH). The HCA further endorses HAPPI with a Kitemark scheme, being developed by Housing LIN and Design For Homes, to reward and raise the profile of developments exemplifying this new industry standard.

It's no wonder we're seeing more and more innovative, age friendly schemes with wide appeal coming through, gaining favour with consumers and governments alike, and winning the most prestigious of national awards. And with the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Spending Review and Autumn Statement announcing the need for least 8,000 new specialist homes for older people and people with disabilities. This report shows why and how housing associations and the private sector should be building on this year's award winning designs and getting HAPPI.

Postscript

At the time of writing, the influential All Party Parliamentary Group on Housing and Care for Older People chaired by Lord Best has established a new inquiry, 'HAPPI3: Making Retirement Living A Positive Choice'. Due to report in May 2016, HAPPI3 is seeking out examples of best and innovative practice, exploring different service options and advocating for improvement in standards and practice in the management of retirement properties.

References/Useful publications

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Note

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

About Design for Homes

Design for Homes is a not-for-profit limited company advised by a cross-industry Board of Directors that champions the value of good design in the housing industry. It runs the annual Housing Design Awards, the longest running awards programme in the country - since 1948. www.designforhomes.org & www.hdawards.org

About the Housing LIN

The Housing LIN is the leading 'learning lab' for a growing network of housing, health and social care professionals in England and Wales involved in planning, commissioning, designing, funding, building and managing housing, care and support services for older people and vulnerable adults with long term conditions.

Previously responsible for managing the Department of Health's Extra Care Housing Fund, the Housing LIN is called upon by a wide range of statutory and other organisations to provide expert advice and support regarding the implementation of policy and good practice in the field of housing, care and support services.

Further information about the Housing LIN's 'design hub' with its comprehensive list of online resources, including a dedicated section on HAPPI, and on how to participate in our shared learning and service improvement networking opportunities, including 'look and learn' site visits and network meetings in your region, visit: www.housinglin.org.uk

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