



Raising the flag at Pencric: Award winning modern senior living at the heart of the community in Staffordshire

This case study describes Pencric, Housing Plus' latest flagship extra care scheme in the heart of Staffordshire including some ambitious facilities and innovative apartment layouts.

Pencric is a mixed-tenure scheme, with 50 rented apartments, 25 shared-ownership and seven apartments for outright sale. Located in the heart of Penkridge, Pencric replaced the former Silverdene Care Home. A replacement scheme was rallied



into being by the local community and Pencric is now a firmly established part of that community: fully designed and equipped to provide for modern, senior living.

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Introduction

Pencric Extra Care Scheme is the latest flagship development from Housing Plus to provide a new way of living for South Staffordshire's ageing population.

Award winning and designed by Pozzoni Architects, this purpose built scheme creates 82 one and two bedroom apartments for sale, rent and shared ownership. With spacious rooms and modern interiors, each apartment has been designed with care and to a high specification; offering comfort and independence -whatever the individual's life circumstances.



As well as providing bespoke residential care and a 24 hour on-site care service, Pencric also houses a range of facilities for both residents and the wider community. These include spaces for social and leisure use such as a restaurant, hairdressers, beauticians and gymnasium, and also educational opportunities aimed at fulfilling residents' ambitions.

Located in the heart of Penkridge, Pencric replaces the Silverdene Care Home which had become outdated and was demolished in 2010. A replacement scheme was rallied into being by the local community and Pencric is now a firmly established part of that community: fully designed and equipped to provide for modern, senior living.

The scheme has been awarded the CIH Midlands award for Development of the Year and a Pinders National Healthcare Design Award for Best Care Complex.

How the project came about

South Staffordshire Council generously supplied a parcel of land adjacent to the site and also supplied £1.1m in funding to help deliver the extra care scheme. The County Council agreed a discounted land value for the old site and South Staffordshire Housing Association then provided additional land to enable site assembly. The site then, as a whole, became capable of delivering a state-of-the-art scheme, set within fantastic landscaped gardens.

Brief/ Design Objectives

Far from a conventional care environment, Housing Plus's aspiration was for the development to feel like a hotel. They wanted the building to deliver "wow" factor: something people will experience when walking through Pencric's richly finished main entrance and into the glazed bistro, where an extended balcony area overlooks the brook and green below.

The care provider, Care Plus, passionately believe that requiring regular care and support should not be seen as an admission of defeat, or an acceptance that some of life's most precious components: choice, freedom, and independence, may have to be compromised or lost altogether.

Their aim is to help individuals concentrate on what's really important and to get the most out of life; making our role, as architects, to ensure that all aspects of design and construction attain that level of life enhancing quality. Maximising the use of innovation and assistive technology, for example, was one way that we were an integral part of this process.

Housing Plus, with partners Care Plus, were heavily involved in the design process, as guided by experienced Extra Care architects, Pozzoni Architecture. The team drew on their previous experience of Extra Care in relation to aesthetics, spatial planning, and practical operations and most importantly the needs and desires of residents, to incorporate proven best practice into the design.

The scheme had to accommodate older people with a range of care needs; from those with low care and support needs through to people living with dementia and a range of physical and mental disabilities. This informed the design from the broader relationships of spaces, down to the detail of the apartment layouts and the interior design.

Design Response

Apartment Design



The scheme comprises 40 two bedroom apartments and 42 one bedroom apartments. There are several elements that make these apartments unique:

- The entrances into the apartments are at an angle. The windows in the kitchens look along the corridor affording a view of the apartment entrance as well as a longer view along the corridor. The advantage of this arrangement is, so that that the view in is more oblique and less intrusive and the view out isn't straight into a neighbour's home or to a blank wall.
- All one bedroom apartments are generous in size and have been designed to allow for a temporary bed space within the lounge that doesn't affect the usability of the space.
- There is space within the internal hallway to store wheelchairs and other mobility aids without crowding the space or impeding access.
- The apartments at the ends of the corridors have fully enclosed kitchens with a window to the outside, to add variety of accommodation.
- All apartments have access to faceted bays or a balcony in the lounge, allowing residents to access fresh air and the outdoors.

- The ground floor apartments have access to secure landscaped gardens, with meandering paths around the building.

Each apartment, having a bay or a balcony off the lounge depending on the aspect, helps to create a variety of dwellings – some with direct access to the gardens, some with access out onto a balcony and some with a bay window only. This variety allows for different tastes and levels of impairment. Faceted bays, a more traditional design feature, were incorporated into the design at the client's request because of the quality of space that is created within the apartment; the light that they allow in and the varied views out.

Independent Living

Apartments allow residents to live independently whilst still feeling safe and secure in the knowledge that care is on hand should it be required. Apartments are designed to meet Lifetime Home standards and allow for adaptations to be made with minimal disruption.

Care can be provided in their own homes, meaning that residents are not required to move should their care requirements change. This allows residents to move in with no, or low need for care; safe in the knowledge that they will not have to uproot should this change.

Housing Plus and Care Plus wished to provide a safe, yet non-institutional environment: allowing maximum freedom for individuals whilst safeguarding against injury or distress. To help facilitate this, the apartments have been designed to have a kitchen window placed at an angle to the corridors. This ensures that carers are able to look into apartments in a discreet and unobtrusive way.

Facilities



The 82 apartments are complemented by a series of flexible communal spaces reserved specifically for the residents. These include:

- Separate, private entrance for residents and their visitors only
- Exclusive residents' lounge with a self-service coffee bar close to the staff base and the residents' entrance
- Assisted bathing and treatment facilities, allowing residents to be treated by visiting healthcare professionals in an on-site and relaxed environment.
- Workshop and craft/ activities room with direct access out into the productive garden area
- IT suite which offers activities such as writing classes
- Laundry with seating area

- Easily accessible landscaped gardens, specifically designed for a variety of activities, and well-lit seating areas.
- Scooter storage adjacent to the main entrance and space within the apartments for the storage of mobility aids.
- A large roof terrace with fantastic views of the surrounding landscape
- All areas are supported by the necessary staff facilities and storage areas, designed for ease of management and use.

The design of the building ensures that the private facilities remain secure and safe at all times.

Further facilities, which were provided to cater to both residents and the wider public, are deliberately given separate access.

Access to the public space is separated from the residents' apartments by secure doors. This is for privacy and safety but also so that these areas can be securely locked out of operational hours.

For public and residential use the following are included:

- Edgar's fully licensed restaurant and bar, with luxury cloakroom and toilet facilities - frequented by residents and members of the public alike.
- Activities/Entertainment lounge including a full size snooker table and media facilities
- Fitness Suite catering to the needs of elderly people and for health rehabilitation, with dedicated changing facilities.
- Multi-purpose room with media and video conferencing facilities. -A larger space for bigger events and functions.
- Staff training facilities. -A smaller more intimate space for training sessions.
- Kitchenette for use with the training and multipurpose rooms
- Hair and Beauty suite including two treatment rooms and a separate staff area. The salon provides a space where residents can enjoy hair and beauty treatments alongside neighbours, friends and family.



These facilities are available to people living in the surrounding area, helping the scheme to become a 'community hub' and enabling residents to engage with the local community if they wish to do so.

This scheme includes extensive communal facilities accessible to the local community. This was a conscious decision aimed at better integrating the scheme with the local community.

Housing Plus carefully analysed the demand for facilities such as a restaurant, gym and hairdresser in the area and put together a business case which ensures the long term viability of the scheme. From very early on, they consulted local businesses and the local CCG to ensure that there were partners for these ventures.

Accessibility and mobility

The building is laid out in three wings, with two entrances: one for residents with access to residential facilities and apartments, the other for the public, residents and visitors which also provide access to apartments with the correct security fob.

The residential wings meet at two pivot points with access to stairs and lifts from here allowing easy access throughout the building.

Apartments are planned to allow for future direct access to bathrooms, and to accommodate possible changing needs of the users.

Hallways are designed to accommodate buggies and circulation is designed to accommodate wheelchair users.



The whole building has well defined routes with generous circulation space and wide doors, making all spaces inclusive and accessible to those with mobility and visual impairment.

The interiors, with design by Stanbridge Interiors, were designed to assist residents with orientating themselves around the building. Different colour schemes were used on each floor, and the use of traditional front doors in keeping with each colour scheme makes sure that corridors are spacious and welcoming. Other features, such as themes for the pictures on the walls, were incorporated into the design in order to further assist users in identifying their location.

Design Features/ Innovation

A design competition was run to select the architects for the scheme. This allowed Housing Plus to select an architect based on their design proposals and their team. Pozzoni Architecture, once selected, worked closely with Housing Plus's development staff and also Care Plus, who manage the scheme, to ensure that the brief was clear and that the design met all aspects of the brief.

One of the advantages Pozzoni offers is their use of Revit, a 3D CAD software allowing the team to visualise and understand the design and layout. This also assisted in delivering the design intent during the construction, as the implications of any design development and input from sub-contractors could be reviewed in 3D. It also helped that the chosen Contractor, Kier, was committed to good design and had a good working relationship with the architects.

Aesthetic Features

A creative architectural response was required as the site is sloped and bound on one side by Otherton Brook. The access into the site is from Tildesley Close at the top end of the site.



The 'y' shaped footprint allows the building to sit comfortably into the slope, presenting a three storey courtyard to the site entrance that hugs the space and a three and four storey frontage to Otherton Brook. The lower ground floor extends in a single bank for the length of the elevation facing the brook.

Because the building is domestic in nature, the mass of the building has been broken down using sections of contrasting materials (brick and two tones of render) and by raising and lowering sections of the roof.

The architectural style of the building borrows elements of traditional architecture and marries them with more contemporary window patterns and materials. Features include:

- Heritage green foil for the Upvc windows and doors, complementing the warm buff brick and cream render tones, providing a soft appearance to the building.
- Heads and cills that appear to be artificial stone but are in fact polystyrene coated in artificial stone. An innovation that meant the heads and cills did not suffer damage during the building process because they were fitted much later and are applied rather than built in.
- Lightweight faceted bays built of a metal framing with stone coated panels
- The setting-back of the top storey of the building element closest to the brook. This provides a generous roof terrace on the top floor and a unique 'penthouse' apartment with three aspects and a private roof terrace.
- Balconies with brise soleil style panels to create a more intimate scale space, more comfortable for sitting out in.
- The balcony structure is powder coated in a soft stone colour with smart black balustrade and warm timber handrail. A timber cill feature has also been added to give the structure warmth and to emphasise the deck.
- Larger areas of glazing to the communal areas so that their location is clear from the outside and to flood the spaces with light. These areas of glazing have bespoke manifestations designed to fit in with the graphical theme of the scheme.



- Bespoke hotel style canopy to announce the entrance to the public communal facilities and restaurant
- A large dining balcony is attached dining area of Edgar's Restaurant, which opens the space to the outside, providing al fresco dining and great views across Staffordshire.

The building is unified by the landscaped gardens that wrap around the scheme. The mature trees on the banks of Otherton Brook were retained as part of the design because of their ecological and aesthetic value. These provide a screen for the building and help the scheme belong to its context. A pond, wildflower meadow areas, fruit trees and an area of raised beds, with a potting shed for accessible gardening, have been incorporated into the landscape design. These features have helped to improve the biodiversity of the site.



The car parking has been split into courts with planting between them and changes in road surface to minimise the impact of the parking on the approach to the building.

Environmental Considerations

Pencrik is located at the heart of Penkridge in an established residential area. It is a very sustainable location for an Extra Care scheme as it is accessible to pedestrians, has good public transport links and is close to the local amenities.

Flooding was a key consideration. The finished floor level of the scheme was set high enough to be above the 100 year flood level but attenuation and a bund, on the lower lying part of the site, were incorporated as mitigation levels against flooding in the area.

The chosen assessment method for this scheme was BREEAM. This demanding and thorough accreditation meant that all aspects of sustainability were considered. The project was designed to achieve BREEAM 'Good', but surpassed this to achieve a very high score just one percent below a "Very Good" score.

The building structure is load bearing masonry construction with concrete plank, used for its robustness and to provide thermal mass.

Meeting Registration and Market Requirements – Addressing the Housing Need

Pencrik is a true mixed-tenure scheme, with 50 rented apartments, 25 shared-ownership and seven apartments for outright sale. All of the shared-ownership and sales apartments were reserved off plan, by means of a pre-fabricated, show-style apartment that was located in the car park.

Though costly, the show flat allowed the sales team to market the apartments much earlier than would usually be possible and many purchasers bought off-plan. It also had the added advantage of being a test-case for fitting, fixtures and finishes which meant that a number of design issues were resolved early.

The development reflects the South Staffordshire Housing Market Assessment January 2013, which states a significant need for extra care accommodation with 1,358 new units needed for older people.

A local connection criteria is attached to the project, ensuring that people with links to Penkridge have priority regarding rooms. There is then a cascade-effect, rippling out to people in the surrounding parishes of south Staffordshire and county-wide.

At Pencric, some residents moved in from existing Care Plus homes, to better meet their care needs, while others downsized and now have the comfort of tailored support on hand. Although elderly people take priority, young people with care and support needs – fitting the Pencric brief – can be offered accommodation. This flexibility enables Care Plus to meet changing housing and care needs.

The mix of tenures within the project was discussed with the Local Authority from the outset. A detailed allocation process was agreed with the County Council and Local Authority on initial lets and re-lets. This enables Pencric to keep the mix of low, medium and high level care needs in proportion. There is also a review mechanism in place, ensuring that the original goal of a high-quality extra care scheme, with mixed care and support needs, is maintained.

The County Council has nominated rights on 35 rented properties and Housing Plus engaged with the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG) to promote Pencric.

Consultation and Results

The scheme was conceived following the closure of a County Council run care home and concerns regarding the impact this would have on housing options for older people in Penkridge.

It was extremely important that Housing Plus worked closely with the Local Authority and County Council from the initial stages of discussions, right through to scheme opening.

It was at the request of a local group that Housing Plus got involved in the scheme. The local community was upset and concerned at the loss of a County Council run care home and wanted them to save it.

The local community was fully involved in the process, especially at the early stages of design. Two initial consultations took place in January 2012. A third event for local businesses was held in February.

Since July 2013, there has been a Friend of Pencric group that meets monthly. As well as forming a strong community group prior to moving in, they have actively contributed to design features such as the spa room, gym area; even highlighting drinks they would like to see in the bar!

The scheme manager, who was recruited in 2013 – many months before hand over, has been instrumental in leading this group, also meeting with others to ensure Pencric has a strong profile prior to opening.

In terms of outcomes, we now have a scheme which meets the needs of residents but equally as importantly, the needs of the local community.

Pencric has also brought an economic boost to the area, creating many job opportunities. A local husband and wife team were delighted to take over the café/restaurant and even though the scheme had only been open for two months; they are regularly doing 60 covers on Sunday lunchtime.

Cost Effectiveness

The total cost of construction was c.£14 million and the design and build contract cost was £12.5million.

The total floor area for the scheme is 9866.8m² and the communal areas form 12.5% of the total Gross Internal Floor Area, which is unusually high for Extra Care schemes.

The scheme was procured in two stages and under a PPC 2000 (partnering) with equal risk and reward for the Association and Contractor. As such, the scheme remained in budget, and where savings were made, the money was used to increase the specification for key components, such as kitchens, taps and tiling, to ensure long-term asset management of the building.

Kier Construction was selected because of their proactive attitude and enthusiasm for the scheme. In order to reach a fixed price the Architect and Contractor worked together to develop the planning package into a construction package. This meant the design was collaborative and we believe that this ensured the quality of the product while delivering value for money.

There was a lot of work carried out to ensure that the scheme remained affordable for all tenures in terms of service charge.

Summary Breakdown of Overall Costs of the Project

Total Project Cost	£14 million
Land Acquisition	£182,500
Professional fees in lands acquisition	£40,000
Design and Build Contract cost	£12.5 million
Construction Cost	£10.2 million
Professional Fees and Local Authority Fees	£325,000
Furniture and Fitting out	£405,000

Conclusion

The scheme has been a great success. It won the CIH Midlands award for Development of the Year and a Pinders Award for Best Care Complex.

Resident Mary Briggs, 87, said:

“in the past two years I’ve had two falls. I fractured my back in five places and can’t walk unaided. Since my accident I found I couldn’t get out and about so found it very lonely.

I’m enjoying having more company, more activities going on around me, and the peace of mind of knowing help is available on site”.



Note

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

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 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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