



Multi-Generational Homes: Building a Community for all Ages

Castlemaine Court in Byfleet, Surrey, is an award winning development designed to offer affordable, fully accessible, high-quality, multi-generational, sustainable one and two-bedroom homes for people of all ages. Built to replace low-demand bedsit accommodation for older people, it was recognised earlier this year as the best designed development in the *Inside Housing* Top 60 developments of 2015.



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Introduction

Castlemaine Court in Byfleet, Surrey, consists of 16 apartments, completed in August 2014. The award-winning development was designed by Archadia (architects) and built by William Lacey Group, with expertise from a variety of consultants, for social landlord, Crown Simmons Housing. It was funded through a combination of recycled Homes and Communities Agency grant and housing association reserves, and cost £2.1 million to build. The 12 two-bedroom and 4 one-bedroom homes are designed to the Lifetime Homes standards¹ and are fully accessible. A biomass, communal boiler burns sustainable wooden pellets providing heating and hot water to the apartments, offering residents warm, comfortable homes. Private outside patios, balconies and decked areas offer each home outside space, and ensures the majority of the apartments meet Level 4 of Code for Sustainable Homes.



Castlemaine Court in Byfleet, Surrey

About Crown Simmons and the Site



The original building prior to demolition – note the Portacabins installed to accommodate temporary plant to deal with issues arising from failing M&E services

Crown Simmons Housing has recently come about through a merger of the Rosemary Simmons Housing Association and Crown Housing Association. Crown Simmons owns and manages just under 800 homes in Surrey, Sussex and London. This site was previously occupied by Dunmow House, a sheltered block of bedsit units, built in the 1970s and owned by the Fellowship Houses Trust, a charity managed by Crown Simmons Housing.

Due to the fall in demand for such lower quality studio and sheltered accommodation in the area, the scheme had suffered from low demand and required extensive maintenance work which was not cost-effective to carry out. The Board made the decision to close the scheme and all residents were re-housed in the local area by the association and Woking Borough Council.

Objectives of the Scheme

Castlemaine Court reinvigorates and enhances land owned by The Fellowship Houses Trust. The Council's Core Strategy² discourages bedsits and encourages two-bedroom homes, specifying that 92% should be socially rented. The importance of affordability was highlighted in

¹ www.lifetimehomes.org.uk

² www.woking2027.info/corestrategy/adoptedcorestrategy.pdf

the Council's Strategic Market Housing Assessment³, which estimates 93% of new households in Woking will have an average income of £15,405. Crown Simmons Housing was in a position to respond to this local need by utilising recycled grant and reserves to build a new scheme which could be let at 'social rent' levels, on average 40% of the market rent for the area.

The development was to be designed to offer affordable, fully accessible, high-quality, multi-generational, sustainable one and two-bedroom homes for people of all ages, to replace low-demand bedsit accommodation for older people. The apartments allow single people, couples and families to be housed within one community with door widths and circulation spaces also allowing wheelchair access.

One of the conclusions often drawn from the difficulty in letting studio schemes originally designed for occupation by older people is that there is no demand for homes for the older segment of the population. This can be incorrect and may say more about the attractiveness of the stock on offer than the demand. This development was designed to be suitable for occupants of all generations and through the accessibility and sustainability of the design to allow people to remain in their own homes into old age.

The introduction of the two-bedroom homes addressed the local Planning Department's initial concerns regarding the loss of 9 affordable units on site (albeit studios), as the homes now acknowledge changes to family units and anticipate modern living conditions, both for families and elderly residents.

Collaboration

Collaboration was crucial in the development to ensure relevant consultations were undertaken at key stages of the design process. Once a design was agreed the main contractor was brought on board at an early stage to give input into its feasibility. The proposed design was presented to Councillor Anne Roberts, a member of the council's Planning Committee, who became an important link between the design team and the local community, and a public consultation was held which resulted in the alteration of some design aspects to consider the views and concerns of the local community. The Council's housing department were involved at an early stage to establish the right mix of flats to meet the needs of the local area, and the new development offers multi-generational lifetime homes to families and single people from the Council's housing list.

The Design Concept – Multi-Generational Homes

Using its experience in designing housing for older people, Archadia proposed a two-storey scheme which is fully accessible with sufficient space for wheelchair users' turning requirements, level access throughout, including first floor lift access and with walk-in showers in the en-suites to the two-bedroomed and one-bedroom homes. Archadia has taken up the recommendations of the HAPPI report⁴ and introduced the concept of dual aspect flats opening onto walkways enabling a single staircase to serve the entire development. In a traditional, enclosed building additional escape stairs would have been required, potentially leading to long dark corridors with limited views of the external spaces.

³ https://www.waverley.gov.uk/downloads/download/1613/waverley_strategic_housing_market_assessment_2013

⁴ www.housinglin.org.uk/library/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Other_reports_and_guidance/Happi_Final_Report.pdf

The walkways are a re-interpretation of an unfashionable 1960's idea and illustrate that if carried out sensitively, deck access can provide pleasant spaces. The important aspect of the walkways is that they are an integral part of the building with projecting roofs and not just an add-on. The over-sailing roofs to the walkways help to define areas to the front of the first floor apartments, which creates a generous private forecourt to the homes.

Through eliminating corridors, the walkways also allow each apartment dual aspect for natural light and ventilation. Instead of a large monolithic block, the roof scape gives the impression of a cluster of independent houses. Most flats have been provided with external private space either with gardens on the ground floor or with balconies and generous 'verandas' to the first floor.



View of the central block from the communal garden showing the lift on the left hand side

Key Design Characteristics

The site layout evolved in direct response to its surrounding context as well as responding to the orientation of the sun. A new site entrance was formed to locate car parking on the northern part of the site thereby freeing up the remaining site for a southerly aspect amenity area.



Site Layout showing the arrangement of the three blocks on the site

The scale and massing of the development relates and responds to the surrounding buildings; a two-storey terrace fronting Rectory Lane continues the existing street pattern and a second two-storey block is located to the rear of the site. These mask the central block, enabling it to be built to three stories which has increased the total number of homes. The three blocks that make up the development play an important part in breaking up the mass of the building and each has a reason for its location.



View of Castlemaine Court from Rectory Lane

The six apartments facing Rectory Lane continue the street pattern and have been designed to appear as three terraced houses, echoing the character of the surrounding locale, which both addresses its urban context by continuing the street scene and prevents noise from the road reaching the amenity space central to the site. The ground floor flats incorporate their own front gardens and off-street driveways for parking. The gardens feature low-level walls and the opportunity for shrub planting to improve privacy and increase the sense of ownership within the development.

A second two-storey block is located to the rear of the site where its scale matches that of the adjacent terraced housing. These two blocks mask the central block, enabling it to be built to three stories which has increased the total number of homes. Clever use of form and screening allow a greater number of units to be incorporated within the site; a standard layout would not have met the separation distances required for planning, resulting in a reduced number of units.

The design creates two intimate, tranquil courtyards whilst also arranging the apartments to avoid overlooking within the development. Setting the central refuse area near the main road allows the development waste to be collected from the road. This enabled the main site area to utilise the space to increase the number of homes and eliminated the need to give significant turning space for large vehicles on-site.

In addition to the complex site condition described above, the design aimed to deliver homes that all benefit from sunlight at some point in the day, and avoid north-facing apartments wherever possible. As such, the majority of the apartments are dual aspect and have an east or west orientation, with generously proportioned windows, which provide a good quality of natural light to the homes.



View of parking area, central 3 storey block and privacy fence controlling access to the flats and communal gardens

In terms of external materials the two-storey blocks to the east and west are in brickwork, while between them, the central block has been finished with white render, timber boarding, angled windows and timber screens. These give the central block a lighter feel and the human scale of the materials used both add privacy and

establish points of interest when walking through the exterior spaces. It also has features such as projected, triangular windows and timber louvers to the walkways on the southern façade which address overlooking issues to the adjoining properties.

Sustainability was built into the design with the installation of a communal biomass boiler which burns sustainable wooden pellets to provide heating and hot water to the homes, through providing enhanced levels of insulation to the fabric of the building and by ensuring each home was double-aspect. These measures ensure the homes require less energy to heat and light, reducing the energy bills of the residents and ensuring their homes are comfortable throughout the year.



First Floor Plan showing arrangement of external walkways

Adding Social Value

The local priorities of the borough of Woking were considered from the beginning of the project. A public consultation enabled the local community to be involved throughout the planning process with an emphasis on genuine empowerment and collaboration.

Local employment was essential to the development's social value during its construction. The main contractor, William Lacey Group, are a Woking-based firm established for over 100 years within the community and managed to utilise the local workforce through employing apprentices in a number of the trades used on site.

The residents will benefit from the inclusion of a biomass boiler, which is supplied locally, which will provide lower heating and hot water bills to the residents. Communal gardens have been designed to increase local biodiversity and social interaction which should bring neighbours together.

The incorporation of two-bedroom homes enabled the Council to house families in genuinely affordable housing, out of expensive temporary accommodation. This offers additional social value through the creation of more genuinely affordable homes.

On completion, Crown Simmons Housing organised a community event to celebrate the project and invited local residents, interested parties and local dignitaries to share in the experience of the development.

Post Occupation

'The community spirit in the scheme is really strong'

Ellie Mellham, Crown Simmons Housing

The current demographic of Castlemaine Court is predominantly families with single occupiers in the one bedroom apartments. The age range of the adult residents is 18-58 with early years and teenage children in the family accommodation.

An issue of particular interest was whether the open walkways engendered any greater feeling of community. Revisiting the scheme, Archadia have learnt that residents used the walkways as an extension of the home, with many using them to sit in the summer, interact with neighbours and view the gardens. The location of the communal gardens has worked well as they are very accessible and overlooked directly from the walkways and dwellings offering natural surveillance. The sense of ownership of the communal areas is evident in the way residents have clubbed together to buy shared garden furniture and get involved in communal activities such as a Sunflower Growing competition in which Crown Simmons Housing provided a prize.



Resident Jagita with her family

Residents Jagita, Jasbir, and their son, Ranvir, had spent two-and-a-half years living in a bedroom together, sharing the kitchen and bathroom in the house with other families. *"It was horrible,"* Jagita says. On viewing Castlemaine Court, their first thought was, *"WOW! When can we move in?"* Now that they have a safe, secure home, Jagita says the family are, *"definitely happy, everyone's very friendly"*.

Councillor Melanie Whitehand, the Portfolio Holder for Housing at Woking Borough Council, said, *"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. The design also took into account the need for a warm and comfortable home and this being affordable for residents both currently and in the future. Reducing the potential for fuel poverty was achieved through installing a central biomass boiler to lower residents' fuel bills."*

Conclusions and Lessons Learned

The key success of this scheme for the tenant is the sense of community engendered by the design. The external decks make movement around the scheme much more visible and help to encourage recognition and interaction between tenants living on the scheme. Single aspect deck access is an inherently more expensive solution but, well designed, can greatly raise the standard of housing provided through the potential for dual aspect, better natural lighting and ventilation.

The secure open space has been utilised by residents to hold events to which everyone in the scheme has been invited, and this has aided a sense of ownership of the gardens and integration of all occupants.

The very light design of the flats themselves has added to the success of the scheme and the generosity of the space provided.

The tenancy arrangements are key in this type of development. This can be difficult to control and relies on a strong partnership between providers and local authorities.

Applying the HAPPI principles and standards of accessibility usually implemented in older persons housing has future-proofed this development and allowed it to cater for a wider range of residents.

Where costs are high due to the selected form of development, expect the cost of the provision of other multi-generational features to come under pressure. At Castlemaine Court, as part of a value-engineering exercise, significant cost savings were made by replacing the level access showers originally proposed with raised shower trays, avoiding the need for below ground drainage at ground floor and penetration of the pre-cast concrete upper floors.

Awards

The scheme won the Inside Housing top 60 'Best Designed Development of 2015' award and was praised by the judges for the way *"collaboration and consultation with the community has clearly helped develop a design concept."*

Paul Yates, Chief Executive of Crown Simmons Housing, said of the award: *"It's fantastic that Castlemaine Court has been recognised as the best designed development of the year and I know that all of our tenants are really pleased with their new homes."*

Note

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

About Archadia

Established over 20 years ago, Archadia has extensive experience in housing, health and special needs, education and public buildings. Our expertise lies in providing specialist housing for older people and people with disabilities and several of our specialist housing projects have won awards. In addition to architectural services we can also offer planning, urban design and Passivhaus expertise to our clients.



Archadia is a chartered architectural practice based in South West London and our specialist, friendly and reliable team of BIM trained architects, technologists and assistants deliver a personal and professional service. We are responsive, efficient and progressive and provide high quality buildings that meet our clients' brief in terms of budget, building function and timescales. Sustainable design is a priority and care is taken in design to give due regard to energy efficiency and the use of renewable materials.

<http://archadia.co.uk>

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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