

# Croftspar Springboig Avenue Glasgow

A small, specialised scheme of seven supported houses for people with dementia.

A partnership between public sector provider Cube Housing Association and Alzheimer Scotland. Cube builds housing and leases it to care providers, but does not provide care services itself. Capital funding was from Communities Scotland.

Staff are on site 24 hours a day, one on duty at night, and one sleeping over.

The architects were Chris Stewart Architects (now Collective Architecture) and the scheme was completed in 2005.

## Key features

- A group of small, individual houses around a landscaped courtyard with a warden alarm system and movement sensors in the bedrooms. The scheme is designed with level access and to maximise solar gain.
- The circular layout helps people with dementia to find their way around the scheme and the small scale appeals to residents. However, the residents do not like the open plan design of their homes and the modern bathroom furniture and underfloor heating is confusing for people with dementia.

## Background

There is little dedicated provision for people with dementia in Glasgow and this partnership between Cube Housing Association and Alzheimer Scotland was set up to help Glasgow City Council provide housing for such people. The scheme was also designed to meet a variety of housing needs and to convert into mainstream housing if required.

Croftspar residents have an average age of 75, and the majority are female, one-person households. Couples can only be accommodated if both have dementia and an enhanced residential care need.

Most of the residents at Croftspar came from residential and care homes so, in effect, they are returning to more independent living. It was intended that residents would be from Springboig, which is in the east end of the city, with family and friends nearby, but this has not always been the case. Six come from the Glasgow area, and one from the south of the city. Five have family in the local area, and two have family in England.

## Design and planning issues

The site is in a run-down residential area. There was considerable opposition to the project, due both to the loss of open space, and rumours about the nature of the development. Partly for these reasons, the scheme was designed to be low-rise, small in scale and modest in its visual and physical impact. The planners insisted the building height should be reduced as much as possible. The scheme is surrounded by other housing but is set back from the road and an area of land has been retained as open space.



Croftspar, Glasgow © Andrew Lee



## Development and building issues

The scheme is designed as a group of small individual houses, each of which can accommodate two people, around a central courtyard. The accommodation wraps around the edge of the site with garden areas behind the buildings. The staff base is at the front of the triangular site beside the entrance to the courtyard, providing a point from which to survey people coming and going.

The design of the individual houses is identical – a brightly coloured front door opening directly into the living room at the front, kitchen and bathroom adjacent to each other in the middle, and bedroom at the back. They are completely open plan, with no doors, except to the bathroom, one opening off the kitchen and one off the bedroom, and no hallways or corridors. The rationale for this was that people with dementia need to be able to see the way in and out of a room at the same time.

Back doors open directly from the bedroom into the garden. All residents have their own area of grass with a 'whirly' for washing, but the gardens are not divided from each other and are not popular with residents.

The living rooms look out across a covered walkway onto the grassed courtyard, adorned with a few pots. The two blocks are set in a V-shape, so residents do not overlook each other. The circular layout of the

courtyard is viewed as a success as people with dementia can walk around it until they find their own front door, recognisable by its colour.

The laundry was intended as a meeting point, but this has not worked out and confusion over clothes led to disputes. The laundry is now used by staff to wash the residents' clothes.

According to the scheme manager, residents are 'very private', and social activities usually take place in the residents' homes with group activities such as birthday and Christmas parties taking place in the staff base.

## Technology and sustainability

There is a warden alarm system in the flats, and sensors in the bedrooms that alert staff to lack of movement after a specified period of time. There is a sprinkler system, and a device to isolate the cooker if residents are unable to use it alone.

The project meets the Scottish government's eco homes standard. The roof is a very low mono-pitched metal standing seam supported on traditional blockwork walls (preferred for their thermal mass). There is a central boiler, and under floor heating, which is regulated but also provided with individual controls. The need to maximise solar gain was stressed in the design manual, with all properties

facing within 30 degrees of due south and large windows on south-facing aspects. There is level access throughout, and all spaces are wheelchair accessible.

## Feedback

Cube Housing Association reports that the residents are happy: the small-scale character of the development has helped them to settle in quickly and the feedback (from carers as well) is positive. However, the residents want a door closing the bedroom off from the kitchen, and want direct access into the bedroom from the back and a glazed vertical strip in the door. They feel that all-white, tiled, internal spaces are unfriendly. They have found some of the modern bathroom furniture confusing.

Some residents find the under floor heating system confusing, because they cannot see it. Residents do not use the back gardens, which are felt to be too open, even though there is a high fence at the back, but they do occasionally enjoy walking out into the courtyard.

## Community integration

The residents regularly go to doctors' appointments, and to social activities, accompanied by Croftspar staff. Residents are also 'supported out' to join in with activities in the local area, such as a church sale or fete, lunch or dinner in local cafés and restaurants, visits to a day centre or a lunch club, or shopping. However on-site activities are not open to non-residents.

## Learning points

Despite some maintenance problems, particularly with the roof which has leaked, the scheme manager deems the project a great success.

She says the layout 'makes Croftspar work'. But she thinks there is scope to make it bigger, increasing from seven to 12 or 16 units, which would also make it more cost effective.

### Design and architectural features

- Group of small, individual houses around a landscaped courtyard
- Warden alarm system and movement sensors in the bedrooms
- Maximises solar gain
- Level access.

### Points for residents

- Circular layout helps orientation of people with dementia
- Small scale appeals to residents but cost effectiveness needs to be considered
- Residents don't like open plan of homes
- Modern bathroom furniture and underfloor heating are confusing for people with dementia.

