Location, location, location!
Hare Hill, Littleborough in Rochdale: The perfect location for extra care

This case study describes Hare Hill, Rochdale Boroughwide Housing’s flagship affordable housing development for the town’s ageing population. The purpose built extra care scheme consists of 43 apartments and is the first scheme of its kind to be provided within the Rochdale area.

Drawing on HAPPI principles, Hare Hill has been designed to maximise residents’ feeling of safety and security whilst also creating delineated areas of life and social activity. The dementia friendly scheme is supported by attractive communal facilities which are open to the public, in combination with other areas which are exclusive to the scheme residents. The entrance and community café serve as focal communal areas, and are prominently located at the front of the scheme to welcome people into Hare Hill, setting an inviting and vibrant tone to the scheme.

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Introduction

Hare Hill is RBH’s flagship development and, as a purpose built extra care scheme, is the first scheme of its kind to be provided within the Rochdale local authority area. Designed by Pozzoni Architecture Ltd, Hare Hill creates 43 extra care apartments for rent, comprising 41 two-bedroom and 2 one-bedroom apartments, and provides a hub of community support for older people in the Pennines.

The location of Hare Hill is ideal and the design makes the most of its setting:
- Close to the village centre, off a quiet cul-de sac
- Next to a well-tended public park, with a public library
- Next to a thriving bowling club and cricket club
- Next to well-tended allotments
- Not overlooked from neighbouring properties
- Views to the Pennines from many apartments
- RBH have another, smaller independent living scheme nearby, allowing those residents to benefit from the resources at Hare Hill.
- There is a public right-of-way to the park via the scheme car park: creating activity and interest with the scheme café benefitting from the passing trade.
- Parking and front-of-house areas open out on the park, affording a sense of connection, whilst the simple L-shaped footprint encloses the private garden.

Architecturally, Hare Hill takes its inspiration from the local vernacular and sympathetic materials have been used, such as the local stone on the feature gables. The design was developed with input from the Planning Officer, Highways Department, Secured by Design (Police), Littleborough Civic Society and client working groups.
Background to the scheme

Location

The 0.5 hectare site is situated in Littleborough, off Inglis Street, between a park, allotments and bowling green. The vehicular access to the site is from Hare Hill Road along Inglis Street. Pedestrians can access the site along the same route or from the park. The only immediately adjacent buildings are the houses on Henderville Street.

The previous use of the site was for Hare Hill Court, an outdated sheltered housing scheme which had become unfit for purpose and was demolished in 2010. The only remaining structure on the site is a garage which will be demolished.

On the boundaries with the bowling green and allotments the site benefits from mature hedgerows. The boundary with the park has established trees and managed planting.

The site is well located for public transport. A bus route passes close to the site along Hare Hill Road into the centre of Littleborough. Pedestrian access to the main centre where the train station is located is approximately 400m away.
RBH had been in discussion with Rochdale Council Adult Care, Strategic Housing, the Health Care Trusts and other local voluntary and private organisations in the Borough over several years. A number of strategic needs assessments undertaken throughout the late 90's and early 2000's by both the strategic health authority and local health and well being forums had identified the need for around 155 extra care units in the borough. At this time the only extra care available was through an existing HA Cat 2 provision, with Rochdale Council Domiciliary Care Service providing overnight care. A number of previous funding bids through DH funding had not been successful and it was recognised that there had been a lack of clarity of the preferred model of extra care in the Borough.

RBH undertook a number of options appraisals on various existing independent living schemes to ascertain potential and estimated cost of transforming existing Cat 2 provision to extra care. However, each option appraisal failed to produce a preferred model with costs also coming out very high. In 2009 / 2010 whilst RBH was still an ALMO, it embarked on consultation to decommission and demolish a 2 story bedsit scheme built in the 1960's mainly due to its lack of viability to continue to provide services for tenants and their needs.

Part of the original promise made to the local community was that the land would be used in the future to build accommodation of older people to continue to support the local demographics of high concentrations of older people dependant on local support networks. In addition, recognition that the site was an ideal location for an extra care scheme continued to support this ambition. With the impending decision on stock transfer in 2011, RBH applied for funding from the HCA under the 2012-2015 Affordable Homes Programme and was successful in gaining grant funding of just under £1million.

With the successful stock transfer completed in 2012 and RBH becoming the first housing mutual to be owned by its tenants and employees a year later, and the remainder of the funding requirement able to be developed within a 30 year business plan, RBH’s ambitions started to be realised with the appointment of Pozzoni to help develop its plans.

**Client brief and objectives**

RBH aspirations for the scheme revolved around achieving integration of the scheme with the local community: steering away from conventional concepts of ‘care homes’, and creating a dementia friendly independent living environment that welcomes people of all ages to partake in the scheme as a true community hub.

To achieve this, RBH needed to create facilities which did not duplicate existing local amenities and design flexibility into the front of house facilities, to meet with varied requirements. Also pivotal to this aspiration was the need to delineate the public and private areas of the scheme, ensuring that the apartment entrances are set apart and remain private, without any risk of intrusion or disturbance from the busier parts of the scheme.

It was important to ensure that residents felt safe and secure, and with this in mind the design ensured that access to the resident areas from both within the scheme and outside entrances was controlled through secured access. This enabled the front of house areas to be accessible to the community for a good part of the day and evening whilst continuing to maintain resident security.
Design response

Hare Hill successfully addresses the clients’ objectives of creating a vibrant community hub and a home for the people who live there, and responds to the recommendations of the HAPPI Report.

The apartments have been designed to support the Independent Living concept, allowing residents to receive care within their own home, without the need to move into a care home should their care requirements change. Indeed, many residents have moved into Hare Hill from care homes, as Hare Hill meets their care needs whilst also allowing them to live independently.

The 41 two-bedroom, and 2 one-bedroomed apartments are designed to allow flexibility of use, with the option to adapt the second bedroom as a second living space, office, guest bedroom, or to allow couples to sleep separately if required. The scheme has been designed to meet all the HCA standards as set out in Standards and Quality in Development, Lifetime Homes compliant and Fully Secured by Design accredited (parts 1 & 2), NHBC requirements and elements of the wheelchair housing design guide. The Lifetime Homes compliant layouts mean that adaptations to the apartments can be made with minimal disruption.

There are different views from each flat: long views of the hills, views across the allotments, park, or of the bowling green. The upper floor levels also have either a generous window or a walk-in glazed corner bay.

Three ground floor apartments have a patio door which opens directly on to the secure communal garden within the courtyard, and another eight have semi-private patios to the rear of the building, which have specially designed privacy screens between the dwellings.

A window has been provided between the kitchen and the communal corridor to allow a connection. Some residents enjoy this feature and have personalised the window space, whereas others have obscured the view. Either way, the option is there, and the windows allow borrowed natural light into the corridors.

The wide recesses at the apartment entrance doorways, some of which have built-in upholstered seats, help to break up the corridors and also provide social areas that encourage interaction between residents. The corridors benefit from natural light, either from windows situated at either end or from borrowed light through the stairwells and rooms.

Assistive technology, telehealth and access to a variety of IT based services all combine to assist residents and make the delivery of care easier for staff.

There are a number of design features that have been included specifically in order to make these apartments comfortable for older people and those with disabilities:

• There are recesses at the entrances to each apartment which include built-in seating to act as resting places. These door recesses also include features allowing each resident to personalise their entrance to aid recognition.
• The double bedrooms have a connecting door into the shower room for ease of access. There is also a door into the shower room from the hallway.

• The hallway is generous and has two stores off it – a tall store for coats, vacuum cleaner etc. and a separate airing cupboard for bedding, towels etc.

• The living area has the lounge at the end with a window for plenty of light and a view out.

• Further into the room there is space for dining next to the kitchen.

• The kitchen has been separated off from the lounge/dining area by a wall with a large opening, while the worksurface returns to further enclose the space and provide a wall to put a table against. This all helps to screen the kitchen without blocking out the light from the window at the end of the room.

A number of features were included to help those with dementia:

• The use of ‘memory boxes’ and kitchen windows allows residents to personalise their own apartment entrance using personal trinkets or objects, and greatly helps them to orientate themselves and encourages interaction.

• Different colour themes are used on each floor with complementing décor, soft furnishings and artwork.

• Within the apartments the spaces have been laid out so that the toilet is visible from the bed.

• There is a circular route within the secure garden space.

• The single point of access from the outside, which is through the communal space, allows residents and the bistro staff to keep an eye out for residents.

**Community Facilities**

The communal areas, which are open to the public, and the private areas which are for residents only, are separated and well defined. The bistro and lounge state their intention to welcome the public by overlooking Hare Hill Park, and are visible on the approach along Inglis Street.

The residents’ main lounge and hobbies room are beyond the secure line, meaning that they are resident exclusive, and give direct access onto the private garden space. The quiet/meeting room is nearby but has a more private outlook over the garden and is more intimate in scale. The more private of the residents’ facilities, like the assisted bathing, are located on upper floors in amongst the apartments for a more homely and domestic feel. A reminiscence and memory suite has been created on the first floor utilising the space of a large "empty room" which was designed into the scheme to enable residents to decide on its use once the scheme had opened.

Integration with the community has been achieved through engaging a local college and school to become involved with the garden; and the café is popular with the park, library and bowling green users. Care was taken when selecting the facilities to provide within the scheme, and where a facility was included for its value to the scheme, like the hair salon and treatment room, businesses from the village were encouraged to come in and use the facilities rather than starting up new businesses. In addition, the scheme has integrated with the local allotments society with regular sessions now in place for residents to have the help of the allotment users to help them to “grow their own”.
The inclusion of a garden shed in the communal gardens has now enabled a “Men (and women) in Sheds” programme to be developed which helps bring some of the men and women together to undertake garden and DIY activities.

Flexibility was created both within the communal and residential facilities by using underfloor heating, freeing up the wall space. A furniture store was included to allow table and chairs to be cleared away to accommodate different activities. The division of space within the largest space – the communal lounge and bistro, is defined by floor finishes, not walls, allowing the spaces to flow into each other and to allow for larger events. In the residents’ area, the hobby and lounge areas are linked but can be divided to make two separate spaces.

Facilities include:

- Landscaped gardens and areas to grow plants and flowers
- Welcoming, modern social spaces with information screens
- Community café popular with the users of the local amenities – library, bowling green, allotments and park
- Outside seating and dining area overlooking the park
- On-site hairdresser
- Treatment room for visiting therapists to provide a variety of health and beauty treatments
• Bathroom for hydrotherapy and help with bathing
• Residents’ hobbies room and lounge which are linked for flexibility of use but have a partition for separating them off
• Quiet lounge – a smaller more intimate space also used for meetings
• Scooter store with automated entrance
• Laundry facilities, which are well used and popular as a social space
• Access to the local amenities – library, park and bowling green

The commercial kitchen caters for the café and can also provide meals for residents should they not wish to cook for themselves, and these can be taken to individual apartments.

The communal areas are extremely well used and create a natural, social environment for the residents. These facilities help residents to form friendships and this is testified to by the way that residents look out for each other, fostering a true village community.

**Accessibility and mobility**

The building is wheelchair accessible throughout and each apartment is designed to meet ‘lifetime homes’ with future adaptability in mind.

The corridors have wide recesses at the apartment entrance doorways to ensure freedom of mobility for all residents.

Both the individual apartments and non-communal areas feature a secure door entry, promoting security and privacy for residents.

Residents are encouraged to leave their outdoor scooter in the store provided and use walking aids or wheelchairs within the scheme. The scooter store features an automated entrance to make accessibility as easy as possible.

Within the landscaping, raised planting beds allow everyone to get involved in gardening and the opportunity to grow fruit, vegetables and herbs.

**Staff needs**

The communal area features a generously sized staff office, for both the care and management staff. The large space available encourages integration and collaboration between team members. Additional office space has been provided within the second floor and can be utilised for future requirements.

The staff room provided at the first floor features a picture window over the allotments, providing a restful space to take a break. There is also a shower room for staff use only provided adjacent to the staff room.

**Staffing at the scheme**

In addition to the Rochdale Council commissioned care service at the scheme, RBH has a 36.25 hours per week scheme manager to support tenants in tenancy management, together with an out of hours response service to respond to non-care issues. In addition, a 36.25 hours per week scheme caretaker is in post to also take on a low level handy person role to assist residents with low level DIY such as hanging pictures, building flat packs, or taking curtains down for washing. These are all aspects which RBH identified as being issues to residents in maintaining tenancies and independence.
Assistive Technology and Telehealth

Assistive technology, Telehealth, and access for older people to a variety of IT based services such as broadband and wireless networks has been integrated into the scheme where possible. Access to IT based services allows people to live more independently and to access low level support from voluntary and community based services.

Specific assistive technology features include:

- The latest in hard-wired warden call technology on a Cat 6 cabling platform.
- The capability for WIFI to be bolted onto the system in some of the communal areas.
- TV / Door entry security in every apartment
- An interactive events and information screen in the main front of house communal area to inform people of café menu, and future events and activities as well as news and weather
- Capability for TeleHealth and Telecare solutions to be bespoke and person led.

HAPPI Recommendations

In response to the ten recommendations of the design of housing for older people as highlighted in the HAPPI Report, Hare Hill accommodates:

Internal Space Standards

- Flats are spacious, typically 65m² with two bedrooms and a well proportioned open lounge/dining area with through kitchen.

Natural Light to Apartments

- Living rooms have large floor to ceiling patio doors or bays. Flats with more northwest or north eastern aspect have bays with side views to the east. Bedroom windows are also large and well proportioned.

Building layout to maximise natural light and ventilation

- The layout makes best use of the site, maximising southerly aspects and views to the park, bowling green and allotments. Internal corridors are wide with recesses at flat entrances, full width / height glazing to corridor ends frame open vistas. Ground floor apartments have private patios and all residents have ready access to secure landscaped gardens.

Adaptability / Care Ready

- The flat layouts provide direct access to bedroom/bathroom with future hoist track provision. Bathrooms are fully accessible wet rooms. Assistive technology and Telecare is incorporated with future emerging technologies enabled.
• An assisted bathroom will be provided in an attractive ‘spa-room’ format, and a treatment room will be available for visiting therapists.

**Circulation areas as shared spaces**

• Corridors are wide with recesses at all flat entrances with built-in seating area. Small windows are provided from kitchens to the corridors allowing social interaction and ‘street’ feel.

• The interior design provides differentiations at floor levels and at flat entrances to aid orientation.

• Communal rooms off corridors have glazed walls allowing wide resident inclusion in activities within the main communal area. Circulation zones are flexible, open and inclusive.

**Multi-purpose social spaces**

• The main communal space is a flexible multi-purpose open plan ‘foyer’, welcoming to residents, visitors and local community. It includes a bistro, lounge, seating areas, reception, and adjacent hair and beauty salon and a hobbies/club room. This multi-use space acts as a true ‘community hub’ with the facility being the centre for an outreach programme and welcoming to local residents including park users.

• In addition, there is a small resident-only lounge fronting the private garden.

**Public Realm**

• The scheme has an enviable location for its resident group. To the south is a park, to the east a well-established bowling club and to the north a large and active allotment zone.

• The scheme benefits from, reinforces, and enhances its setting. Mature trees are retained, footpath routes retained/diverted and a landscaped public realm links seamlessly, and without barriers, to the adjacent park.

• New hedges were planted and an existing mature hedgerow retained.

• The private, secure garden area was landscaped and visible to the public realm through railings.

• A productive garden area provides growing areas for green-fingered residents.

**Energy Efficiency**

• The building is compact, with minimal external wall area, reducing heat loss through the fabric.

• The scheme achieved a Code for Sustainable Homes level 3 accreditation.

• A centralised plant ensures maximum efficiency.

• Two sides of the building are protected by mature trees.
Storage

- Externally the scheme includes cycle storage, a potting shed and a greenhouse. Internally there is a mobility scooter store with direct external access. There are also a furniture store and several conveniently-sited general stores.
- Within the apartments, the homes meet the HCA storage requirements, with two general stores, as well as a tall larder store in the kitchen.
- A central store is provided for the storage and charging of scooters. It is not intended that scooters will be taken into apartments but wheelchairs may be used in residents’ dwellings.

External shared surfaces

- There is one vehicular access into the site, which is off Inglis Street. There is also a pedestrian route following on from both footpaths on Inglis Street, one linking to the park and the other providing a route to the front entrance with resting places along the way that doesn’t require crossing the car park.
- The benches on this pedestrian route will be shaded by the avenue of trees and it is intended that they will provide safe places to watch the comings and goings at the front of the building as this area will not be clearly visible from the private garden. There is also a pedestrian link from the park to the front entrance that passes in front of the dining patio.

Allocations

All of the apartments at Hare Hill are for social rent. The allocations policy utilises the formulation of a multi-agency allocations panel made up of representatives from RBH, Rochdale Council Adult Care, the care agency provider and the local NHS Trust (as needed). In addition the scheme manager and on-site care manager are also involved. The panel meets every six weeks and cases are presented in line with priority and need.

This panel allocates cases in line with the amount of care hours needed and links this to priority, not necessarily to the time the case has been waiting in the queue. This approach identifies who would benefit from what Hare Hill as an extra care scheme offers, and gives them priority. A promise had previously been made with Rochdale Council to take some allocations from residential care and this played a part in the decision making. Wherever possible the care need mix is kept as an even split between high, medium and low care needs.

The panel met regularly throughout the latter part of 2014 and early part of 2015 to allocate spaces. Due to early negotiations and marketing, the majority of the apartments were allocated prior to completion.

Care is provided to residents by a care provider commissioned by Rochdale Council Adult Care within an agreed amount of delivered hours per week. Any additional night time requirement is paid for by residents through an additional welfare charge.

Hare Hill is suitable for people with low–medium level dementia. There has only been a single incident where a resident doing hand-washing in the kitchen sink accidentally left the tap on. During June 2014 the entire development team at RBH received a ‘Dementia Friends’ information session.
Cost effectiveness

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<th>Total Project Cost</th>
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<tr>
<td>Land Acquisition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Works Only Construction Costs</td>
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<td>Contractors Design Fees</td>
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<td>Professional Fees and Other On-Costs</td>
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<td>Furniture and Interior Design</td>
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The total cost of construction was £4.5million and the design and build contract cost was £3.9million.

Design work commenced July 2012 with planning approval granted June 2013. Construction work began on site January 2014 with completion April 2015. By June 2015 the scheme was at full occupancy, reflecting the demand for extra care accommodation in the area.

The total floor area for the scheme is 4204m² and the communal areas form 9% of the total Gross Internal Floor Area.

The scheme featured a variety of cost effective elements, such as:

- A simple footprint with load bearing walls: the only area requiring steel structure being the open communal areas.
- Identical kitchens and bathrooms in each apartment type (1 or 2 bedrooms).
- Flush façade with applied window boxes and corner bays: only the corner bays require additional structure.
- Unique but uncomplicated roof structure sitting over load-bearing walls.
- Surrounding green areas within the park contribute to the landscaped context of the scheme with no cost to RBH. The landscaped garden is relatively small so the high quality planting and garden features were concentrated for greatest effect.
- A small palette of materials was used – natural stone, brick, fibre cement roof tiles and metal clad features.
- The use of expensive natural stone was concentrated in the locations it gives most impact. For the remainder of the elevations a buff brick that toned well with the local natural stone was used to give the overall appearance of a stone built building without having to use expensive natural stone throughout. This was something negotiated at the planning stage with the Planning Officer and Civic Society.
Input from Structural and Services engineers was sought early in the design process. This meant that all aspects of the design were well integrated and a co-ordinated and relatively advanced package of information was issued for tender securing more accurate prices. In the post completion review the Contractor stated that this was their preferred approach as it allowed them better cost certainty.

There is flexibility to adapt the apartments to the residents’ needs without significant alterations to the layout. This means that items like grab rails did not need to be fitted at the outset - items that can make a space feel more institutional.

**How the scheme is working now**

The first residents moved into Hare Hill during May 2015 and the scheme was fully occupied by June 2015.

Generally the scheme is very well liked with residents advising they like the choice of either privacy in their own apartment or taking part in social and communal activities.

The café is very popular and is used by people visiting the adjacent library, bowling club, cricket club, in addition to residents and other visitors to the scheme. The café is run by a local social enterprise who RBH partner with for other projects and is staffed by local adults with mild learning disabilities – offering employment training to this disadvantaged group of people, RBH help support the social enterprise with some of the overheads.

The residents lounge tends to be used only for specific activities or occasions. Residents prefer to sit in the public areas where there is more day-to-day life and activity.

The laundry is well used and has become very much a social space.

The bench seating provided in the corridors is well liked and these are used as informal social spaces as well as creating a resting place for the residents with mobility issues.

The secure doors separating the public and private areas were originally installed as a fob/intercom access but with the weight of the fire door and overhead closers, some residents have struggled to open these doors. An automatic door opening device has now been fitted to all these communal doors.

There is a single lift at Hare Hill which can be busy as it is used by residents, visitors and care staff. The option of a second lift was discussed during the design stage but the expense of a second lift coupled with the loss of an apartment or communal space made this financially unviable.

The garden area is very popular as it provides a secure area but with views to the life and activity of the entrance and the public right of way to the adjacent library, bowling green, cricket club.

[Community café at Hare Hill]

[Vegetable beds in the garden area]
The size and layout of the apartments is well liked and the option of the second bedroom for use as a bedroom or dining room or study is popular. Ground floor apartments have a small patio area and the installation of external wall mounted clothes drying racks is very popular.

The kitchen windows opening onto the corridor areas are also popular. Some residents have taken the opportunity to personalise these windows in various creative ways. Residents have also commented that these windows give them reassurance that they are not alone.

One wheelchair user had difficulty with pulling his apartment front door open and retro-fitting a grab rail to the door has helped him with this.

Another comment has been that kitchen wall cupboards are too high for some to use although they have been fitted to HCA standards.

Carers or families take refuse out to the communal refuse store for those residents who are unable to do this for themselves. The communal refuse store has been set up with the Council in line with their recycling strategy.

**Conclusion**

The success of Hare Hill is borne out by the popularity of the scheme, both in the time to achieve full occupancy and the popularity of the community facilities. With just over a year since handover the scheme is popular with residents and with the local community.

“My mum’s been living at Hare Hill for the past 2 months. All I can say is wow what a lovely environment for my mum. The staff are all very helpful, pleasant and nothing is too much trouble for them. They offer 24 hour care, also have a lovely hairdressers and the cafe is superb. Adam who runs the café is so pleasant and always asks after my mum. It’s just a joy to visit my mum in lovely surroundings; you’ve definitely made a difference in my mum’s life. In my mum’s words she feels like the QUEEN.”

Tracey (relative of a resident in Hare Hill)
Comment posted on Housingcare.org

“Littleborough Removals are proud to announce that they have helped their first resident move into the new and magnificent facility at Hare Hill, Littleborough. I had the unpleasant job of moving many old residents out of Hare Hill House into many other sheltered housing throughout the borough but I can state without fear of contradiction that this new Extra Care Housing facility is the best I have ever been in. The rooms are wonderful, spacious and possibly one of the best settings in the country. The whole place has a warm and homely feel to it and the building is state of the art and the people of Littleborough have been truly blessed with this Home. I wouldn’t hesitate to recommend to anyone, if given the chance to live here to take it in a heart beat.”

Jamie (helped new service users move into Hare Hill)
Comment posted on Housingcare.org
"Our new purpose built Extra Care facility at Hare Hill is a very exciting project that will benefit the local community as well as older people across the borough"

Clare Tostevin, Director of Communities
Quoted in New Articles

“This is a defining moment in the way we care for our older residents. It will mean they can maintain their independence but still have the reassurance of 24-hour care on site, as well as community facilities which will keep them connected to their friends and neighbours.”

Councillor Iftikhar Ahmed, Cabinet member for Adult Care at Rochdale Borough Council
Quoted in New Articles

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

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 information about the Housing LIN’s comprehensive list of online resources on designing for an ageing population visit: www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/Design_building/

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