



Housing LIN

*Connecting people, ideas and resources*

## Case Study 152

# Designing inclusive Later Living communities for HAPPI residents

**MAY 2019**

Written for the Housing Learning and Improvement Network by **Constanze Leibrock**,  
Director, Proctor and Matthews Architects



# Summary

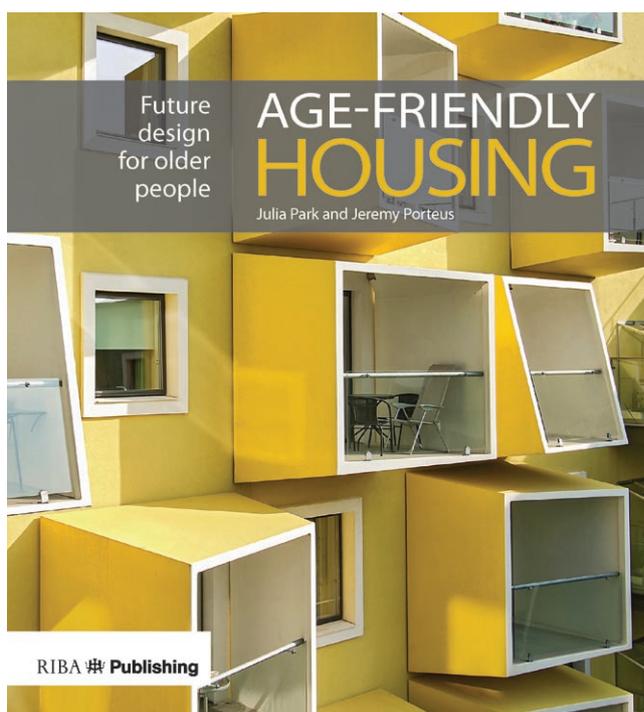
This case study report for the Housing LIN (Learning and Improvement Network) features three award winning developments for retirement living operator PegasusLife, designed by Proctor and Matthews Architects. It explores how the HAPPI design principles have come to life in each to promote social inclusion where older people are empowered to live an independent and socially active life at the heart of their wider community.

The three schemes differ in size, setting and architectural form, but they have all been carefully designed around the needs of people as they age, aiming to give the residents a true sense of belonging in their new homes and neighbourhoods.

## Introduction

As highlighted in the RIBA publication on 'Age Friendly Housing'<sup>1</sup>, there are certain qualities we all desire, require and deserve from our homes and neighbourhoods, regardless of where we live, how old we are or who we share our lives with. We all want to live in well-designed, functional and attractive spaces that are generous and flexible and make us feel comfortable and safe. We value our privacy and independence, and our wellbeing depends on sufficient daylight, fresh air and access to green amenity spaces. But above all we need to feel a sense of belonging and a social connection with both our immediate neighbours and the wider community.

Some of these qualities are particularly relevant to intergenerational living and living for older people and have also been summarised by the 'Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation'<sup>2</sup> in the 10 HAPPI principles for good design. This paper outlines how these principles have been applied to deliver award-winning inclusive later living communities.



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/type/RIBA-age-friendly-housing/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/Design-building/HAPPI/>

# Chapter House, Lichfield

Chapter House is located on the edge of the historic centre of Lichfield, Staffordshire, and comprises 38 later living apartments along with visitors' accommodation and communal areas, landscaped courts and generous gardens. A new access and parking court for 40 parking spaces is also provided as part of the development.



## ***Connecting with the local context and history***

Set within the central conservation area of Lichfield, Proctor and Matthews' design has been strongly influenced by the surrounding historic buildings, structures and gardens. A Medieval Franciscan Friary which historically occupied part of the site provided a powerful precedent and inspiration for the proposed development's spatial arrangement and architectural language. The accommodation is arranged as a series of courtyards and cloisters that not only reference the Friary's expressive gables, integrated landscape and cloistered monastic court, but also provide a comfortable, friendly and accessible environment for the Chapter House residents.

The building's architectural language draws upon ideas of historic walled gardens, a characteristic of 18th Century Lichfield, through its external envelope, which is formed by a strong and solid brick skin that wraps around the accommodation forming a new relationship with the existing wall along the site's boundary.

The dialogue between the architecture and the surrounding urban context mirrors the interaction between the residents and the existing community, thereby aiding the mutually beneficial cohesion of both urban fabric and society.

## ***Integrating existing communities***

Open space and connections with the local community are important factors in all our designs. As well as offering new gardens and courtyards, the development site includes a historic garden called 'Monks Walk' with walls dating back to the Middle Ages which has been lovingly maintained by local volunteers over the years. The new design proposes to enhance Monks Walk by extending it into a new shared courtyard containing generous amenity spaces for residents and visitors alike. A clear pedestrian route beginning at the main entrance to the development aims to provide a spatial sequence from the public realm through the development via the landscaped courtyard towards the 'Monks Walk'. Both residents and the local community are invited to explore and form new relationships through sharing a space and a passion for gardening. With this in mind the development incorporates a new garden equipment store for use of all those who maintain both 'Monks Walk' and the new communal landscaped court.



At ground floor level a large lounge area for the residents is orientated both towards the arrival space at the front of the building and towards the more tranquil courtyard area at the heart of the development. To the south-east of the communal lounge is a sheltered external seating area with attractive views across the courtyard. This area is partially covered by a set of communal balconies on the first and second floor level that allow residents on the upper floors to enjoy the fresh air without having to venture too far from their individual apartment. An orangery along the south west facing courtyard wall provides a sheltered greenhouse space with seats and planters that remains useable throughout the seasons.

*“We had been intent on moving from our rural 3 bedroom family home of 47 years into the centre of a town, to be near to transport, cultural, and social venues as well as essential services, for some ten years. When Chapter House came along and with all amenities within 6 mins walk, it ticked all the boxes. The move into our two bed apartment took place in March 2017, since when we have been invigorated and energised by the move. Our euphoria has been greatly enhanced by the nature and character of the building itself.*

*The building has accommodation around three sides of a cloister like courtyard, all of which gets direct sunlight at some part of the day. The interior south western wall of the courtyard is faced with light coloured brick which reflects light into this space. The courtyard has an orangery to complement the numerous spaces that can be used by residents.*

*Although this is a modern high spec. building, it is also reminiscent of a building that has grown organically over time. Pegasus Life, the developers of Chapter House are to be congratulated for investing in a building of quality which sits so comfortably in the streetscape and one which enhances and enriches the lives of its residents.”*

George & Wendy Arblaster, residents of Chapter House, June 2017



Chapter House won the Best Community Living Award at the Sunday Times British Homes Awards and the 2018 HAPPI Award at the Housing Design Awards.

Hear from the residents of Chapter House in this short film:  
<https://www.proctorandmatthews.com/project/chapter-house-lichfield>

# Steepleton, Tetbury

Shortlisted for RIBA's South West region awards 2019, Steepleton in Tetbury, Gloucestershire, is a retirement community providing 113 Later Living units within the Cotswolds in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The residential buildings are clustered at a comfortable domestic scale around a series of open courtyards that provide older residents with a sense of identity and security and encourage the establishment of small community groupings within the wider framework of the 'Later Living' village. A publicly accessible Village Hall at the heart of the site contains communal facilities including a large dining area and resident's lounge, care and therapy provision, IT facilities and an exercise room. A central communal court and open-air bathing pond accompany a Spa that can be used by residents and the local community alike and there is an inviting public café open to all located along the street frontage.



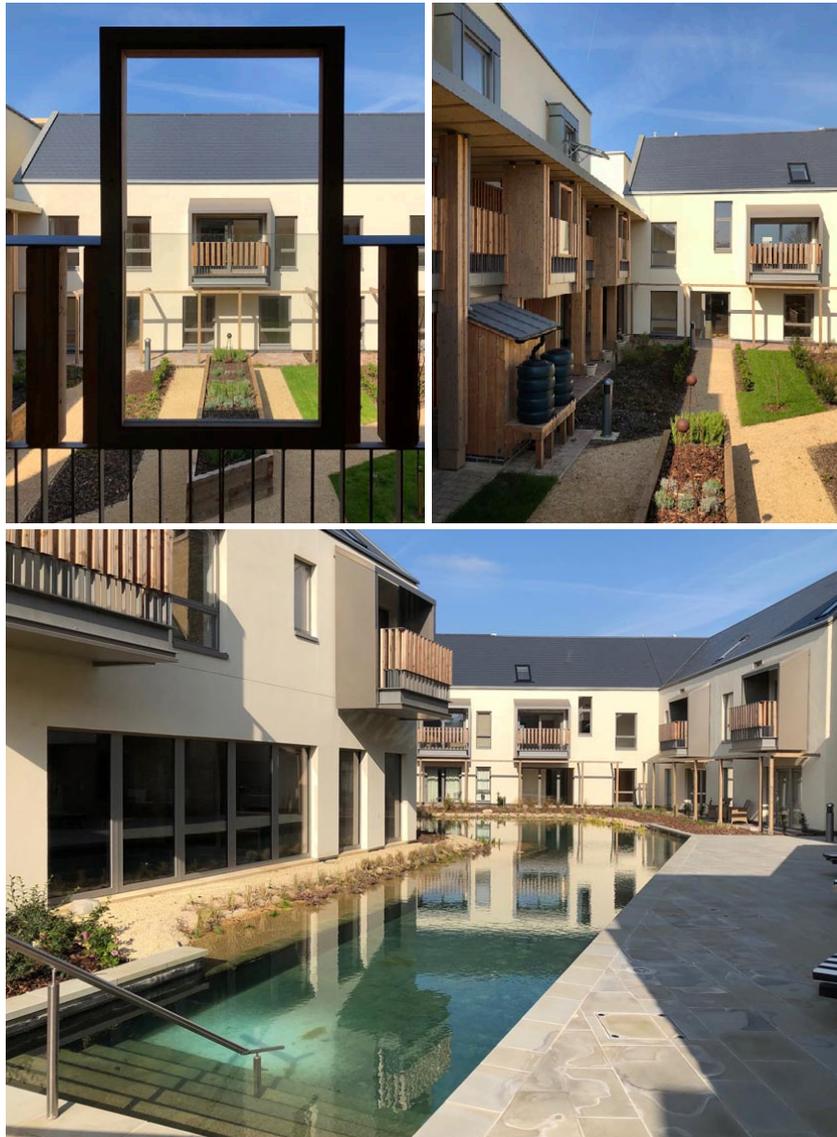
Proctor and Matthews designed the development to deliver a varied range of public, semi-public and private areas. The more relaxed juxtaposition of different environments aims to foster opportunities for informal interaction and neighbourly gathering on a day-to-day basis.

## ***Designing for social interaction***

A key element of the courtyard clusters is the Ambulatory, a cloistered walkway to both ground and first floor units. This is not merely conceived as a way of circulating through each cluster but provides a social engagement space with group seating areas for meeting neighbours, afternoon tea or even playing chess. The sheltered seating areas are strategically spaced around apartment entrances and kitchens to nurture neighbourly contact and enable the creation of community groupings. Architecturally, this stacked arcade breaks up the courtyard elevations and delivers an animated frontage to the courtyards and public realm.

## ***Providing a flexible living environment***

The self-contained one and two bed apartments consist of living spaces, private kitchens and bathrooms, alongside generous private outdoor space and external storage. Sliding walls within each apartment offer greater spatial flexibility for adaptation as residents' circumstances change. The maisonettes make full use of the roof void to enhance day lighting into each dwelling and boost the sense of space within units by the incorporation of a double height space.



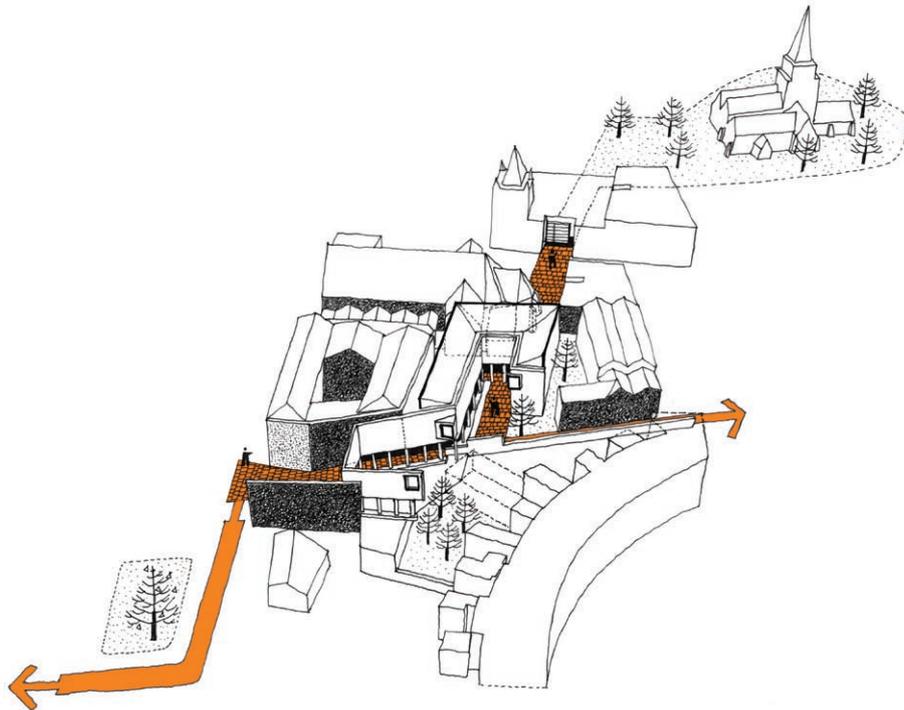
## ***Encouraging an (inter) active lifestyle***

At the centre of each communal courtyard is a landscaped garden with allotments where residents and visitors are encouraged to exercise in the fresh air or jointly participate in gardening activities. The individual courtyards form a sequence of spaces that creates a longer circular walk - or exercise route - around the development. Further opportunities for social interaction and physical activities are provided by the therapy and exercise suite along with the communal natural swimming pond adjacent to the Village Hall.

Steepleton won the HAPPI concept award at the 2015 Housing Design Awards.

# John Dower House, Cheltenham

Also in Gloucestershire, John Dower House is a Later Living residential development located in the heart of Cheltenham's central conservation area. Currently on-site, the project will provide 77 one and two bedroom apartments alongside supporting facilities such as a communal lounge, landscaped courtyards and underground parking. The development aims to create a welcoming and safe environment which will facilitate independent retirement living where residents can enjoy the freedom and privacy of their own homes, whilst benefiting from communal outdoor spaces and a public interface with local residents and visitors to Cheltenham.



## ***Adding to the urban and social fabric***

Inspired by the town's historic architecture and rich history, the scheme adopts a number of design strategies that integrate the project into its sensitive surroundings. The development repairs an existing fragmented public lane and defines a new pedestrian route running diagonally across the site. In doing so, Proctor and Matthews Architects has created a sequence of spaces that reference local promenades and parades, thereby drawing from and contributing to the identity of the neighbourhood. A publicly accessible courtyard at the centre of the scheme simultaneously creates an attractive outlook for the John Dower House residents and invites the wider public into the development to enjoy a tranquil hidden space within the centre of Cheltenham.

## ***Creating links between the internal and external environment***

John Dower House has been designed to the specific needs and requirements of older people, promoting individuality and social interaction. As many residents will spend extended periods of time in their apartments, creating a relationship between inside and outside was of utmost

importance. Private balconies, a vertical garden and many generous shared spaces offer a well-considered blend of private and communal space, avoiding isolation among residents and encouraging a strong sense of community.

Each balcony is designed to provide a visual and physical connection between the inside and outside world by forming an additional external room and encouraging residents to spend time outside while still enjoying the safety of their own space. A staggered balcony arrangement within the courtyard allows a dialogue to occur between neighbours and aims to nurture a sense of community amongst residents.



### ***Feeling part of the wider neighbourhood***

At ground floor level there is a large lounge for the residents, which is orientated towards the courtyard and pedestrian route through the site. The residents' lounge is fully glazed on both sides to maximise lighting levels and perception of space and to allow good views over the activities in the public realm. A small visitor flat is available to all residents who would like to accommodate a visiting relative or friend within the building.

In addition to the internal communal spaces there is a wide range of outdoor areas, including the courtyard, water garden, various grassed areas and cloistered sections of the pedestrian route that invite residents to do some gardening, go for a walk or simply sit on a bench and observe community life.

*“PegasusLife has commissioned three projects from Proctor and Matthews. All of the sites are in sensitive locations, either in close proximity to listed historic buildings or within important conservation areas.*

*Proctor and Matthews has created award-winning designs that respond well to their challenging historic contexts, whilst also being contemporary. Their designs are not only visually appealing, but have addressed the wants and needs of an ageing population. This is reflected in the feedback we receive from the residents of the developments..”*

**Mike Gill, Regional Development Director, PegasusLife**

## Conclusion

As is widely recognised, older people are particularly vulnerable to isolation, but we all need to be part of a wider community to truly feel a sense of belonging and to feel at home. A thoughtfully designed and well detailed living environment is important for everybody, independent of age, background, location or tenure. By providing good quality homes and neighbourhoods for all generations we can achieve true social inclusion and sustainable intergenerational communities for everyone.

## Key learning points

- Enabling social and physical connections with the wider community is critical for the success and sustainability of any residential development.
- A consciously designed environment can help to encourage social interaction between neighbours and nurture a feeling of belonging and a sense of home.
- Communal and private external spaces deserve the same level of design consideration as the internal environment and are especially important for residents with an increasingly limited mobility.

## 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 a sophisticated network bringing together over 25,000 housing, health and social care professionals in England, Wales and Scotland 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.

To view other resources on designing for an ageing population, visit our 'design hub' at:

<https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/Design-building/>

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