



Housing LIN

*Connecting people, ideas and resources*

## Case Study 160

# A hallmark for naturally occurring intergenerational living – Hanham Hall, South Gloucestershire

**OCTOBER 2020**

Written for the Housing Learning and Improvement Network by **Simon Bayliss**, Managing Partner at architects HTA, and **Lucy Cook**, Sovereign Housing Association



# Introduction - about Hanham Hall

The award-winning Hanham Hall in South Gloucestershire is England's first large-scale volume house builder scheme to achieve the zero-carbon standard, and is one of the flagship Carbon Challenge schemes promoted by the Homes and Communities Agency (now Homes England). At the core of HTA's approach, was a belief that building sustainable communities is about more than meeting codes, it means creating a place where people want to build their lives, where they feel safe and comfortable, and where they are inspired to live harmoniously with their environment.

Located near Bristol, the 9 hectare site adjoins the green belt and suburban housing. It provides 187 new private and affordable homes from 1 bedroom flats to 5 bedroom houses, with complimentary community and commercial uses.

The restored Grade II\* Listed Hanham Hall is central to the vision - providing the site with a sense of identity and history while adding vibrancy to the community through new uses such as office space, a crèche, and cafe. The layout of the homes is built around the Hall, revealing and framing views and structured by the historic gardens and field patterns to connect into the surrounding park and countryside.



## Innovations in design



The homes are packed with innovative ideas. They prioritise views and light with generous windows oriented to maximise solar collection. They open on to large balconies and verandahs to create strong connections with the surrounding communal gardens and countryside. Shared gardens incorporate allotments, green houses, play areas, an orchard, retained mature trees and hedgerows while integrating swales and ponds as part of the SUDs solution. The usable volume of the home has been exploited using the advantages of SIP panels to open up living rooms into high cathedral ceilings. Innovative home layouts split living spaces across multiple floors making homes that deliver more usable space while making the most of views out. The homes combine stack and cross ventilation, large openings, deep roof overhangs, balconies and shutters to avoid overheating. As a result

of all these innovations we exceeds a wide range of industry benchmarks including delivering the 'Zero Carbon' standard, CfsH Level 5, Building for Life 12, CEEQUAL Excellent and BREEAM Very Good for the refurbished Hall.

The scheme addresses local housing requirements by providing a wide range of accommodation, from 1 bedroom flats and coach houses to five bedroom houses. These are arranged in terraces, semi-detached and detached arrangements to create varied urban form. A significant proportion of the homes are family homes with parking in-curtilage or adjacent to the home. Smaller apartments provide an accessible entry level to the housing market, whilst coach houses provide a good intermediate step between houses and apartments.



## Naturally occurring intergenerational living

Not designed with older people specifically in mind, the homes themselves have attracted older residents from elsewhere in the country who have moved to Hanham to live in a sustainable community. The development provides housing for people at all stages of their life and has quickly become an intergenerational neighbourhood. Homes are grouped in terraces, semi-detached and detached to create varied urban form. A significant proportion of the homes are family homes with parking in-curtilage or adjacent to the home. Smaller apartments provide an accessible entry level to the housing market, whilst coach houses provide a good intermediate step between houses and apartments.



# Community-led placemaking – residents building a community

Hanham Hall is now run by its residents, who share a Community Interest Company that manages and maintains the buildings and grounds. The community are active, running their own Facebook page and staging regular events including summer fairs. It promotes an active community with car-sharing clubs, gardening groups and walking school bus projects. Much use is made of the community room in the restored hall. The parish council also use the hall for committee meetings. We believe the combination of the design and the management company has enabled residents to shape their community and to create the resources they need for a sustainable future. Whilst Hanham Hall has been tailored closely to its environment, this approach to 'Placemaking' is replicable anywhere. The key ingredients are a holistic approach to design and an understanding that people want to be empowered rather than coerced to live sustainably.



A resident focus group, and subsequent questionnaire, proved that Hanham Hall has a strong sense of community and neighbourhood connectivity. On arrival many residents said their reason for moving was either to downsize or to buy their first home with one of the strongest attractions of the development being the sense of community. One resident said, 'That is one of the great things I love about living here - the community is very strong and vibrant.'

Overall, residents responded positively to questions on active lifestyle citing the surrounding greenery and natural environment as inviting to spend time in. The residents group puts on lots of events both inside and outside that invite people to take a curious approach to their environment: 'And we've got the beehives. They are up in the far corner. We had 60 odd pounds of honey. And we all made books the other day - a local artist came to teach us. Basically if you have ideas we are always welcome to them.'

82.46% of residents agreed or strongly agreed that the neighbourhood gave them opportunities to stop and talk with people regularly and that 81.82% felt the design of the home and its environment lifted their spirits.

# Resident's voice

Diana Warden, a Hanham Hall resident said, "I moved to Hanham Hall as I was keen to reduce my carbon footprint. This made the rainwater harvesting, PV Panels and construction of the building attractive to me. I was also nearing retirement age and decided to downsize, as my son had moved out. I was looking for a home with features that would suit my needs as I grew older and less physically able. The homes at Hanham Hall have stairwells which are less steep than the average stairs and have a bedroom and shower room on the ground floor."

"There's a strong community in Hanham Hall and opportunities to engage with others which I would not necessarily have been able to access easily living in the wider community. I attend weekly yoga classes and a monthly book club. I also learnt about beekeeping and have an allotment, all on my doorstep. I've been involved in The Environment Group and organising events since I moved here."

"There's a mix of young and old living here, families and single households, and I have gotten to know my immediate neighbours very well. I know the individual children who greet me by name and I've enjoyed watching them grow up, and meeting the new family members that are born! There have been events such as Bug Hunts and Halloween/Easter events that attract both adults and children. We have all mixed very well, all eager to learn about our wildlife."

"I enjoy living in an environment that nurtures and protects the local flora and fauna, walking through the wildflower meadows with my dog, and watching the changing of the flowers across the seasons. I often have hedgehogs, bats and foxes visiting my garden in the late evenings and we have even captured badgers on film when visited the allotments."

"People talk about putting on weight during Covid Lockdown; my weight increased because of all the baking classes children did at home as they shared cakes and scones with me! Residents would go out of their way to ask if I needed anything from the supermarket when they made online food orders or visited the supermarket, I felt cared for."



# Lessons learned

The successful delivery of this development required the need to balance the objectives of developer, design team, local planning authority and government, on a site with challenging constraints as a starting point, containing a listed building and set in an area of sensitive landscape character. As a government flagship scheme there was no option to fail. The design team used dialogue with neighbours, the HCA Design Panel, South Gloucestershire Council and the Hanham Abbots Parish Council, in sometimes challenging, but intellectually explanatory ways. The airing of conflicting views during workshops and events with stakeholders was a common occurrence in the design process, but the frequency with which the stakeholders met enabled all to achieve a higher level of understanding about climate change and the implications of a zero-carbon rationale. Over time, this led to a common vision and enthusiasm to achieve the objectives of the scheme.

By design, Hanham Hall has considered intergenerational living through thinking about community needs. Hanham Hall enjoys many features that are used throughout the community that encourage intergenerational interactions. Allotments and parks are available as well as open spaces for walking, play spaces, greenhouses and the community orchard. These spaces are used by the whole community, of all ages, and bring together outside enjoyment with added health benefits of outdoor activity.



## 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 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 'ideas lab' on specialist/supported housing, our online and regional networked activities, and consultancy services:

- connect people, ideas and resources to inform and improve the range of housing that enables older and disabled people to live independently in a home of their choice
- provide insight and intelligence on latest funding, research, policy and practice to support sector learning and improvement
- showcase what's best in specialist/supported housing and feature innovative projects and services that demonstrate how lives of people have been transformed, and
- support commissioners and providers to review their existing provision and develop, test out and deliver solutions so that they are best placed to respond to their customers' changing needs and aspirations

To access a selection of related resources on intergenerational living, visit our dedicated pages at: <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/Housing/HousingforOlderPeople/intergenerational-housing/>

And for more information about how the Housing LIN can advise and support your organisation on intergenerational and multi-generational approaches to shaping your housing and community 'offer', go to:

<https://www.housinglin.org.uk/consultancy/consultancy-services/>

## Published by

Housing Learning and Improvement Network  
c/o PRP, The Ideas Store  
10 Lindsey Street, Clerkenwell  
London EC1A 9HP

Email: [info@housinglin.org.uk](mailto:info@housinglin.org.uk)

Web: [www.housinglin.org.uk](http://www.housinglin.org.uk)

Twitter: [@HousingLIN](https://twitter.com/HousingLIN), [@HousingLINNews](https://twitter.com/HousingLINNews) & [@HLINConsult](https://twitter.com/HLINConsult)