



Housing LIN

Connecting people, ideas and resources

Case Study 182

The Depot, South Manchester - A neighbourhood approach to intergenerational living.

JULY 2026

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Background information

The Depot in south Manchester demonstrates how a large-scale residential development can embed intergenerational living within a mainstream neighbourhood, designed by Buttress Architects and managed by Mosscafe St Vincent's Housing Group (MSV).

By combining family housing, later living provision and integrated care within a single masterplan, the scheme reflects the findings of the 2026 All-Party Parliamentary Group on Housing and Care for Older People Inquiry into Creating Intergenerational Communities, showing how housing can function as essential social infrastructure that supports ageing in place, social connection and long-term community resilience.



Bowes House: HAPPI-informed homes for independent living at The Depot

Introduction



The APPG Inquiry report, Creating Intergenerational Communities

Most housing in the UK continues to be structured around distinct life stages: first homes, family housing and later living. However, people's lives are more fluid, their needs evolve and circumstances change. Too often, this results in people leaving established communities to meet housing needs later in life.

The Depot in Manchester takes a different approach. Rather than designing for a single moment, it has been conceived as a long-term neighbourhood. It allows residents to remain, adapt and belong as their lives change.

This aligns with the recent APPG Inquiry report¹, which frames housing as essential social infrastructure. It supports connection, resilience and wellbeing across generations. The Depot reflects this approach, providing a clear example of "sharing the location", where different generations live in separate homes within the same neighbourhood.

(1) <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/Housing/HousingforOlderPeople/intergenerational-housing/appg-inquiry-intergenerational-communities>

From transport hub to connected neighbourhood

The Depot occupies the site of a former bus depot that operated for over a century. Following its closure in 2011, the site offered a significant redevelopment opportunity but also presented a clear urban challenge.

For decades, the bus depot acted as a barrier between neighbouring communities. The masterplan addressed this by reinstating streets, reconnecting routes and restoring the urban grain. This transformed an inward-looking site into an integrated and walkable neighbourhood.

This reconnection was a fundamental part of the scheme as successful neighbourhoods depend not just on who lives there, but on how people move, interact and share space. The Depot's spatial strategy established the conditions for proximity, continuity and everyday overlap, essential ingredients for intergenerational living.

A continuum, not a collection, of homes

An innovative partnership approach, orchestrated by Rowlinson - a Northwest based contractor and developer with a long established track record in the delivery of residential, commercial and mixed-use projects - brought industry experts together; Buttress, Manchester City Council, MSV Housing, Rise Homes and Homes England, each utilising their sector expertise, with Rowlinson progressing the scheme as both developer and construction partner.

Its defining characteristic is not simply the creation of over 300 homes, but the breadth and integration of its housing offer. The scheme brings together:

- Family homes, including shared ownership
- Affordable one- and two-bedroom apartments
- Over-55s independent living, at Bowes House
- Extra care provision, at Elmswood Park
- and NHS step-down apartments



Landscape Strategy Masterplan

Individually, these elements are not unusual. What distinguishes The Depot is how they are combined. Rather than existing as discrete tenures or typologies, they form a continuum of housing types enabling residents, should they choose, to remain within the same neighbourhood as their needs evolve.

Importantly, 112 homes at an affordable market rent in the extra care housing dwelling and HAPPI apartments are designed for people aged 55 and over and are fully integrated into the wider development. This avoids the spatial separation that can lead to isolation, embedding later living within everyday neighbourhood life.

This approach supports long-term stability and reflects the APPG's emphasis on ageing in the right place. In doing so, it also supports wider outcomes associated with intergenerational communities, including reduced isolation, improved wellbeing and stronger neighbourly support.

"The Depot is a truly intergenerational development built with affordability, adaptability and a keen sense of design. Generations can, and do, mix freely whilst people can upsize, downsize, or adapt their existing space to meet their changing needs, all whilst remaining within their community. In short, The Depot is a development for all."

David Chilton Chief Executive Officer, Rowlinson

Later living, embedded within the neighbourhood

The later living offer is also anchored by Bowes House and Elmswood Park, forming a graduated model of independence and care embedded within a wider regeneration vision. Since the 1990s, the Strategic Regeneration Framework has promoted higher-specification, lower-cost homes with diverse tenures, establishing the area as a neighbourhood of choice.



Bowes House



Elmswood Park

Aligned with this strategy, the scheme delivers high-quality, mixed-tenure housing on brownfield land, addressing demographic need while supporting economic growth. Designed in collaboration with Buttress, the development offers increased quality, sustainability and choice at scale within a cohesive masterplan.

Bowes House provides HAPPI-informed² homes for independent living, with accessible layouts, generous space, natural light and private outdoor areas, supported by shared social spaces. Elmswood Park extends this with extra care apartments organised around a central garden, alongside communal lounges and activity spaces.

Crucially, these elements are integrated into the neighbourhood rather than segregated, supporting an intergenerational community. A phased delivery model enables tenures to be absorbed without competition. The scheme also reinstates connectivity, stepping down in height from the site's frontage and adopting an existing grid layout to respond sensitively to its context.

Designing for everyday interaction

A diverse housing mix alone does not create intergenerational communities. The Depot places equal emphasis on the public realm, the spaces between buildings where everyday life unfolds.

The landscape strategy includes tree lined streets, pedestrian priority routes and shared and private green spaces, with parking set back to reduce the dominance of vehicles.



Housing with set back parking



Shared space at Elmswood Park

These elements support frequent, informal encounters. These small interactions help build familiarity, trust and social connection over time.

This responds directly to the APPG's warning against "co-location without connection". Rather than placing different groups alongside one another, the scheme creates opportunities for meaningful interaction through shared space and movement.

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

"Intergenerational communities are most successful when housing, shared space and care provision work together as social infrastructure, supporting everyday interaction, mutual support and long-term community resilience."

David Coulson – Associate, Buttress Architects



Aerial view of the development

Connecting housing and health

One of the most distinctive aspects of The Depot is the inclusion of NHS step-down accommodation. This provides short-term housing for individuals leaving hospital, offering a more domestic and supportive environment for recovery.

This integration of housing with healthcare demonstrates the broader role residential development can play within emerging neighbourhood health systems, in:

- Supporting recovery in a more domestic environment
- Reducing pressure on acute services
- Enabling a smoother transition back to independent living

This reflects a growing understanding that housing can play a preventative and enabling role within wider health systems, particularly when integrated within mixed, supportive communities, as also highlighted in this recent Department of Health and Social Care guide.³

(3) <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/type/Housing-and-health-in-local-strategic-health-planning/>

Delivery and long-term stewardship

The Depot was delivered through a partnership between public and private stakeholders, including Manchester City Council, Rowlinson, MSV Housing and Rise Homes. Construction took place during the Covid 19 pandemic and a challenging economic period.

Experience since completion reinforces an important point. Design alone cannot guarantee social outcomes. While the scheme establishes a strong framework, its success depends on how spaces are used and managed over time.

Shared spaces require ongoing stewardship to achieve their full potential. As highlighted in the APPG, intergenerational communities are sustained through management, partnership and continued engagement as well as design.



Bev Craig and Andy Burnham opening Bowes House

Lessons for future places

Several key themes have emerged from our work on The Depot:

- **Progress meaningful partnerships:** Create a team made up of strength, expertise and a shared vision
- **Thinking at a neighbourhood scale:** Intergenerational living is most effective when embedded across a whole place
- **Provide homes that respond to changing needs:** A range of housing types allows residents to remain within their community
- **Integrate later living into everyday settings:** Avoiding spatial separation reduces isolation and strengthens inclusion
- **Prioritise shared space:** Public realm enables interaction and fosters a sense of belonging
- **Plan for stewardship:** Long term management and activation are essential to sustain social value.

Conclusion: A grounded model for intergenerational living

Projects such as The Depot illustrate how brownfield sites can be transformed into neighbourhoods that support people at every stage of life. Their value lies not only in the mix of homes provided, but in how those homes are connected spatially, socially and functionally, shaping everyday experiences of community, continuity and belonging.

More broadly, the scheme reflects a shift away from housing as a series of individual products towards housing as part of a wider eco-system that supports how people live over time. This aligns closely with the APPG's emphasis on housing as social infrastructure and its role in enabling meaningful intergenerational living.

The lesson for future development is clear. Creating intergenerational communities is not simply about combining different housing types, but about designing the relationships between them through shared spaces, integrated care and long-term stewardship.

When delivered effectively, this approach provides a practical response to demographic change and health inequality, supporting more connected, resilient and inclusive neighbourhoods. As the APPG concludes, intergenerational communities should become the norm rather than the exception. The Depot offers a clear and practical example of how this ambition can be realised.

Note

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

About Buttress Architects

"Architecture for an equitable tomorrow"



Buttress is a leading design studio delivering architecture, heritage consultancy, urban design, interior design and conservation services. A certified B Corporation, the practice is committed to creating places that generate long-term positive impact for communities, clients and the environment.

Guided by its purpose *"Architecture for an equitable tomorrow"*, Buttress places social value, inclusion and sustainability at the heart of its work. This ethos underpins the studio's approach to design, ensuring that every project looks to improve access, opportunity and quality of life through the built environment, while responding responsibly to climate and cultural context.

Working collaboratively with a diverse range of clients and stakeholders, Buttress delivers projects that are shaped by a deep understanding of people, place and heritage. The practice combines creativity with technical ability to develop thoughtful, context-driven solutions that balance the practical and the visionary.

At its core, Buttress believes that architecture is as much about people as it is about buildings, designing environments that are meaningful, resilient and designed for the future. Through this people-first approach, the studio continues to create places that are not only well-designed, but fair, enduring and widely valued.

About the Housing LIN

The Housing LIN is a sophisticated network bringing together over 15,000 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
- provide access to intelligence on the latest funding, research, policy and practice developments
- raise the profile of specialist and supported housing with developers, commissioners and operators, and
- attract business to help and support clients plan, design and operate aspirational housing and services for people of all ages.

If you found this Case Study of interest, the Housing LIN curates a dedicate webpage on intergenerational living where you can access a range of other case studies, reports and guides.

Browse at:

<https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/Housing/HousingforOlderPeople/intergenerational-housing/>

Published by

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

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