



## Getting the housing offer right for older people: Dreywood Court, Romford

Designed by architects Penoyre & Prasad, and developed by Willmott Dixon on behalf of East Thames and the London Borough of Havering, Dreywood Court has been recognised for its outstanding design for people aged over 55. It was featured in Inside Housing's prestigious list of the Top 50 UK Affordable Housing Developments in 2014 and took home the Sunday Times award for Best Supported Housing Development 2013.



Written for the Housing Learning & Improvement Network by **Daniel French**, and David **Grant** of East Thames, **Nicholas Kingham** of L.B. of Havering and **Caroline Kaiser** of Sanctuary Care

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## 1. Introduction

Dreywood Court is a mixed tenure, 98 unit retirement community designed specifically for residents aged over 55. The scheme opened in July 2013. It comprises 78 homes for social rent, 20 homes for shared ownership, an onsite care and support service and a wealth of communal facilities common to extra care housing schemes of this size.

The scheme was designed by architects Penoyre & Prasad, developed by Willmott Dixon on behalf of East Thames and the London Borough of Havering. Since opening last year, Dreywood Court has been



recognised for its outstanding design. It was featured in Inside Housing's prestigious list of the Top 50 UK Affordable Housing Developments in 2014, and took home the Sunday Times award for Best Supported Housing Development 2013.

## 2. Background

### Funding

The scheme was supported by £10m of grant subsidy from the Greater London Authority, which included a proportion of East Thames recycled Capital Grant Funding. This grant support was critical in achieving the viability for the scheme which had an overall development value of £16m.

The London Borough of Havering's business case for Dreywood Court was based upon the forecasted financial savings that could be achieved by allocating people extra care housing and preventing them from moving into residential care when they were no longer able to remain in their own home. Dreywood Court was designed to enable people to achieve a more fulfilling social life whilst living independently in a scheme which caters for their individual needs. Research carried out in Havering amongst the voluntary sector and the Borough's over 65s, identified that loneliness and isolation significantly contributed to poor health and poor social care outcomes. The investment in Dreywood Court was in response to this research.

### Land

The scheme was developed on land previously occupied by a redundant sheltered scheme that no longer met with the London Borough of Havering's standards. The Council remained a key partner in steering both the design and level of community provision included within the final scheme. A discounted land deal was agreed, which enabled East Thames to purchase the land for £1m. In return, the Council retained 100% nomination rights on the social rent properties, benefited from facilities which were designed to a high specification, contributed to the scheme's design throughout its development and shared ownership properties were ring-fenced to residents of the borough.

## Sustainability

As an overarching sustainability measure for the scheme, Dreywood Court has received the Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4 certification. Key elements of the environmental strategy have been:

- Renewable energy generation, to a level of typically 20% of all energy used within the scheme, generated through the photovoltaic roof panels.
- A brown roof installed to reduce rainwater runoff and enhance insulation. Rainwater harvesting has also been implemented.
- Emphasis on maximising the efficiency of the building's fabric as the most cost effective means to increase thermal/acoustic performance.
- Emissions produced by the subcontractor and project team during travel to and from the site were considered and targeted for reduction. To help achieve this we source 21% of trades from within 15 miles of the site.
- Car sharing incentives were put in place. Willmott Dixon's project staff were able to claim back costs for additional mileage where journeys were shared.
- The Willmott Dixon Green Bonus Scheme – a global company policy - encouraged employees to opt for low emission vehicles in return for personal cash incentives.

## 3. Development & Design

From concept through to detailed design, Dreywood Court has been aligned to a range of design standards. The first of these was East Thames' own employers' requirements and design guide. This included required space standards for private and communal areas and compliance with The London Housing Design Guide. Other design standards applied include:

- **Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4**  
The scheme attained sufficient credits in assessment to meet the targeted Level 4 certification.
- **Lifetime Homes**  
The apartments are built to this standard, ensuring homes can be adapted to the future needs of the occupant.
- **Secure by Design**  
Security was kept at the forefront of the design process. Access is via a permanently staffed main reception area. All doors and windows in the homes are lockable and have been built to high 'Secure by Design' standards. CCTV is in use throughout, alongside a video door entry system and a 24 hour warden emergency call system.
- **Habinteg's Wheelchair Design Guide**  
A key consideration when building a scheme for over 55's is accessibility, East Thames incorporated many of these design principles.



Development of the scheme design was underpinned by community involvement. East Thames worked to understand the views of local residents and the aspirations of future occupants;

1. Planning design workshops were held in Gidea Park Library. This ensured that the project team were able to take on board local resident views and that these were reflected in the submitted planning application.
2. Letters were delivered to more than 200 homes in the area immediately surrounding the site. These letters detailed the scheme, its design and the purpose of development. Responses were collected in writing and via a dedicated telephone line, giving local residents the opportunity to provide feedback and discuss any concerns.
3. Design proposals were positively received and the consultation event was attended by more than 30 local residents.
4. The local authority was involved in all design meetings up to start on site. In particular the council's care and support team was involved in ensuring the scheme was designed with the residents in mind.
5. Planning was successfully awarded on the first application.
6. The provision of additional community infrastructure within the scheme design was a key element. This includes a range of day to day services; ironing, laundry, collection of dry cleaning, cleaning individual flats, shopping, prescription collection and a handyman service.
7. DELTA, the tenant management organisation on the estate adjacent to the scheme, was fully engaged throughout the planning and development process. This continued during construction and was facilitated through community events. Willmott Dixon organised 5-a-side football tournaments and funded a football coaching programme during school holidays to help build ties with the local community.
8. Now the scheme is complete, engagement has been driven through 'Friends of Dreywood', a community group run by residents for residents. The East Thames management team has helped set up and initially facilitate the group. The aim is for Friends of Dreywood to work closely with the local community and raise money for resident activities, such as day trips, craft activities, dances, local volunteering and gardening and nature projects on the scheme's grounds.



### Resident Testimonial

"I don't care what anyone tells me; in 50 years I've never had anyone tell me that they could find me a place like this. In my view, it is a five star hotel."

*Terrence King, Dreywood Court resident*



## 4. Housing

The concept of Dreywood Court was focussed in part on the way people relate to their environment and, with this in mind, the Borough commissioned a 'Landlord Plus' contract alongside the care and support contract. This contract addressed how people act practically and technically with the resources of their environment, from ensuring that the facilities



meet their needs, to improving social well-being through community activities. During all stages of the project the progress was monitored and challenged by members through a dedicated overview and scrutiny committee.

### Landlord Plus Service

The aim of the 'Landlord Plus' service is to enable the landlord to work with residents and the on-site care and support provider beyond the limits of the traditional housing management role to create and maintain a safe, supportive and inclusive environment that promotes independence, health, well-being and social inclusion.

East Thames and Sanctuary Home Care work in partnership to support residents to achieve the following high level outcomes:

- To be in control of their service
- To receive a flexible service that is responsive to changing need and individual circumstances on a day to day basis
- To maintain dignity and to be respected
- To encourage positive health and wellbeing
- To feel a part of their local community.

Individual outcomes for residents are based upon assessed needs at the point of referral using the seven domains:

- Improved health and emotional wellbeing
- Improved quality of life
- Making a contribution
- Exercise of choice and control
- Freedom from discrimination and harassment
- Economic wellbeing
- Personal dignity and respect.

Moving into an extra care development has already resulted in positive changes, such as those listed above, for many of the residents living at Dreywood Court:

- Wendy\* is paraplegic. By coming to the scheme she is able to move freely around the complex mixing with neighbours and accessing the wider community. By moving from hospital to a nursing home and then to the scheme Wendy has been able to increase independence by having her own space where family and friends can visit without restrictions. She has reported being very happy with what she can achieve at the scheme. This move involved close planning with the health authority which continues to fund the support. In addition to enhancing her well-being moving out of residential care has saved considerable funding for the health authority public purse.
- Christine & Ernest were childhood sweethearts who lost touch until a chance holiday encounter in 2012. Their romance was quickly re-ignited and after moving into Dreywood Court as a couple in 2013 they got married in February this year. See Romford Recorder article.
- Daredevil Terry undertook a sponsored sky dive for Parkinsons UK in memory of his late wife Jean, raising £250. Not something most people would do of any age – let alone on Friday 13th!

## Community and Inclusion

East Thames co-ordinates the approach to social inclusion at Dreywood Court. This has seen a range of services brought into the scheme from chiropodists and opticians to visiting church services. In addition, East Thames employs an activities co-ordinator who works jointly with Sanctuary's social inclusion officer to provide a varied menu of activities at least five days a week. This has enabled a calendar of activities to be offered at the scheme including:



- Arts & crafts
- Board games
- Bingo
- Baking
- Religious services
- Coordination classes with Sid the visiting pat-dog
- Exercise sessions
- Entertainment evenings
- Reminiscence
- Flower arranging & horticulture

Following further resident consultation new activity sessions have been added and new dishes have been included on the menu in the Restaurant. While Dreywood Court benefits from good transport links to plenty of local amenities, the scheme itself features a comprehensive restaurant service run by Caterplus (Contract Caterer of the Year 2014); a hair salon and treatment room run by a resident led 'Therapy Learning Centre'; five community lounges; a hobby room; and a meeting room.

Working jointly with Sanctuary Home Care, East Thames have been able to target those residents who have been isolated in the community who are perhaps lacking in confidence to join in with group activities. Letting residents take the lead on what is on offer has seen attendance increase. There are many residents who only leave their apartments to participate in certain sessions and it is hoped that, with time, these individuals will be more likely to try new things.

Additionally, the extra care housing manager has worked in partnership with Havering Council to ensure residents, where eligible, are claiming housing benefit. As a result, regular surgeries have been set up at the scheme for one-to-one welfare benefits advice sessions to look at individual resident's finances.

## **Hairdressers and therapy rooms**

Therapy Learning Centre was given the opportunity of providing a hair and beauty service at the scheme. They operate as an NVQ training centre which means services are delivered by students with experienced supervision. The benefits to the residents have been that a wide range of services are available at a very low cost – a haircut costs around £3 and a manicure only £5. Providing these facilities allows residents who are largely unable to leave the scheme to feel part of the local community.



## **Volunteers**

It has been possible to enhance the service provision at Dreywood Court by working with East Thames' Volunteer Service & Havering Association of Voluntary and Community Organisations (HAVCO) to deliver at least 24 volunteer hours per week at this scheme.

This has covered befriending and additional time spent working with residents on learning to use appliances, settling into a new area and helping those with disabilities participate in communal activities.

## **Residents' association**

Residents are empowered to help shape their community, and have recently formed residents' committee to start off a residents' association. Resident committee members have now been announced after months of consultation and a constitution is currently being drawn up by the elected members. A meeting will be called shortly so everyone gets a chance to participate.

## **Allocations**

Once the business case for Dreywood Court had been made, the main focus was on the build and ensuring that the facilities at the building matched all partners' expectations. It was relatively late in the project that identifying the actual residents to be offered the properties was considered. The lateness in deciding who would be the first residents was inevitable for two reasons. Firstly, the care provider had to assess each applicant to ensure that their needs could be met but the care provider could only be appointed three months before the block was

due to open. The successful provider had to prioritise the appointment of new staff with the need to have a consistent assessment process. Fortunately the successful provider was an established concern and had all the necessary systems and procedures in place which could then be transferred to the Dreywood Court scheme. Secondly, many of the potential residents had care needs which could change in a relatively short period and meeting these needs at Dreywood Court required continual assessment.

In hindsight, the allocation of residents within a 98 apartment extra care scheme was likely to have taken longer than the three months allowed. The complexity of starting new care plans and establishing new routines for the residents and developing personalised packages at the same time as welcoming and settling in new arrivals proved to be a challenge.

In identifying such a large number of residents within a short timescale, the decision was made to dedicate resources to helping people apply for the scheme in order to overcome the barriers that people face when contemplating a move. The focus of the work was on helping people complete the paperwork and arranging for them to visit the show flat. As much of the communal areas of the scheme were still under completion, time was taken to explain what services would be available.

To assist those without family support etc. a service contract with Age Concern Havering was designed. This “Support to Move Service” provided an independent outreach, floating and support service which assisted vulnerable and frail individuals in preparing for their move. This helped to ensure that Dreywood Court was let to applicants who would most benefit from the scheme and that applicants whose vulnerability might act as a disincentive to move were not disadvantaged. Age Concern Havering engaged a dedicated caseworker who was able to call upon the pool of established volunteers for practical assistance.

The council is fully aware of the potential stress caused by moving home and sought to use this service to minimise levels of anxiety, particularly for individuals who do not have a supportive family network around them. This service was not designed to replace familial responsibility, where it exists, although it can complement such activity.

All aspects of moving home were covered by this service from packing belongings through to transferring utility providers (facilitated by East Thames extra care housing staff).

## **Marketing**

Dreywood Court provides a safe environment for Havering residents who are 55 plus to live as fulfilling and active life as they desire; whilst comfortable in the knowledge that the on-site care and support service is available whenever they may need it, now or in the future, to meet their needs in the privacy of their own home.

Marketing for the scheme focused on promoting the opportunity for people to downsize and become stakeholders in a retirement community that would fully meet the increasing needs associated with aging, building choice and control into their living environment.

Our marketing approach aimed to raise brand awareness of the scheme through local advertising, promotion and events targeting the over 55s in Havering. The marketing plan used the following tools to generate interest in the scheme:

- Working with Havering Council to identify and target potential social housing tenants, generate leads for shared ownership sales and manage the care process. This approach carried through development, scheme handover and launch and continues to date as referrals and allocations are made to the scheme.



- Engagement with Age Concern Havering to target their members and seek their views on what they would like to see offered at the scheme. This extended to sponsoring Age Concern Havering lunches across the borough, meaning that the views of the over 55s were received first hand. This approach also helped generate a significant number of referrals to the scheme for both the rented units and as well as the shared ownership apartments.
- Working with HAVCO (Havering Association of Voluntary & Community Organisations) to both raise awareness of the scheme amongst its service users and begin the process of establishing a volunteer network to further support East Thames's aim to create a strong and vibrant community around the scheme.

Regular promotion of the scheme and advertising was active through:

- A dedicated website that detailed all aspects of the scheme, with particular emphasis on shared ownership options, the benefits of downsizing, and the community element of Dreywood Court;
- Use of local estate agents websites;
- Specific agency websites aimed at older people across all lifestyle areas;
- Targeting the local press and regularly advertising the new scheme through campaigns in the following publications: The Romford Recorder, The Yellow Advertiser, South East Times, and Havering Council's own Living Magazine.
- Directly contacting those aged over 55 living within a five mile radius of the development. This meant we could contact 8,000 local people with scheme information.
- Distribution of information at local health centres and GP surgeries, libraries and community centres.
- Promotional events were held in the Liberty Shopping Centre in Romford – we had a stand that displayed information about the scheme and meant that the public were able to speak to our sales and marketing staff in person.
- Presentations to frontline staff in the Council and other statutory agencies.

Prior to the official Show Home becoming available a launch event was held in late 2012 at the neighbouring David Lloyd Health Club and our show home was opened at a launch event in January 2013 meaning we could further engage with potential residents, as well as their carers and families. The show home enabled people to ask questions about interiors, fixtures and fittings, accessibility issues, alarm call systems, safety issues, discuss communal facilities, and of course provide reassurance to those considering either purchasing a shared ownership unit or indeed applying for a nomination to the social rented units through the local authority.

As the scheme neared full completion and became available to fully utilise, East Thames held a 'tea and tour' event in July 2013 which enabled all stakeholders and potential residents to see the new scheme, its individual apartments and award winning communal facilities and gardens.

## Sales – Shared Ownership

The purpose of the shared ownership product at Dreywood Court is to satisfy a customer demand for modern homes with care provision which are affordable, aspirational and allow planning for later life. Customers generally purchase a 75% share and no rent is payable on the unsold equity. Of the 98 homes at Dreywood Court, East Thames offered 20 for this purchase option, of which 15 are two bedroom and five are one bedroom high-specification apartments. Despite being a new way of purchasing a home in the area, the apartments were very well received by customers, 15 customers have moved in to date and the remaining five properties have been reserved. Customer feedback praises the spacious layouts, contemporary finish and thoughtful design touches such as high-level ovens, two way bathroom doors and a fall alert system. All 20 customers purchasing a shared ownership home at Dreywood Court were already resident in the London Borough of Havering.

The first residents moved into Dreywood Court on 15th July 2013. As the scheme has moved towards being fully occupied, residents have settled into their new homes and started to enjoy their new surroundings, as outlined by our residents' feedback below.

### Resident Testimonials

*Dreywood Court resident Terrence Keeling said:* "East Thames and the council have done a marvellous job. The presentation of this place is wonderful".

*Dreywood Court resident Ron Pleasance said:* "It's a new concept. Never in my lifetime have I seen anything like it. As a boy I always dreamt of being in a mansion - big garden, river, I've got it all".

*The family of former resident Marguerite Ibbunson said:* "From day one she loved it. She said that she had never been so happy in her life, which is quite an accolade for a lady of eighty. It wasn't just because the building was so lovely and wonderfully designed for disability living, but because she loved socialising with the staff who worked there. Going the extra mile made Dreywood Court the wonderful place it is".



## 5. Care & Support

Care and support provision at Dreywood Court is currently delivered by Sanctuary Home Care which works in partnership with the extra care housing management team to deliver a seamless approach to meeting resident needs. Residents are able to maintain their

independence with the assistance of a 24/7 care and support service on-site. Each resident has a package designed around their individual needs allowing people to live with greater

choices than those possible in other housing options. The positive changes of moving into a retirement community such as Dreywood Court are perhaps best illustrated by examples from some of those who have moved into the scheme:

- There are two examples of residents with identified mental health needs who have moved to the scheme. Both previously experienced a level of social isolation in the community, which impacted on their mental health. After moving into Dreywood Court they have benefited from regular interaction with neighbours and staff which has somewhat improved their mental health and created a noticeable difference in their confidence levels.
- There are number of couples residing at the scheme where one partner requires significant care and the other lower level care. Not only are staff available to help facilitate everyday life, filling in the gaps which a spouse or the family are not always able to meet, but because they see others in a similar position there is a larger support network within the resident community for the more independent partner.

Sanctuary's care and support team includes a re-ablement worker who works with the more vulnerable residents, in particular those making the transition from a stay in hospital, or recovering from illness, or those making the adjustment from their previous home into an extra care setting. Re-ablement care packages are implemented to support the resident towards recovery and greater independence, meaning they can engage more fully within the thriving community that is fast evolving at Dreywood Court. The care and support team uses the ethos of re-ablement within all its care and support packages to encourage residents to retain their levels of independence.

- Benjamin\* has expressed his appreciation of the re-ablement approach. The impact of the sessions with the re-ablement worker has given him the ability and confidence to again enjoy regular shopping trips that he had been unable to manage for years. The re-ablement worker has also supported resident B in acquiring a mobility vehicle which has improved his independence and allows for greater involvement in day to day activities within the Dreywood community.
- Frank\* had no initial care needs when he moved into Dreywood. They were eligible due to the elements of social isolation they suffered following bereavement and their anticipated future care needs. Sadly a major stroke significantly reduced his mobility a few months after moving into the scheme. Working with the re-ablement worker on site, Frank has relearnt some of the skills he had prior to the stroke and begun work on strengthening his movement to continue being part of the community. As there is a constant staff presence Frank is offered care and support through the joint working of both Sanctuary and East Thames enabling him to utilise communal space, attend social activities, eat with others in the restaurant and grow friendships that were forming prior to the stroke.

## **6. Lessons Learned**

In January 2014, East Thames held a series of focus meetings that explored all areas associated with each different stage and aspect of the project, with the discussion of each heading centring on three key questions:

- What went well?
- What didn't go so well?
- What needs to be different next time?

We covered the following key areas in depth:

- Design process and features
- Build, construction and handover
- Budget and finance
- Working with the local authority
- Service contracts
- Fixtures, furnishings and white goods
- Marketing, communications and sales
- Key recommendations and conclusion

We used the information to create a report that captured the lessons learned in a formal document for future use by other East Thames project managers. The document details the challenges which occurred, how those challenges were handled and how they may be avoided in the future. Additionally, we focussed on what went well with the project, meaning we are well placed to capitalise on these actions in the future, ensuring success and ultimately delivering on our commitment to provide quality homes that meet all needs, both present and future.

### Highlights from our conclusions are:

- **Scheme design and build** - Future schemes should be designed to accommodate the different potential service model scenarios of single, dual or multiple providers delivering the care and support and housing management services. Partnership working must be supported as a key element in 'getting it right'.
- **Working with the local authority** - At the earliest opportunity, clear expectations need to be identified and agreed by all stakeholders. These will be agreed, documented, and referred back to when necessary throughout the process. Partnership working with the local authority and if relevant, the external care provider will be led by our senior managers to ensure a strong working relationship is established and maintained throughout the life of the project.
- **Communication** - is without doubt, the most important area and a common thread throughout all the challenges we faced and may face in the future. All our future projects will have an internal project team that consistently represents all relevant work streams from the outset right through to scheme completion and ultimately handover.

The scheme is a success: an emerging creative and thriving community is looking forward to its second year of growth, and satisfaction is high among key stakeholders including residents, their families and both officers and members from the London Borough of Havering.

\*Names changed.

### 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 authors

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**Nicholas Kingham** of London Borough of Havering, as Implementation Officer was key in delivering the scheme into operation as part of the larger project team.

**Caroline Kaiser** is a regional manager for Sanctuary Homecare Ltd (part of Sanctuary Group) and a registered Domiciliary Care Manager.

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## About East Thames



East Thames Group is a housing association and social regeneration charity with 35 years' experience. We are one of the largest housing associations operating in east London and Essex.

East Thames owns and manages more than 14,000 homes, and is a pioneer for the building of new, affordable housing and the regeneration of East London and Essex. We also offer care and support services and run a range of programmes to prevent homelessness, get unemployed people back into work, create better neighbourhoods, and bring communities together.

Our mission is to make a positive and lasting difference to the neighbourhoods in which we work, and we're totally committed to our patch in east London and Essex.

More information about East Thames can be found at: [www.east-thames.co.uk](http://www.east-thames.co.uk)

## About the Housing LIN

Previously responsible for managing the Department of Health's Extra Care Housing Fund, the Housing Learning and Improvement Network (LIN) is the leading 'learning lab' for a growing network of housing, health and social care professionals in England involved in planning, commissioning, designing, funding, building and managing housing, care and support services for older people and vulnerable adults with long term conditions.

For further information about the Housing LIN's comprehensive list of online resources and to participate in our shared learning and service improvement networking opportunities, including 'look and learn' site visits and network meetings in your region, visit: [www.housinglin.org.uk](http://www.housinglin.org.uk)

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