Trees Extra Care Housing
Highgate
We are passionate about designing homes which are innovative and sustainable, where residents feel happy, secure and proud to live.

Written by:
Anne-Marie Nicholson, Senior Partner, PRP
Mark Walker, Associate Director, PRP

Photography by:
Tim Crocker

Architect: PRP
Project Manager: PRP
QS: DWB Appleyards
Town Planner: PRP
Landscape Architect: PRP
Interior Designer: PRP
M&E: KUT Partnership
Structural Engineer: Campbell Reith Hill
Contractor: Durkan
We make a difference to peoples’ lives.
“As individuals we have lived and loved this project, the development process used for this scheme has allowed the architects to follow a project through, from concept to completion. We are proud that the building has already transformed the lives of those that live there.”

Anne-Marie Nicholson
Senior Partner, PRP

“This beautiful scheme is a collection of quite simple ideas, that when put together each make a huge contribution to the resulting building and enhance the lives of its residents.”

Mark Walker
Associate Director, PRP
This case study provides an overview of the design and development of the ‘Trees’ Extra Care Housing scheme in Highgate. There are 40 apartments for older people on what is a beautiful site located in Highgate’s Conservation Area. The scheme is unique in that it is the first 100% affordable housing project in this part of Haringey.

‘Trees’ is considered to be an exemplary design that was conceived prior to the recently published HAPPI Report 2009 (Housing our Aging Population: Panel for Innovation). This report was commissioned by the HCA to promote high quality design and innovation in the older persons housing sector. ‘Trees’ embodies many of the recommendations set out within the report and has already been heralded as one of the best HAPPI schemes in Europe.

The building was recently awarded a prestigious Housing Design Award in July 2011 winning the best ‘Completed HAPPI Scheme’. The judges described Trees as ‘setting the benchmark for all housing for older people in the UK’. Trees is an example of PRP’s ability to manage the delivery of high quality design from inception to completion.

“I’ve visited about 400 of these developments, and this is the best one.”  David Birkbeck, the Chief Executive of Design for Homes

This case study will illustrate a range of the important design attributes and how these were achieved in order to make ‘Trees’ such a significant and special building for those working in this sector, those involved in its creation and most importantly those who will call it their ‘home’.
Award Winning Design

‘Trees’ has been recognised as an exemplary scheme, the client and design team are proud to have won the following design awards:

**Housing Design Awards 2011**
HAPPI Completed Award Winner

**British Homes Awards 2011**
Lifetime Home of the Year Winner

**House Builder Awards 2011**
Best Design Winner

**Housing Design Awards 2009**
Exhibition of Excellence (Project)

“Sets the benchmark for all housing for older people in the UK.”

HDA Judges

“I’ve visited 400 of these developments, and this is the best one.”

David Birkbeck
Design For Homes & HDA Awards Judge
Schedule of Accommodation and Key Features

- 40 no. Total Flats
- 21 no. 1 Bed Flats @ 55 sq.mts
- 19 no. 2 Bed Flats @ 68 sq.mts
- 100% Private Amenity Space
- Shared Communal Gardens
- 8 no. Parking Spaces

- Range of Communal & Support Spaces including:
  - Staff Administration Office
  - Manager’s Office
  - Communal Lounge
  - Kitchenette
  - Hair Salon
  - Laundry
  - Therapy Room
  - Buggy Store
  - Disabled WC’s
  - Assisted Bathroom
  - Informal Seating Bays
The Client Brief and Aspirations

Hill Home’s Vision & Legacy
The client’s ambition for the project from the outset was to achieve a high quality scheme, they recognised that this new building would be significant in many ways not least because ‘Trees’ represented an opportunity to extend the legacy of care begun by Margaret Hill in 1944, to provide Care Homes for elderly victims of the Blitz in the Highgate area. The new development provides Extra Care housing that reflects 21st Century changes in care provision that provides much needed accommodation now and for many years to come. Hill Homes’ ambition for the project is to provide an exemplar service in a building of architectural distinction that will be of benefit to the community and enhance the lives of the residents.

Achieving the Vision
A fundamental part of the success of the project was the involvement of key members of the client team throughout the process from inception to completion - a level of continuity that is sadly uncommon in modern procurement. The client team included two eminent Architects from the Hill Homes Board of Trustees who understood and influenced the design development and choice of procurement, at all stages. There was a wide reaching commitment to quality and desire to ensure that the integrity of the early design principles were maintained. A robust approach was taken to achieving high quality within a ‘Design and Build’ contract, which was the chosen method of procurement, by instructing a detailed set of Employers Requirements before tender, novating the architect, and retaining the key designer in a quality monitoring role.

Hill Homes worked in partnership with developing agents One Housing Group, who along with PRP, brought specialist knowledge of the sector and development expertise to the project team.

The overall financial viability of the scheme was assisted by the fact that Hill Homes owned the site.
Stakeholder Involvement and Consultation

Planning and Conservation Area Context
The site’s location on a sensitive site within the Highgate Conservation Area meant that the Local Authority Planning, and also in this case the Conservation department, were engaged from the outset of the scheme’s design.

The new development at ‘Trees’ required that the two existing buildings on the site were demolished - buildings that historically had been used as ‘care’ accommodation, although following a rigorous testing process it was accepted that these were no longer fit for purpose. These existing buildings were however considered to be of architectural merit and ones which made a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area.

It was widely acknowledged that the replacement scheme needed to be one that not only represented 21st century changes in care provision but also one of ‘Architectural distinction’ in order to justify the loss of the existing buildings. This ambition was one that was shared by the Local Authority, client, design team and by the local community. There was a continual process of evaluation against this aspiration by the client, the architect and Local Authority.

Housing and Social Care Context
There was an identified deficit in Extra Care Accommodation in Haringey and the scheme at ‘Trees’ was seen as an important part of the strategic delivery of housing for older people within the West of the Borough.

The Local Authority Housing & Adult Social Care Departments played a role in the development of the brief and provided valuable support both to the scheme throughout the planning process and also achieving grant funding from the HCA.

Early consultation revealed a high demand for affordable extra care in this part of the borough of Haringey. The challenge had always been how to provide affordable housing in this area. This challenge was met by the desire to provide a continuation of care and support that had long been provided by Hill Homes within Highgate.

‘This scheme is the first and only affordable housing project in living memory, in this part of Haringey’. (Haringey Planning)
**Public Consultation**

An initial public consultation event was carried out early in the design process allowing local residents to see the emerging proposals.

This important event was held within the existing buildings which made discussing any issues in relation to the immediate context very productive. A second consultation event displayed more developed proposals giving residents the opportunity to see that the team had responded to the earlier comments.

Close consultation was carried out with the Highgate Society with whom the project team met at their local headquarters in Highgate. Members of the society also attended the open public consultation events and they shared the vision to create an exemplar service within a building of architectural distinction.

**Local Authority Design Forum**

The proposals were presented at a ‘Design Forum’ organised by Haringey Planning & Conservation departments; this was a more formal part of the process where residents could comment on the scheme design and these comments would inform part of the committee report.

The client and design team fully engaged with the local community throughout the entire design process. The scheme received approval at the planning committee in July 2008.
The Site

‘Trees’ is located in North London on a beautiful site within the Highgate Conservation Area, the residential context comprises primarily of large period properties. The existing housing stock within the North Hill & Broadlands Road vicinity varies considerably from grand Victorian, Edwardian & Gothic Villas to 1930 modernist Architecture including the Highpoint One by Lubetkin – a Grade 1 listed apartment block in render and dark brick; this building is considered to be one of considerable architectural distinction.

One of the most striking characteristics of the site is the mature landscape with its many beautiful trees both to the front and rear.

The site generally has a quiet residential quality, whilst North Hill to the east has a more active and busy character. The site addresses Broadlands Road to its Southern Boundary & Grange Road to the West, Broadlands Road is a residential feeder road accessed from North Hill. The Eastern boundary backs onto the rear gardens of the residential properties in North Hill. Grange Road which forms the western boundary to the site is a private, un-adopted road providing access to the residential dwellings within the road.

Other buildings comprise of housing developments likely to have been constructed during the 1950’ & 1960’s in a mix of brick, render and timber boarding. The Highgate area has a rich and varied mix of architectural styles that adds to its overall character and diversity.
Site Location Plan - Showing New Building
The Concept & Key Design Principles

The scale of the proposals are similar to that of the existing buildings on the site and sit adjacent to the 4 storey massing of the existing flats to the East located in North Hill. The resulting form is appropriately proportioned and achieves a sense of permeability to the plan providing high levels of natural light to the internal spaces. This approach creates visual articulation and interest to the main street elevation.

A number of key design principles were established at an early stage during the development of the scheme, each of which are really quite simple ideas but ones which make a huge contribution to the resulting building.
Informal Seating Bays

**Natural Light & A ‘Permeable’ Plan**

It was important to maximise the levels of natural light within the building and particularly within the circulation areas. Access to daylight is a simple yet fundamental aspect of good design and when designing for older people can assist with orientation and an awareness of the surroundings, the weather and the time of day.

A key design principle was the design of a ‘permeable’ plan containing smaller clusters of homes arranged around a dramatic internal atrium. The atrium creates a strong connection between the ground floor communal spaces and the residential areas on the upper floors. This delightful space is enhanced with bespoke artwork spanning the full height of the atrium which gives further identity to each floor level.

The arrangement of the apartments in smaller clusters rather than the widely-employed Extra Care typology of long double banked corridors helps to promote neighbourliness amongst residents and maximizes natural daylight within the building. The circulation areas are designed as meaningful shared spaces encouraging casual social interaction. Glazed links create informal seating bays and provide views from all circulation areas to outside space. These areas are beneficial in reducing the effective length of corridors and assisting orientation for older people.

There are a number of Dual Aspect Apartments which maximise natural light into the flats and create greater opportunity for natural ventilation.
Urban Design / Contextual response
This was important in achieving the support of the Planning & Conservation Departments. The design aspiration was to achieve an appropriate response to the context in urban design terms but simultaneously see this as an opportunity to create a positive aspect of the scheme for the end user residents.

The scheme is expressed along Broadlands Road as three distinct building elements connected with glazed links that respond sensitively to the local context and reflect the rhythm of the existing villas in Broadlands Road. This approach was not simply viewed as an urban design response but exploited to create meaningful spaces within the scheme i.e. within the glazed links.

The new building broadly follows the general footprint of the previous buildings that occupied the site and in turn are respectful to the existing mature landscape.

The single storey wings along the eastern boundary maintain the visual gap in development and extend the existing residential façade in Grange Road. A green roof to both wings allows these to integrate with the landscape when viewed from above and in this respect improves the visual amenity to the properties in North Hill. Following discussions with the Local Planning Officer it was felt that a reduction in scale to the South West corner would be beneficial to reflect the general change in scale & character in Grange Road.

A recessed top floor to the South West corner achieves a stepping to the roof line and a general reduction in scale when viewed ~ from the South & West.
Accessibility

As an Extra Care scheme the building is designed to be fully accessible and have an inherent flexibility. The scheme is designed to be fully wheelchair accessible and meets lifetime homes standards.

Landscaped Heart to Scheme

The beautiful mature landscape is one of the site’s most significant characteristics and created the opportunity to create a ‘green heart to the scheme’. The enclosure of the garden provides a delightful shared amenity space that can be accessed from the main communal areas and provides a beautiful visual amenity to the enclosing apartments.

Vibrant Hub & Progressive Privacy

The entrance to the scheme is located directly off Broadlands Road into a welcoming reception foyer which offers views through bright and open communal spaces to outdoor terraces and the gardens beyond. The layout provides progressive privacy from the communal hub at the centre of the plan on the ground floor, to the more private residential areas within the single storey side wings and the residential floors above. The use of volume & space provides vibrant connections between floors whilst maintaining a degree of progressive privacy that is so important in Extra Care Housing.
Landscape Design & Private Amenity Space

The scheme is designed around beautiful gardens with two single storey wings sensitively placed between the existing trees and the use of green roofs enable these elements to integrate with the landscape when viewed from upper floors and adjacent dwellings. The entrance forecourt includes new planting that complements the existing landscape. There is a strong visual connection from the front door through to the gardens that is reinforced by a linear water feature and sculpture on its axis. A variety of sheltered seating, pergolas and terraces create opportunities for social gatherings and also secluded spots for more private moments.

The external spaces integrate with the existing mature landscape setting and establish an attractive communal courtyard garden at the heart of the scheme. In keeping with the formality of the building the garden is laid out along strong visual axes. Central to the layout is the vista and main access that extends through the glass foyer, linking the entrance court on Broadlands Road to an impressive polished granite mirror pool and sculpture at the far end of the rear garden.
A series of secondary pathways meander along the periphery of the garden leading to sheltered seating spaces, timber pergolas, and patio areas. Two large terraces encourage social gatherings and combine with other secluded spots which offer opportunities for privacy and contemplation. The garden is carefully arranged to provide seating in areas exposed to both sunlight and natural shade.

The external layout ensures that there is an appropriate level of defensible space to the ground-floor apartments utilising generous patios combined with low planting. The adjacent communal spaces, ground floor terraces and projecting balconies to the upper floors encourage outdoor activities helping to animate this important central space.

The entrance forecourt to the main Broadlands Road frontage provides 8 parking spaces over a permeable pavement with new planting to enhance the existing trees and vegetation.

The planting has been carefully choreographed to provide seasonal variation and species selected for their sensory qualities. The gardens are irrigated sustainably utilising underground rainwater storage reservoirs.

The apartments all have private balconies offering amenity space with enough space for table chairs and plants.
The Architecture

The architectural approach combines traditional materials with contemporary detailing. The primary material within the overall composition is ‘red multi’ facing brick responding to the predominant material within the surrounding area. Red brick is used within the East & West villas and provides an appropriate visual connection between the new building and the existing context. The central villa is finished in self-coloured white render enhancing the overall articulation of the blocks and reinforcing the ‘3-Villa’ concept. A blue/grey engineering brick plinth is used at ground floor level to anchor each of the blocks in a positive manner, whilst also providing visual distinction between the residential and communal areas of the building.

A similar approach has been adopted on the single storey wings with brick bays on a rendered elevation. It is felt that these materials create a strong, considered composition that sits appropriately within the site, and appears particularly elegant when viewed against the trees and existing landscape.

Bay windows with projecting balconies are included on all flats providing private external amenity space. The bays to the main south facing elevation are cantilevered from first floor level achieving particularly strong structure free architectural feature. The detailing to this element has been rigorously considered to achieve a well crafted, elegant detail of the highest design quality.

The brickwork provides a strong framing element to the bay. Painted steel balconies with glazed balustrades cantilever from the main façade.

On the south facing elevation the ‘glazed links’ are formed by frameless planar glazing. These accommodate seating bays internally and create a sense of permeability to the elevations. The delicate connection achieved using this system also reinforces the ‘3-villa’ concept.

A simple parapet up-stand provides an elegant roof detail to each of the rendered villas. A recessed channel below the line of the parapet creates a shadow gap that is consistent to each elevation.

A rigorous level of information was produced for the ‘Employers Requirements’ which has resulted in a well considered and elegantly detailed building. This approach has been particularly successful within the context of the ‘Design & Build’ contract.
Layered Façade
The Layout of the Building

The main entrance is via Broadlands Road into one of the glazed ‘links’ which leads into the main foyer space. This area is a bright and welcoming and has views through the communal lounge and circulation areas to the beautiful gardens beyond. A path extends from the main entrance into the gardens with a water feature and sculpture on its axis; the oak flooring planks change direction locally to align with this geometry.

An open plan foyer lounge provides a space for residents to wait for family and visitors or to casually observe the activity of the main entrance area. Other areas around the main entrance include a hair salon and reception, staff and managers office. The adjacent communal lounge, kitchenette and dining spaces contribute greatly to this vibrant hub and are arranged around a dramatic four storey atrium with full height artwork. There is a delightful therapy room located at the end of the eastern residential wing. This location provides an appropriate level of privacy and has wonderful views back across the shared gardens.
The main ancillary spaces are discreetly located at ground floor to the right of the entrance and do not impact on the communal or residential parts of the scheme; the ancillary spaces here include a buggy store, refuse store, laundry and plant and other support spaces.

There is progressive privacy between the main ground floor communal spaces and the residential areas of the scheme. The two single storey wings that extend into the gardens contain single banked residential apartments with glazed circulation areas and circular rooflights framing views to the sky above. The upper floors are entirely residential with additional shared seating bays, these apartments have a visual connection to the main communal space via the central atrium.

The apartments on the upper levels are arranged in small clusters around the central atrium which is flooded in natural light from above. The cluster approach results in very short corridors and further sources of natural light within the circulation areas.

The building is served by two lifts and two stair cores at either end of the plan and there is fob access to control movement between the communal and residential parts of the scheme.

A small activity room / board room is located on the top floor to the southwest corner of the building. This room is recessed from the main facade and has access to a delightful terrace area with spectacular views over Highgate. There is also an assisted bathroom and accessible WC also located at this level.
Roof Plan

Third Floor Plan
The Apartments

There are a mix of 1 & 2 bedroom self contained apartments with good space standards at 55 sq.mts for a 1 Bedroom Apartment & 68 sq.mts for a 2 Bedroom Apartment and all homes are fully accessible for wheelchair users. The larger 2 bedroom flat includes a second toilet for guests and visitors.

The balconies are high quality and include glazed balustrade, honed limestone flooring and stainless steel handrails. From the upper levels it has been mentioned that you ‘really do feel like you are in the trees’. Bathrooms have been designed with flush floor showers, integral storage and concealed pipework. Kitchens are all fully fitted with appliances to suit the user group and good levels of storage.

The entrance doors to all of the apartments are recessed, have a full height sidelight, functional shelf and are lined in a beautiful oak giving a high quality finish and defensible space to every home.
The client employed Interiors at PRP to achieve the aspiration for a quality product throughout the building. The appointment of the interior designer was as crucial as all the other consultants in achieving the final result and cannot be emphasised enough when procuring such buildings. The interior design was informed by the architectural approach and the resulting interiors are calm and contemporary. Materials selected will age gracefully over time.

Room layouts are oriented to maximise the views of the landscaped gardens and the chosen furniture is simple in design but of a high standard. Each level has subtle variations in colour to passively assist orientation.
Sustainable Design

The scheme far exceeds minimum standards in terms of sustainability & incorporates renewable energy sources.

A biomass boiler achieves a 32% reduction in CO₂ emissions. The scheme includes high performing building fabric and incorporates under floor heating throughout.

The Code for Sustainable Homes (CSH) assessment method was used as requested by the client. This means that the individual flats were assessed for their environmental performance but not the communal areas. CSH level 4 has been achieved.

A separate BREEAM assessment could have been undertaken in respect of the whole building, however this would have incurred additional costs for the client and some duplication of work. The advantage of using the CSH for flats is that their performance can be compared with that of conventional new build housing, although there are likely to be some credits which are not appropriate for older peoples’ housing such as cycle storage.

Energy efficiency measures include; very good building fabric performance gained through enhanced building fabric U-values, mechanical ventilation with heat recovery (MVHR) installed to all apartments together with dedicated low energy light fittings throughout.

Natural daylight has been maximised in the design thereby reducing the need for artificial lighting. Energy is supplied using gas / biodiesel boilers linked to a mini CHP system.
Procurement

The post planning procurement method included the preparation of thorough Employers Requirements to an advanced stage to ensure that the integrity of the original design intent was maintained.

The architect was the initial team member appointed by the client with further key team members (inc. QS / Project Manager / M&E / Structural Engineer / Landscape / Town Planner) appointed early to ensure a fully coordinated approach to the scheme from the outset.

The project build was procured using a Design & Build Contract with Durkan the appointed Contractor. PRP were novated to prepare the working drawings. Uniquely PRP also had a separate appointment with the client to assist with the monitoring of quality on site and ensuring that the scheme did not deviate from the very detailed Employers Requirements.

This arrangement allowed for continuity of role with the key designer involved throughout the entire process which has undoubtedly been of benefit to the resulting scheme.

The key work stages are outlined below:

- Design development
- Planning Application
- Stage E / employers requirements - an enhanced set of employers requirements were produced to capture the key features of the scheme and ‘design intent’ This provided a robust platform for tendering contractors to price ensuring that the resulting scheme reflected the aspirations of the client. A full design team was assembled at planning and pre-tender stage. Detailed Room Data Sheets were prepared by the EA.
- Tender process
- Novation - PRP Architects were novated to contractor, this ensured design continuity.
- Working Drawings
- On site roles involved the Employers Agent / Client / Quality monitoring role of the architect.
Allocations, Rent & Support

Tenure and eligibility
All the flats are for affordable rent on an assured tenancy basis. To be offered a flat people must meet the following criteria:

• Be 55 years or over (for couples partner can be as young as 50)
• Either meets council criteria for being on housing register or nominated by Hill Homes due to a local connection or a social need to live in the area
• Be registered on housing list and been assessed by adult social care as have needs that could be met by extra care
• OR be disabled and/or frail person requiring care of the kind provided.

Care and support
There are care and support staff available 24 hours a day seven days a week who provide:

• Personal care
• Shopping & domestic tasks
• Personal affairs handling
• Enabling & befriending
• Handyman
• Volunteers to accompany people on trips, help with daily activities etc.

Personal care is provided by London Care plc who provide a core daytime and waking night service that tenants can top up by purchasing additional hours. Support is provided by Hill Homes.
Charges
The charges are broken down into:

- Rent
- Service charge for communal services
- Service charge personal (includes water & heating to flat)
- Electricity usage in flat
- Hill Homes support charge
- London Care charge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>One bed</th>
<th>Two bed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rent</td>
<td>119.10</td>
<td>126.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service charge (communal)</td>
<td>50.73</td>
<td>67.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service charge (personal)</td>
<td>6.18</td>
<td>8.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill homes support charge</td>
<td>76.00</td>
<td>76.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Care charge</td>
<td>84.90</td>
<td>84.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL WEEKLY CHARGE</td>
<td>341.91</td>
<td>367.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Feedback

“PRP have designed a building for us that is both beautiful and practical. We particularly appreciated working with architects who encouraged us to play an active part in the design process and responded to our ideas.”

David Bernstein – Trustee Hill Homes

“Everyone involved in this scheme wanted it to be of the highest standard because the decision to move to supported accommodation is likely to be one of the most difficult decisions individuals and their families make. It is incumbent upon us to make the offer the best it can be and I think this scheme represents that aspiration.”

Fiona Lovering - One Housing Group

“PRP’s Trees Extra Care Housing, is the best of its kind in Europe, with every aspect of the development researched and applied”

Housebuilder Awards Judges
Conclusion

‘Trees’ is a building of high quality incorporating key design features to meet the needs of older people both now and in the future. The qualities of the proposals are summarised below:

- Provides a valuable housing and care facility for older people and the local community.
- Provides high-quality and attractive accommodation for older people.
- Provides a building form that responds to the constraints of the site and responds sensitively to the surrounding context in terms of its scale, massing and materials.
- High quality materials ensure a robust long lasting design.
- Provides a secure environment with convenient but controlled access.
- Respects adjoining properties.
- Provides an innovative and appropriate solution for the site and the requirements of the community.
- Provides amenity space within the scheme suitable for the recreational needs of the residents both present and future and an integrated landscaping scheme that reinforces the form and quality of the proposals and enhances the visual amenity value of the locality.
- Provides modern, purpose-built accommodation on a vacant/underused site, which will enhance the quality of life of service users and staff.
- A high quality building in terms of its architectural design.
- Extensive public & local authority consultation has resulted in a scheme that is a sensitive response to the existing context.
- Benefit to the community - meeting a need in the local area that has not been met before.
- High quality design achieved through key involvement of the client and continuity of architect’s role from start to finish using a design and build contract to give cost certainty.
- Uplifting internal environment achieved by maximising natural light with simple adjustments to the plan and considered detailing.
- Changing the quality of life of the residents, empowering them through the care and support of the on-site team and suitability of the building for vulnerable and frail older people.
Mark Walker
Associate Director
Architecture
020 8339 3661
07715 510 393
m.walker@prp-co.uk

Surrey studio
PRP
Ferry Works
Summer Road
Thames Ditton
Surrey KT7 0QJ
020 8339 3600
surrey@prp-co.uk