

Architect's Choice

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BIOMIMICRY

How do we build on the bond between human beings and the built environment?

SAIL AWAY

Naval Architect, Bill Dixon dissects the nuances of boat design

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the**last**word



ACTIVE AGEING

DEMAND FOR OVER-55S HOUSING HAS BEEN GROWING RAPIDLY IN RECENT YEARS. JOE POU, ARCHITECT, PELLINGS, SAYS DESIGNING HOUSING FOR OLDER PEOPLE SHOULD BE A GROWTH MARKET FOR ARCHITECTS

WORK SHOULD COME FROM ALL AREAS OF THE MARKET, FROM SOCIAL HOUSING CLIENTS THROUGH TO PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPERS. ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICES WITH RESIDENTIAL DESIGN EXPERTISE WILL BE BEST PLACED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE, HOWEVER THOSE CONSIDERING PITCHING FOR WORK SHOULD BE AWARE THAT THERE ARE DIFFERENCES COMPARED TO DESIGNING TRADITIONAL HOUSING.

Specialised design to encourage 'active ageing' to ensure residents can live in their homes without support for as long as possible, and to encourage downsizing in order to release family housing for the younger population, tends to be a key prerequisite for most clients. This type of design is also often necessary for meeting standards such as the social housing market's Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation (HAPPI), Lifetime Homes,

CABE's Building for Life and London Housing Design Guide standards. Bonney Court, is a good example of a contemporary new-build sheltered residential development for over-55s. Designed by Pellings for West Kent Housing Association, it encourages active ageing and comfort for residents. Bonney Court includes a single multifunctional shared space and other communal facilities to promote neighbourly social interaction and community spirit. Its design also enables ease of access and movement throughout, improving the quality of life for residents. Wheelchair access, in excess of Lifetime Homes, is made easy - the main door is power operated and opens at the push of a low button. Space standards are in excess of 'minimum' and are comfortable, desirable, meet accessibility requirements. Apartments have bathtubs that are easily removable when baths become physically difficult for residents. Apartments also have

large windows to allow in large amounts of natural light, but are purposely placed at a lower level, for the benefit of all residents as well as those with mobility issues in wheelchairs. Flower beds in the communal gardens are purposely raised, so residents do not need to kneel down when gardening, encouraging them to spend time outdoors and to lead an active lifestyle. All corridor lights have sensors that automatically turn-on as residents move through the scheme ensuring safety, security and energy saving. Prior to design, a consultation was held with West Kent's Emerald Forum, a group comprising residents who are over 55 years old, with regard to the design of Bonney Court's communal areas. The consultation process also enabled residents to select bespoke schemes of individual apartments. Character and quality help increase community pride. Character, identity, variety and a strong landscape strategy help create a sense of place where people choose to live.