

A Gradual Design Gaze on Almshousing:

An architectural research perspective

Inaugural Almshouse Association Research Conference

The Worshipful Company of Mercers, London 11 | 01 | 2024



**THE WELSH
SCHOOL OF
ARCHITECTURE**



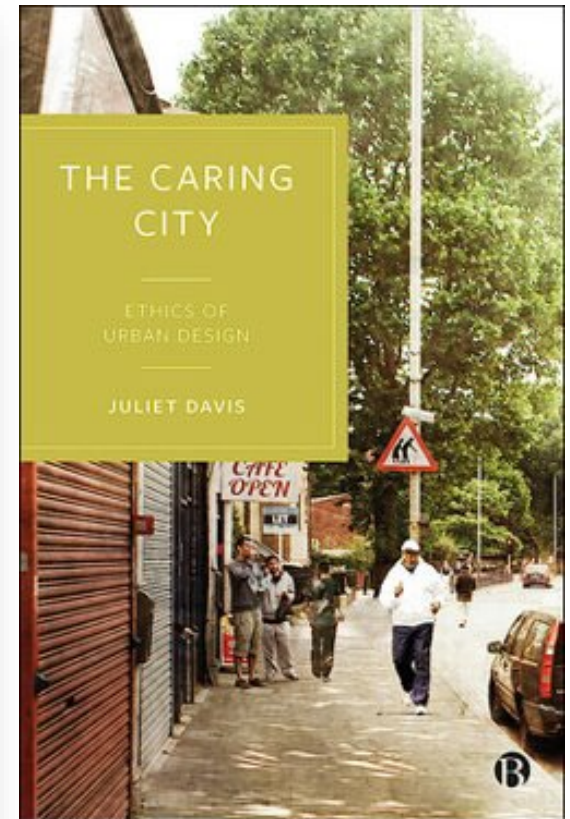
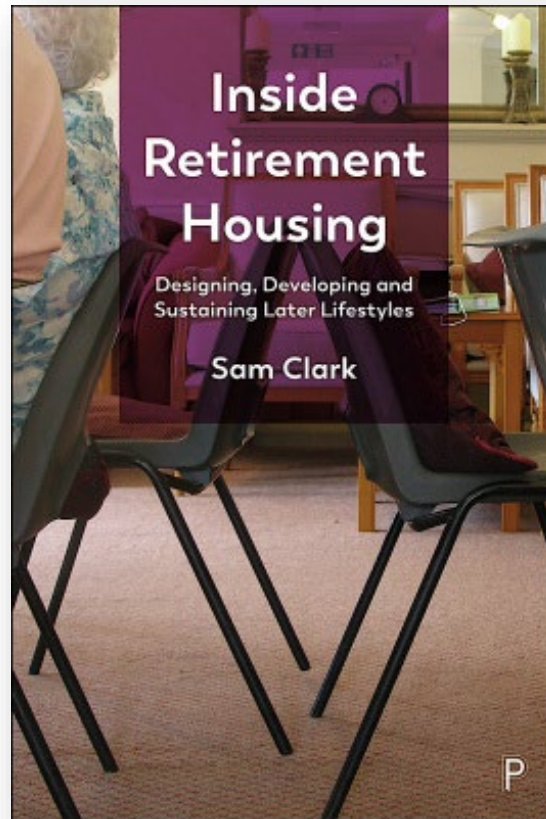
Dr Sam Clark



Prof Juliet Davis

PAST PUBLICATIONS

Retirement Living Explained A Guide for Planning & Design Professionals



FIELDWORK



- Appleby Blue Almshouse, Southwark, London
- United St Saviour's Charity
- Research Residencies, 5 nights and 7 days during summer 2023
- Ethnographic research / post-occupancy evaluation

FIELDWORK


- **Gradual gaze** – ethnography offers a longer, deeper exploration
- **Slow research** – compared to architectural journalism and its role in generating practice knowledge – case study material
- **Immersive** – ethnography gets inside architecture and social worlds within, over time, and potentially less time-bound
- **Lived experience** – connects with everyday person-environment interactions – appropriations/interpretations
- **Research residencies** – inhabiting the building and neighbourhood as a 'neighbour' – naturalistic
- **Methods** – drawn from research developed within retirement housing sector (Clark 2022).

FUTURE
PUBLICATION

*'Getting in Place: Ethnographic
observations of home-making in new-
build almshousing in Central London'*

ARCHITECTURES OF AGEING IN PLACE

Call for Chapter Abstracts for Book: Extended Deadline
Friday 15 April 2023


Email Your Abstract 

Architectures of Ageing in Place (edited by Dr Anuradha Chatterjee) has been awarded a contract by Routledge (ISBNs Hardback 9781032571232 Paperback 9781032571188 eBook 9781003437918, forthcoming 2025) after extensive peer review. This call to invite

'Getting in Place: Ethnographic observations of home-making in new-build almshousing in Central London'

Chapter Conclusions

- Early research in this new-build context
- Tensions in creating a de-institutional character for almshouse
- From design inception, construction and governance
- Evolving 'institution' and 'home' for staff and beneficiaries
- A building must be learnt (door locks to cooling strategy...)
- Home-making done by the residents as 'designers'/shapers
- Questions around control, curation, and custodianship


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'Getting in Place: Ethnographic observations of home-making in new-build almshousing in Central London'

Questions

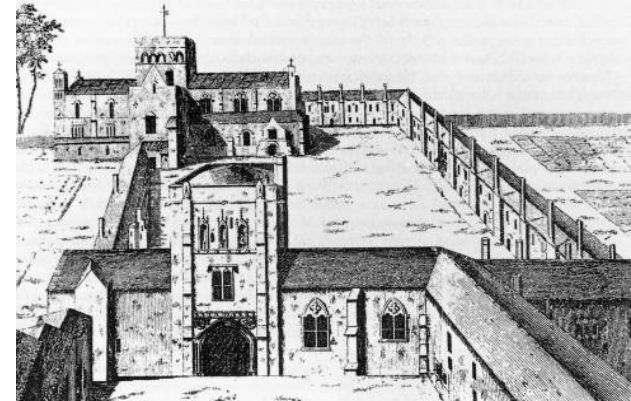
- Longitudinal research needed (aspirations versus realities)
- What limits independent living within almshousing environs?
- How do these stand up to transitions in later life (fourth-age)?
- Can environs flex to meet incremental creep in housing need?
- Trigger points for seeking forms of assisted living?
- Should 'successful' environments for ageing-in-place confront 'taboos' of cognitive decline and death?

Email Your Abstract 

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FUTURE RESEARCH / AREAS OF COLLABORATION POTENTIAL

- Longitudinal research tracking emerging health outcomes and unpacking the relationships between space, governance, everyday life in facilitating ageing in place for as long as possible in new almshouses.
- Exploring the relationships between space, governance, community (including intergenerational?) and interdependence/ independence
- Exploring the provision of almshouses and how models can scale up to more significantly address the need for sheltered housing/ new models of housing provision eg partnerships with Local Authorities, S106 funding.
- Comparative research across almshouse examples – including continental models?
- Interdisciplinary research combining medical research, design research and social science methods
- Research to explore potential to join up almshouse design with neighbourhood planning to ensure cohesive approaches to accessible/ inclusive design.



Building Design/Procurement



7	0	1
In Use	Strategic Definition	Preparation and Brief
Undertake In Use services in accordance with Schedule of Services .	Identify client's Business Case and Strategic Brief and other core project requirements.	Develop Project Objectives including Quality Objectives and Project Outcome Sustainability Aspirations , other parameters or constraints develop Initial Project Brief Undertake Feasibility and review of Site Information .
	Initial considerations for	Prepare Project Role Contractual Terms assembling the team.
Practice-led Design Research (Reflective Work)		
including Post-occupancy Evaluation , review of Project Performance , Project Outcomes and Research and Development aspects.		Agree Schedule of Strategic Design Responsibility Matrix and Information Exchanges and prep Project Execution Plan including Technology Communication Strategy and consideration of Contract Standards to be used.
Sustainability Checkpoint – 7	Sustainability Checkpoint – 0	Sustainability Checkpoint – 1
'As-constructed' Information updated in response to ongoing Client Feedback and Operational developments.	Strategic Brief .	Initial Project Brief .
As required.	Not required.	Required.

RIBA a bespoke project or practice specific RIBA Plan of Work 2013 via www

2	3	4	5	6
Concept Design	Developed Design	Technical Design	Construction	Handover and Close Out
Prepare Concept Design , including outline proposals for structural design, building services systems, outline specifications and preliminary Cost Information along with relevant Project Strategies in accordance with Design Programme . Agree alterations to brief and issue Final Project Brief .	Prepare Developed Design , including coordinated and updated proposals for structural design, building services systems, outline specifications, Cost Information and Project Strategies in accordance with Design Programme .	Prepare Technical Design in accordance with Design Responsibility Matrix and Project Strategies to include all architectural, structural and building services information, specialist subcontractor design and specifications, in accordance with Design Programme .	Offsite manufacturing and onsite Construction in accordance with Construction Programme and resolution of Design Queries from site as they arise.	Handover of building and conclusion of Building Contract .
	The procurement strategy does not fundamentally alter the progression of the design or the level of detail. Information Exchanges will vary route and Building Contract . A brief out the specific tendering and programme in relation to the		Administration of Building Contract including regular inspections and review	Conclude administration of Building Contract .
Review Project Programme .	Design Practice (Transactional)		Certain Work	
	Planning applications. A bespoke RIBA Plan of Work application.			
Prepare Sustainability Strategy , Maintenance and Operational Strategy and review Handover Strategy and Risk Assessments .	Review Sustainability Strategy and Operational and Handover Strategies and Risk Assessments .	Review Sustainability Strategy and Operational and Handover Strategies and Risk Assessments .	Review Sustainability Strategy and implement Handover Strategy , including agreement of information required for commissioning, training, handover, asset management, future monitoring and maintenance and ongoing compilation of 'As-constructed' Information .	Carry out activities listed in Handover Strategy including Feedback for use during the future life of the building or future projects.
Undertake third party consultations as required and any Research and Development aspects.	Undertake third party consultations as required and conclude Research and Development aspects.	Prepare and submit Building Regulations submission and any other third party submissions requiring consent.	Update Construction and Health and Safety Strategies .	Updating of Project Information as required.
Review and update Project Execution Plan .	Review and update Project Execution Plan , including Change Control Procedures .	Review and update Project Execution Plan .	Update Construction and Health and Safety Strategies .	
Consider Construction Strategy , including offsite fabrication, and develop Health and Safety Strategy .	Review and update Construction and Health and Safety Strategies .	Review Construction Strategy , including sequencing, and update Health and Safety Strategy .		
Sustainability Checkpoint – 2	Sustainability Checkpoint – 3	Sustainability Checkpoint – 4	Sustainability Checkpoint – 5	Sustainability Checkpoint – 6
Concept Design including outline structural and building services design, associated Project Strategies , preliminary Cost Information and Final Project Brief .	Developed Design , including the coordinated architectural, structural and building services design and updated Cost Information .	Completed Technical Design of the project.	'As-constructed' Information .	Updated 'As-constructed' Information .
Required.	Required.	Not required.	Not required.	Required.

ibaplano/work.com a specific bar is selected from a number of options.

Design research and professional practice

[About](#) [Projects](#) [Publications](#) [Next steps](#)

By promoting critical design research and professional practice within architecture we can address some of the grand challenges facing society and the planet.

Our research group brings together experts working in creative practice, practice-based and practice-led design research and research related to the practice of architecture and scholarship within architectural pedagogy and practice.

Together we explore the intersections of academic and professional domains; architectural agency and the shape of the architectural profession; and the shifting landscape of architectural research, education and professional development. By connecting original, rigorous academic research to external communities of practice in the wider construction industry, we influence design change and impact within architecture.

Projects



[The 2013-2017 restoration of the oratory of the Partal Palace](#)



[Community Gateway](#)

Our rich mix of ongoing work with Grangetown



[Embodied pedagogies: introducing 'otherness' in architectural education](#)

CONTRACTED RESEARCH?

Toward a new design approach to housing choices in later life

PhD by Creative Practice (Newcastle University)



WORK PACKAGES

WP1 Older Person Context (April 2014)

- Demographic change
- Wellbeing trends
- Lifestyle trends
- Equity profiles
- Future destinations



Consumer Profiles (Source: Mosaic UK 2012-13)

25 %
Population



3.4 %
Population



Bungalow Quietude Type E21 Group E: Active Retirement	Elderly people owning their own bungalow and drawing a modest pension.	When this group retired, they sold their homes, and if they hadn't already paid off their mortgages, they did so at this point. With their profits from a few decades of house price growth, they moved to rural and coastal areas of Wales and England, where they bought themselves a substantial bungalow to see them through old age.	Norwich Peterborough Portsmouth Brighton Sheffield	1.42 % Population 1.79 % Households
Balcony Downsizers Type E23 Group E: Active Retirement	Elders, generally single, who have downsized to flats more suited to their income and capabilities.	This accommodation, either owned or privately rented, is often purpose-built with single retired people in mind, designed to ensure peace of ageing mind in a simple but sophisticated environment. Some will be a second home, or pied-à-terre in London, the South East or near Scottish cities.	Brighton Bournemouth Edinburgh Glasgow Birmingham	0.90 % Population 1.29 % Households

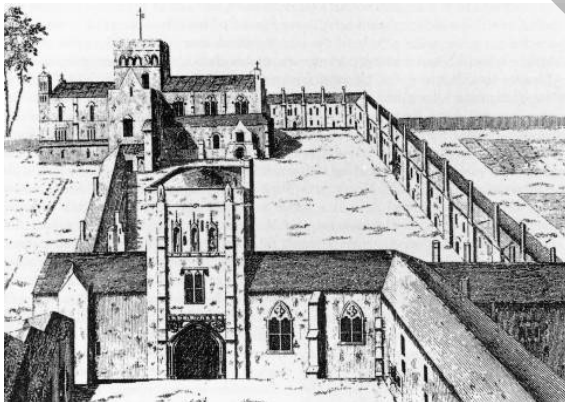
WORK PACKAGES

WP2 Specialist Housing (July 2014)

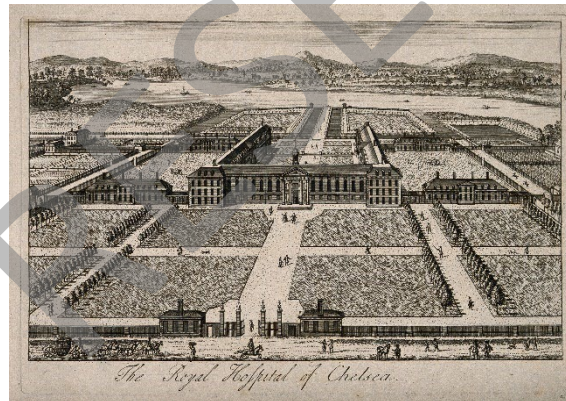
- Evolution of specialist housing
- Planning context
- Benefits of sheltered housing
- Community responses
- Meanings of 'home'



Southwark Almshouse, London (Witherford Watson Mann)



Saint Cross, Winchester



Royal Hospital Chelsea, London



Blaise Hamlet, Bristol

WORK PACKAGES

WP3 Fieldwork (January 2016)

- Data collection
- Ethnographic methods
- Product review
- Ageing Town design studio
- Reflective developer toolkit

FIELDWORK REPORT

REFLECTIVE DEVELOPER TOOLKIT



WORK PACKAGE 3
JANUARY 2016

AGEING TOWN

DESIGN STUDIO RESPONSES



DECEMBER 2015



Chartwell Lodge



Concorde Lodge



Cambridge Lodge

WORK PACKAGES

WP4 Planning Perspectives (October 2016)

- National review – literature
- Regional review – policy
- Local review – projects
- Decision/refusal notices
- Common ground analysis



Comparative Analysis

Feedback comments from the three case studies, particularly points of contention, have been collated and organised into ten categories and thirty one descriptors. Specific instances are charted and represented as coloured cells; yellow where one instance is evident, orange where there are two, and red where there are three instances within the same field. Similarly the main category areas and case studies are colour-coded according to intensity of evidence. In this way the chart provides a graphic representation of 'convergence' in planning professional feedback; indicating areas of 'heat' that warrant further investigation. Design – character and appearance – is clearly a significant area.

Planning Issues Raised by officer reports and notices	A Eastleigh	B Swindon	C Wetherby
01 Development Principles			
1.1 Demolition / preservation of historic assets			
1.2 Scale / density of development			
1.3 Use Class / scheme identity (naming)			
02 Section 106 Contributions			
2.1 Affordable Housing (determination)			
2.2 CIL (determination)			
2.3 Open Space			
2.4 Accessible Housing			
03 Building Typology			
3.1 Single building approach			
3.2 Double-loaded and/or long corridors			
3.3 Single-aspect apartments			
04 Parking			
4.1 Number of car parking spaces			
4.2 Size / accessibility of car parking bays			
4.3 Scooter store location			
05 Private Amenity			
5.1 Amount			
5.2 Distribution / layout			
5.3 Quality			

Table 1 - Comparative analysis of planning issues presented by the case studies

Planning Issues Raised by officer reports and notices	A Eastleigh	B Swindon	C Wetherby
06 Design: Strategic Siting			
6.1 Building (location / orientation)			
6.2 Parking (location / distribution)			
6.3 Main Garden (location / orientation)			
Design: Character/Appearance			
7.1 Relation to context / street scene			
7.2 Massing (distribution and form)			
7.3 Elevations (composition and materials)			
08 Design: Building Entrance			
8.1 Number			
8.2 Location			
8.3 Appearance			
09 Design: Internal Environment			
9.1 Sun/light, ventilation, noise			
9.2 Apartment outlook			
9.3 Travel distances (for older people)			
10 Landscape Design			
10.1 Site entrance / approach (quality)			
10.2 Vehicle drop-off			
10.3 Garden paving / features			

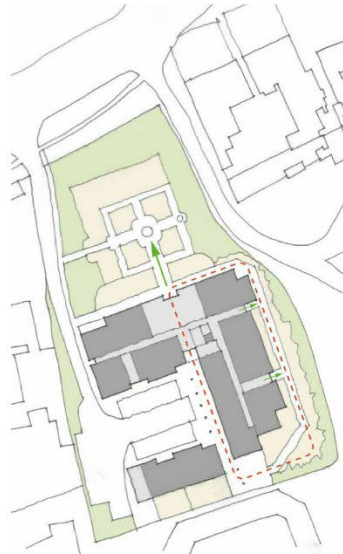
Before unpacking the data further it is worth reflecting on how the projects themselves have been presented, in as much, how they have been described. In all cases the planning application form and design and access statements refer to the 'elderly'. This is now considered out-dated as contemporary research and policy documents refer to 'older people', thereby avoiding cultural stereotypes and the act of 'othering'. In two cases the application form also describes the accommodation as "category II Type" (Eastleigh & Wetherby), which is unhelpful. Planning barrister Neil Cameron QC recently advised *Churchill Retirement Living* to desist in using these definitions as they are both 'out of date' and 'hard to find'. Planners working within the organisation reported frequent misinterpretation arising from shortened/colloquial references e.g. 'C2' (Category 2 Housing) within 'C2' and 'C3' (planning Use Classes)¹. There are also numerous non-authoritative systems of classification, variously three and four tiered, including references to Category 2.5 or 2Plus (and with them implicit models of later life as a kind of conveyor belt along which older persons travel from one class to another). Indeed one planning inspector twice refers to a project as a 'care home' within the appeal decision report (Wetherby). This serves to remind providers that the image of retirement housing products is somewhat confused.

WALKING ROUTES

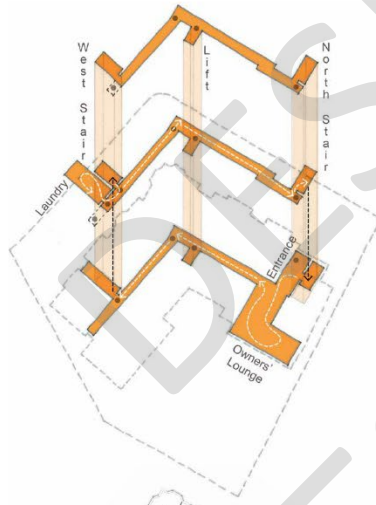
*The chalet is bigger than a house;
its shared spaces add up to a long walk.*

Walking Routes are designed circular walks that connect destinations (e.g. entrance, coffee bar, garden terrace, workshop, etc.) as well as sequences of resting places (e.g. by the lift, stairs, window, bookshelf, etc.). Walking Routes follow natural desire-lines and facilitate visual connectivity (seeing along and/or above routes, through use of vistas and vantage points); utilising intuitive 'land-marking', as opposed to signposting. Walking Routes are relatively level (not precluding stairs) and sufficiently wide

for two people to pass, making allowances for mobility aids. Walking Routes are variable; they encompass different surface qualities and spatial experiences, ranging from interior to exterior and passing through ('transversal') and alongside ('tangential') larger territories. Walking Routes facilitate personal exercise, ad-hoc social encounters, and engender a sense of orientation and purpose, helping you to sustain an active and independent lifestyle.



Above: Site plan showing walking route around grounds and through lounge



Above, right: Axonometric showing internal walking routes through common areas



Right: Plan drawing showing resting paces along internal walking routes

Vignette IX
Design Patterns
~ No.4 ~

WELLBEING STAIRS

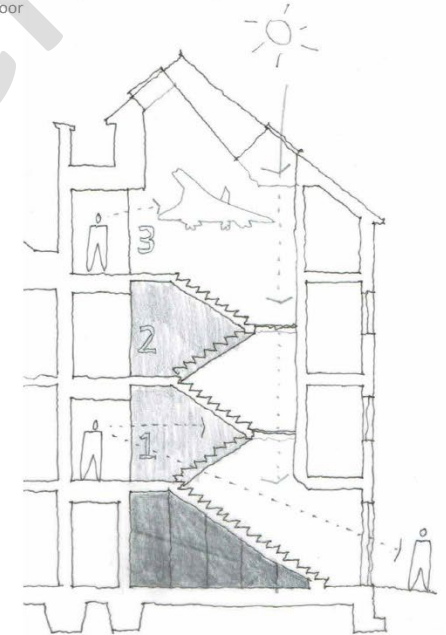
*The stairs are not just for emergency escape
or being carried out feet first.*

Wellbeing Stairs offer an attractive alternative to using the lift; helping to sustain a healthy and independent lifestyle, by providing physical and mental stimulation, as well as greater opportunity for social interaction. Wellbeing Stairs are naturally lit and ventilated and offer a range of external aspects from garden to rooftop level. Similarly, internal windows (between stair and corridor) aid your sense of orientation and connection with neighbours above and/or below. Way-finding and creative interior decoration give each floor

a clear identity and character. Wellbeing Stairs are designed with older people in mind. Deep treads and shallow risers allow for comfortable travel, while robust balustrading provides reassurance and the handrail is warm to touch. Rich materials and good lighting make for a homely and hospitable environment; a welcome place that feels pleasant and safe. You might even boost your pedometer count by going up and down a few times before sitting down.



Plan showing stair core with green roof access door and resting place



Cross section through stair core, showing sight-lines through vision panels, plus way-finding signage and decor

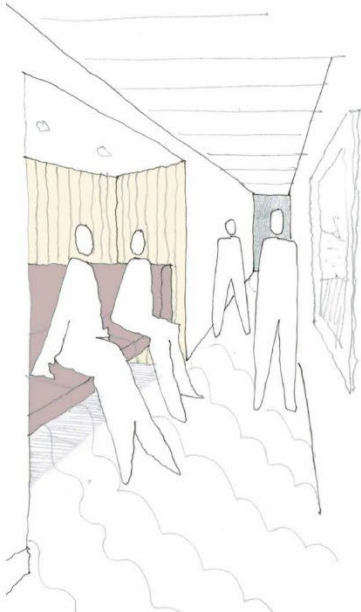
Vignette IX
Design Patterns
~ No.6 ~

SOCIAL CORRIDORS

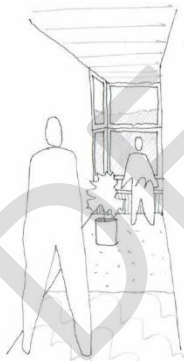
The chalet corridors do more than simply connect other places.

Social Corridors provide opportunities for informal interaction, as you might expect on a country lane. No need to visit the village hall, nor cross the threshold of the shared lounge and attend organised events. The Social Corridor is naturally lit and ventilated, with floor-to-ceiling windows and roof lights where possible. Wall and floor coverings are selected for daylight distribution and avoid high contrast or glare. The Social Corridor is wide enough for two people to pass or stop and talk; its height made more generous by exposed services and innovative construction.

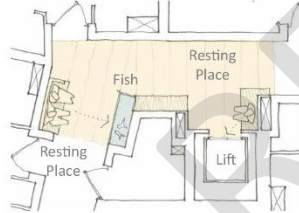
There are 'eddy' places, coinciding with front doors and removed from the general flow of movement, and pools of daylight that aid orientation by providing obvious points to walk towards, highlighting 'events'. The Social Corridor offers a sequence of resting places – by the window, lift and stairs, and at designed midpoints – including built-in seating, feature lighting, an interior/exterior view (to stairs or garden), and display spaces (a bookshelf, information board or tropical fish tank) to help sustain your social life.



Perspective view showing corridor resting place



Perspective view showing corridor-end window seat



Plan showing resting place and fish tank by lift core

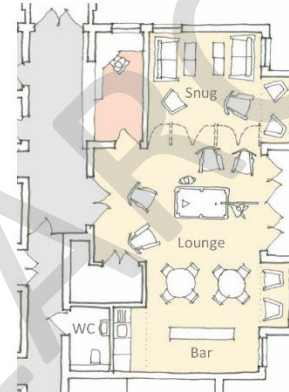
Vignette IX
Design Patterns
~ No.5 ~

COFFEE BAR

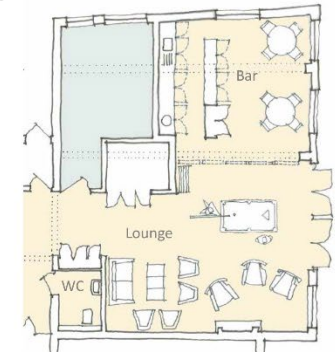
The shared lounge is an unfamiliar place, not experienced in earlier life.

The Coffee Bar replaces the shared lounge. The social protocol is clear; this is a place to meet and share a drink, like the familiar coffee shop where we met at weekends or the Raffles bar where we whiled away our holidays. The Coffee Bar overlooks – and is directly accessible to/ from – an important exterior space such as the garden terrace or street. There is a coffee bar and café-style tables, as well as a 'snug' with soft furnishings, including your favourite wing back armchair by the fire. The Coffee Bar offers

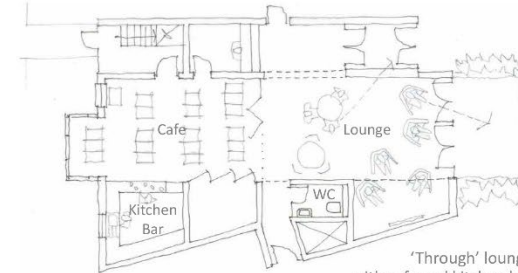
the possibility of splitting the space, by means of sliding bi-folding doors, allowing for parallel activities such as card games or watching a film. The Coffee Bar has some amount of flexible space, readily accommodating a fish and chip supper, yoga or ballroom dance class. There will be storage space for the folding pool table and a nearby accessible toilet. In short this will be a great place to throw your 80th birthday party or plot your ninetieth!



Lounge with open plan coffee bar and snug



Lounge and side bar with sliding partition



'Through' lounge with cafe and kitchen bar

Vignette IX
Design Patterns
~ No.3 ~

ARCHITECTURAL PERSPECTIVE

- **Almshousing forms** – not necessarily a distinct building typology – an architecturally diverse housing stock
- **Architectural heritage** – almshouse movement travels through centuries of building traditions, with lasting legacy
- **More than housing** – contextualising almshousing as distinct urban places that offer more than dwellings
- **Holistic analysis** – looking beyond technical building performance and assessing fitness for purpose
- **Design research** – methods for research that is *about/through/for* design – bringing ‘desingerly’ knowledge to housing studies
- **Translational** – gradual gaze / critical case study analysis to deepen architectural knowledge base and inform future practice.

A photograph of a modern building facade featuring large, multi-paned windows and balconies. The building has a light-colored wooden frame and a grey concrete balcony. The text "THANK YOU" is overlaid in the center of the image in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The windows reflect the sky and surrounding environment, and some interior details like a fire extinguisher and a table are visible through the glass.

THANK YOU