



## INTRODUCTION

Early in 1973, the former Cowbridge Borough Council commissioned H.M.R.Burgess + Partners to prepare designs for a development of Grouped Flatlets to meet the needs of less active elderly and disabled people on what was then known as Tuckers Field in Cowbridge. The Council's brief was in general to provide two person, single bedroom flats for a minimum of twenty four residents, with a proportion of the dwellings being designed specifically with the disabled in mind.

The design of the flats were to comply with the mandatory minimum standards for all Local Authority Housing for old people set down by the Welsh Office. Discussions established the Council's current operational policies and developed detailed requirements. These took in the specification of materials, methods of refuse collection the application of car parking standards, and decisions on the type and method of heating.

The site lies to the north of Eastgate on land between Cowbridge and the Bye-Pass. A part of the site was subsequently developed for private housing as an extension to Druids Green and the River Thaw passes near the western boundary of the site. This location is ideal as a site for a development for the elderly in that it lies close to the centre of Cowbridge while at the same time being adjacent to other residential development and affords pleasant views of the surrounding countryside.

Discussions took place at an early stage with the then Glamorgan County Council before plans were approved by the Borough Council in April 1973. Planning permission was received in June 1973 and consultations and approvals with the Housing Division of the Welsh Office were sought and obtained during this period.

Tenders were received in December 1973 as a result of which Messrs.R.T.(Contractors) Ltd of Cowbridge were nominated as General Contractors and work began on site in May 1974, two months after the responsibility for the project had transferred to the new Vale of Glamorgan Borough Council. During the construction period consultations have continued with the Officers of the Vale of Glamorgan Borough Council and certain minor amendments have been incorporated into the scheme as a result of these consultations.

## THE PROJECT

While the Tuckers Field site was considered well suited for residential development for the elderly it was also an important site in that it was close to that part of Cowbridge where consideration has to be given to the need for conservation of the existing environment. Its natural qualities are important in terms of visual amenity. Early discussions with the Planning Authority (the then Glamorgan County Council) had indicated that as far as was possible, the development of the site should be dealt with comprehensively. The relationship with the adjacent private housing was considered from the outset.

The shape and form of the building therefore reflects not only the necessity of developing a functional and economical plan suited to the needs of its residents, but also an attempt to integrate the development into its immediate surroundings.

The building, including the Warden's accommodation and the communal facilities can accommodate up to fifty three people which predetermines the scale of the building. In consultation with the Service Consultant it became apparent at an early stage that although each resident would have independent control within each flat the scale of development lent itself to a central source for the heating system. There was also the necessity to plan for car parking spaces to meet the standards set down by the Planning Authority.

The Architectural solution sought to maintain an essentially domestic character to the building while at the same time meeting the operational requirements of a reasonably large two storey development. This has been done by arranging the accommodation around three sides of an open court thus visually breaking down the mass of the building; by a considered arrangement of single storey and double storey pitched roof areas and by the use of restrained and simply detailed 'domestic' details such as bay windows and timber boarding.

The construction is essentially two storey traditional of load bearing blockwork, finished externally in spar-dash render with dark coloured concrete tiled pitched roofs. The suspended floor is constructed of reinforced concrete and the roof is supported on prefabricated timber trusses.

The accommodation consists of twelve single bedroomed two person flats for the disabled and elderly on the ground floor, and twelve single bedroomed two person flats for the elderly only on the first floor. The communal facilities comprise a large lounge with a small communal kitchen, and there is a laundry, a single person guest room, stores and a boiler room to accommodate the plant for the central heating system. The warden has a self contained three bedroomed flat which with the communal facilities takes up one side of the 'court' and there is a warden's office for day time use on the ground floor.

Three of the flats on the ground floor have been designed specifically for the disabled but all flats in matters such as the height of worktops and the disposition of windows have considered the needs of the elderly and the disabled. The flats are self contained and create the right feeling of independence for the residents as each flat contains a living/dining room, a kitchen, bedroom and bathroom opening off a private hallway. The flats are dispersed each side of a central corridor which follows around the three sides of the building. The use of painted fairfaced blockwork and the general modelling of this corridor creates visual interest for the residents. The corridors and the enclosed staircases take the residents to and from the communal facilities which ensure the opportunity for adequate social integration whilst still maintaining their independence.

The finishes within the building have been chosen against the criteria of their suitability for elderly residents. The choice of finishes and colours externally were chosen so as to be reasonably maintenance free and also to blend with the grey stone and slate traditions of Cowbridge itself. Entrances to the building are ramped. Ribbed quarry tiles give these ramps added non slip qualities. They link with the external paving finishes which have been kept reasonably simple to maintain the domestic character of the building and its site.

Residents are encouraged to furnish the flats for themselves but furniture and carpeting within the communal areas is part of the Local Authority's provision. Landscaping is initially essentially limited but it is hoped that there will be an ongoing development of soft landscaping so that the judicious introduction of trees and bushes will further exploit the pastoral quality of the site which still exists even though the building is so close to the centre of Cowbridge.

Residents' flats are linked to the warden's accommodation by an alarm call system. Lighting and heating have been provided to meet requisite standards of levels of illumination and comfort.

LONGMEADOW COURT  
Sheltered Accommodation for the Elderly  
COWBRIDGE

CONSULTANTS

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MAIN CONTRACTOR

R.T.(Contractors) Ltd.  
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