

THE
ALMSHOUSE
ASSOCIATION



PATRON'S AWARD

DESIGN BRIEF



BACKGROUND

HRH The Prince of Wales, Patron of The Almshouse Association, introduced an award scheme in 2000 to recognise and encourage outstanding almshouse development and it remains a coveted award across the almshouse movement.

His Royal Highness personally reviews applications annually and is advised by a Patron's Award Committee.

2



Church Almshouses, Appleton

Front Cover: Davenport Homes – Patron's Award 2017



CLARENCE HOUSE

The tradition of building Almshouses is one of the most special and delightful in Britain. From the social benefits of providing accommodation for those in need, to the environmental benefits of creating dignified and graceful homes for residents and adding to our rich national heritage, this is a tradition which must be maintained and enhanced. The purpose of the Patrons Award, and this Design Guide, is to encourage Almshouse charities to apply best practice in the restoration of existing buildings and the design of new homes.

The many wonderful examples of Almshouses found across Britain act as a guide in themselves to inspire new buildings of quality. However, many elements can be greatly improved through better environmental solutions and space standards to enhance thereby the quality of life for residents. The addition of small details such as, for example, low window sills to enable residents to enjoy views from a seated position, are neither expensive nor difficult to put in, but can make a huge difference to someone's life.

By carefully following the suggested guidelines, the charity and designer will be able to put the resident at the centre of the design process and create a thoughtful and beautiful environment which will look after people for decades to come. This level of care in design will, I hope, ensure that the great tradition of building Almshouses will continue in good health.

Chanel

CONTENTS

BACKGROUND	2
FOREWORD BY HRH THE PRINCE OF WALES	3
CONTENTS	4
INTRODUCTION	5
PROPORTIONALITY	6
CHARACTER	6
COMPOSITION	7
LAYOUT	7
LISTED BUILDINGS	8
MATERIALS	9
WINDOWS	10
MAIN ENTRANCE AND COMMUNAL AREAS	10
VALUE FOR MONEY	11
HOMES FOR LIFE	11



*Partis College, Bath
– Patron's Award 2008*

INTRODUCTION

Almshouses should be attractive buildings that sit well within their environment. They should be designed for their residents and in the case of older people, be regarded as homes for life. For listed buildings, the Committee expects very high standards of restoration and conservation, balanced with the need for them to be functional and affordable.



5

Morden College, Greenwich – Patron's Award 2010

The purpose of this booklet is to raise standards by drawing attention to those aspects of design which the Committee considers to be important when assessing excellence. It is not intended to be exhaustive, not least because standards are continually rising and technology may provide new solutions and techniques. This Design Brief is intended to assist trustees in formulating ideas and to offer suggestions which can form part of the brief for architects and builders before a project is finalised. The Committee will update the brief from time to time to ensure that it remains relevant and practical.

■ PROPORTIONALITY

Good proportions are an essential ingredient for good looking buildings and therefore new designs should have well proportioned facades and windows. Prominent roofs and chimneys are a characteristic element of almshouses and so should be considered and may be used for passive ventilation.



*William Browne's
Hospital, Stamford*

■ CHARACTER

New buildings should sit harmoniously within their surroundings. A thorough characterisation study should be made of the best examples of local character and this should inform new design. Almshouses of today should be as attractive as their forebears and not resemble cheap, commercially driven apartment buildings or volume housing.



*St Leonard's Hospital, Newark
– Patron's Award 2013*

COMPOSITION

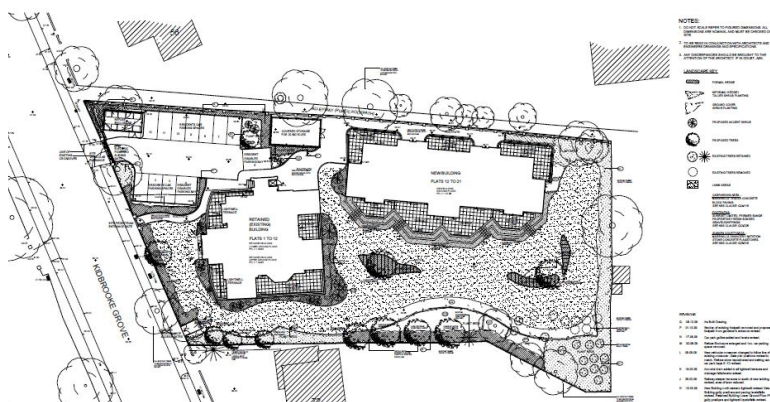
One of the timeless characteristics of almshouses is the three-sided court with a central emphasis of the most public building. This offers a sense of community, security and a window on everyday life for residents who may be unable to get out very much. It is important residents feel they have their own entrance and independence while buildings are composed together to form a strong sense of community. Garden spaces should be generous.



Nicholas Chamberlaine's Almshouses, Bedford

LAYOUT

Different parts of a building should be clearly defined with public, semi-public and private spaces clearly delineated architecturally. The spaces within the homes should be clear and legible. Accessibility for residents and visitors should be a high priority in design terms.



■ LISTED BUILDINGS

In the case of improvements to listed buildings, extensions should blend naturally and avoid being in stark contrast to the original design. Modernisation should provide improvements to living standards while being sensitive to the original design, preserving the integral character of the building. The skill is to balance the need for high standards of restoration and conservation with affordability and functionality.

8



John Dakyn Almshouses, North Yorkshire – Patron's Award 2007

MATERIALS

To ensure longevity, the quality and type of materials used should be of a high standard. Natural materials should be used where possible with those that improve with age being preferable. Simple, robust and non-toxic materials are recommended such as stone, timber, brick and lime based render. Where possible, materials should be sourced locally.



Tiverton Almshouse Trust – Patron's Award 2004

■ WINDOWS

Windows should be thoughtfully placed and proportioned to provide both natural light and pleasant views. Modern windows should be glazed sufficiently to reduce draught. Particular attention should be given to the design of window latches to enable those that may be less dextrous as a result of frailty, to operate them effectively. Natural light penetration should be optimized through the use of high window-heads. Corridors should be well lit where possible and top light should be considered where the floor plan allows.

■ MAIN ENTRANCE AND COMMUNAL AREAS

A main entrance to a block of dwellings should be welcoming and convey the feeling of home through the use of pictures, sofas and flowers. Notice boards and instructions should be placed elsewhere to avoid an institutional impression. Any instructions should be nicely designed, put at an appropriate height and phrased in a friendly, welcoming way.



St John's Combe Park, Bath
– Patron's Award 2003

■ VALUE FOR MONEY

It would be wrong to assume that achieving high quality buildings will inevitably make a project unaffordable. Care should be taken balancing budget with high quality design so the project is good value for money. This should take account of life cycle costs and longer-term maintenance requirements.

11



*Harrietsham
Almshouses, Kent*

■ HOMES FOR LIFE

Almshouse dwellings should feel like home and every effort should be made to avoid creating an institutional environment. For example, a reasonable ceiling height and the use of natural light will make an almshouse feel more spacious and inviting. Communal areas should have a good floor finish and be well decorated to invoke a feeling of dignity, intimacy and civility.



Hospital of St Cross, Winchester



The Almshouse Association

Billingbear Lodge
Maidenhead Road
Wokingham
Berkshire RG40 5RU

Tel: 01344 452922

Email: AlmshouseSupport@almshouses.org

www.almshouses.org

Registered Charity No: 245668