



# Grace House

A blueprint for accessible and affordable over 55s living

Motionspot

**C&C**  
LONDON HOMES  
SINCE 1926  
ASTER

  
**REGAL**  
LONDON

Ryder





## Executive summary

Beyond being an important facility for the immediate community in Westminster, Grace House answers the challenge of integrating housing, social care, and health. In doing so, it is driving new innovative models of housing and care set out in the Social Care White Paper. Grace House provides the perfect canvas to innovate and enable an inspired partnership approach while providing the highest quality affordable accommodation for people aged over 55 in London.



Grace House reimagines what over-55s supported living can be. Built to be fully adaptable and provide elegant accessible housing for people as they age, it is the benchmark for modern affordable living.”



**Julia Ashley**, Business Development Director at Aster Group and C&C’s former Chief Executive



# An introduction to Grace House

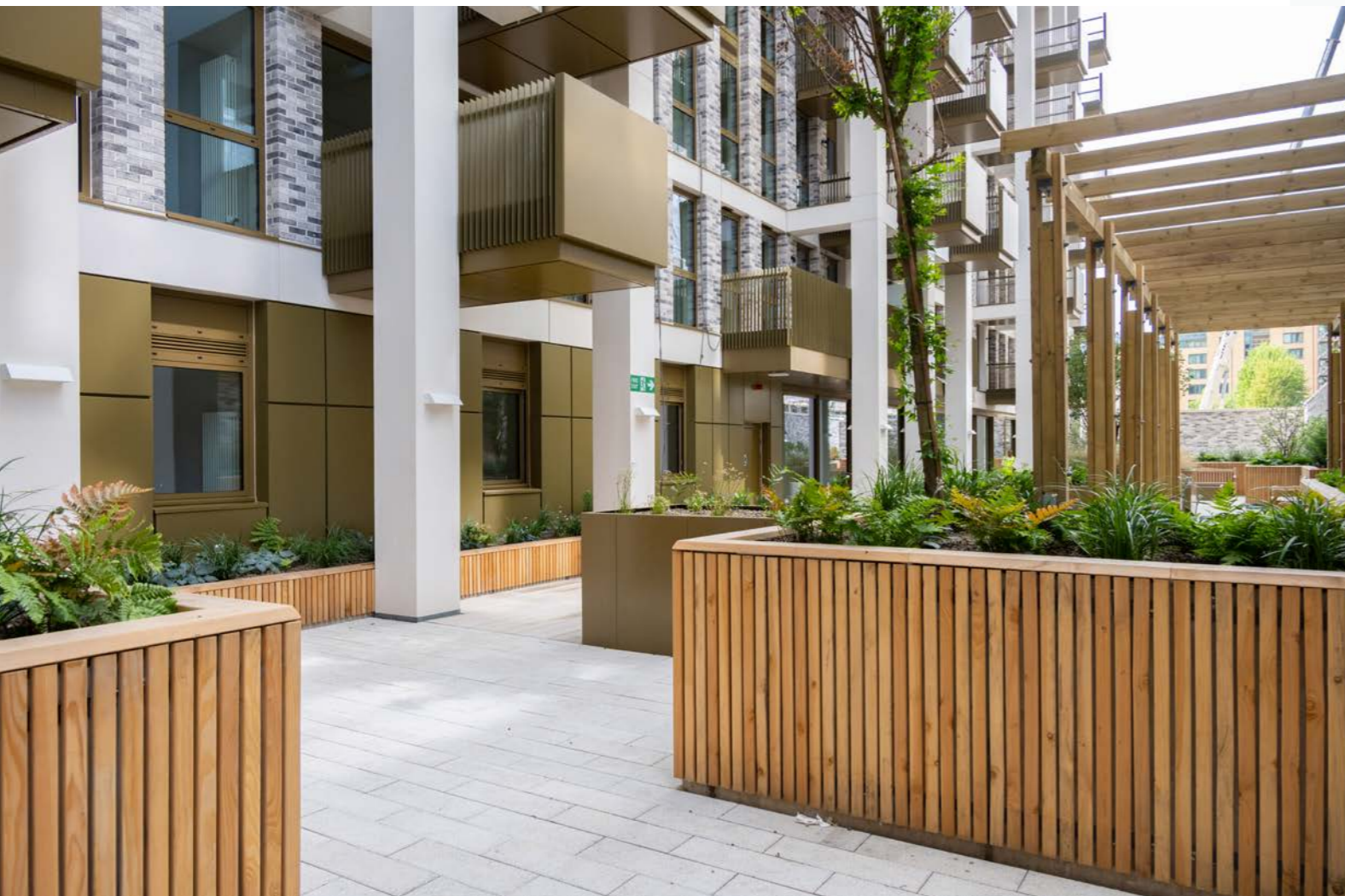
Grace House is an award-winning<sup>i</sup>, accessibly designed affordable housing scheme in St John's Wood, Westminster which aims to provide among the highest quality affordable homes for over 55s in the capital. Overlooking Lord's Cricket Ground in one of the most exclusive areas of London, not-for-profit housing provider Central & Cecil (C&C) and its partners, residential-led mixed-use developer Regal London; international design practice Ryder Architecture; and accessible design specialist Motionspot have created 170 accessible apartments for rent, 153 of which are affordable and 17 of which are available for private rent. A range of communal areas and garden spaces have also been thoughtfully designed throughout the building's 13 floors to meet the evolving access needs of people aged 55 and over.

Opened in August 2022, Grace House has been built on the site of the former 205 unit sheltered housing scheme, Dora House. Built in 1970, the Dora House accommodation mainly consisted of 32m<sup>2</sup> studio apartments that were no longer considered to adequately meet the needs or standards of present-day residents. It was estimated in 2008 that investment in the realm of £8-11 million would have been required to bring basics including boilers, pipework, radiators, roofing, windows, and thermal insulation up to current standards.

In 2012 it was agreed that Dora House was no longer fit for purpose and should be redeveloped with significant accessible design involvement and improvements integrated into the fabric of the building. The objective was to create a building which would provide suitable future-proofed accommodation that could adapt to residents' needs as they age in place. Following full planning being granted in November 2019,

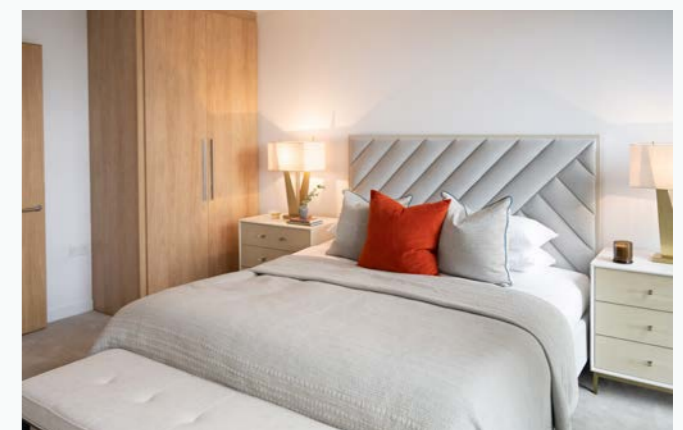
Dora House was demolished in early 2020, with a demolition ceremony attended by former residents who had a right to return to the redeveloped Grace House. Those intending to return were resettled by C&C within its own housing stock until the building was ready for them to move back into. New applications to live in Grace House were opened to those who require housing and are eligible for affordable housing through Westminster City Council.

Following a competitive process to reappraise the scheme in 2018, Regal London was chosen by C&C as its delivery partner for the project and was responsible for building the new Grace House. Regal London's partnership-led and fully integrated and collaborative approach was key to the success of the new development. It ensured that Grace House delivers adaptable apartments that exceed the Mayor of London's space standards, as well as specialist services for residents and a range of communal facilities.



●● From the initial meetings with C&C we were clear about our shared ambition. We wanted to create a new affordable housing scheme for over 55s that would change perceptions and challenge assumptions. It's clear, opening the doors of Grace House, that we have truly delivered on this dream. The resulting building, designed with and for the original residents to create the best possible outcomes, embodies our principles of design excellence and quality whilst providing accessible accommodation for those who need it.

●● **Paul Eden**, Co-Founder of Regal London





# The co-design process

In 2014 C&C first engaged around 30 Dora House residents as collaborative 'Dora Designers' to work alongside Ryder, Motionspot, technical advisors, planners, and the C&C team. The co-design process included visiting accessible public spaces for inspiration around what is possible; monthly full-day drop-in surgeries where residents could speak to a C&C director; the introduction of an independent 'Resident Friend' chosen by residents to represent their views; and Motionspot building a show bathroom and running a focus group to collect resident feedback. This included: "I'm happy about all the development and look forward to moving back in"; "I like the design because it's very easy for older people"; "Please design where to put shampoo bottles back in the shower area"; and "I would like this exact bathroom when I move back in."

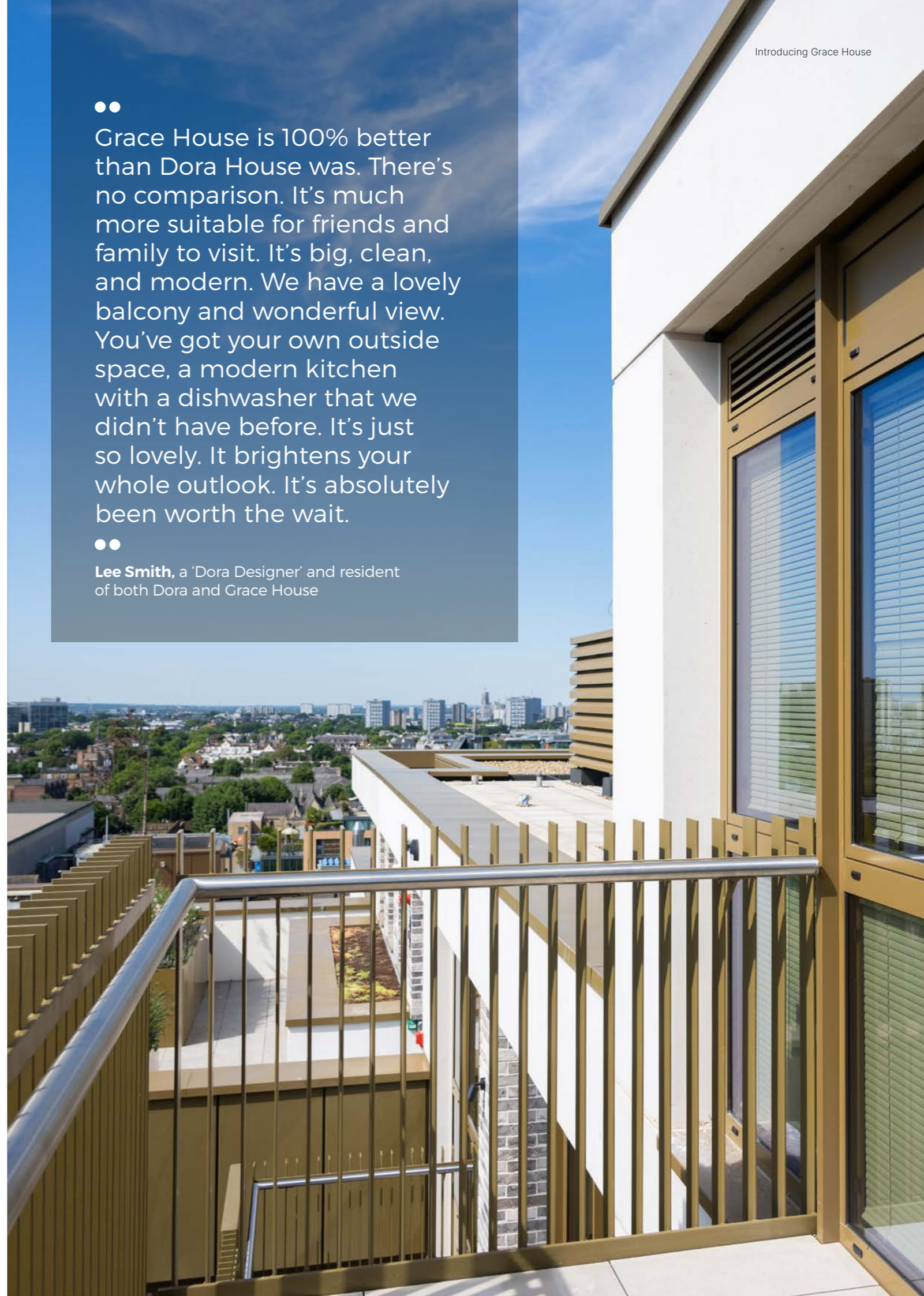
Residents were enthusiastic to be involved and held a competition to name the new building 'Grace House', taking inspiration from WG Grace, the father of cricket, and continuing the tradition of female names for C&C buildings. Overwhelming feedback gathered from surgeries and focus groups was that residents wanted to continue to live in the area where they had lived and worked, brought up their families and contributed to the local community for many years. They also stressed the need for homes with better access to storage and more accessible bathroom and kitchen facilities.

By placing residents at the heart of every step of the process, Grace House has been designed to meet the unique needs of residents, resulting in the creation of a building which will enable them to live as independently as possible as they age, and which can adapt to their evolving care and access needs, while reducing pressure on the social care sector wherever possible.



●● Grace House is 100% better than Dora House was. There's no comparison. It's much more suitable for friends and family to visit. It's big, clean, and modern. We have a lovely balcony and wonderful view. You've got your own outside space, a modern kitchen with a dishwasher that we didn't have before. It's just so lovely. It brightens your whole outlook. It's absolutely been worth the wait.

●● **Lee Smith**, a 'Dora Designer' and resident of both Dora and Grace House





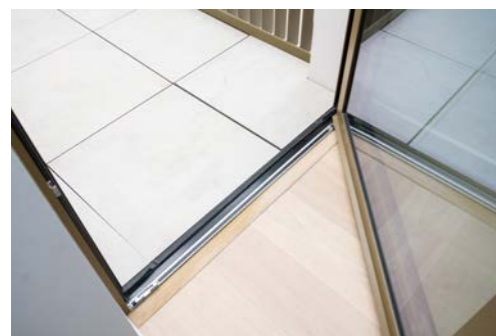
# Accessible design

Designing Grace House from scratch provided a unique opportunity to create a future-proofed building that is easy and enjoyable to move around in without compromising on style or looking clinical. As well as the central theme of 'elegance', the accessible design features incorporated in the build included:

- Level access thresholds throughout
- Wide doorways and corridors
- Clear wayfinding and signage
- Power assisted doors to communal areas
- Innovative products
- Good visual contrast between floors, walls and soft furnishings
- Good use of biophilic design principles

•• The biggest compliment is when everyone, regardless of age or disability enjoys being in a space while being unaware of all the considered design and product choices that went into meeting more specific needs. Grace House perfectly demonstrates how affordable homes can be built to be beautiful, adaptable, and accessible to suit people as they age.

•• **Ed Warner**, CEO and Founder of Motionspot



# Accessible apartments

Grace House's 170 apartments, including 17 wheelchair accessible apartments are all over 52m<sup>2</sup> in size, feature level access to private balconies overlooking London and ambulant or wheelchair accessible kitchens and bathrooms. The wheelchair accessible apartments also feature dual bedroom access to aid carer support.

C&C engaged Motionspot to work closely with Ryder during the conceptual and pre-planning phases. In addition to considerations for physical access Motionspot considered a range of progressive cognitive and sensory conditions including dementia and visual impairment.

The accessible design principles Motionspot put forward for kitchens included easy to see and use drawer and cupboard handles, comfort height ovens and space under the sink to enable seated access. As bathrooms are the first room in the home where people start to struggle and identify the need for specific support, this is where Motionspot focussed its accessible design principles which included:

- Level access wetrooms with a seat, light bi-fold door and thermostatically controlled shower valve
- Good contrast between floor and wall tiles which are matt rather than gloss
- Wall mounted basins to accommodate a stool or wheelchair underneath
- Easy-to-use lever taps
- Long-projection comfort-height toilets that would accommodate a range of commodes
- Flush plates that are easier to operate with limited dexterity
- L-shaped riser rails in the shower which double up as support
- Removable grab rails and shower seats that can be fitted when required by residents



# Adaptability

Importantly, Grace House as an entire building has been designed to be adaptable for future use through the development of two 'clusters' per floor. Each cluster can convert into a 10-bed registered care home, containing two interconnected units of five beds<sup>ii</sup> so that residents requiring higher levels of care can remain in the community as their needs increase. There is also potential to use three studio units and a rehabilitation room as a dedicated respite/rehabilitation space for short term stays to avoid hospital admissions and/or enable timely discharge from hospital.<sup>iii</sup>



# Communal areas

The amenity spaces in the high specification new development include a communal lounge, exercise studio, and several gardens including a roof garden and heated winter garden, meeting spaces, quiet zones, sensory and activity areas. All integrate seamlessly, providing opportunities for residents to interact with each other through incidental meetings or gathering in more formal areas. Attractive accessible toilet facilities have also been incorporated.





# Future-proofing

In addition to being future-proofed for individual's evolving needs, Grace House has also been designed with future sustainability and technological developments in mind. An operationally sustainable smart building, Air Source Heat Pumps and PV (Photovoltaic) panels are set to generate around 60% of the building's annual heat demand, and a future connection point to a District Heating (DH) network will allow the site to reduce carbon emissions from heating and hot water. Wi-fi and smart lighting are available throughout, and the building also boasts interoperable technology-enabled care solutions, a new security system and fire integration with 24-hour monitoring. There is also an underground carpark with electric vehicle charging points, wheelchair accessible compliant units with mobility scooter charging points, and a car club.



# Inspiring the industry

Key takeaways from the partnership approach deployed at Grace House include:

- Integration and collaboration between all strategic partners
- Extensive early stages collaboration with target audience groups
- Placing residents at the heart of every step of the design and build process
- Engagement with accessible design professionals from concept stage
- Entrenching flexible future-proofed elements into the fabric of the building

C&C welcomes a constructive dialogue with housing, health, and social care colleagues to develop a new partnership approach to delivering an outstanding integrated model.

●● We are hugely proud to see the opening of Grace House. This has been the culmination of an extensive co-design process with C&C and residents to develop the design of their new homes and shared spaces. We are sure that the residents will enjoy their new homes and that Grace House will become an exemplar approach to working collaboratively to deliver modern high quality later living environments.

●● **David McMahon**, Director and Project Architect at Ryder Architecture





# The team behind Grace House



Motionspot is an award-winning accessible design specialist with a wealth of experience designing accessible, adaptable and future-proofed homes and other commercial spaces. Motionspot provides accessible and inclusive design advice at all RIBA stages for both new builds and refurbishments helping clients and their architects design and build spaces that are accessible for users with a range of physical, cognitive and sensory needs, including design considerations for faith, culture, ethnic background and gender. Motionspot also works with manufacturers to design and supply accessible products that perfectly blend form and function without looking clinical in their design look and feel.

Speak to one of Motionspot's accessible design experts to discuss your requirements by emailing [team@motionspot.co.uk](mailto:team@motionspot.co.uk) or calling 020 3735 5139.

[www.motionspot.co.uk](http://www.motionspot.co.uk)



Central & Cecil (C&C) is a not-for-profit housing provider that offers housing and care for over 55s in outstanding locations across London. Founded 95 years ago, C&C delivers inspirational living services for residents across over 1,850 properties including affordable and private rent, four care homes and a small number of luxury retirement properties. C&C is regulated by the HCA (Housing and Communities Agency) and CQC (Care Quality Commission).

C&C as well as East Borough Housing Trust, and Enham Trust are part of Aster Group, with the merger having completed in January 2022. Aster Group is currently in the process of forming a new Strategic Plan for Ageing which will set the direction for the homes, services, technologies, property developments and employment options for people as they age across its operational area of Southern England.

To find out more about C&C and its housing and care services across London, please call 0207 922 5300 or email [contact-us@ccht.org.uk](mailto:contact-us@ccht.org.uk).

[www.ccht.org.uk](http://www.ccht.org.uk)



Regal London is one of the capital's leading privately owned mixed-use developers with a focus on unlocking value from complex urban settings to transform London's landscape and deliver high-quality places for people to live, play, visit and work in. Regal London has delivered successful projects across the capital, from Brent to Tower Hamlets and from Barnet to Lambeth. Its developments are characterised by bespoke design and exceptional quality and are built to unlock value, enhance the local environment, and respect local communities. Unlike many other developers, Regal London is a fully integrated business operating across the entire lifecycle of the asset, which means that it puts the customer at the centre of each decision taken.

Please contact [info@regal-london.co.uk](mailto:info@regal-london.co.uk) for further information.

[www.regal-london.co.uk](http://www.regal-london.co.uk)



Ryder Architecture was established in Newcastle upon Tyne in 1953, and now has a team of over 300 passionate people in Newcastle, London, Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester, Hong Kong, Vancouver, and Amsterdam, reinforced by global connectivity through the Ryder Alliance. It delivers pioneering architectural and design services across a diverse portfolio of sectors. Its goal is simple – 'to improve the quality of the world around us and, in doing so, improve people's lives.'

Please contact [info@ryderarchitecture.com](mailto:info@ryderarchitecture.com) for further information.

[www.ryderarchitecture.com](http://www.ryderarchitecture.com)



## Appendix

Page 4

- i Grace House won Best Social Housing in Europe at The International Property Awards 2022.

Page 10

- ii Change requires local authority support and planning approval for a change of use from C3 to C2.
- iii Change requires housing, health and social care partners to agree a service model and funding.





Photography courtesy of Regal London

Motionspot<sup>•</sup>

**C&C**  
LONDON HOMES  
SINCE 1926  
BY  
ASTER  
LONDON

  
**R E G A L**  
L O N D O N

Ryder