

The future of retirement estates is green



'Eco' and 'retirement' are not often words that are heard in the same sentence. John Lavin of Cognatum says that retirement estates, especially those outside London, have been slow to start in terms of incorporating environmental features into their developments. But the new extension to their estate Stuart Court in Minchinhampton has an encouraging array of green elements.

The award-winning Stuart Court, which originally consisted of twenty-six properties including some apartments and the conversion of the charming former rectory Stuart House, is set amidst parkland grounds beautifully maintained by Cognatum. Phase II of Stuart Court comprises five houses and two apartments, with the contemporary architecture complementing the original design of the estate. The spacious two and three bedroom properties are designed to suit the lifestyle and requirements of the new generation of unretiring 55+ year-olds.

John Lavin says, "One of the most overlooked environmental benefits of a retirement estate is one that reduces the need for cars. All Cognatum retirement estates have great 'walkability', and Stuart Court is no exception being a five-minute stroll from the lovely town of Minchinhampton.

"Stuart Court also has a host of other smart features including self-cleaning glass, sockets with USB charging points, and a lift-ready layout.

"The new properties have triple glazing to windows and doors, under-floor heating, low level LED lights on sensors, a mechanical ventilation and heat recovery system, digital heat controls to zoned areas, and a pull-out recycling system, with the laundry room cleverly located on the first floor of the cottages. There are also communal allotments available to residents – good for the environment, and good for the health and well-being of the residents".

But while the properties have an eco-focussed design, the ergonomics have not been overlooked.

"Downsizing to Stuart Court doesn't mean compromising on space, it just means different space – perhaps less bedrooms, but plenty of room for entertaining. All the cottages and apartments extend over more than 1,500 sq. ft. and include light enhancing bi-folding doors that allow residents to open up kitchen, dining and living space as desired.

"Cognatum estates are designed to be right for now, and ready to grow into. Many new buyers are in their 50s or early 60s, so being 'right for now', with the functionality in place for later modifications, also means that unless residents require serious later-life care there should be no reason for another move. If and when stairs become a problem, the electrics are in place and the space is available to install a through floor lift – and until such time as a lift may be required the space is used as a walk in wardrobe.

"Each estate has dedicated Estate Managers, who are appointed to look after the day to day management of the estate and be on hand for any advice or information. The services provided by Cognatum include the upkeep of buildings, maintenance of the gardens, window cleaning and a regular transport service to local towns, so residents can enjoy their increased leisure time and new more relaxed lifestyle."

If the future is green, environmentally speaking, it is also green in a literal sense. The properties at Stuart Court are surrounded by superb landscaped gardens and magnificent trees with a large lawn area fringed by woodland, and two formal courtyard gardens. The estate borders the lovely National Trust-managed Minchinhampton Common providing hundreds of acres of beautiful walking opportunities.

Prices range from £685,000 to £925,000.

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Cognatum, a not-for-profit company, has 60 retirement estates in 21 counties across central and southern England, a total of 928 retirement homes. All are in prime locations within vibrant market towns or villages, within walking distance of shops and restaurants. Each estate benefits from thoughtful architecture, landscaped grounds, and a dedicated estate manager.

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