

# Homes fit for your future



DEBORAH STONE looks at stylish living options for the over-55s that adapt to accommodate the changing needs of later life

New government guidance has called for more homes to be built to fit owners' changing needs as they age, with wide paths and rooms that have enough space for wheelchairs. But one specialist house builder for over-55s is already well ahead when it comes to building adaptable homes.

Retirement housing firm Cognatum builds homes with "lift-ready" layouts and has more than 40 landscaped estates in villages and market towns, often built around refurbished period properties.

Among them is Stuart Court in Minchinhampton, Gloucestershire, where a second phase of five houses and two apartments are now being sold in parkland that already has 26 properties for over-55s, although only three remain.

The two and three-bedroom homes have been built with self-cleaning glass and low running costs thanks to mechanical ventilation and heat recovery systems.

"Cognatum estates are designed to be right for now, and ready to grow into," says managing director John Lavin. "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."



MODERN LIVING – Cotswold stone gives the properties a light and airy feel

*"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 then the space is used as a walk-in wardrobe."*

Every Cognatum estate has a manager to look after day-to-day needs and is on hand to advise residents. Building upkeep, garden maintenance and window cleaning is included in service charges and there's regular transport to local towns.

Many Cognatum estates are within walking distance of towns, including Stuart Court, which is a five-minute stroll from the historic Cotswold market town of Minchinhampton. It also borders Minchinhampton Common, with hundreds of acres of good walking.

Stroud railway station is four miles away and London Paddington is an hour and 32 minutes by train, while Cheltenham is a 16-mile car drive and Bath is 27 miles away.

LIGHT TOUCH – Bedrooms are refreshingly subtle with their neutral shades



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Minchinhampton Cricket Club and the town's library are a few minutes' walk away.

Stuart Court's cottages and apartments have bi-folding internal doors so the kitchen, dining and living spaces can be open-plan or separate if desired and Lavin says: *"The new properties have triple glazing to windows and doors, under-floor heating, low-level LED lights on sensors 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 wellbeing of the residents."*

Stuart Court's new homes are built in Cotswold stone with large double bedrooms that have ensuite bathrooms, and some have a third bedroom that can be used as a study.

Prices range from £675,000 to £925,000 (01491 821150; cognatum.co.uk).

*"Downsizing doesn't mean compromising on space," says Lavin, "it just means different space. Perhaps fewer bedrooms but plenty of room for entertaining."*



CONTEMPORARY – Bright open-plan kitchens add to the feeling of space

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[www.cognatum.co.uk](http://www.cognatum.co.uk)  
01491 821170

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*By Deborah Stone  
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