

The RIBA Journal

February 2023

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MacEwen Award 2023

Architecture for the common good:

Jubilee Pool Penzance makes a splash

Wash Your Words: launder as you read

Wraxall Yard's fully accessible stays

Intricate East Quay makes a big impact





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MACEWEN AWARD 07

The strength of entries made judges work harder than ever this year

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Photo: Ben Luxemore



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MacEwen Award commended
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07

1: Buildings



MACEWEN AWARD 2023 ARCHITECTURE FOR THE COMMON GOOD

Below We Made That's MacEwen longlisted scheme to transform Lockwood Way, an industrial estate in north-east London, into a social hub.

Welcome to 2023's MacEwen Award special issue. In the following pages we present the overall winner, two highly commended schemes, a special mention and the eight-strong shortlist.

Getting to a shortlist from this year's 32 MacEwen Award longlisted projects (ribaj.com/macewen-longlist-2023) was no small task for the five judges. So many projects had all the attributes of architecture for the common good that the judges look for; social, environmental, economic, or any other appropriate type. Projects passed back and forth into various winning positions.

This final roster, however, presents a fantastic array of projects across the UK, with a street takeover in Belfast, two converted London buses, two rural social enterprise initiatives and an urban fashion and garment workshop, among others. They demonstrate how architecture can help to improve lives and the places we inhabit. Our winner, one of our highly commended projects and our special mention are all located in the south west. It is a nice

coincidence that we haven't had before in this award (now in its seventh year), but possibly exemplifies a shift to the region that has grown since Covid-19. The other highly commended project, however takes us to a converted housing office in Blackpool and on the shortlist you'll find a cluster in the north-east as well as all areas of London. You'll see also several schemes that are designed to reactivate city centres and urban greening schemes that developed as a consequence of the pandemic.

A big thank you must go to all the practices that entered – the award wouldn't happen without them – and to the judges: Takeshi Hayatsu, founder of Hayatsu Architects, Joan Kerr, BDP Birmingham architect associate, Kathy MacEwen, planner and daughter of Malcolm and Anni MacEwen after whom the prize is named, and Anthony Staples, associate at RCKa and MacEwen Award 2022 winner for Nourish Hub (RIBA J Feb 2022). And finally, many congratulations to the winners, shortlisters and longlisters. ●

JIM STEPHENSON



Take the plunge

Local commitment and creative engineering produced a sustainable community and tourist amenity in the MacEwen Award winner – Scott Whitby Studio’s Jubilee Pool in Penzance

Words: Isabelle Priest Photographs: Jim Stephenson

The day I visited Jubilee Pool in Penzance was during the extremely cold patch, the week before Christmas. On the way out of London on the train, inches of solidified snow had lain on the ground for five cold days, and I was braving a 24-hour break in the week-long train strikes schedule. The train was deserted. Outside temperatures weren’t much above 0°C, sometimes well below. But the day was stunningly bright and crisp, and at Jubilee Pool in the winter sunshine a constant huddle of swimmers was enjoying the new geothermally heated waters.

At 91m long by 49m wide, the pool is the UK’s largest and one of its five remaining seawater lidos. With a capacity of five million litres it can accommodate 600 people. It was designed by Penzance borough engineer Frank Latham in an

IN NUMBERS

266m²
gifa

£1.8m
funding raised for
phase 2

30°C
minimum guaranteed
temperature of
geothermal pool

art deco style and completed in 1935. Triangular in shape, the pool was built on an area known as Battery Rocks on the headland, which had become a popular year-round bathing spot during the Victorian period. It is surrounded by 225° sea views, including of St Michael’s Mount, with the harbour on one side and the beach promenade on the other.

However, the grade II-listed Jubilee Pool has in recent decades endured multiple episodes of waning popularity and damage followed by closure and reopening. After declining in the 1970s and falling into disrepair, it was closed in 1992 but relaunched after a restoration in 1994. Then in 2014 it was seriously damaged during the Valentine’s Day storms along the south coast. Some outdoor changing rooms and sun lounging terraces were

Scott Whitby Studio’s expansion at Jubilee Pool includes a new café and community hub buildings either side of the 1935 wrought iron entrance gate. You can see the undulating roof and clerestory windows rippling over the top of the original sea wall.



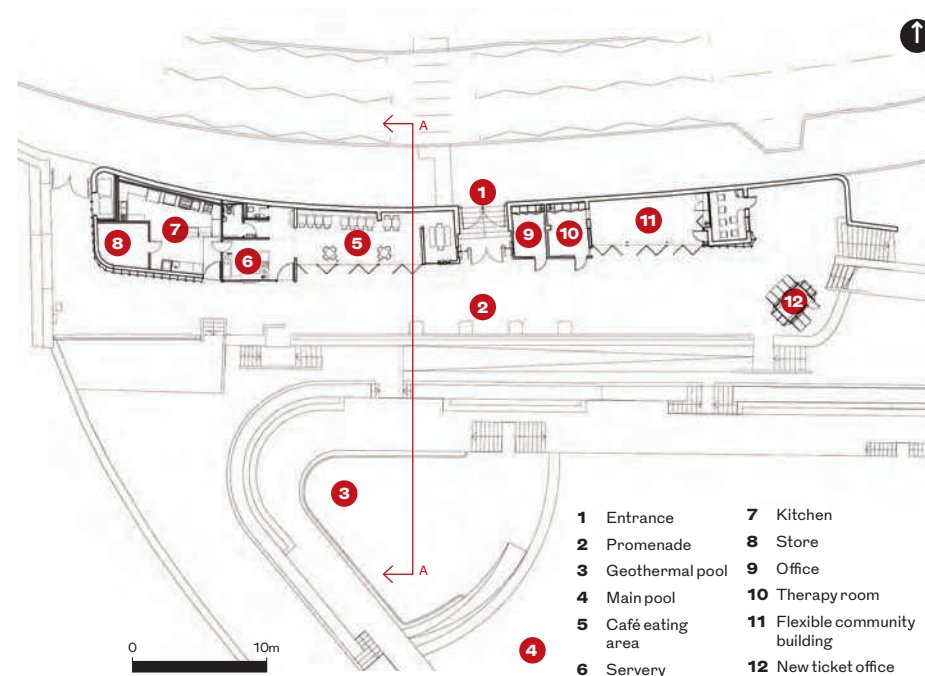
Swimmers enjoy the newly partitioned geothermal pool in one corner of the original pool. Temperatures in the heated area are guaranteed at 30-35°C all year round.



Buildings MacEwen Award – winner

of development at Jubilee Pool, a collaboration between Jubilee Pool Penzance Ltd and Scott Whitby Studio, that makes the scheme this year's MacEwen Award winner. The project has saved an important historical monument and piece of heritage, and given it a new, sustainable and thriving future.

Before being taken into community ownership the pool was open for four to five months a year, largely on a voluntary basis, and drained over the winter. In recent decades its best year had achieved 40,000 swimmers. Since the pool reopened mid 2020 that number has more than doubled to 90,000 per year; about 50% come from outside Cornwall. It has created 46 jobs, seven full time, across lifeguarding, hospitality, bookings, retail, planning and marketing. And it has developed a thriving events programme that includes pizzas on summer evenings, open-air cinema and music, and a revival of the open water swim from Newlyn, down the bay to the pool, in which 215 people took part.



The huge turnaround has been down to local commitment. Once the pool was in community ownership in 2017, the organisation launched a new funding drive that raised a further £1.8 million. By this point, the idea to create a geothermally heated section of the pool was already under way. Scott Whitby Studio's early feasibility found opportunities to upgrade the café to make it less weather-dependent and create a community space that could be used for events, local group activities or as a shop at different times of the year. As a community benefit society structure, which allowed it to issue shares, the organisation found 1400 community shareholders worth £600,000 with the help of Scott Whitby Studio – 1000 from within the county. Share prices ranged from £20 to £25,000. The team also attracted £350,000 from the Architectural Heritage Fund, and one of the last-awarded EU grants to do the geothermal pool, plus funds from Cornwall county council and Penzance town council.

EYEON HIGH

affected and the storm revealed major underlying structural issues whereby the pool floor was no longer attached to the bedrock.

After the storm, the Friends of Jubilee Pool charity was set up by locals to help raise funds for its repair. The pool was again restored and reopened in May 2016 at a cost of £2.94 million. At the time, however, the council which owned it was simultaneously reviewing its longer-term viability. Its operation in the years to that point had been contracted to other health/leisure providers as part of multi-facility centres in Cornwall, and as a result it never received the investment or attention it needed. One proposal considered by the council was to fill in the pool and turn it into a giant car park. Again, the Friends of Jubilee Pool came to its rescue and in 2017 agreed to buy it on a 99-year lease, setting itself up as Jubilee Pool Penzance Ltd, a charitable community benefit society.

For the judges of the 2023 MacEwen Awards, this backdrop of community action and ambition set the project apart. In 2017 Scott Whitby Studio got involved. Director Alex Scott Whitby was introduced to the Friends of Jubilee Pool/Jubilee Pool Penzance by Patricia Brown, director of design consultancy Central, who has a house in the area. Scott Whitby is connected too – his wife's family has learned to swim at Jubilee Pool for generations. The practice was asked to make proposals that could turn the pool into a year-round facility, thereby ensuring its financial security and making its revenues more predictable with, for example, a permanent staff. It is this second phase

Credits
Client Jubilee Pool Penzance
Architect Scott Whitby Studio
QS (RIBA Stage 2) PT Projects
Structural and services engineer WebbYates Engineers
Project manager/quantity surveyor Fox Cornwall
Main contractor Catling Construction
Joinery A1 Construction Penzance
Polyurea roofing ESW
Fibreglass cladding Fibreglass Ltd
Geothermal engineering GEON - GEL Geothermal Engineering Ltd/Arup

- 1 Jubilee Pool
- 2 Town harbour
- 3 Penzance railway station
- 4 Town centre

Since Jubilee Pool reopened it has doubled its previous best swimmer numbers to 90,000 and created 46 jobs

Penzance site plan with Jubilee Pool



Seen from above: the new geothermal pool in one corner and roofs of the new café and community buildings either side of the entrance steps.

RAK-DES

RAK-Des is a new concept bathroom suite that pays tribute to the Bauhaus school by which it is inspired, the collection includes bowls and freestanding washbasins with the essential minimalist lines. The rectangular washbasins can be installed suspended, individually, or combined with the RAK-Joy vanities.



RAKCERAMICS.COM

RAK
CERAMICS

Buildings
MacEwen Award – winner



The geothermal pool, designed by GEL Geothermal Engineering and Arup and partitioned from the main triangular pool in the most sheltered section, broadens its audience by appealing to those less comfortable in the cold. It is also fully accessible. It works using a 410m-deep well just off the site. Hot water from the well is pumped up to a new plant located in several converted former changing rooms where a heat exchange process with the pool sea water takes place. The process guarantees pool temperatures of 30-35°C all year. The pool steams in the cold – although it was a struggle to reach the guaranteed temperatures during the prolonged pre-Christmas cold patch. ‘The ingenuity of the project is making the pool more affordable to heat,’ commented judge Joan Kerr. ‘It could so easily have been lost because of high running costs.’

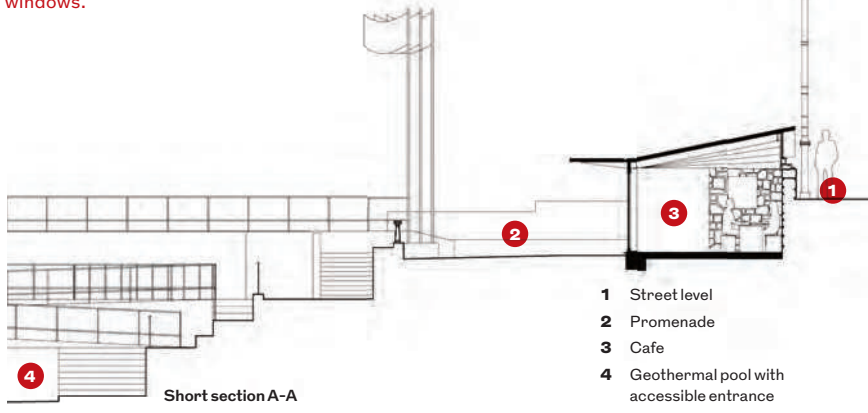
As for the expanded facilities, Scott Whitby Studio’s approach has been to retain the existing structures along the promenade either side of the original entrance gate and extend them by infilling and linking up. From a planning perspective, despite its heritage listing, the local authority’s



ribaj.com



Left Like pop-up eyes, one of the new clerestory windows.



The community space with its vaulted timber ceiling can be transformed to any use, with packable furniture for when it is a gift shop.

Left The café has an informal, cosy atmosphere .



attract more experiential-type tourism.

On awarding the project, judge Kathy MacEwen said: 'The pool is really important to Penzance, it is beautiful but it does more than that... it could have just fallen back into the sea. It is a major achievement to get it back.'

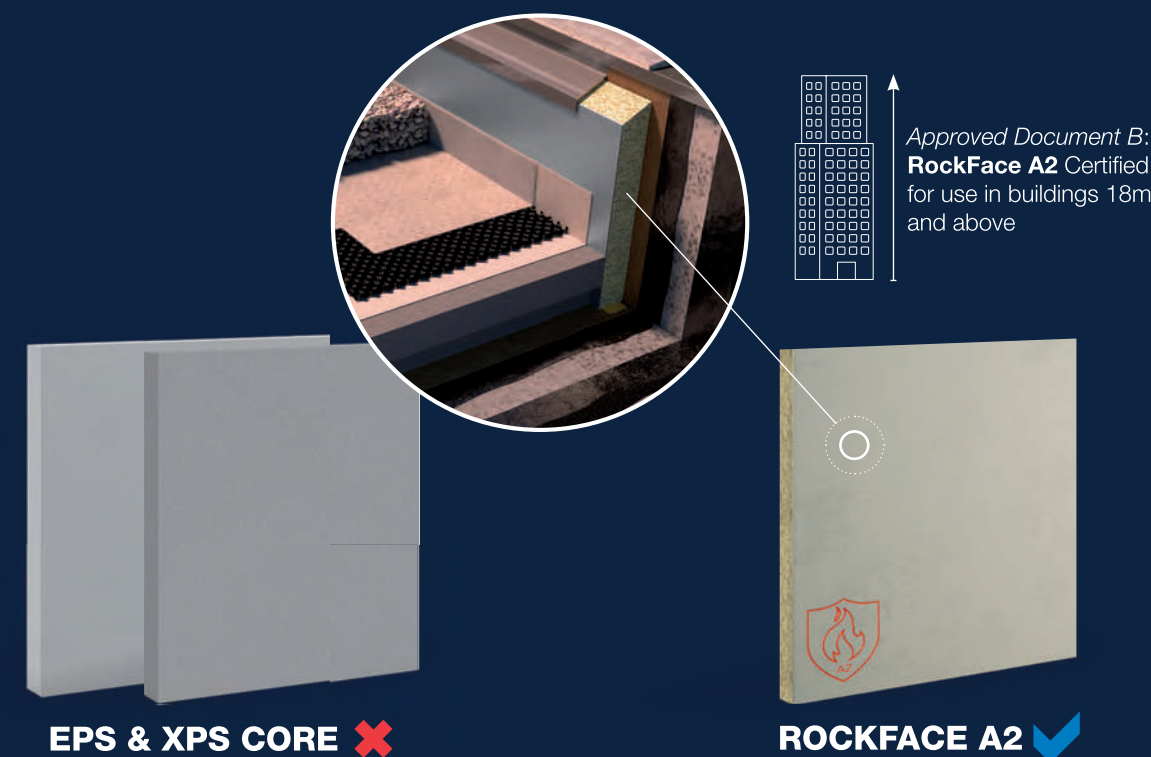
Jubilee Pool is of course naturally enhanced by its original architecture, but the judges felt the project had it all as a MacEwen Award winner. It has been community focused from the outset, the introduction of sustainable, low-cost geothermal energy has been a vital achievement, and it re-engages the promenade, makes it more accessible and gives it a livelier public life too. The project has a thorough business plan with longevity. The community saved it; they and the architect jumped into the scheme, making it happen with a determination that has blossomed. ●

Left The simply finished café interior adopts one of the former rubble huts on the site.

Below Jubilee Pool seen from the poolside, with the city making an attractive backdrop at dusk.

conditions were 'all about how to sit the new buildings on the original promenade perimeter wall,' explains architect Osman Marfo-Gyasi. As a solution, the new steel beams sit across the top of the sea wall to create two structures that are approximately symmetrical and of similar size. One is the café, which expands into a former stone ticket office. The other is the community room. To the north the roofs lift up in an undulating form to pop out as rippling wave-like clerestory windows, letting in soft light from the north and creating a welcoming wall from the road whereby passers-by can peek inside to see what's going on. This particularly delighted this year's judges, with RCKa's Anthony Staples commenting: 'The new interventions are not singing, they are quiet. It's nice the way it touches the street.'

To the south, the roof veers downwards to protect the all-glass south walls from too much solar glare and create a sheltered outdoor terrace. In both spaces the finish is rustic but charming – the exposed ply underside of the roof, timber rafters, simple concrete floors and original exterior walls just whitewashed. Where new enclosed structures have been added, like the new freestanding ticket hall and refurbished kitchen, the exterior surfaces have been clad in similarly undulating fibreglass panels that provide a robust defence against sometimes aggressive sea. The programme of works has also included creating a spa treatment room in one of the former rubble huts to expand into and



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The Valchromat storage wall, using launderette language, allows for storage of prams and dirty/clean washing.

Buildings
MacEwen Award – highly commended

Scrubbed up well

An unlikely pairing of library and launderette supplies much needed practical and social facilities in Blackpool, on a shoestring budget

Words: Jan-Carlos Kucharek Photographs: Lee Ivett

To some families in Blackpool, making your way past the seafront of expensive attractions to get to the pleasure beach can feel like running the gauntlet. For many residents of Mereside, on the town's eastern fringe, the infamous shenanigans to the west can feel a world away from lived experience on an estate hiding the deprivation typical of northern towns – albeit behind the dignified brick architraves of its 1950s council houses.

But according to Laura Jamieson, creative producer of socially-engaged arts practice LeftCoast, stories come out in the wash. The firm was taken on in 2018 by early years provider Blackpool BetterStart to consult with residents on how to make the most of the estate's Langdale open space for communal use, and very different conversations

The library and launderette is looking to extend its community reach by staying open for evening events.



arose out of LeftCoast’s involvement. ‘What we kept hearing was that families needed somewhere to wash their clothes – ironic considering that Mereside originally had wash houses to carry out that chore communally,’ says Jamieson. But there was more to it than that. The estate’s library, in a small flat facing the green, was, back then, fragile and underused, leaving them considering how it might come into better use. But when Covid hit, and even that closed, LeftCoast continued conversations with residents and kept on building partnerships with Blackpool Local Libraries and Blackpool Coastal Housing. ‘The pandemic worked to our

The people of Mereside have a right to aspirational design and the technologies and ways of making

Below Axonometric showing the layout of the new Langdale library and launderette.

advantage in that it gave us time to find funding from organisations like HA Great Places which, in the new reality, was more willing to take risks or try new things,’ Jamieson explains. The result was Wash Your Words. Standing next to the local chippie on the parade in front of the green, Langdale Road’s new library has, on entering, the surprising but pleasant fragrance of fabric conditioner wafting in its warm air – that’ll be the launderette. It’s the week before Christmas and it’s quietly buzzing in the main library space and at the table in front, mums and kids are sitting making decorations while their washing is on a cycle in one of

ECATERINA STEFANESCU



- 1 Entrance area
- 2 Workshop/ craft space
- 3 Laundry storage wall
- 4 Laundry area
- 5 Librarian's desk
- 6 Library space
- 7 Kid's nook
- 8 Meeting/private consultation space
- 9 Kitchenette
- 10 IT desks



Left All the work was carried out by community ‘volunteers’ who were paid a nominal sum in appreciation of their input.

Below Desks and furniture were, like the wall colour choices, decided from a palette of ‘Blackpool’ colours developed from an earlier arts project.

Credits
Client LeftCoast
Architect Lee Ivett and Ecaterina Stefanescu
Grenfell-Baines Institute of Architecture, UCLan
Partners Blackpool Council Libraries, Blackpool Coastal Housing
Graphic designer Dan Astbury

visually satisfying tromp l’oeil effects from almost nothing. And as Ivett explains, ‘the money got spent on what you can see and touch.’ When it came to making their designs for Valchromat bookshelves, charming kid’s reading nook and marvellous dryer-shaped language of the built-in furniture, Ivett used the resources of UCLan’s Architecture & Engineering faculty not only to train students in specialist cutting technologies but to bring them to the awareness of residents. ‘We felt the people of Mereside should have the right not only to aspirational design – however cheap,’ says Ivett ‘but also to the technologies and ways of

the machines at the rear of what was formerly the empty office of Great Places housing association. Not that you’d recognise its previous warren of stale spaces now that architect Lee Ivett and fellow UCLan colleague Ecaterina Stefanescu have worked their magic on it. LeftCoast, having worked with both before, brought them in to help realise this programmatic mash-up – which is all the more thrilling for feeling utterly obvious and suited to its context in spite of how odd an idea it might have initially seemed. With Ivett and Stefanescu both committed to socially engaged practice, the community consultation was nothing less than hands-on. ‘It was all done in the space towards the end of 2021 while there was no power or heating in here,’ recalls Ivett. ‘We’d go round with pens and draw openings in the existing walls and Ecaterina had this card model that we’d constantly take to bits and reconfigure. It brought the voices of all the parties into the discussion, and done “live”, even the engagement felt performative.’ But there were real limitations. Budgets were so low that walls with services on them like radiators had to stay, and the same was true of the suspended ceiling. It led to an approach of ‘removal’, cutting out curved forms and openings in the walls that had to stay, generating a form of open plan arrangement; one that lets you look through spaces into others, creating



making that they are detached from.’ There was certainly no detachment regarding how it all came together, however. LeftCoast director Tina Redford says that local volunteers were paid a nominal fee (‘their value to the project was as much as anyone else’s’) to come in and do the demolition, plumbing and painting works. The painting palette stemmed from a ‘Blackpool’ colour range developed by LeftCoast, and had to pair with the electric blue of the existing metal glazing sections.

The fundamental sense of recycle/ reuse and local sourcing evident in the architectural design runs through the project like writing through rock, born of a resistance to need being the driver. Granted, Wash Your Words addresses a lot of pressing concerns – fuel poverty, condensation and mould in flats, even childcare issues – but it was always about the bigger picture. ‘Positive reinforcement and what people deserve rather than need,’ explains Jamieson, ‘making people aware that it’s not only more sustainable to share washing facilities but that using them, creates a support network for residents.’ Machines are free to use as long as you sign up to the ‘club’ so users are trained in basic maintenance. Likewise, the two pairs of reconditioned washers and dryers were provided by local charity Furniture Matters, which will come round if they break down and replace and then fix them again. It’s all part of virtuous circle of economy and responsibility.

Creating a network is also the self-sustaining idea at the core of Wash Your Words. For now, the statutory requirement to keep the library open only runs to half the week, but engaging residents, the HA, education and jobseeker groups to make them custodians of the space with keys to open and close it, means that opening hours are extending. It is hoped that, with evening events, it will embed itself in the life of the estate. And the signs are that meaningful encounters are already occurring. ‘One guy came in last week just to keep warm and he told us about his dad’s accommodation issues but while here he joined a clothes-screen-printing

IN NUMBERS
£30,000
total budget
130m²
internal floor area
£231
cost per m²

Below Keeping costs down mean that walls were less ‘removed’ than cut into, with services like radiators left ‘as is’.

workshop,’ Jamieson relates. ‘Then he signed up for the laundry and took out a book to read about his insomnia.’ All from a foot crossing a welcome threshold. The following week they’ll be running a ‘soup-making disco’ – ‘the place looks great lit up at night!’ she adds with a cheeky grin. Sounds risky to me – but if it gets messy, at least they won’t have far to go to get cleaned up. ●



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Everyone welcome

High quality, picturesque holiday homes that are truly accessible to disabled guests are extremely rare, but Clementine Blakemore Architects' Wraxall Yard breaks the mould, says Chris Foges

Below Entered through a covered breezeway, the courtyard is planted with high grasses and small trees.



LORENZO ZANDRI



'But here is something exceptionally beautiful, of the highest quality, where accessibility is not a compromise. This is quite special.'

It's the creation of entrepreneur turned organic farmer Nick Read, working with Clementine Blakemore Architects. Read acquired the surrounding land as an extension to his farm, and the barns almost as an afterthought. In a state of near-collapse, they were useless for agriculture and he sought a socially beneficial use for the site. 'I've been very lucky, and didn't need an income from it', he says. 'The motivation to do a big project had to be different'.

Having seen the dearth of holiday accommodation available to his mother, a wheelchair user, he knew of the desperate need for it. Looking at 'horrible' places in the vicinity strengthened his conviction. 'The belief that it could be better became a sort of mission'.

Referrals led him to Blakemore, who hadn't completed a project of equivalent size but inspired immediate confidence. Together they spent months on research, getting detailed advice from

EMMA LEWIS

Look through the listings of any holiday lettings agency and it's shocking how little there is for disabled people, their families and carers. Charming old cottages are off limits, or poorly adapted in ways that make hard work of a holiday. Purpose-built accommodation might have better facilities but they're often grim, institutional environments in third-rate locations.

Wraxall Yard offers something very different. The collection of five cottages within a restored dairy sits in a picture-book hamlet in west Dorset. Run as a not-for-profit, it promises equal access for all in a serene, restorative setting, and has been crafted with a level of care that touched and impressed the MacEwen Award judges.

'Collectively we don't go out of our way to support this marginalised community,' said juror Anthony Staples.



CLEMENTINE BLAKEMORE

Above The whole complex is accessible without special routes, ramps or handrails for wheelchair users.

Below Guests can handle animals in a restored Dutch barn opposite the workshop and staff office.



the Centre for Accessible Environments. Consultation with wheelchair users yielded practical tips and underscored the importance of design for all. ‘It’s about dignity,’ says Blakemore. ‘No-one wants to feel different: “This entrance is for you, that way for everyone else.” We aimed to eliminate all those distinctions.’

That principle governs the arrangement of the whole site, which comprises 19th century stone barns around a rectangular courtyard, with later buildings to the south framing a more open farmyard. To keep cars out of sight, a relocated driveway brings you into the yard and swings round to a gravelled car park behind the buildings. Broad concrete walkways lead to a sheltered breezeway cut through the eastern range, and into the courtyard. Curving paths snake through a densely planted garden to patios at each cottage door, rising and falling gently over the sloping ground.

All courtyard elevations were beyond repair and have been completely reconstructed. New timber framing faced in recycled stone preserves their essential character – important because a neighbouring 12th century church



Above Plywood soffits sit above original trusses, repaired and retained where possible.

Below left High contrast between floors and walls, or window frames and handles, helps guests with visual impairment.

- 1 Church
- 2 Biomass boiler
- 3 Dutch barn
- 4 Farmyard
- 5 Workshop
- 6 Water treatment
- 7 Bike/wheelchair store
- 8 Parking
- 9 Community space
- 10 Cottage
- 11 Breezeway
- 12 Courtyard
- 13 Boardwalk

imposes heritage constraints, but no less because it’s precisely this sort of old, quirky building that guests rarely get to enjoy. Galvanised guttering, precast lintels and a variety of wood and metal windows add to the artfully rustic effect.

‘Repairs are visible and pragmatic,’ says Blakemore. ‘We tried to approach the structure as a farmer might.’ There’s more skill involved than that suggests: you’d never guess at the headaches caused by collapsing masonry or the insertion of wood-fibre insulation below clay tile roofs, disguised by nifty eaves details.

The blend of rough and smooth continues within, where gnarled timber roof trusses and brick cross-walls are counterpointed by refined fixtures and finishes. The agricultural character of the barns was helpful. Stainless steel rise-and-fall kitchen worktops fit right in, as do perfectly level concrete floors. Greenish-grey wainscoting



protects plaster walls from knocks by wheelchairs, and echoes the vertical rhythm of the Yorkshire-boarded breezeway and mullioned windows.

With generous height, lots of light, tasteful tones and glamorous touches, the cottages look like any other high-end holiday home, but accommodations for disability are invisibly present throughout. Tables from Another Country were adjusted to increase clearance. Kitchen carcasses were sourced from one of the few suppliers who incorporate pull-out shelves below ovens, and finished with plywood fronts.

Specialist equipment is neatly integrated, with some ingenuity: the track for a hoist travelling between one bedroom and its bathroom is recessed into a roof truss. Even the trickiest obstacles have been overcome. ‘My fear was that bedrooms would be wrecked by electric profiling beds,’ says Read. ‘They usually look awful’. Instead, Blakemore asked a manufacturer to supply the mechanism and had frames made in Douglas fir to match other joinery.

Bathrooms are a highlight for guests. Their globe lights, rippling tiles and wooden shutters are quietly luxurious.

IN NUMBERS

4600m²
site area

800m²
GIA

20.59
kgCO₂eq/m²/year
Annual CO₂ emissions
(estimated)

Above A passage through the northern range leads to the boardwalk. Walls reconstructed in timber are less deep, allowing better turning circles for wheelchairs within.

Right Kitchen worktops with hob and sink can be lowered electrically.

‘Here is something exceptionally beautiful, of the highest quality, where accessibility is not a compromise’

You have to look twice to notice hand-holds set into elegant basins. Brushed stainless steel grabrails and emergency alarms blend nicely with metal taps and towel rails. It’s a far cry from the careless installation of clunky fittings supplied in job-lot ‘Part M packs’.

‘Anyone coming here thinks “Wow”,’ says Read, ‘but for disabled people, used to being fobbed off, the reaction is much more emotional.’ To ensure that the experience isn’t only available to those who can pay, he has partnered with a charity to offer subsidised stays.

Read and his co-director, daughter Katie, believe that everyone has a right to enjoy the countryside, and enabling that is one of the project’s central aims. From the protective courtyard there are views out in four directions, to woodland and pasture. One new opening leads to a timber boardwalk that winds across a field among oaks, flag irises and meadowsweet, down to a meandering chalk stream. ‘Imagine a teenager wanting to escape their family for a bit’, says Blakemore. ‘It’s fantastic to find some space and seclusion’.

There’s more life around the picturesque farmyard. A scrappy shed has been converted into a





handsome workshop and staff office, with galvanised doors and decorative brickwork. A steel Dutch barn opposite contains the scheme’s biomass boiler, hay bales and the occasional sheep stationed there to meet guests.

The final component of the ensemble is a voluminous community space, used for communal meals when there are group bookings, and also offered free-of-charge for activities such as school visits. It’s robust but cosy, with exposed brick and stone warmed by rough-sawn timber panelling. An adjacent bathroom has been made large enough to house a changing bench and hoist if required; it could then be listed with Changing Places, a scheme that allows more than 250,000 people to get out and about.

This anticipatory move illustrates the ethos that underpins the project – the ‘social model’ of disability which contends that poor design and ignorant assumptions are more restrictive than a person’s difference. The onus is on society to remove barriers, and not on individuals to overcome them. Read believes that Wraxall Yard can accommodate almost anyone able to travel, but if unmet needs emerge the place must adapt. My hunch is that there won’t be much to do. The care that has gone into this project is remarkable, and the result truly exemplary. ●

- Credits
- Client**
Wraxall Yard CIC
 - Architect**
Clementine Blakemore Architects
 - Structural engineer**
Structure Workshop
 - Services engineer**
Ritchie+Daffin
 - Landscape designer**
Hortus Collective
 - Quantity surveyor**
Align Property Consultants
 - Accessibility consultant**
Centre for Accessible Environments
 - Identity and wayfinding**
Smiths Studio
 - Main contractor**
Stonewood Builders



Above A staff office sits above the workshop, and water from a spring is treated in a room behind. Apart from electricity, Wraxall Yard is off-grid.

Below The community space hosts group activities at tables made from Douglas fir offcuts.



LORENZO ZANDRI
EMMA LEWIS



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Quay impact

A transformative local community project, East Quay in Watchet on the Somerset coast, won a special mention in this year’s awards

Words: Eleanor Young Photographs: Jim Stephenson

Below The spaces between the courtyard buildings and the first floor street give locals and tourists an informal way to experience East Quay before even crossing the threshold.



‘This came about as part of a community project and has big buy-in. It could be transformative in Watchet’

One of the key criteria of the MacEwen Award is the impact of a building. For Jessica Prendergrast, one of the all-female Onion Collective which dreamt up and commissioned community arts centre East Quay, this was all in a day’s work. She had studied a mix of politics and economics before going into economic research and helped put together the funding bid to show the Coastal Communities Fund how transformative such a community hub could be to the Somerset coastal town of Watchet.

What surprised her is that over a year on it really is delivering on that. ‘You do all the impact analysis, following the methodology and rules, but you always wonder, will it translate into reality?’ she says. In numbers that is 32 permanent jobs, supporting 140 indirect jobs such as those at the handmade paper mill on the ground floor, and giving makers studios they can sell from. At 108,000, visitor numbers in the first year reached the estimates for year three, giving the town a significant financial boost (calculating exactly how much is a longer job though).

‘But it is hard to capture in the numbers a sense of what it feels like and why it is important,’ says Prendergrast. She sketches out the economic context of West Somerset, which is peripheral, even to tourism. There is no big industry and barely any local or national government intervention: ‘We are filling the gap in state and economic failure.’ The district has the lowest social mobility in the country. ‘Disadvantaged children have less chance of changing their future,’ she explains. ‘There is a



lack of visibility of alternative paths or places, in fact you have to sit on a bus for an hour to get to almost anywhere.’

The Onion Collective has been active in Watchet since 2014 and does regular surveys of locals’ perception of the town. Results have been encouraging since East Quay was completed with a greater sense of wellbeing and community. And the number agreeing that Watchet has a positive future has jumped from below 40% in 2017 to over 60% in 2021.

So what of the building that has enabled these changes? It extends the



Section

- 1 B&B pod
- 2 Education room
- 3 Gallery
- 4 Store/workshop
- 5 Lift
- 6 Studio
- 7 Paper mill



East Quay extends the walkable edge of Watchet. Its three layers, from solid to whimsical, make a new part of the town.

IN NUMBERS

£5.3m
contract cost

1700m²
gross internal floor area

£3118
cost per m²



This image Angled roofs and bold stripes give tourists arriving on the West Somerset Railway steam train something to look for.

Right The first floor is open to walk through with this alley and decks accessing the makers' studios while connecting them to the courtyard below.

town to make a new communal edge of Watchet harbour. Its V-shaped plan has two arms of a podium of pink concrete with gallery, shop, paper press, café and print studio looking out into a protected courtyard space. Architect Piers Taylor of Invisible Studio designed it for an incremental build that would deal with piecemeal funding. Though funding was forthcoming so that was not needed, it has given East Quay its flavour and on top of the podium sit the lightweight metal-clad structures, accessed externally. Here are makers' studios, a

Credits
Client Onion Collective
Architect Invisible Studio
Executive architect Ellis Williams
Pod interior designer Pearce + Fægan
Structural engineer Momentum
Landscape architect LT Studio

Suppliers
External doors Assa Abloy
Concrete works DWall
Lighting Erco
External metal stairs Earp Engineering
Metal cladding GreenCoat
External concrete Hopkins Concrete
Insulation Rockwool
Window, external door and curtain walling systems Schüco
Handrails Stoneman Engineering

Buildings MacEwen Award – special mention

second gallery and education space on steroids (ply structures, brilliant lights, all reconfigurable). Above these are five little holiday lets. Each perkily looks out to sea, some on stilts, and fitouts by Pearce+Fægen create unexpected spaces, some decorated with drawings, some with timber and nets, others tiny objects. Windows and rooflights at unexpected angles capture the views and the light and create a great sense of character.

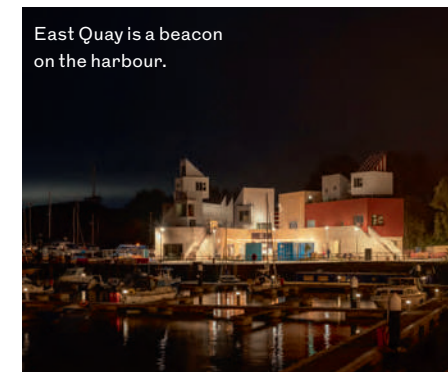
Approaching from the town the building scoops you in. From the coast path an alleyway of candy-striped walls draws you in. Taylor describes it as a city, its cluster of volumes do make it seem like more than a single building and its open grain lets you poke around at different levels without feeling you are trespassing.

The courtyard breaks down any reservation about entering the building. Here you can linger, look through windows to see what's going on, have a coffee or join one of the many activities East Quay puts on. And then perhaps go inside and see the latest art exhibition or watch the paper making. The roughed up concrete and blue shipping containers of the courtyard were used as studios and for discussions before the build project got off the ground. They are one of the things that mark this project out from more glossy lottery-funded arts

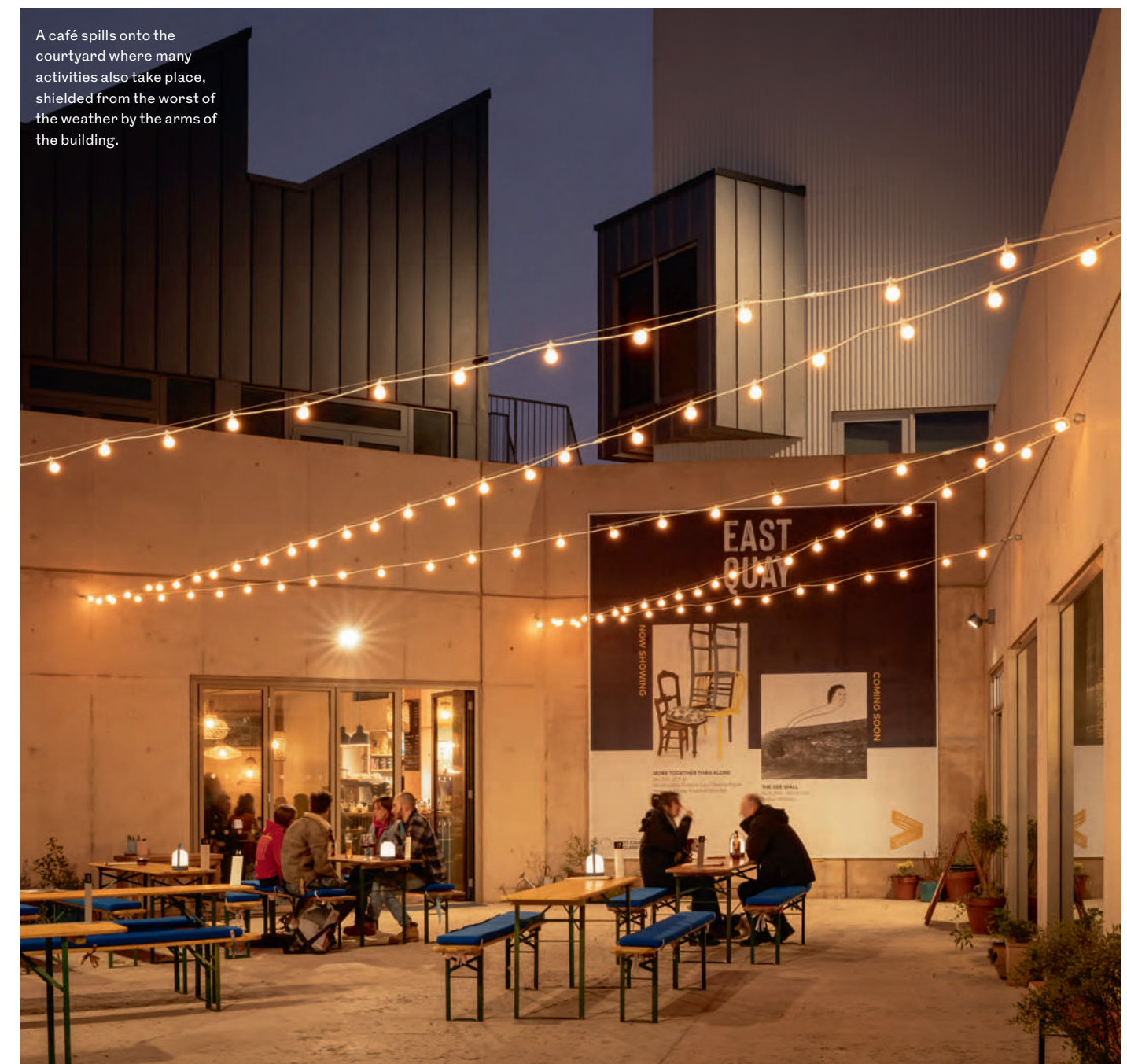


buildings where a once in a lifetime chance to resolve a project sometimes makes things just too tidy.

The building's activities have to make money to keep it going – hence the accommodation pods – but importantly this is not the point of East Quay. It is a not-for-profit social enterprise. 'It's not about making money but connections and community,' says Prendergrast. The very particular architecture allows that in a fun, playful way.



Awarding East Quay a special mention, the judges praised the mixed ecosystem of the 'strong' project's programme. They also remarked on its gestation. Its story was 'amazing', said judge Anthony Staples of RCKa. Kathy MacEwen said 'Watchet had gone from being a thriving harbour into a steep decline. It is an area of deprivation. That is part of the story... it came about as part of a community project and has big buy-in. It could be transformative in Watchet.'



A café spills onto the courtyard where many activities also take place, shielded from the worst of the weather by the arms of the building.

MacEwen Award shortlist

From buses repurposed to serve the homeless to a collaborative community space in Redcar, eight strong projects that involved local people and improved environments shared the shortlist with the four MacEwen finalists

Words: Michèle Woodger

Above OGU and MMAS' scheme in Belfast reduces two lanes of traffic to one to create a 500m-long linear park.

Below The park came out of an initiative to improve green spaces for local residents in flats as a result of the pandemic.

The Adelaide Street Project, Belfast OGU Architects + MMAS for Belfast City Council

This brief from Belfast City Council, one of the UK's most car-centric cities, requested a scheme that would connect people through the city while celebrating its built heritage. Adelaide Street is a connecting corridor used by residents, business owners and office workers, yet there was no outdoor space for residents.

The design team replaced one lane of traffic in a two-lane road with an urban garden. Solar powered 'totemic lanterns' reference the area's linen heritage, offer shelter and spark users' imaginations. A demountable, reusable installation of quality craftsmanship (using sustainable materials such as local larch) minimises waste on the temporary scheme. The resulting architecture has 'appropriate gravity and articulation for a city-centre public space, qualities that are often lacking from perceived temporary,

tactical urbanism' says the architect. This intervention was radical and unprecedented in its 'brave and inspired act of collaboration'.

'The discussion about how difficult it is to get these projects off the ground in Belfast... clinched it for me' said judge Isabelle Priest. 'This is probably the nicest piece of architecture of all the public realm projects,' agreed Anthony Staples. 'You can just imagine the council not wanting to take away half a road'.

But as client Brighdín Farren of Belfast City Council comments, all parties were satisfied with both the result and the process – 'a comprehensive co-design approach, which involved young and old residents, workers, diners and disability advisors, working collectively to create a high quality linear park accessible to all ages and abilities'.

The fact that 'the entire construction team was working to bring their home city back to life,' was, says the designer, key to the project's success.

JOE LAVERTY (2)

Buildings MacEwen Award – shortlist

This offers something really valuable. You're taken into a space that is clean and nice and taken care of

Top right The dental studio sits alongside a GP surgery, hairdresser and training spaces in the two buses deployed to provide essential services to homeless people.

Bottom right Corporate branding is crucial to financing the scheme, which converts two London buses.

Below A corridor for a quiet moment: the interiors have been carefully fitted out to make the most of every centimetre, with tactile finishes and soft colours.



HUFTON + CROW (3)

Driving for Change, London tp bennett for Change Please

From April to July 2022, London had 2,998 rough sleepers – 16% more than the same period last year according to the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN). Charity Change Please repurposed two London double-decker buses as mobile places of support in the City of London and Hackney – 'an amazing concept', said judge Takeshi Hayatsu. The buses were deployed in two further London boroughs in December and will expand to Manchester in 2023; a later phase will add services for women and mental health.

Driving for Change offers homeless people access to free services including GP consultations, haircuts, dental care, an NHS triage nurse, digital and financial literacy training, employment support, showers, therapy assessments, and everyday essentials. The result of a partnership between the NHS East



London Foundation Trust, HSBC, Colgate, Haircuts4Homeless and Community Dental, each bus cost £18,000 to kit out. While some judges recoiled at the corporate branding dominating the buses' exterior, sponsorship is crucial to the success of the scheme. 'Inside it is really high quality' said Joan Kerr. 'It is offering people practical things that perhaps they don't need every day but do need every so often, like dental treatment. There is a use for things like this.'

Aiming to create a 'welcoming sanctuary where guests would feel at ease', interiors give a sense of domesticity and safety, with confidential spaces. 'This scored very highly for me,' said Isabelle Priest. 'The interior fit out and spaces were of high quality.' Kathy MacEwen agreed: 'This is really offering something valuable to people. You are taken into a space that is clean and nice and you are taken care of. The fact it comes to you is also nice. It says you matter.'



**FC Designer Workspace,
Finsbury Park, London**
Studio Partington for Fashion-Enter Ltd

Studio Partington is working on a multi-phase masterplan on the Andover Estate, Islington. In judge Kathy MacEwen's words, this is 'a really troubled place' so it scored highly for its commitment to both providing opportunities and improving the public realm: 'It sits within a community, it brings in employment... in terms of changing things in a place, it does do something good.'

Disused garages have been converted into a workspace for social enterprise Fashion-Enter, which supports local residents and businesses in the fashion and garment making industry. There are affordable-rent studios, courses, hireable sewing machines, co-working desks and selling opportunities.

Individual studios set round a communal workspace, exhibition space and entrance maximise natural daylight and ventilation. A new secure entrance and lift access lead to residential units above. The workspace activates the



Above Former garages have become spaces for a social enterprise that supports the local fashion and garment industry.

Below The scheme accommodates affordable-rent studios, courses, sewing machines to hire and co-working desks.



Durham Road street frontage with full height glazing, an accessible main entrance and signage, which particularly impressed judges Takeshi Hayatsu and Isabelle Priest, who called the street's reactivation 'crucial. It plugs into an existing community with a purpose. It may not stand out architecturally [but] it is doing it quietly well.'

The design team collaborated with Fashion-Enter and client Islington Council from early feasibility stage. The affordable workspace was co-funded by the council and the Mayor of London's Good Growth Fund, which seeks to make London fairer and more inclusive by strengthening civic networks at local level. The FC Designer Workspace nurtures local talent, hoping to promote new jobs and more sustainable futures for residents. Says client Jenny Holloway: 'The aim is to bring a circular economy to the borough of Islington, allowing local entrepreneurs to maximise their potential and grow further with space to sell their product. The FC Designer Workspace at Andover Estate really is the beating heart of collaboration.'

JAN KATTEIN ARCHITECTS



Spark Lab, Ilford, London
Jan Kattein Architects for Redbridge Council

'We're committed to making our town centres beautiful, safe and enjoyable to visit so local businesses thrive and shoppers and visitors find all they need here in the borough of Redbridge', says council leader Jas Athwal.

Recent efforts to turn Ilford, within the borough, into a welcoming and cultural place – and reassert the value of the high street and community life – include a new food market, urban rooftop farm, street art gallery and modular homeless shelter. Created in collaboration with urban events company Things Made Public, in 400m² of disused retail space on the ground floor of an empty department store, Spark Lab provides a bursary and incubator space for seven businesses and community organisations. Nearby is Wilderness Street, a temporary 1000m² 'living urban landscape' along Oakfield Road, which links Ilford's cultural venues with the high street.

The inspiration for Wilderness Street is the area's pre-urban heritage. 'Ilford, Barkingside and Hainault were characterised by forests, fields and meadows. Our design strategy temporarily revives these lost landscapes,' explains Jan Kattein. Redbridge Council and Ilford Business Improvement District held community events including planting workshops. Once dismantled, all plants will be given to community organisations. 'Enticing local people to adopt the plants will see elements of the ancient Essex landscape reinstated in public places, in people's gardens, front gardens and allotments' says Kattein.

'I was taken by the forest references,' said Takeshi Hayatsu. 'The clients are incredible in the way they're rethinking their relationship with residents, really questioning what a high street is for,' added Anthony Staples. 'This is a lovely narrative about lost landscapes of Essex.'

Left Wilderness Street is a 1000m² temporary urban living landscape.





NUCastle, Newcastle upon Tyne
Ryder Architecture for Newcastle United Foundation

The £5.6 million scheme is the new home for the Newcastle United Foundation, the charitable arm of the Premier League football team. The foundation aims to deliver over 30 programmes to communities in Newcastle, and needed a base for activities in sports education, health and fitness, mental wellbeing, employability and outreach.

The result is a state of the art community building that incorporates

diverse facilities to enhance sports and learning. ‘Life in our new home is incredible,’ says client Steve Beharall. ‘The design has transformed our ability to give participants the best experience. The building allows us to engage with our community in new ways... You can see and hear excitement on every floor.’

Built to receive 100,000 people a year, the building has a four-court sports hall, mini soccer rooftop pitch, and spin and activity studios with associated changing facilities – used by local charities including those geared for disabled users. A flexible STEM classroom, further

teaching spaces and an e-sports room are also used by local schools.

During the building’s creation, the project team provided apprenticeship places in construction and across the design team. As a large and well-funded scheme, its impact is correspondingly far reaching. ‘In terms of impact, this is transformational in the Newcastle area,’ said judge Kathy MacEwen. Isabelle Priest commended it as a ‘transparent, welcoming building, doing a range of things about employment, sports and learning – and the architecture is pretty exciting based on those standards.’



Above The four-court sports hall at the new base for the Newcastle United Foundation.

Left The building, with a mini soccer pitch on the roof, is next to St James’ Park stadium, by the city centre.

Right A yoga class taking place in one of the multi-use community rooms.



MARTIN FORSTER (2)



Outside, Bantham, Devon
IDK for Outside

Rural South Hams has ‘many unique qualities,’ explains client Paddy Wellens of social enterprise ‘Outside’. Yet ‘it lacked places that bring people together, in particular younger generations.’ This project is a multi-purpose hub that promotes sociability, wellbeing and learning, which the community can invest in through co-ownership.

The 1ha facility combines a farm with a leisure facility and co-working space that hosts skateboarding, an orchard, play area and football pitch, a café, ceramics studio and surfboard shaping workshop. The main building is a dilapidated structure reworked by a local agricultural construction company, and a self-built interior. There is a hint of Lacaton & Vassal in its polycarbonate materiality, light airy spaces and generosity of spirit.

‘It adds missing pieces to the area’s social and economic life,’ explains the architect. ‘The project serves as a case study for new forms of hyperlocal, sustainable rural development.’

The judges valued the project’s



contribution to rural life. ‘It’s radical for a rural setting,’ said Anthony Staples. ‘To get something like that working and used and well visited seemed really special... and I like the low cost, impactful, generous spaces.’

Community support saw more than 500 letters from local residents and £60,000 raised for the skate bowl from 300 crowd-funding donors.

‘The mixed-use site encourages

cross pollination of individuals and groups with a restored natural ecology,’ says IDK. ‘As the network grows, Outside has the capacity to evolve and adapt in the image of the local and wider community which it looks to engage.’ ‘I couldn’t believe they’d done it and made it work’ said Isabelle Priest. ‘I saw it as a coming together of a lot of different activities and people. This would have been useful when I was growing up in the countryside.’



Above The skatebowl is just one facility at Outside that throws activities and people together in rural Devon.

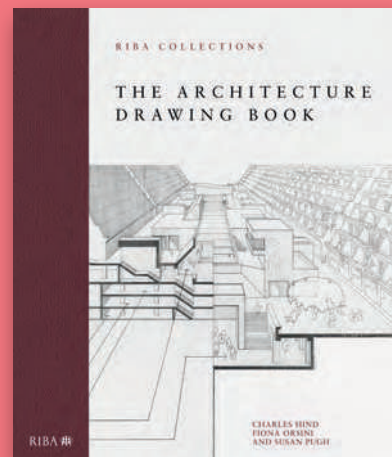
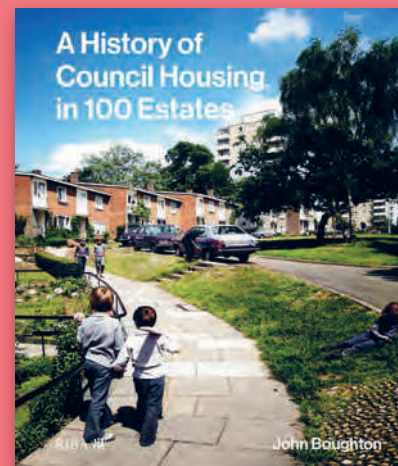
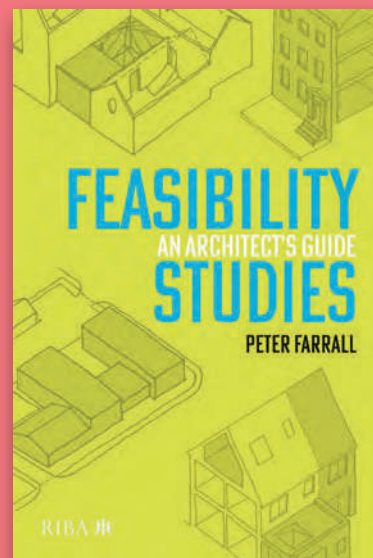
This image The building was transformed into a community hub using steel and polycarbonate sheeting.

TOBY COULSON (2)

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Buildings MacEwen Award – shortlist

Lewisham Zero Carbon Schools Retrofit Action for Tomorrow (RAFT) for Dalmain, Donderry, Myatt Garden, Torridon and St Winifred's primary schools

These five Lewisham primary schools engaged with architect-led retrofit consultant RAFT to upgrade their buildings.

While the architectural changes differed for each school, the wider scheme had a heavy emphasis on community education, making its positive impact far greater than straightforward building upgrades. 'This project serves environmental and education agendas,' said Isabelle Priest.

In collaboration with the London Borough of Lewisham and with Low Carbon Skills Fund support, RAFT began with workshops and a zero carbon plan for St Winifred's Primary. More schools joined and participatory engagement increased. The culmination in 2022 saw whole-building retrofit



Above Both an educational and a building programme, this scheme took a two-pronged approach to retrofit schools.

Below A children's workshop, designed to teach pupils about how buildings can be adapted for improved performance, involves them in the process.



39

measures completed at three schools, plus funding from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme. Interventions included removal of fossil fuel heating, upgrades to building fabric, improved ventilation and rainwater gardens.

Meanwhile, at 83 schools across the borough, retrofit workshops were delivered to more than 250 staff, and 2,300 children were engaged with via assemblies. More than 200 children learnt about energy use, waste, the climate emergency and the impact of deep retrofit at in-depth workshops.

'The submission was very strong,' said judge Joan Kerr. 'I liked the aspect of using the zero carbon initiatives to engage people and get their interest.'

'The actions of our school potentially influence the actions of up to 2,500 people in the local community,' added one head teacher; indeed, RAFT even received a phone call from a parent whose daughter had instigated a family discussion about retrofitting their home after attending a workshop.



AGNESE SANVITO (2)



St Hilda's, Redcar
Chance de Silva for Kirkleatham
Parochial Church Council

The congregation of St Hilda's Church, Redcar, needed a new place of worship. The original church had irredeemable structural problems and, as the centre of community life in a deprived neighbourhood, it needed a more flexible building to improve local amenities.

The brief called for an uplifting, welcoming community landmark and a simple, robust, sustainable building. It had to be cost effective, as Lottery funding fell through, leaving a budget of only £638,000. This sum was raised by parishioners, in part through 'the sale of umpteen cups of tea and biscuits'.

Parishioner participation was crucial: 'At the presentation we offered to tear up our design and start again', says architect Stephen Chance. Judges liked the people-centred approach of open days, workshops, fact-finding visits and coach trips. 'This story was excellent,' said Joan Kerr. 'If you want to engage with people, putting everyone on a bus together and getting to know them is a really nice idea'.

A finned facade distinguishes the new timber-clad building from surrounding houses. A 7m-long enamelled glass clerestory by local artists referencing local traditions and landmarks is a talking



Above Judges liked the way the new St Hilda's Church was fought for by its local community, which raised the entire £638,000 budget.

Below The resulting building is beautifully simple and people-centred, as seen from the exterior.

point at the popular Tuesday Café that now takes place here. The light-filled interior makes a pleasant environment for many activities and there has been a surge in demand for the building (which opens at 6.00 am for yoga and closes late in the evening after tae kwon do). There has been a corresponding increase in lettings revenue. 'A range of groups now use the facility regularly, giving benefits to many,' confirms client Rob Nightingale. Judge Anthony Staples said: 'This made me feel quite emotional... a community in need is getting what it needs'. ●

CHANCE DE SILVA



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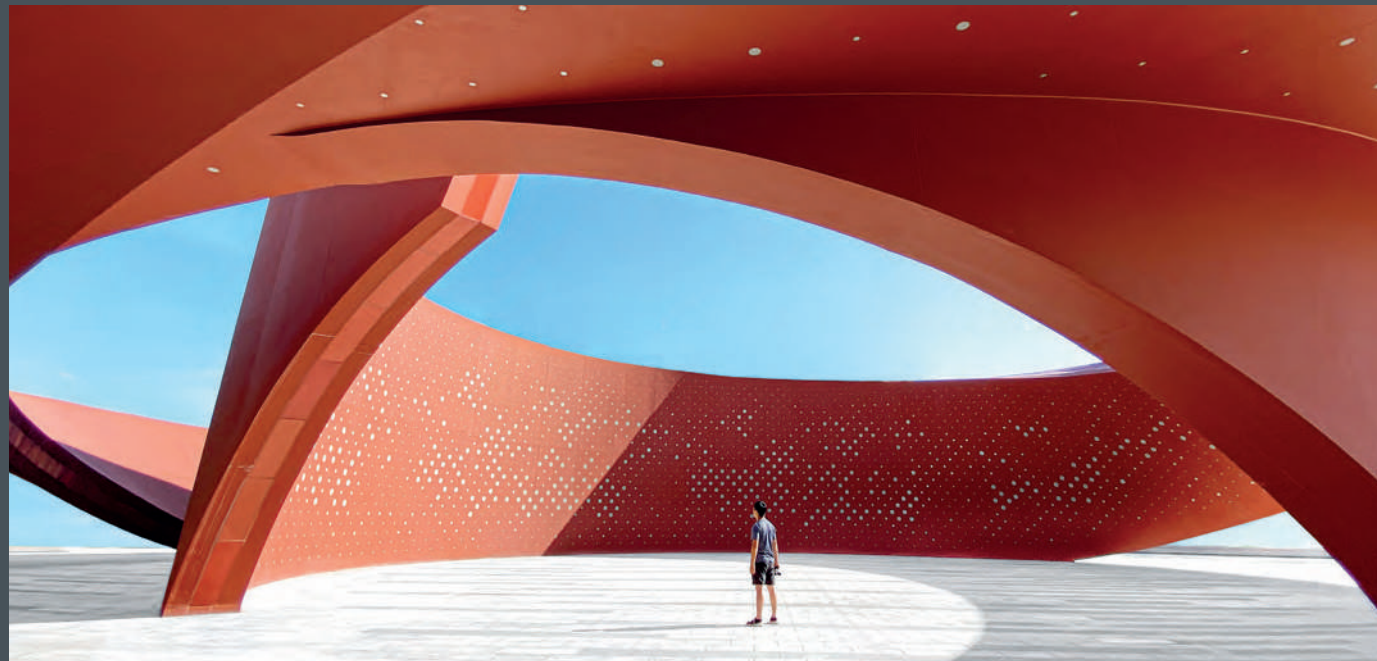
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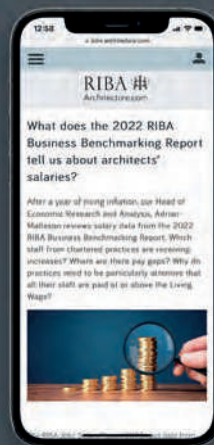
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2: Intelligence

**MOVING TO A NINE-DAY
FORTNIGHT**
EDMUND FOWLES,
DIRECTOR AT
FEILDEN FOWLES

Since early last year our 22-strong practice has trialled a nine-day fortnight. On alternate Fridays we close the studio and staff have a day off. After the ad-hoc way of working required by the pandemic we wanted to bring everybody back to the office, but still offer flexibility and a better quality of life.

The day is a discretionary 'gift'; staff contracts are unchanged. And it deals with people accruing time off in lieu for occasional late evenings, which was becoming hard to administer. Some have used it to take up new hobbies or classes, and others for life admin that's difficult at the weekend.

As we need to cover the same ground in fewer hours, we set out guidance on improving efficiency. We've tried 'focus mornings', when people can work uninterrupted, and more obvious approaches: less non-essential chat on digital platforms; shorter, frequent breaks; better communication on deadlines and workloads. Productivity is hard to measure, but from a commercial point of view our turnover has increased during the period – and 40% of staff have reduced overtime.

Clients are supportive. Our email signatures link to a list of off-days on our website. Phones are answered by a messaging service. That said, some deadlines or meetings are unavoidable and around half the team has worked on at least one free day in the last quarter. We are looking at how to reduce this.

Our trial runs until Q2 this year, but in an interim staff survey 100% of staff said they had a better work-life balance and felt more energised; 84% said efficiency had improved, and 92% are satisfied with the policy. While some details still need refining, on the evidence so far the nine-day fortnight is set to stay. ●

'From a commercial point of view our turnover has increased during the period – and 40% of staff have reduced overtime'



Intelligence is officially approved RIBA CPD. Look out for icons throughout the section indicating core curriculum areas.



Left Feilden Fowles' self-built studio in Waterloo, London.

Library balances the books while keeping quality high

In our series on how architects make buildings, Studio Weave's Je Ahn tells Jan-Carlos Kucharek how the firm kept control of the D&B procurement process to make its LVL timber Lea Bridge Library extension look a million dollars

Photographs Jim Stephenson



Design, construction
& technology



Sustainable
Architecture

You've procured a building that looks like it cost a lot more than the £740,000 the client paid for it

Before we even went out to tender on the D&B contract, we had sourced quotes for all the packages that we wanted to maintain control of. Crucially, we weren't nominating the subcontractor, so they were free to not use them. If they could find another supplier, all well and good – we merely gave them our own subcontractor research. The contractor assumed liability but was happy to do so with a methodology and cost certainty. We'd done the lion's share of the work for them – for free. But it all helped bring

the 250m² building in for a £2960/m² construction cost.

It ended up costing us a third more than the fee we charged when we were taken on as client advisor. But we have a list of fabricators that we've worked with before and who we have a relationship with, and it allows me to get upfront knowledge on what can be done and at what expense. I never ask them to do anything on the cheap but then I don't need to. All contractors will charge a hefty premium on their works if they're not absolutely clear what the methodology is. But suppliers have to know that you're looking after their interests as well as the client's.

What's the story on the fabricating of the distinctive concrete columns?

A lot of this project was about making tiny tweaks to create savings. With the precast columns, every other one is in

fact hiding a self-supporting galvanised steel downpipe within – designed in tandem with the engineer and fabricator. Likewise, the precast concrete clad steel beams support the roof overhang, with the lower line of the beam evidencing the fall to the downpipe.

AlbionArt, who did the columns, usually work on historic buildings so we knew they could do the job. We asked them early on what digital files they would need to make the columns' distinctive 'circle to square' form. We knew a firm like Cambridge Concrete could have made the C-channel steel beam cladding as one piece, but AlbionArt offered big savings if we were prepared to run with three cladding sections and two joint lines. The fibreglass cement cladding itself is 12mm thick, which makes it robust and light yet flexible, allowing for steel thermal movement. This decision on

thickness all came out of fabricator conversations before the contractor ever appointed them.

It's a low-cost building but with curved glass. How did you manage to keep costs down on the glazing package?

Suppliers have different rates for their per m² costs and it depends on variables like radius, size, installation logistics and shatter risk – but they also have healthy contingency built into their quotes. As the glazing went through value engineering, the curved form became faceted to the point where I felt we'd need to just change the design. So instead we looked at what factors could be optimised to maintain it. Not just height, as anything over 3.2m tends to double the panel cost, but frame section and weight – and transportation and site installation. We went to six suppliers with our 2.8m high glazed wall and three offered a sectional and price profile that worked. In the end we ran with IQ Glass.

The internal joinery looks bespoke

We were lucky that carpenter Sebastian Cox, who we worked with long before



Opposite The precast concrete columns define the main east facade of the new block looking onto the Friendship Garden. The facade also connects to another entrance in the south wall.

Left Looking north to the café and main entrance beyond. Canny specification allowed curved rather than faceted glazing to the external walkway. Interior joinery is high quality.

Below View from the external walkway to the south wall. Design control for the columns and use of standard Marshalls' planks helped keep costs in check.





Above Looking south from the entrance to cafe and library. Sebastian Cox's scalloped timber panels are sourced sustainably from local tress felled across London's Parks.

Left The huge hinge on the separating door was sourced from a Dutch supplier, so the contractor did not need to price it as a 'special'.

he became successful, was prepared to do it. The bespoke joinery he did used timber all sourced from a yard in Essex that takes all the trees felled from parks across the various London boroughs, so it was all sourced locally and sustainably.

We talked with Seb about the fluting detail we wanted and I suggested he go out and buy a standard router bit – which he did – to cut the pieces of pine, sycamore, oak, London plane and cherry. Due to the specialist nature of the

work, we advised the client to contract Sebastian separately to maintain a clear line of delineation. We set a datum line for the cabinetry below which Seb would work, with the contractor doing the upper part, hiding the service spine pipes and ductwork. Seb made and installed the beautiful and tactile fluted panels as a 'free issue', with little contractor intervention.

Asking the contractor at the outset to quote for the works felt like a formality; we knew it would effectively prove the value for money argument with the client. And we were right – Seb's estimated price for the works came in at half that stated by the contractor.

You had to raise the building to take account of a small underground bunker?

Yes, the design had to get tweaked to take account of that and to keep a nearby mature tree that we pushed to have retained, meaning a blockwork upstand on the garden side below the columns – but we really tried to minimise the cost effect. We managed to get the upstand in at a maximum height that didn't require a handrail and changed the walkway width to a standard Marshalls' plank width, meaning no expensive specials. The contractor priced the simple mild steel folded plate covering the blockwork at £50,000 but shopping around through our network of fabricators we got it down to £8,000! Keeping the tree also ruled out potential problematic ground shrinkage from its removal.

What about the terrazzo floors?

They're not! When the contractor poured the wet finishing screed I just told them to sprinkle it with bags of cheap-as-chips golden flint as they were going to have to grind and polish the floor anyway. Buying the flint only put a 5% premium on the cost of the floor. Proper terrazzo is expensive, maybe £300-400/m² but this polished screed came out at around £80. Its utilitarian too: if you have a gallery grade floor finish and spill coffee on it or a kid scrawls on it with pens, you'll see it – here, you don't. Low cost but lovely! ●

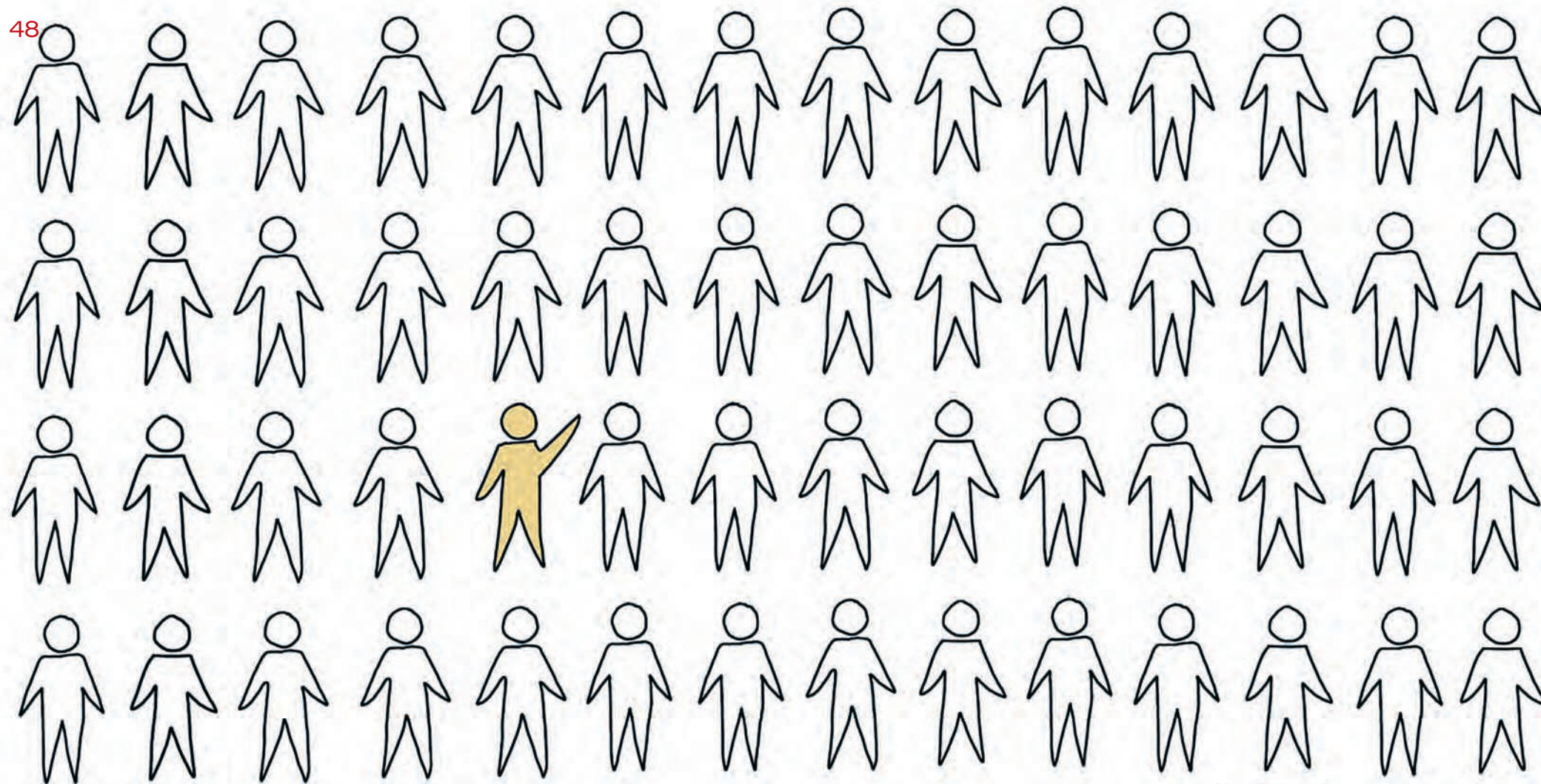


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Architects' views from the shop floor

Elle Thompson reports on the office cultures of three Part 2 architectural assistants and presses the case for the all-round benefits of open, engaged workplaces



Health, safety & wellbeing



Inclusive environments

How are you finding the work? What do you make of your team? Is there any further support you require? Such are typical review questions – from a process all too often neglected within the architectural profession. But whether you are a Part 1 experiencing your first taste of practice, a Part 2 returning to a familiar firm or you're starting anew elsewhere, the benefits of engaging with it can be felt by the individual, the employer and the wider practice.

As a new starter fresh from contemporary architectural education and with the learning of previous practice, a Part 2 architectural assistant is particularly well placed to appraise a practice's working culture – the atmosphere, values and behaviours embodied in it. These attributes are influential in defining a practice's approach to the key issues facing

the profession, for example working conditions and response to the climate emergency. Such matters require an open and reflective discourse, something the next generation of architects has shown familiarity with.

Last autumn, Shukri Sultan's coverage of the union movement presented the impact that groups such as the Section of Architectural Workers, (SAW) and the Future Architects Front (FAF) are having on the culture and performance of the architectural profession. Most notable is their influence in bringing an architectural worker to the position of RIBA president-elect – Muiyiwa Oki.

This provocation to challenge the profession is why I am here – a Part 2 crossing the three-month milestone in their second practice – writing about working culture. It's also why a

Intelligence Working cultures

number of my new-starter peers were enthusiastic to share their thoughts on the matter, albeit anonymously. Perhaps at some point, thoughts on our workplace can be shared without fear of dismissal. These are individual experiences, but they do offer a certain insight.

Assistant A: Large practice pitfalls

Large practices are notorious for a strong social scene. For assistant A, it has been the thriving opportunities to step away from their desk in a globally renowned practice that have been the redeeming facet of an intense working culture.

Weekly talks are sandwiched between monthly socials hosted by alternating teams, peppered with the after-work drinks that come with a central London office. 'It feels like you need to be social to be known', says Assistant A, reflecting on the lack of integration across teams in the typical working day. Between a flexi-work policy – employees can work from home two days a week and enjoy flexible start and finish times – and years of Covid disruption, new faces equate not to new starters but a lack of knowing 'who is who' in a fragmented workplace.

This is a problem for Assistant A. At their previous practice of almost 100, the new starter would shake the hand of every team member, an act that dissolved barriers across the office and set the precedent for good communication. Despite a 300-plus strong workforce, their current practice feels closer to a series of small practices which happen to share a physical space

The physically absent leadership, ambiguous mentorship and the lack of team catch-up has made for difficult working conditions

but differ greatly in management, workload and opportunities.

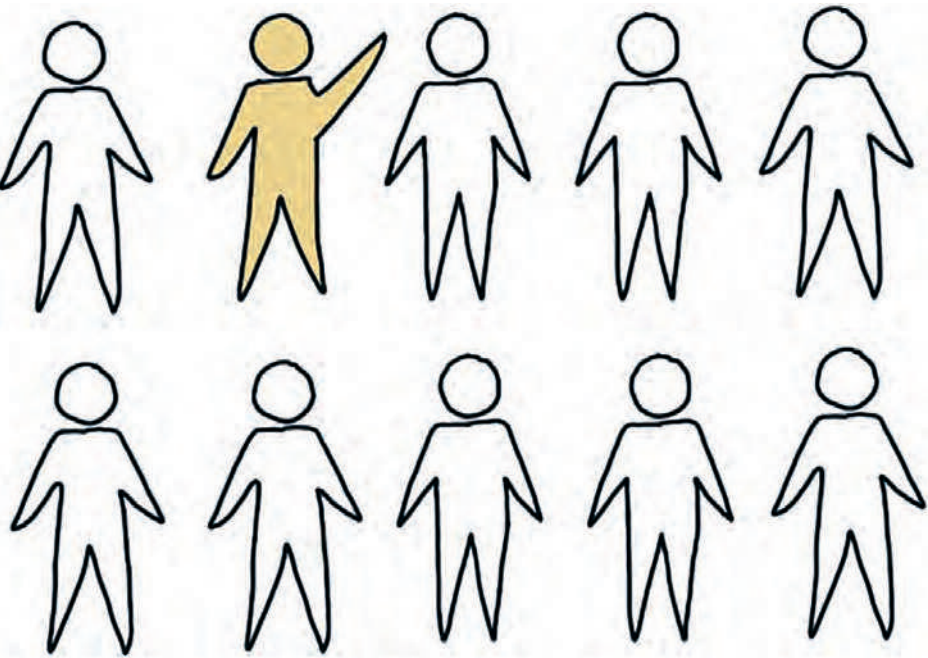
Most notably for Assistant A, the physically absent leadership, ambiguous mentorship and the lack of team catch-up – daily, weekly or even monthly – has made for difficult working conditions, with overtime expected at a moment's notice, out-of-hours emails and inconsistent working patterns.

Assistant A puts this working culture down to sustained learnt behaviours of generations of senior management, leading to burnout and dissatisfaction among colleagues. It has prompted Assistant A to question the alignment of their values with the practice. 'It takes a strong character to define workplace boundaries' they say. But this new starter will keep striving to assert what is possible in the working day as a means of countering a 'chaotic' workplace culture – with one eye on the job market all the while.

Assistant B: Challenging inherent culture

Assistant B uses the comradeship previously experienced in these pits of overworking to benchmark their current experience. As a learned behaviour from their East Asian home culture, they have long accepted toxic working conditions and the dissolution of life outside of architectural employment. After two years of UK-based student experience they have begun to challenge it, moving away from a large-scale practice following a disengaging, CAD-driven interview process, in favour of a medium-sized practice. Assistant B didn't want to be a 'small piece in a very big machine'.

More desirable was a practice with an imaginative approach to design, which they got. And although workplace culture was not what drove Assistant B to this current employer – the practice's website doesn't mention the working experience it offers – the office has a friendly and approachable professional environment in which ideas and input are acknowledged by all. These traits relate closely to Assistant B's educational experience, which encouraged students



to voice an opinion, be informed on their working rights and exercise their values. Coincidentally several colleagues share this experience, all graduates from the same institution, which illuminates the link between practice working culture and what we experience as students.

It is to this inclusive type of practice that Assistant B credits their ease in settling in. Every week begins with a whole office meeting, bringing consistency and transparency, followed by CPD or invited speakers suggested by the team. Despite these more formal activities, Assistant B notes the lack of social events instigated by the practice. Fortunately, all is not lost in this lack of social investment; good working habits, including taking the full lunch break and leaving promptly at the end of the working day, have created strong social bonds across the office which thrive outside the workplace. That comradeship is born of the successes of the working environment, not its failings.

Assistant C: Transparency in employee ownership

Assistant C is also in a medium-sized practice, though not only as an employee but a shareholder. Employee-owned trusts (EOT) are being offered across architectural practice. For Assistant

C, this model of business ownership – detailed on the company website – was part of the appeal of what they deem a ‘progressive’ working culture in which employees are seen as an investment and ‘not expendable’.

On the surface, the practice appears to be like any other; teams are arranged in bays and feature members from across the hierarchy, a tried and tested mode of spatial organisation aiding collaboration and passive mentorship. But within it strategies are interlaced, tying teams together across the office,

Representatives from each level of the practice meet fortnightly, bringing the directors feedback from the office floor

which Assistant C believes encourages greater levels of engagement in everyday practice operations and, as a result, creates a collaborative working culture.

One strategy of particular note is the employee council. Representatives from each level of the practice meet fortnightly, bringing the directors feedback from the office floor. It is within this communication channel that Assistant C has felt comfortable suggesting changes to the working day to accommodate different cultures. Another example, the monthly whole office meetings, gives employees transparency by informing them on both projects and more sensitive information such as practice performance.

Consequently the physical office space is populated, despite offering one flexi-day a week: people want to be there. Assistant C says this is responsible for their record of having had multiple conversations with every member of the team since starting. Such conversations first followed the introduction of new starters in the weekly newsletter, sending a short profile straight to their colleagues’ in-boxes. A recent European City break aided this, and gives further evidence of the practice’s commitment to investing in both the working and employee experience.

The employee experience so far is exactly what Assistant C wanted: space to be included, inspired and influential. Since starting they have actively sought to instil a peer review culture among their fellow assistants.

Whether it be defining working boundaries, challenging inherent views, or curating new working strategies, conscious engagement with working culture can improve architectural practice more widely. The future of architecture looks optimistic and the awareness presented in these accounts is testament to that. But first, we must all accept the responsibility to look beyond the product of practice, at the cultures which permeate its production. ●

Elle Thompson is an architectural assistant at William Matthews Associates and Sheffield School of Architecture collaborative practice graduate

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What will design codes mean for you?

Design codes are set to become part of all local authority development plans. David Rudlin, one of the authors of the National Model Design Code, explains their origins, gestation and expected impact on architects



Let us start by imagining two people in separate rooms. The first person is tasked with designing something but cannot build it; they must pass instructions to the person in the second room whose job it is to realise the design. The twist is that the second person isn't a willing collaborator. They might resent the imposition on their own creativity and take every opportunity to introduce their own ideas.

The person in the first room is, of course, an urban designer and the other is an architect tasked with realising buildings within a masterplan or design framework. There may be multiple architects – all working for clients who are also not interested in the work of the urban designer. It is no wonder that 90% of masterplans are never built.

The tragedy is that the urban design discipline has not recognised this situation. Frustrated that its plans and policies are too often ignored, it draws them in ever more detail and brighter colours. This is what lies behind design coding, it marks a switch in focus from endless re-emphasis of what good looks like, to how good is achieved.

In preparing the National Model Design Code (NMDC) we spent some time looking at design coding elsewhere in the world, where it is the norm. In

France, for example, there is a digital map on the local authority website that delineates a series of zones, some for existing areas and some for areas to be developed. Click on your site and you are taken to a set of rules that tell you exactly what you can do, the floor area ratio, the height, the relationship to the plot boundary, and more. No discretion, no debate but also a quick and guaranteed permission if you follow the rules. The person in the second room has no choice but to follow the rules. Whether you think this is a good idea probably depends which room you are sitting in.

Fixed and flexible mix
The 2020 Planning White Paper suggested something similar through its much-misunderstood provision for 'deemed planning consent' in 'growth areas'. Like the French system, planning consent was only guaranteed if the rules were followed, rules that were to be set out in a code. Given the political changes since then it seems unlikely it will ever become policy. So the National Model Design Code had to be written to be implemented through our current planning system. It is the discrepancy

The point of a code is that it is clear and binary. It uses words like 'must' and 'shall' and includes parameters

between the precision of a code and the lack of clarity, consistency and certainty in our planning system that has generated most questions about how codes are to be implemented in the UK.

Our current planning system is discretionary, policies are worded in general terms and planning applications are negotiated between architects and their clients, and planning officers and their committees – who have a great deal of leeway. A system based on coding, in theory, removes much of the discretion; architects may feel hidebound by the provisions of a code but so are planners.

The whole point of a code is that it is clear and binary. It uses words like 'must' and 'shall' and includes figures and parameters. There is no 'shall seeks' or 'where appropriates' or 'high quality designs'. This is understood and set out very clearly in guidance for coding being prepared by the Office for Place.

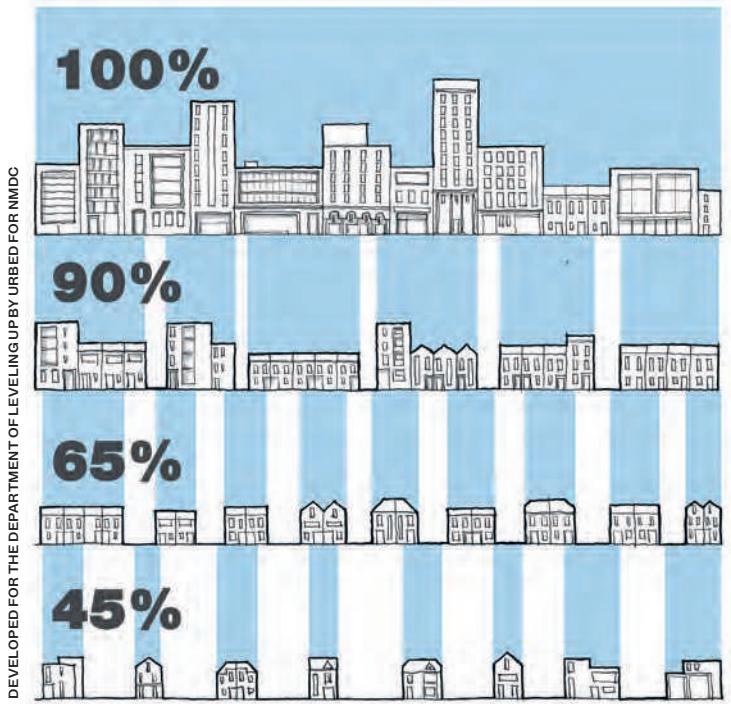
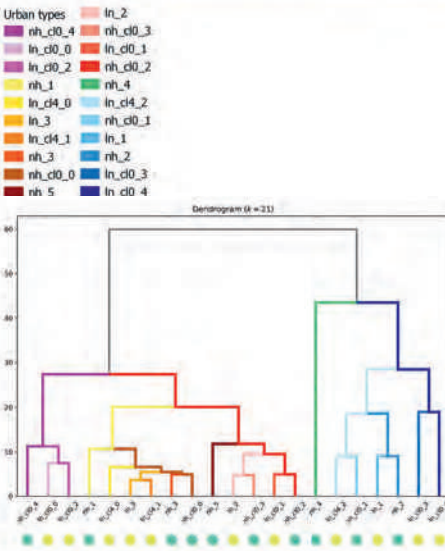
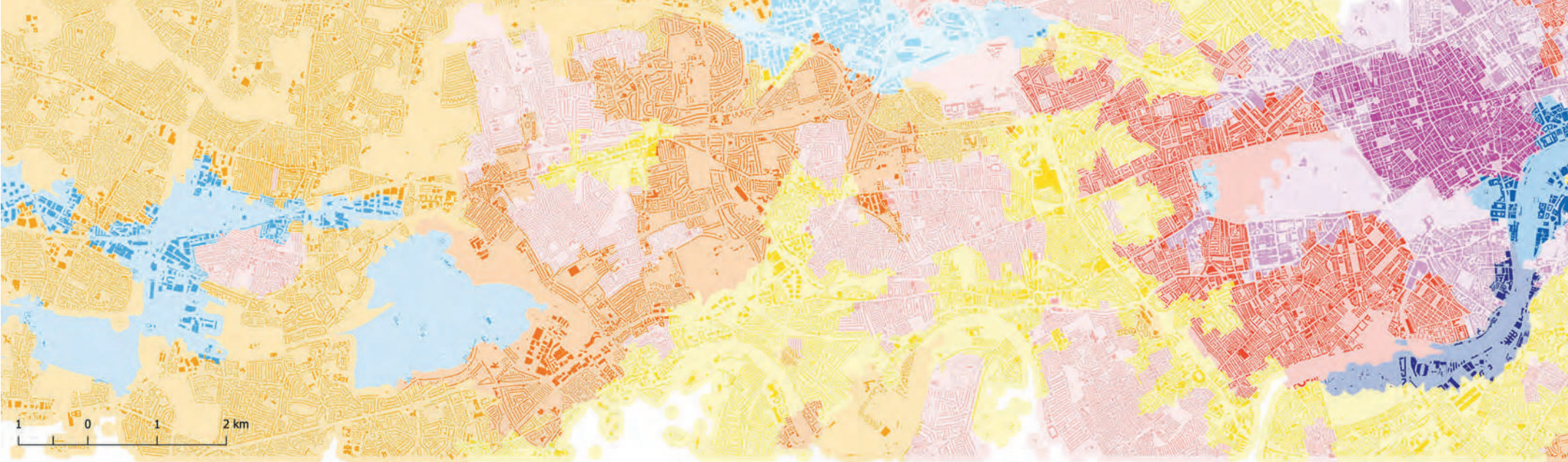
Of course, calls for 'flexibility' will come from those worried about the constraints codes are likely to impose. Flexibility is important, but it comes from creating space for design within loose-fit, but fixed, parameters. This is not a contradiction in terms. A code can set precise parameters within which there is a huge amount of flexibility. But if the parameters are flexible, the code becomes meaningless.

One of the implications of being specific about rules is that they need to apply to a particular geographic area. For example, a rule on building heights for an entire district would have to use vague statements about fitting in with the local

context, or designs 'being appropriate'. If you wish to say that the eaves height of buildings should not exceed 10m, then you need to be geographically specific. Elsewhere in the world this is dealt with via zoning – a suburban area needs different rules to a city centre, so it is in a different zone. We weren't allowed to use the word 'zones' in the NMDC so after a long debate we called them 'Area Types'.

Codes and guidance
When Matthew Carmona, Bartlett professor of planning and urban design, reviewed the NMDC pilots he was not convinced about Area Types and revealed that most of the pilots had not

found them useful. Even authorities that were developing authority-wide coding tended to use more flexible guidance that covered their entire area, and so avoided creating Area Types. The resulting guidance is just that; it is not codes. There may be codes that cover unified urban areas that have just a single Area Type, which is fine. But to reject Area Types is to reject the idea of coding. Fortunately the NMDC pathfinders are taking a different approach and most have been progressing Area Types, some using the urban morphometrics system developed by the University of Strathclyde. This automatically identifies Area Types



Above Northampton by Area Types, as drawn out by the University of Strathclyde's urban morphometrics system.

Left Example from the NMDC of a building line compliance diagram showing how much of the frontage should be occupied by development.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS
The National Model Design Code sets a baseline standard of quality and practice which local planning authorities are expected to take into account when developing local design codes and guides and when determining planning applications, including:

- How new development should enhance the health and wellbeing of local communities and create safe, inclusive, accessible and active environments
- How landscape, green infrastructure and biodiversity should be approached, including the importance of streets being tree-lined
- The environmental performance of place and buildings ensuring they contribute to net zero targets
- The layout of new development, including infrastructure and street pattern
- The factors to be considered when determining whether building facades are high-enough quality
- That developments should take account of local vernacular, character, heritage, architecture and materials.

To see more search online for National Model Design Code Process publication

A system identifying Area Types from mapping data can be calibrated to be as coarse or fine-grained you want

from mapping data and can be calibrated according to how coarse or fine-grained you want to be. This has huge potential to make the concept of Area Types workable for hard pressed authorities.

It is important to understand that Area Types described in the NMDC relate to what an area should be in the future, rather than what it is now – for existing urban areas as well as new site allocations. A low-density housing area may be allocated to a higher density Area Type as a means of intensification. Proposed redevelopment may see a retail park allocated as a mixed-use Area Type. The art of coding is to derive Area Types and parameters from successful urban areas and, through discussion with local communities, apply them more widely to new development and poorer quality existing areas.

Once the Area Types have been established, rules can be written for each; the NMDC sets out a contents list of issues that can be covered and even suggests how rules might be drafted. There is nothing new here, the issues are those that urban designers have been pushing for years. The point about coding is that it shifts attention to the process by which principles are implemented.

If it works, then the person in the second room will have a set of parameters that are fixed but will not feel constraining or onerous. It won't guarantee high quality design, but it is an important tool in improving the quality of what we build. If, that is, we can make codes work within our slightly chaotic planning system. ●

David Rudlin is one of the authors of the National Model Design Codes and an urban design director at BDP. He spoke about Codes at the Office for Place event, Beauty: Who Cares, Wins at the RIBA on 31 January

THE CHALLENGES OF SETTING OUT DISTRICT-WIDE DESIGN CODES:
ALLIES AND MORRISON'S EXPERIENCE IN HOUNSLOW

The authorities engaged in producing the first district-wide design codes each have strong ambition and a pioneering attitude. In the main, these codes are to be adopted as Supplementary Planning Documents and so must hook off existing local planning policy. Bridging these twin objectives can be challenging, particularly when gaps in national policy mean there simply aren't the contingency hooks for ambitious codes around aspects like climate change.

The process follows the three stages set out in the National Model Design Code, with extensive community engagement informing each stage. In Stage 1 the focus is on analysis. Much of the work is what has traditionally been undertaken in characterisation studies. Mapping in GIS is a prerequisite of this work and has transformed the interactive potential through platforms such as ESRI StoryMap.

But before diving into the mapping, it is essential to engage with the council's development management team. This can usefully steer the priorities for analysis and streamline the focus for coding later down the line. The community engagement during this stage is about building trust and absorbing information into the project. But time should also be spent on building capacity. By Stage 3 the content will get quite technical and so building up stakeholders' knowledge during earlier stages helps ensure they can keep inputting meaningfully later on.

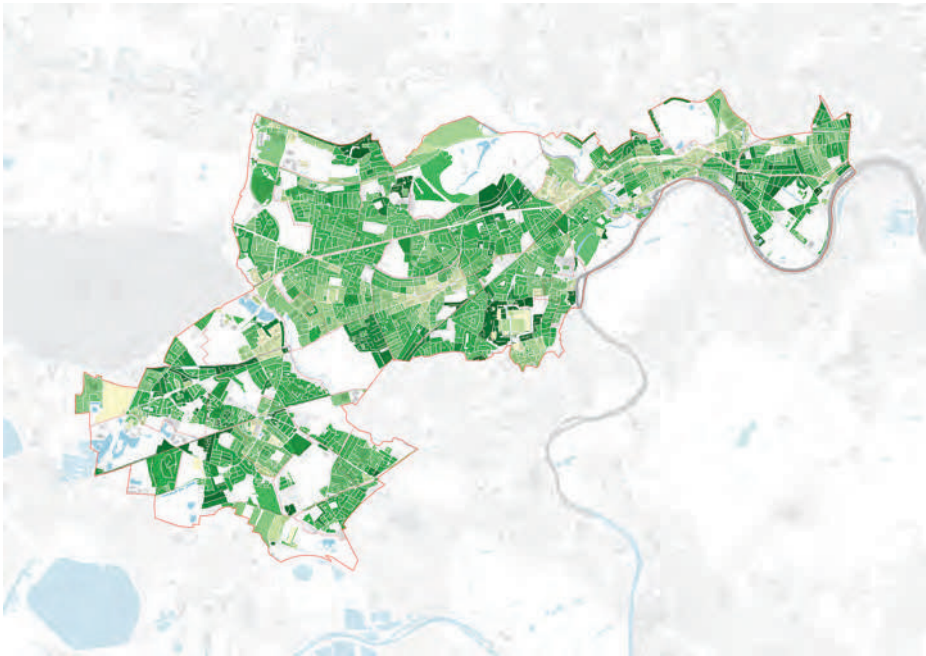
In Stage 2, we have learned it is important to find balance during conceptualisation – capturing what people want to see in their local area vs. what a code

can control or influence. Much will be outside the remit of a design code, but fundamental to the design concept. The ideal is therefore to find a home for the wider actions put forward by the community, for example, in the Local Plan review process. One of the most common challenges though is deciding on Area Types. Achieving a comfortable alignment between Area Types, character areas and neighbourhoods is the holy grail, but it takes careful refinement to achieve a set that make sense of the local area and meet wider guidance requirements.

In stage 3, a big challenge is avoiding the output becoming a design guide covering everything. A code should just cover the aspects specific to that area or district, but often it is the basics that need setting out first. A solution can be a set of district-wide design principles in an overarching chapter, which is then followed by specific design codes which address local priority design issues. By the end of the process local stakeholders must be able to clearly see the thread running between local character, current issues, and design code solutions.

Jane Manning, Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners

Below Strategic Urban Greening Factor analysis of existing street blocks can be instrumental in guiding locally appropriate design codes for adapting to climate change, as here in Hounslow.



STRATEGIC URBAN GREENING FACTOR MAP, HOUNSLOW © ALLIES AND MORRISON URBAN PRACTITIONERS

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A (warm) roof over one's head

Start at the top for an energy efficient building, says Loader Monteith's Matt Loader

Images: Dapple Photography



Sustainable
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Making an energy efficient building, is, at its heart, a fairly simple affair. Insulate the envelope well to minimise heat loss, cut openings, add site-specific technology to provide heating and power. Of course, as you get into the detail it becomes more complex, but this is the driving principle of making a building which is comfortable to live in and affordable to heat.

Since heat rises, a roof that works really hard will have a more positive impact than heavily insulated walls and floor; a roof light with a U-value of 0.7W/m²K is roughly equivalent to a window the same size of 1.2W/m²K. Having a constant line of insulation that is not disrupted by the structure is a fundamental principle we apply to all of our projects.

We've shown two drawings which focus on the roof – one for our newbuild Manser Medal shortlisted Ceangal



Left Ceangal House in South Lanarkshire, near Glasgow, is a newbuild five-bedroom courtyard house in the middle of a working farm.



LOADER MONTEITH

House in South Lanarkshire, the other for our retrofit of the category A-listed house High Sunderland in the Scottish Borders.

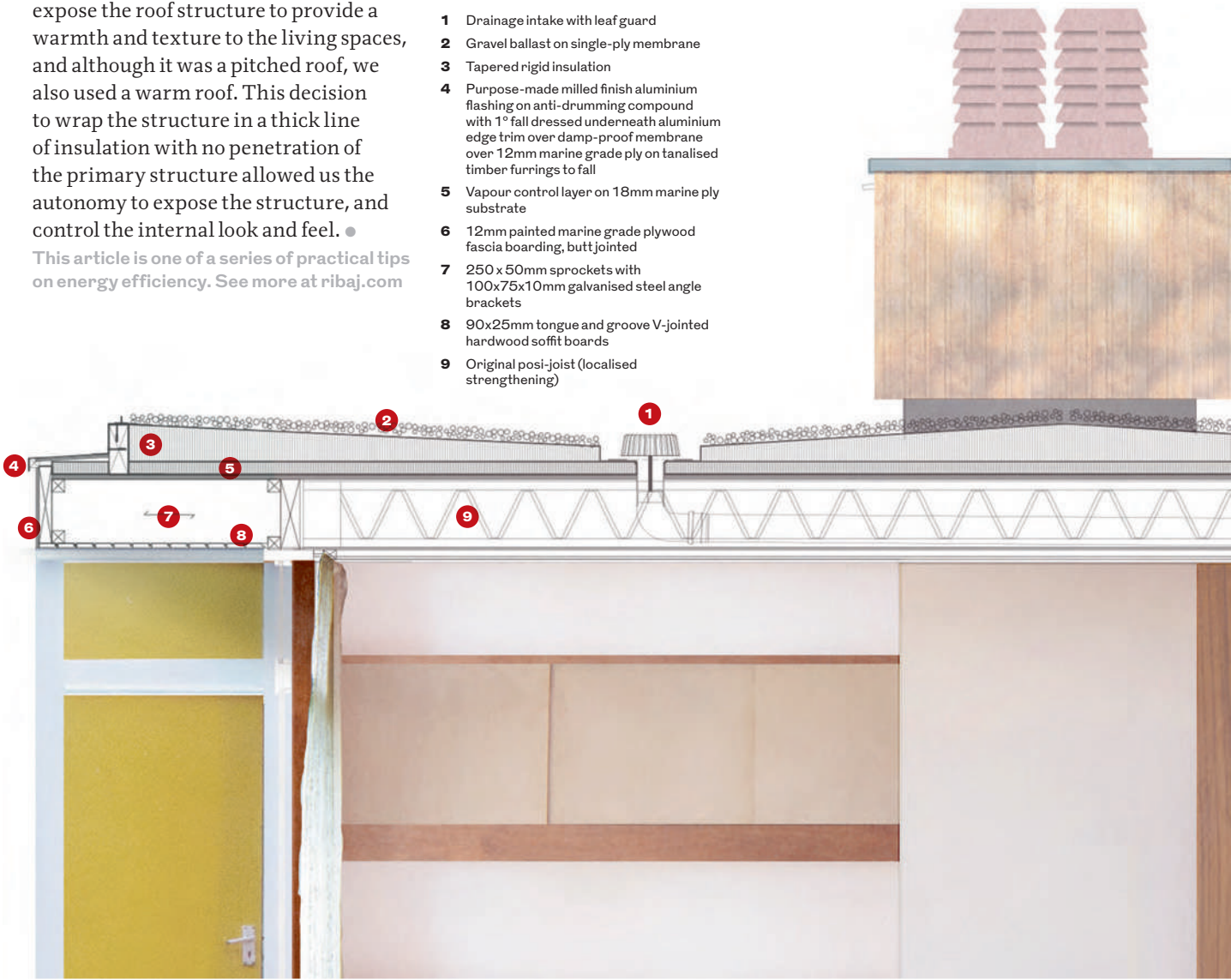
While we have the above guiding principles underpinning both details, we're always keen to ensure the desire to make a warm envelope doesn't compromise the quality of the space inside or out. At High Sunderland, we had to respect the eaves line, which was critical to the house's external character, while the timber ceiling was absolutely essential inside. For this reason, as we turned the house into a 'warm roof' we came up with the stepping profile. This took the U-value of the roof from 0.2 W/m²K to 0.16 W/m²K.

At Ceangal House, we wanted to expose the roof structure to provide a warmth and texture to the living spaces, and although it was a pitched roof, we also used a warm roof. This decision to wrap the structure in a thick line of insulation with no penetration of the primary structure allowed us the autonomy to expose the structure, and control the internal look and feel. ●

This article is one of a series of practical tips on energy efficiency. See more at ribaj.com



The A-listed High Sunderland, originally designed by Peter Womersley, has been brought into the 21st century courtesy of Loader Monteith's decarbonising interventions.

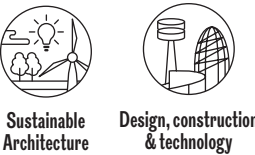


LOADER MONTEITH

Lessons on reusing steel

Developer Fabrix on how a reused structure fits into a project programme and whether it is worth it

Words: Eleanor Young



‘We shouldn’t waste things,’ insists Clive Nichol, founder and CEO of Fabrix which invests in and develops buildings. Two of the company’s London projects reuse steel to adapt old buildings: at Roots in the Sky with Sheppard Robson, a transformation of old Blackfriars Crown Court, it will support the plant floors, and at 55 Great Suffolk Street it will make up the structure for a new external core designed by Hawkins\Brown.

Where to start?
How does a project bring in reused steel? First it needs the will of those holding the purse strings. Nichol, who does that here, explains. ‘In a project meeting, we saw we were breaking down the levels of embodied carbon. Steel was such a high polluter, but how could we bring down the carbon? In previous projects we had exposed old structures. So I asked the team: “Why don’t we reuse some steel?”.’
The first hard barrier on a project like Roots in the Sky is that the project team is running to stages and deadlines, he continues, which drives them down a funnel. Even when those involved know



SEBASTIAN ZIEGLER

there are better ways to do things, he says, it can be hard to change course.
But this time the team put out feelers to demolition contractors, stating the steel sizes they needed. It was structural engineer AKTII that came up with the steel, mined from its project at 1 Broadgate in the City. Demolition contractor Cantillon had already bought the steel, planning to melt down and recycle it. It had already removed the concrete casings and hot-cut it at each end.

Restoring and certifying
So Fabrix struck a deal with Cantillon. The next task was to work out where the steel would go and how it could be certified for use in a new building. Processes had to be reinvented as the programme progressed: ‘The first time you do anything like this it is heavily manual, and relies on the project team being positive about the challenge. But they were – they were excited,’ explains Nichol.
Once they had located Cleveland Steel they had a solution for storage, restoration and recertification of the steel. As even new steel from abroad has to be certified in UK, it did not seem to be much more work to do the same for reclaimed steel. Cleveland has seen a massive surge in requests for reused steel, with four to five inquiries a week according to managing director Roy Fishwick, after years of the trade being confined to the oil industry (London’s Olympic Stadium reused 2000 tonnes of gas pipes). Each piece has to be given a unique identity and be reworked, with attachments removed and holes filled in. And then it has to be tested.
Does reusing steel save money given the lower cost of the reclaimed material

from Cantillon? Nichol says the firm didn’t save any money doing it despite the effect of the Russia-Ukraine war on supply chains and the availability of steel, partly at least because this was the first time it had done it. But it did save 80% of the embodied carbon in one of the most unsustainable elements of the building, he adds.

Future possibilities
Nichol sees the possibilities of digitisation to make mining materials more viable in the future. ‘As we develop and use BIM models and digital twins, everything that goes into a building should be ledgered so you can effectively see a supply chain,’ he suggests. ‘Ledgers should be open source as a planning requirement – if developer is getting credit for building a demountable structure then local authorities should require a ledger.’
‘Using artificial intelligence as an architectural tool to identify all the items coming out of demolition projects could potentially pull them altogether and design a building based on the availability of materials and their dimensions – structural steel, concrete slabs or CLT panels. If we started now it might take 20 years.’
‘We need to design with what we actually have,’ he concludes. ‘We need to turn around our way of designing to a much more balanced and respectful way of treating the planet.’ ●
Learn more about Fabrix work and other circular economy examples at Long Life, Low Energy: Designing for a circular economy at 66 Portland Place until 1 April. The exhibition is sponsored by Autodesk

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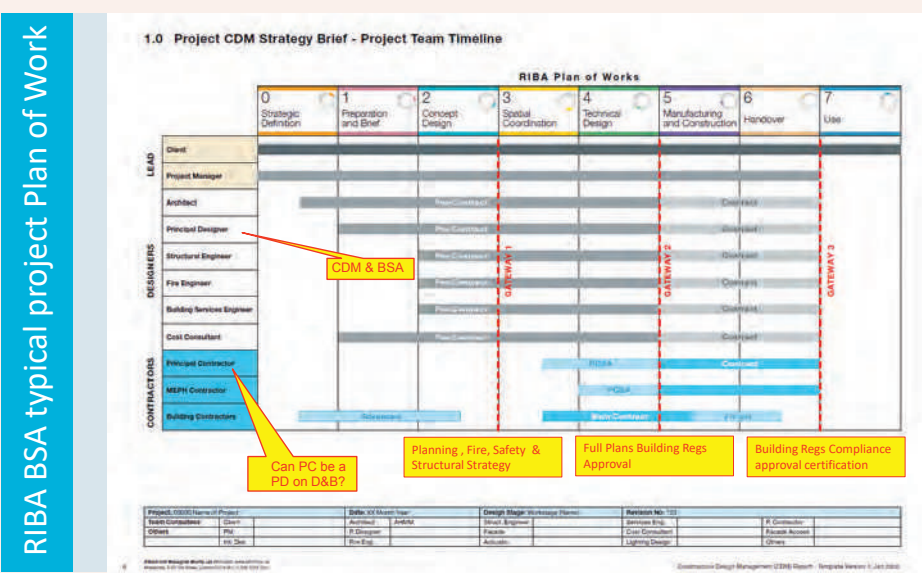
All change for architects in a more complex regulatory landscape

Practitioners and experts investigated the implications of the Building Safety Act and what we can learn so far from Gateway 1, at a RIBA/J/Hilti seminar which aimed to prepare architects to navigate the new regulatory waters that lie ahead

Images: Hilti

The new building safety regime seems to put architects between a rock and a hard place. On one side is the prevailing construction industry culture and legislative environment. On the other is the emerging safety framework, placing new duties and responsibilities on the principal designer and demanding additional time and resources to demonstrate the fire safety of higher-risk buildings at three gateway check points, providing a golden thread of information. So how can architects navigate their way? Expert speakers had a few – but not all – of the answers at the seminar, The Building Safety Act 2022 – Preparing architects for change, organised by RIBA in association with Hilti in London last November.

With the first of the three gateways in place and the Building Safety Act confirming the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) as the Building Safety Regulator to oversee safety across the built environment and regulate higher-risk buildings, the transition is becoming real; so too are its challenges. Early HSE analysis of Gateway 1 (planning), which was introduced in August 2021, found that around 60% of planning applications where HSE was a statutory consultee had a concern relating to fire safety in terms



of land-use planning. The two most common issues in those applications were unsuitable or insufficient fire brigade access, or concerns over linking single staircase buildings to other areas.

New approaches

For their part, architects attending the seminar expressed frustration that Approved Document B: Fire Safety references so many standards and documents. It is, said one delegate to audience applause, ‘completely overwhelming for any designer to follow through’. Equally overwhelming for practices, especially smaller ones, is the cost of buying those standards, which are not all freely accessible. Others in the audience questioned how they could steer a new course against the strong currents of construction culture and recessionary market pressures.

Gateway 1’s feedback has emphasised the need for the right early input on fire safety. ‘We are advocating that attention should be paid earlier – at RIBA stage 1 to 2 – to get the key components right in terms of fire safety design,’ explained Colin Blatchford-Brown, operational policy lead for gateways and building control at the HSE. He was sympathetic to audience complaints about the cost of standards, suggesting that written representations were made to HSE via RIBA and other organisations.

But Blatchford-Brown was forthright on who should be carrying out fire safety design. ‘The duty holder regulations say you should have competent persons employed to undertake design work. If the project – whatever size it is – requires a specialist consultant, that’s what should be employed. If you don’t have the competence, you don’t want the liability,’ he stressed. Gary Neal, head of fire at Skanska, echoed that: ‘I can’t think how you can deliver a project without a fire engineer. Even for a small extension on a school, or something of that nature, you need a fire technical note.’

Advice and challenges

When it comes to passive fire protection, Hilti is providing technical advice, specification support and professional services for architects in the selection, design, and modelling of passive fire protection and firestopping. ‘There

are challenges across design, product selection, installation, maintenance and recording of passive fire protection,’ explained Khadije Bah, northern European head of the engineering marketing and engineering design team at the company. ‘It’s important to identify the right product with the right testing for the purpose, to think about the whole system and work with contractors and regulators to ensure products are designed and installed properly. Early engagement allows stakeholders to focus on these areas and give them the best chance to install firestopping correctly.’

Paul Bussey, senior technical consultant at AHMM and the RIBA’s representative on committees and working groups planning the new regime’s integration, accepted that questions still remain. Legislation has been described by chair of the post-Grenfell fire safety review, Dame Judith Hackitt, and others, as not fit for purpose, and Bussey said it had left the industry working with ‘vague, ambiguous target setting’. But at the same time, he argued, the industry had to drive its own culture change, adding, ‘We can’t keep saying we did it that way in the past so we have to keep doing it’.

The Building Safety Act also has tools to force change. ‘The regulator will hold designers/contractors to account for a block of flats with poor detailing or construction because we will not issue a completion certificate. If we don’t have the evidence to support what was done and whether it’s been done correctly, it will end with a building with no people in it,’ warned Blatchford-Brown. ‘There are things in the Act that are quite harsh and it will change the way in which everyone has to design and construct.’

Hilti is on hand to help specifiers through the complexities of passive fire protection. hilti.co.uk



Left AHMM senior technical consultant Paul Bussey attempts to guide attendees through the complexity of Building Safety Act legislation. **Above right** The proposed three ‘Gateways’ and their relationship to the RIBA Plan of Work. **Below right** HSE’s Colin Blatchford-Brown delivers some hard truths to architects about the scope of duty holder roles.



High risk resi: fire safety must go in at the start

Adrian Dobson looks at the impact of Planning Gateway One and reports on RIBA efforts to maintain momentum on fire safety in high-risk residential buildings



Health, safety & wellbeing



Legal, regulatory & statutory compliance

With the implementation of the Building Safety Act we look forward to a wholesale reform of the Building Regulations system in England, but for higher risk residential buildings the first piece in the jigsaw has been in place since August 2021, when Planning Gateway One was introduced. This brought in measures to ensure fire safety matters were considered at the planning stage for schemes involving a relevant high rise residential building – 18m or more in height or seven or more storeys.

Planning Gateway One fire statements must provide information about:

- The principles, concepts and approach relating to fire safety
- Site layout
- Emergency vehicle access and water supplies for firefighting purposes
- Consultation undertaken on issues relating to the fire safety of the development
- How any policies relating to fire safety in relevant local development documents have been taken into account.

One year's experience

In November 2022 representatives of the RIBA met the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) at the Health & Safety Executive

(HSE) to be briefed in detail on findings from the first year of Planning Gateway One in operation. The feedback is that during the start-up period nearly two thirds of applications generated some or serious concerns, with a smaller percentage recommended for outright rejection.

Correct the focus

While this is disappointing, it is perhaps not entirely surprising, and indeed it is to some extent reassuring that the BSR is empowered to take appropriate action. For many proposed developments the focus still seems to be on achieving minimal compliance, with development economics, rather than a culture of building safety, apparently the overriding driver.

Availability of fire safety engineering expertise also continues to be a challenge. The Building Safety Regulator reports a decrease in the proportion of applications of concern in the last few months, but sends a clear message that successful navigation of the Planning Gateway One process requires the proper demonstration of the fire safety case – not just compliance with guidance in Approved



TWO STAIRCASES?

The government has announced a new consultation on proposed amendments to Approved Document B. The consultation, which closes on 17 March, includes a proposal to introduce a threshold whereby residential buildings above 30m in height should be designed and built with two staircases. More information can be found at: <https://bit.ly/two-staircases>

Above Continuing concerns over single-stair tall buildings and extended travel distances have been raised by the Building Safety Regulator, following monitoring of Planning Gateway One submissions.

Document B or BS9991.

The dominant concerns reported by the BSR relate to:

- Means of escape – staircases, evacuation lifts and protected escape routes, and in particular concerns about single-stair tall buildings and extended travel distances
- Firefighter access and facilities – firefighting shafts, fire appliance access and access to water
- External fire spread – use of combustible materials (new Approved Doc B requirements which came into force in December 2022 should provide greater certainty)
- Basements and covered car parks – separation from stairs serving upper floors.

Keeping in touch

For our part, the RIBA has committed to undertaking quarterly briefing meetings with the BSR to understand lessons learnt from implementation of the new Building Safety regime, which we can pass on to our members through our communication channels. We would like to develop best practice design exemplars working with the BSR and will be incorporating this insight into our popular 'Building Safety Act – next steps for architects' programme delivered via RIBA Academy, our member CPD platform. We have also published the new 'RIBA Guide to the Building Safety Act', setting out the expectations on duty holders and the implications for professional services contracts, and will shortly release an updated version of the RIBA Health and Safety Guide.

The RIBA will also issue further guidance to the RIBA Plan of Work stressing the need to base planning applications for higher risk residential buildings on a co-ordinated Stage 3 design, not on a Stage 2 basis, and for this to include a Qualitative Design Review.

We will support and reinforce the BSR's message that single staircase designs for residential buildings over 18m should only be considered in the most exceptional circumstances, such as constrained retrofit of

For many proposed developments the focus still seems to be on achieving minimal compliance

existing buildings. The RIBA will also continue to press for a research-based, prescriptive height threshold for a second means of escape to be incorporated in Building Regulations and British Standards. In December 2022, the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) called on the government to ensure that all new high-rise residential buildings over 18m, or seven storeys, have more than one fire escape staircase, commenting that: 'In the event of a fire, a correctly designed second staircase removes the risk of a single point of failure, buying critical time for firefighting activities and providing residents with multiple escape routes.' England remains an international outlier, with countries such as the US, Canada and Australia all having prescribed height limits.

Meet the challenge

When Dame Judith Hackitt called for a culture shift in relation to building safety, the challenge she set the architectural profession was to address key areas – at the earliest design stages – with fire engineering professionals. Without this essential move, the fundamentals of means of escape, firefighter access and facilities, and the separation of high fire risk areas, could become locked in. We can't afford to simply rely on fire engineering to 'fix' or find solutions for in-built design constraints. ●

Adrian Dobson is executive director of professional services
The RIBA Guide to the Building Safety Act can be downloaded from [architecture.com](https://www.architecture.com)

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3: Culture

Growing up in Woolston on the east bank of Southampton's River Itchen, photographer Greg Moss knows this bridge well. He must have crossed it 1000 times – sometimes with a raised heart rate, pelting over it as an Air Cadet.

His family has lived here for generations but would not all have been acquainted with its hollow box sections spanning 800m over the estuary. Until it opened in 1977, there was a chain ferry here; but had his father wanted to avoid that, it would have meant a short journey north to the concrete Northam bridge. His grandfather would have gone to the stones of Cobden bridge upriver and his great grandfather might have needed to use the lock crossing at Woodmill, where the river's fresh water meets the tidal salt – each generation casting back into engineering time.

Soaring 27m over the Itchen, the vista it gave was the reward for Moss's walk, also a view back in family history. To the ATC drill house of his youth; the river slipway of Supermarine Spitfire works from where his grandfather fled to the safety of Peartree Green in wartime bombing; and to the site of a long lost pub where his great grandad, seeing a man killed in a drunken brawl, took the pledge. Lives lived – and lost – in the streets below, free from the shadow of the toll bridge's expediting arc. ● Jan-Carlos Kucharek

Greg Moss
Itchen Bridge, 2017
Pentax 67 Mk II. 90mm lens,
shot on medium format film.

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Culture Opinion

'Tides of dereliction become floods in some places; in others they evaporate in the sun of architectural attention'



MacEwen projects send a ray of hope

Our award for socially beneficial schemes shows how architecture can heal cracks, if not divisions, in our communities

Nothing says neglect like broken windows. The blank staring eyes of their buildings, fractured shards, often with a destructive quiff of buddleia. Every city has these lost buildings, over the years they come and go, a marker of an area's fortunes.

It is oddly unsettling seeing such degradation in our shopping centres and major high streets; thus the window stickers promising and inviting activity with bright shots of happy shoppers and glowing cafés. Can the echoing empty floors of Debenhams and House of Fraser find new life as laboratories, student rooms and hotels, or offices? Their owners have been brainstorming and business planning for the last couple of years. There are challenges; deep floor plates with dark hearts, a very particular sort of access split between pedestrian front doors to the street and behind the scenes loading bays.

Those projects are now coming through the planning system, one being Barkers of Kensington in west London. It was briefly home to fashion label Biba, and until 2018 you might have visited Kensington Roof Gardens on top – once lauded in Time Out as a location for views and cocktails when that mix was in short supply in the capital. Emrys Architects' proposal now places offices around a central atrium.

It is a picture of economic optimism. But as I write, amid rain squalls and weeks of strikes, repurposing department stores seem a million miles away. Instead I turn to a darker portrayal of the city. When Mike Davies, who died recently, wrote City of Quartz, he took apart the community, political, racial and labour dynamics of Los Angeles. His picture of division may sound dramatic but it was given credence two years after the book was published by the city's 1992 riots, rooted in police brutality towards an African American citizen. Sixty-three people died.

Davies drew a compelling image of separation: of a fortress city for the rich and gang lawlessness borne out of need. He also dissected the organizing structures that made it what it was – from the economy to the church and political leadership, power networks that were embedded in the buildings and spaces of LA.

The UK too is unequal in terms of income and wealth. The top fifth of people hold 63% of the wealth, the bottom 5th have 0.5%, according to the Office of National Statistics. We too have seen division and unrest and we see the tides of dereliction become floods in some places, while in others they evaporate in the sun of architectural attention.

RIBA MacEwen Award projects, published in this issue, cannot address the fundamental division and inequity. But they show that local people can be agents for change, piecing together funding to bring together lean projects that allow people to build communities of interest and place. They are a good antidote to what is broken in our society. ●



ONLY ON RIBAJ.COM

I'd rather have been an architect in the late 19th century, when expertise and innovation were at a peak

Tim Ronalds on an all-engrossing vocation: [ribaj.com/tim-ronalds-hindsight](https://www.ribaj.com/tim-ronalds-hindsight)

Emrys Architects' plan for Barkers of Kensington places offices around an atrium.

Down your way

Edwin Heathcote’s forensic study of the incidental furniture that peppers our streets is a paean to the ubiquitous, overlooked and magnificently evocative, says Hugh Pearman

Below Helen Levitt’s famous image, N.Y., 1988, is one fruit of a decades-long effort to document ordinary street life in New York City.



The essays in Edwin Heathcote’s new book, ‘On the Street’, are personal meditations, really. None of them is more than a few pages long, some are very short, and one consists of no more than an 11-word quote. There are 101 of them, from ‘Advertising’ to ‘Working’, each stimulated by some aspect or other of what is broadly street furniture. This ranges from the curiously orientalist ‘Morris columns’ of Paris to the ornate cast-iron products of Glasgow’s Saracen Foundry, notably its combined circular horse-trough/ drinking fountain and gas lamp. But Heathcote is less concerned with street furniture in its own right as an accumulation of overlooked products, rather with the aspects of life that they enable and are backdrops to.

As physical objects they can stick around long after they have outlived their usefulness or (not the same thing) the municipal desire to maintain them: drinking fountains and gas lamps being cases in point, or in recent years the banal superseded cabinets of first-generation fibre-optic cabling.

The huge variety of patterns found in British locking cast-iron coal plates, inserted either in public pavements built over cellars or in the private front paths of Victorian houses, is much more long term. Geeks – Jeremy Corbyn among them – like to ‘collect’ them in photographs, and I salute them for it. They were still in use as late as the 1980s – I had one in working order outside my house, though even then releasing the plate from below and having coal poured down the hole felt like a historic re-enactment.

Heathcote fills in the details in his ‘Mining’ essay: that for all their decorative variety and multiplicity of makers such coal plates were of a standard 12 inches across (‘the exact size and

more or less the colour of an old vinyl LP’). That made them too narrow for burglars to get in through if left open, or for anyone to fall down. The geeks existed even when they were new: a medical student, Shephard Taylor, obsessively sketched them on his walks in 1869, taxonomised them like a living species, and had them published in a book.

Heathcote, architecture critic of the Financial Times, has taken his cue from Taylor. This book began as a short series of pieces in the FT and then became a larger lockdown project. What could any of us do during a pandemic? If ambulant, we could walk. Heathcote walked, and recorded what he saw and what these things made him think about. ‘It gave me something to do on otherwise interminably repetitive exercise strolls. But it also allowed me the time and space to see and to find things that were, in their own ways, wonderful.’

It is, as he says, a book about public space and the things in it. He recalls the street smells of his childhood: a coffee-roasters close to a public toilet, with objects such as an illuminated sign and a newspaper kiosk completing the scene. ‘Everything in that ensemble is gone now. Some of it may never have even been there, except in my head. Street furniture, like memory, is fragile.’

The section headings describe actions rather than objects: Ascending, Concretising, Littering, Reappropriating, as well as more usual ones such as Streetlighting, Draining, or Balustrading. There is both a Pissing and Anti-pissing section, but not adjacent: strict alphabetical order is imposed.

Right Photograph from Michael Wolf’s series Bastard Chairs, 1995–2017, a study of ad hoc urban ingenuity.



In ‘Recording’, Heathcote emulates Georges Perec’s 1974 attempt to describe everything he saw from a café in a Parisian square in deliberately stultifying detail, which he called ‘An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris’. It was the Place Saint Sulpice, as already recorded in a rainy-day photograph by Edouard Boubat in 1948.

Heathcote chooses a deserted Clerkenwell Green to repeat the exercise even more boringly: a simple inventory of what is there. He finds it incredibly difficult: there’s just so much stuff, from Georgian bollards via CCTV cameras to yellow plastic grit bins. Rain sets in, he gives up after a few hours (Perec managed three days). He then goes to Perec’s location in Paris and discovers that most of the things Perec described have vanished, though ‘the pigeons are as active as ever’. Some might see such an exercise as futile: I regard it as noble, and fascinating.

These self-contained essays, most illustrated, are almost hypnotic. There is some repetition between sections that could have been edited out, but the book more than achieves its aims. The everyday is elevated. After a while, he warns, you can’t stop looking. ‘This strata of street furniture becomes, at first, visible, and then unavoidable.’ He ends his book with a burst of images of some of the random things that have caught his eye. As for what has not, go to the ‘Sculpting’ section consisting only of that 11-word quote. It reads “‘There is nothing in this world,” wrote Robert Musil, “so invisible as a monument”.’ ●



‘On the Street: In-Between Architecture’ by Edwin Heathcote
HENI Publishing, £35 hardback



Image shouldn't be the driver of design

We need to rise to the challenge of good design not chase after superlatives, says Simon Allford

February is always perceived as a difficult month. The year ahead looms large and the weather is unseasonable. However, there are upsides.

We are commencing our review of submissions for the RIBA Awards – and thank you to all who submitted. RIBA Awards are not just a celebration, they are also about indicating what 'good' looks like. I am always reminded of Voltaire's aphorism 'the best is the enemy of the good'. That said, the response from many is to ask: is 'good' good enough? Should we not – as suggested by the title of author Jim Collins' bestseller – be seeking to go from Good to Great? (I haven't read the book as I run away from management-speak clichés.)

But I think good is the best expectation, aspiration and specification. We live in a world where there are too many superlatives, acclamations of genius and greatness; a world of too many exclamation marks!

History will decide whether a building stands the test of time; whether its merits prove to exceed those of other contemporary projects

– projects that garner acclaim such as likes on Instagram. Image should never be the driver of design. Artificial intelligence apps are in vogue just now and are already reported to be designing buildings, extrapolated from an image or even words alone. I have my doubts. I am excited by the many benefits AI could bring to the making of good architecture but, to date, all it is doing is aping the idea of architecture as great image – the image weary world of Insta-architecture, devoid of depth, inhabitation or the idea of space as a servant to and facilitator of enhanced quality of life.

Doubt is good. We should happily peer over the precipice that is at the edge of our comfort zone. We should embrace challenge as we have great challenges to face, economically, culturally, politically and very specifically for us all in terms of designing in response to the climate challenge.

This month's RIBA Journal features David Rudlin writing about design codes (see page 52) – an uncomfortable idea for many but also a powerful one. For me, the idea is welcome but success is all about how it is put into practice in terms of its contribution to community, construction and culture, and the constraints it imposes on thoughtful design – constraints can be a liberator. And what of its effects in terms of serving inhabitants, in terms of aesthetics, beauty even? The discourse should run, which is why we are hosting a debate on the issue with The Office of Place at the RIBA – to be captured and shared online. I doubt there will be a consistent view but that again is good.

Once again I am reminded of the words of my predecessor Alex Gordon and his call for 'more climbing on other people's shoulders and less ad-hoc originality'. In that sense it is great to be good. ●

Simon Allford is president of the RIBA

Left AI needs to move from aping the image to bringing real benefit to the making of good architecture. Here OpenAI's DALL-E system generated images from the text 'an armchair in the shape of an avocado'. See openai.com/blog/dall-e
DALL-E: Creating Images from Text



DISCIPLINARY SANCTION: PUBLIC REPRIMAND

Following a hearing of the Professional Conduct Committee on 2 November 2022, Professor Jonathan Ellis-Miller was found to have breached the RIBA Code of Professional Conduct (2005 version with 2016 guidance notes and 2019 version).

He failed to properly manage his practice, in breach of Principle 2.1 and 2.3 of the RIBA Code of Professional Conduct (2005 version with 2016 guidance notes)

He made misleading, untrue and/or unfair statements to the ARB and the RIBA in connection with the complaint in breach of Principle 1.1 and 1.3 of the RIBA Code of Professional Conduct (2019 version)

The hearing panel issued Professor Ellis-Miller with a public reprimand.

'The brightest' Yale classmate of Foster and Rogers; a modernist architect whose designs included Tate St Ives, teacher and active advocate for the profession



ANOUK AHLBORN / AA XX 100

Eldred Evans 1937 – 2022

Eldred Evans was born in London, to artists Merlyn Evans and Phyllis Sullivan, but spent her childhood and much of her adolescence in South Africa, where the family emigrated in 1938.

She studied at the Architectural Association (AA) and joined the Yale Masters Class of 1961-62 – year of 'the British invasion'. Among her contemporaries were Norman Foster and Richard and Su Rogers. The head of school was Paul Rudolph; other notable teachers were Serge Chermayeff, who offered an urbane counterpoint to the acerbic Rudolph, and Vincent Scully. Richard Rogers remembered Evans as a student of great maturity – 'easily the brightest in the class'.

Always immaculately dressed, she had tremendous personal style. In her twenties she drove a vintage Rolls Royce, bought with competition prize money, which can be glimpsed in period photographs of Stirling and Gowan's Leicester Engineering Building. She drew with great elegance and economy, always in ink, and later became an accomplished watercolourist.

In 1962, during her second term at Yale, she won the competition for Lincoln Civic Centre with her AA graduate thesis, which her tutor David Gray had encouraged her to submit. She returned to London and opened an office, initially with the architect Denis Gailey. Although the Lincoln scheme wasn't built, it heralded the beginning of Evans' independent practice.

Practice was combined with teaching at the AA and the Regent Street Polytechnic. Among her students at the polytechnic was Nick Mason, who announced one day that he was giving up architecture and taking his band Pink Floyd on tour, to which the response was, 'You're mad!'

In 1963, Evans was introduced to the Israeli architect, David Shalev (1934-2018), newly arrived in London, with whom she formed an immediate

rapport. In 1964 they began working and then living together. Over six decades, Evans & Shalev entered 60 architecture and masterplanning competitions, winning 18 and gaining places in 20 more. Notable among their built works are Newport High School (1972), the Truro Courts of Justice (1988), Tate St Ives (1993), which they subsequently modified, and the Quincentenary Library (1995) and Student Residences (2000) for Jesus College, Cambridge.

Newport School was ahead of its time, more in tune conceptually with today's academies than the template comprehensives of the period. Neglected by the local authority, it was needlessly demolished in 2008, despite a vigorous campaign by the Twentieth Century Society for its listing and adaptive reuse.

The rigorous brutalism of Newport and other early buildings shifted to a more sculptural language from the mid-1980s. Distinctive but elusive, this work is responsive to context but not quite vernacular, and 'definitely not postmodern' – Evans' words. There are echoes of the Mediterranean modernism with which Shalev was familiar as a student in Haifa, though both architects insisted that they were doing what they always had – exploring structure, space and light to create appropriate form.

Throughout the 1980s, Evans was an RIBA external examiner in the UK, and until 1998 a member of the RIBA Visiting Board at various architectural schools. She was also a member of the RIBA Overseas Visiting Board and several RIBA committees, as well as the Arts Council Architectural Unit. She was awarded an OBE in the New Year Honours, 1990, and is survived by her daughter, Elantha. ●

David Jenkins is an editor, publisher and founder of Circa Press

IN MEMORIAM

Alexander John Hughes
ELECTED 1996, LONDON

Gerald Kenneth Thomas Deighton
ELECTED 1961, SLOUGH

Basil William Powell
ELECTED 1962, SOUTH AFRICA

Russell Herbert Lewis Randall
ELECTED 1957, ESSEX

Hugh Grahame Herbert
ELECTED 1957, LONDON

William Ernest Fox
ELECTED 1959, DORSET

Rolf Rothermel
ELECTED 1964, LONDON

Christopher Gardner-Medwin
ELECTED 1973, CORNWALL

Jane Williamson
ELECTED 2008, GLASGOW

Paul Tyrrell Hammond
ELECTED 1984, LONDON

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Culture
Feedback

Exchange

Key points for better housing

It was good to read about housing issues including damp and mould in the January 2023 issue (p55). The update on Decent Home Standards is long overdue – it is pitiful in its minimum requirements as it stands. Good design and construction also matter – there's no point repairing or maintaining poorly designed housing that doesn't work.

I was part of the Better Social Housing Review supported by the Chartered Institute of Housing and National Housing Federation, which published its final report last December. Our key findings were:

1. Housing associations and the sector as a whole, should refocus and deliver on their core purpose.
2. Housing associations should work together to publish an audit of all social housing in England.
3. Housing associations should partner with tenants, contractors and frontline staff to develop and apply new standards defining what an excellent maintenance and repairs process looks like.
4. The Chartered Institute of Housing should promote the traditional 'housing officer' role with a Chartered Institute of Housing recognised programme of training and continuing development.
5. Housing associations should work with all tenants to ensure they have a voice and influence at every level of decision making across the organisation, through both voluntary and paid roles.
6. Housing associations should develop a proactive local community presence through community hubs which foster greater multi-agency working.
7. Housing associations should help tenants and staff to annually review the organisation's progress in implementing this review's recommendations.

In particular, data collection and audits are important to understand what we are working with. There is currently no comprehensive, consistently measured picture of the state of social housing across the country.

I see a lot of work for architects here, work that is important socially, environmentally and morally.

Sumita Singha, Ecologic Architects

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We welcome letters but retain the right to edit them

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SELECTIONS FROM OUR WINTER BOOK CHOICES ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICE IN INTERWAR LONDON

Designs on Democracy looks at how the architecture profession was reconstructed in a new democratic phase in the wake of the First World War; how the mission and culture of architecture were changing while architects were redefining themselves and what they do.

Author Neal Shasore makes his thoughts on how the profession and its output have evolved incredibly accessible. It's not fashionable but it's really gripping.

The book looks at what architects were producing during this amazing period of innovation and how they described themselves. It situates their work in a larger cultural context in Britain and globally as part of the empire, amid the rise of modernism. This gives an understanding of the higher purpose that different architects thought they were working towards. This was before practice was put into silos, streamlined into areas of expertise and confined to sectors. They still had the idea that you could design everything from interiors to cities. Deborah Saunt, DSDHA



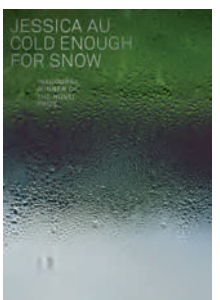
Designs on Democracy: Architecture and the Public in Interwar London, by Neal Shasore. HB 448pp, Oxford University Press, 2022

TRIP TO TOKYO BRINGS THE WORLD TO LIFE

Fiction provides insight, depth and empathy that enriches my perspective, provoking many thoughts that feed into our work. Cold Enough for Snow is a wonderfully written, slim novel, which follows a mother and grown-up daughter on a trip together to Tokyo.

Nothing much happens – it's really a story about their relationship as they travel around and talk to each other, and each place triggers associations to do with childhood and the characters' past lives. The deceptively simple, strongly evocative way Au describes places is outstanding. They leave an impression on the characters that's direct and sensory without the writing being florid or highly wrought. Sound, touch and smell are described with precisely the right words.

The book describes 'designed' and 'undesigned' places with an equivalence that quietly shows how made things become real places through being experienced, ageing and changing. If your building ends up in a novel, it's become part of the world, and that's something we'd very much want. Hana Loftus, HAT Projects



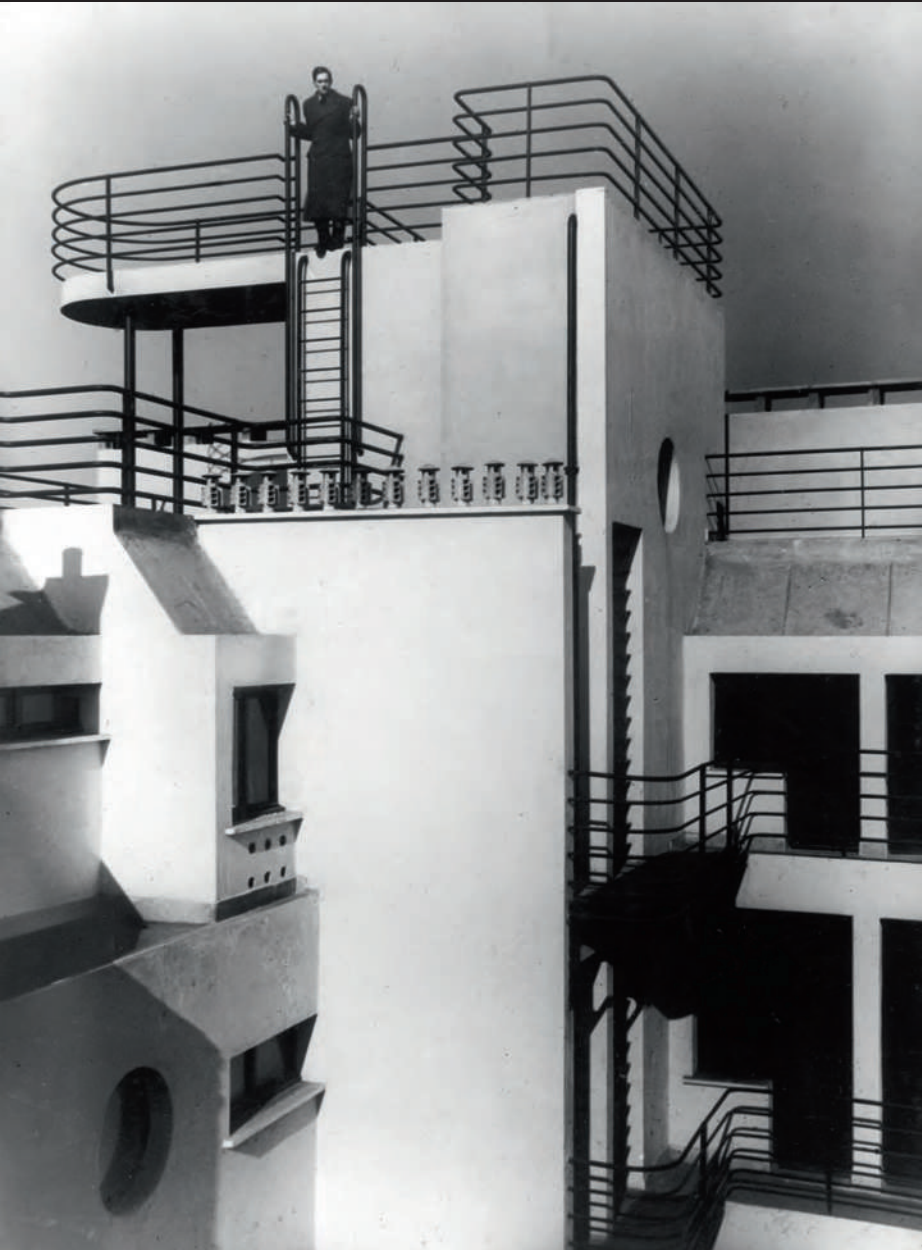
Cold Enough for Snow by Jessica Au. PB, Giramondo, 2022



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The RIBA Journal February 2023



25 Avenue de Versailles, Paris
Berthold Lubetkin and Jean Ginsberg, 1931

Born in Georgia, Berthold Lubetkin studied at the avant-garde art and architecture school Vkhutemas in Moscow before moving to Paris in the 1920s, where he undertook his first major project in collaboration with Polish-born architect Jean Ginsberg. Ginsberg had studied under Robert Mallet-Stevens and worked in the studios of Le Corbusier and André Lurçat. The project was an apartment block at 25 Avenue de Versailles, Paris, on a very small site between existing buildings. Influenced by Le Corbusier’s ideas, Lubetkin and Ginsberg designed a nine-storey

block ending with a two-level sun deck with great views towards the Seine and Eiffel Tower. Posing on the sun deck in this photograph is Austrian-born artist and architect Jean Welz. Before moving to South Africa in the late 1930s, Welz worked in Paris with such prominent modern architects as Mallet-Stevens and Adolf Loos, and designed a number of villas, including the striking Maison Zilveli – sadly recently demolished by its new owners. This image perfectly encapsulates the role of 1920s Paris as an international hub for modern architects. ● Valeria Carullo

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oscar evo-blade ceiling trim

Renowned fashion brand uses Evo-Blade knife-edge trim for its global store design.

Evo-Blade transforms bulky ceilings into wafer-thin surfaces, providing dramatic shifts in height and sharp recessed lighting features, that recreate the brands distinctive chequered design.

Designed and manufactured in Great Britain, Evo-Blade works with a variety of configurations, from regular plasterboard to acoustic sprays and plasters, such as Oscar Elite & SonaSpray.

Search Oscar Evo-Blade on YouTube to find out more.

Tom D Morgan Photography.



INSIDE OUTSIDE LIVING.

LONDON
SHOWROOM
APPOINTMENT



The frameless insulated sliding doors by Swiss manufacturer Sky-Frame blend naturally into their surroundings, creating a seamless continuity between indoors and outdoors and blurring the line between where the living space ends and the view begins. SKY-FRAME.COM

SKY-FRAME