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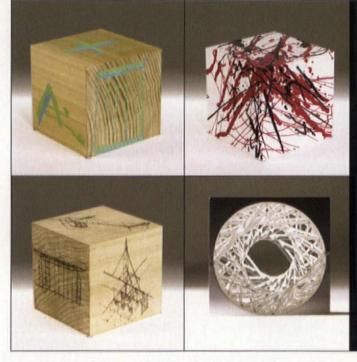
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These children's building blocks, decorated by (clockwise from bottom right) Lord Foster, Sir Nicholas Grimshaw, Tadao Ando and Lord Rogers, are among 160 produced by celebrities to help raise money for children's charity Tommy's. Contributors, including Tiger Woods, Hugh Grant and Damien Hirst, were asked to make a collector's item of an American Tulipwood block by adding their own design. Foster hollowed out his block, which was then pierced with a series of perspex rods to create a tunnel effect, while Grimshaw decorated his with architectural sketches. The blocks are being auctioned online this week by www.ebay.co.uk.

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'I am unconvinced that this over-mighty alliance of politicians, planners and architects has absorbed the lessons taught by Jane Jacobs 40 years ago – cities are messy, untidy places regenerated by the people themselves, not by planners.'
Ferdinand Mount on the Urban Summit.
Sunday Times, 3.11.02

'If it could take the same kind of cultural risks that Glasgow did when it took Peter Brook to the Gorbals, rather than focus simply on culture for the sake of its economy, it probably has the strongest claim on the title.'

Deyan Sudjic on Newcastle/Gateshead's bid to be Capital of Culture 2008. Observer, 3.11.02



#### ALSOP WINS STATION REVAMP

Will Alsop has won the commission to redesign Birmingham's New Street Station. However, Network Rail has admitted it is unable to carry the project forward until it has raised sufficient funds. Alsop will also reveal his masterplan for Leicester on Friday. Visit ajplus.co.uk for images.

#### C4 SEEKS NEW PRESENTERS

Channel 4 Television is seeking two presenters to front a programme about homes that do or don't work. The company is looking for people who are 'sensitive to the challenges and contradictions of modern day living arrangements, able to provide innovative solutions to everyday space/style dilemmas, and be able to fix homes that aren't working'. E-mail kelly.close@ricochetsouth.co.uk

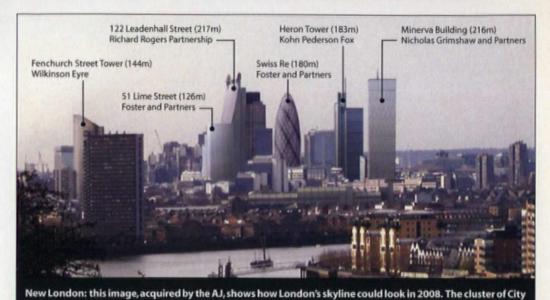
#### **CRACKS APPEAR ON BRIDGE**

Problems have appeared on Lifschutz Davidson's Hungerford Bridge. Westminster council has confirmed that cracks developing in the concrete paving slabs have forced contractors to start remedial work. The council and the contractors have also launched an investigation into the possibilities of a long-term problem.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL DEMANDS**

Debra Shipley MP has met with energy and construction minister Brian Wilson to demand the government takes environmental issues seriously. She said that where public or lottery money is used, there should be a requirement for a high level of sustainability.

For the best jobs in architecture turn to page 53 or visit www.careersin construction.com



# Brown risks 'development frenzy'

construction and KPF's Heron Tower on Bishopsgate has cleared all planning hurdles and is set to start on site.

skyscrapers includes a scheme in development by Richard Rogers Partnership on Leadenhall Street, one by

Foster and Partners on Lime Street, which is in for planning, and Nicholas Grimshaw & Partners' Minerva

building, also in for planning. Another by Wilkinson Eyre on Fenchurch Street has been submitted for

consideration by a developer which has yet to acquire the site. Foster and Partners' Swiss Re is under

Existing planning regulations could be abandoned in thousands of the UK's most deprived areas as a tool to trigger regeneration, chancellor Gordon Brown revealed in a keynote address last week.

He told the Urban Summit on Friday that the government will soon outline proposals to set up Business Planning Zones (BPZ) in the poorest local government wards in the country. The move is sure to dismay conservation campaigners, as some of the areas fall within sensitive localities.

The new policy will charge local authorities with the preparation of local planning frameworks, which will form the only restraint on development. So long as a proposed scheme falls within these guidelines, developers and architects will not need to apply for planning permission.

But government urban regeneration adviser Lord Rogers said the move must not signal the start of local authorities 'abandoning good design'. And the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) has described the policy – designed to encourage business to set up – as a 'free-for-all'.

The heaviest concentration of these areas is in London, with vast swathes of the capital likely to be subject to the new policy. For example, the boroughs of Islington and Southwark have 18 wards each which could be affected and Tower Hamlets' City Fringe, site of the controversial Spitalfields development, is also set to become a BPZ.

Other areas included on the 2,000-strong list are in Derby and Chesterfield in the Midlands plus Stockton-on-Tees and Sunderland in the North East.

However, Building Design Partnership's director of planning Peter Toother warned the government against relaxing the planning regulations. 'I am all for businesses being encouraged to set up in deprived areas as part of regeneration,' he said. 'But it should not be achieved through the loosening or abandonment of planning regulations.

'This policy could damage areas because businesses normally want to see a well organised area, with a planned infrastructure and planned environment before they move in,' Toother added.

The RTPI's David Rose said the government must be extremely careful. 'We think these zones are a bit of a non-starter. The government should be very restrained in reducing planning regulations altogether – they do not want an uncontrolled development frenzy,' he warned.

The plans will form part of a policy statement by John Prescott to be presented to Parliament in January. See page 12.

Ed Dorrell

'I find it almost funny that we are talking about these early Modern houses in the same terms as they were spoken about 70 years ago... There is nothing about them that can't be put right today.'

John Allan of Avanti Architects on threats to demolish Connell Ward & Lucas' Wentworth house. *Guardian*, 4.11.02 'Picasso changed styles, artists change styles. Nobody worries about artists changing. Why do they worry about architects who move on?'

Sir Terry Farrell. *Independent*, 31.10.02

'If visitors have an experience more akin to the former eastern Europe, in which galleries are shut and there are plastic buckets under the roofs, that will damage very seriously the international perception of Britain.'

National Gallery director Charles Saumarez Smith on a crisis in museum funding. *Guardian*, 2-11-02

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# Nine win through in 'Designs on Democracy' competition

The ippr think tank, in association with the AJ, has picked a strong shortlist of nine in its quest to design the 'town hall of the future'.

The nine firms, chosen from a high-profile batch of 82 practices that expressed interest in the CABE and Design Council-backed project, are:

- EEA
- DSDHA
- Buschow Henley
- ABK
- Bucholz McEvoy
- Brisac Gonzalez
- Bauman Lyons
- Penovre & Prasad
- Witherford Watson Mann Architects

Each team wins an honorarium of £5,000 and the chance to scoop a further £5,000, which will go to the winners of each of the three sites on offer. The two-stage competition is to 'reinvent' Letchworth, Stockport and Bradford town halls, with the final projects including facilities such as office space, cafes, gallery space and even flats.

The top three shortlisted teams (above) will concentrate on Letchworth, the middle trio on Stockport and final three on Bradford. But the core of the competition is to create a new democratic space which is individual to the site and the character of the area and to foster democratic engagement and civic pride.

A public exhibition of the nine shortlisted schemes – three for each site – will be staged in the new year and the winners will be announced in January 2003.

Chair of judges Robin Nicholson said: 'We were delighted by the response and the wide range of the approaches.' But he cautioned: 'While the general standard of submissions was high and the teams talented, not all architects appear to have understood the central challenge of enhancing local democracy. We have every expectation of three profound proposals for each of the three sites.'

Last week, more than 50 third-year architecture students from Manchester University School of Architecture visited Stockport for a design project to design a town hall of the future.

The students are developing their schemes based on the ippr/AJ competition guidelines, and the best of their designs will go on show at Stockport town hall later this year. See news in pictures, page 10.

David Taylor

#### Government demands yet more skyscraper guidance

The government has called for further guidance on tall buildings, saying CABE and English Heritage's recently published Guidance on Tall Buildings does not go far enough.

In its response to the Local Government and Regional Affairs Select Committee's Report on Tall Buildings (AJ 5.9.02), the government highlights areas 'not sufficiently covered' by the Guidance and says they need to be further outlined when PPG1 is revised.

The response also calls on English Heritage to be more cautious about the listing of 20th century buildings. 'Its willingness to list eyesores from this period whatever their effect on the environment undermines its opposition to new tall buildings in inappropriate places,' the report says.

It also hits out at CABE, demanding that the commission become less attached to the Modernist movement, saying, 'tall buildings are not essential for the urban renaissance'.

And it calls on planning departments to make better use of 'developers' contributions' to transport systems, 'especially where tall buildings have a significant impact on the local infrastructure'.

#### **EXTRA CASH FOR EASTSIDE**

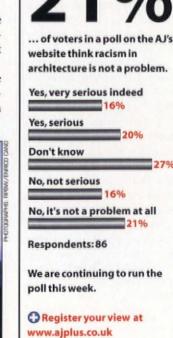
Regeneration minister Tony McNulty has announced a further £30 million European funding for redevelopment of Birmingham's Eastside. The grant will fund a range of projects including the demolition of Masshouse Circus.

#### **BISHOPSGATE VERDICT DUE**

The ruling of the judicial review into future of the Bishopsgate Goods Yard is expected on Friday. It will decide whether London Underground can demolish the historic structure for its East London Line extension. For the verdict see www.ajplus.co.uk •

#### **OLYMPICS TO REAP £79m**

An Arup report into the viability of a London Olympic Games bid says hosting the event would bring in a profit of £79 million. The capital costs of staging the games would be outweighed by the benefits of regeneration, job creation and additional tax revenues.





Renzo Piano has completed this picture gallery for the Marella Agnelli Foundation. The 'jewel box' has been constructed on the roof of the Fiat Lingotto Factory in Turin – the latest in a line of schemes to renovate the 1920s building by Giacomo Matte Trucco, which features a car-testing track on the roof.



# Dixon Jones opening doors at National Gallery

Jeremy Dixon. Edward Jones has unveiled plans to revamp the National Gallery's East Wing.

The £21 million project follows the practice's highly praised extension to the adjacent National Portrait Gallery (NPG). At the same time Charles Saumarez Smith's move from the NPG to his new post as the National's director re-establishes the successful client-architect relationship that drove that earlier scheme.

The project complements the pedestrianisation of the north of London's Trafalgar Square and the start on site last week of Foster and Partners' grand stairway linking the square and gallery.

It establishes a new point of entry to the gallery at ground level to improve disabled access and converts a series of back-of-house spaces on the ground floor into improved public facilities.

Visitors will be able to enter the building through a new public entrance, the East Door, and pass through into the entrance hall lobby, where a lift will provide disabled access to the main gallery floor above. To either side of the entrance hall, the scheme creates a shop and 300-seat café, with interior design by Din Associates.

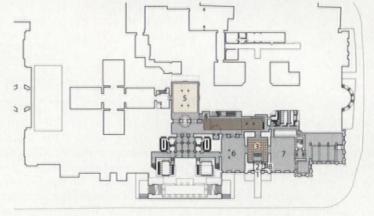
Beyond the entrance hall, a hidden courtyard at the heart of the building becomes a roof-lit atrium, connected to the galleries on the first floor by a new staircase.

The scheme also creates an informal public space in the ground floor Lower Hall, where visitors will be able to drink coffee, browse the gallery catalogues and access the gallery's databases through a collection of touch-screen computers.

On the main gallery floor, at first-floor level, the scheme will open up the Main Portico Entrance, restore the original Victorian decoration in the Staircase Hall and bring about further improvements to the Central Hall, the picture gallery at the heart of the building.

Work is due to start on the project in late spring 2003, with completion set for 2005.

Zoë Blackler



ground floor plan



#### KEY

- The East Door, new level access from Trafalgar Square
- entrance hall lobb
   east entrance hall
- 4 internal courtyard
- 5 lower hall
- 6 shop
- 7 cafe
- 8 disabled lift



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# Little and large in Jersey

Naish Waddington Architects has just completed two contrasting housing projects in Jersey – a single family house, South Wind, near St Peter (below), and flats for Jersey Homes Trust housing association in central St Helier (right and top). Tenants from across the island are just moving into the 113 single-bed flats of Berkshire Court. Two blocks of deck-access accommodation for the over-50s face each other across a landscaped courtyard. There is 56-bay basement parking below. On the street is a colourful presence.

The architect was appointed after initial planning permission. Good value at £12 million, the balconies and decks of this D&B contract were prefabricated in London.

South Wind is a four-bed house over semi-basement parking. Designed with engineer Arup Rothwell, it is located on the coast in a rocky, uncultivated area. The stone-clad base of the house is topped with a cedar-clad, highly insulated, timber structure and gently curving sedum roof. Here is a building merging into the landscape, in contrast to Berkshire Court, mixing it with the buzz of the city.

Barrie Evans



The landscaped courtyard for pétanque, and glass-fronted decks with timbered 'lay-bys' for dawdling and discourse



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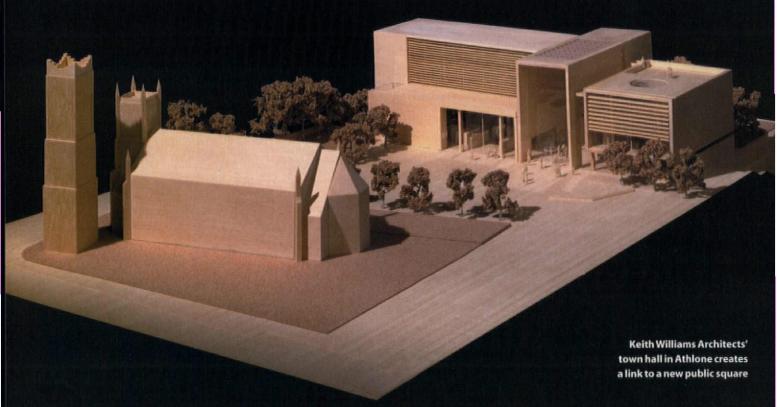
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# Keith Williams adds to Athlone's civic stock



Keith Williams Architects has begun construction of its Civic Centre, Athlone, in Ireland's County Westmeath. The scheme, the latest in a series of high-profile civic projects, responds to a wider drive by the Irish government to modernise local democracy.

The 4,200m2 landmark development is the practice's first project in Ireland and the initial phase of Athlone council's urban renewal programme for the town centre.

The building will house the town's new library, the council's civic chamber, administrative offices and a 'one-stop shop' where the public can inquire about council services.

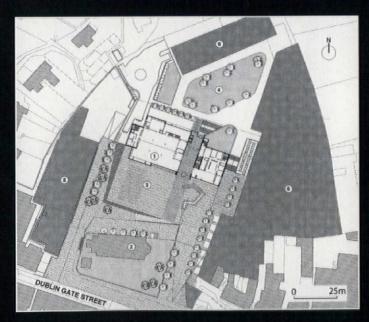
It will be constructed with a pale reconstituted stone that will echo

Althone's main historic structures, the Castle, Cathedral and Shannon Bridge. Each of these heritage buildings, though constructed at different times in different architectural styles, shares a solid formality that distinguishes them from the rest of the town's architecture. Keith Williams Architects' design for the new Town Hall takes it cue from that tradition.

The scheme is part of a wider masterplan for Athlone that includes residential and commercial development and the creation of a new public square between the new Town Hall and St Mary's Church on Dublin Gate Street, Althlone's key historic thoroughfare.

Construction is scheduled to take 15 months.

Zoë Blackler



- new town hall and library St Mary's church tower and church yard
- residential square
- master plan development





The scheme includes a top-lit public entrance (left) and ceremonial stair to the debating chamber (right)



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#### ARB TACKLES EDUCATION

The ARB hosted a symposium at the Royal Society of Arts last Tuesday. Educating for Practice? attempted to assess whether schools are succeeding in educating students for modern practice. It concluded that further research is needed into the destination of students after graduation and that schools need to foster a spirit of life-long learning.

#### NT CHOOSES ARCHITECT

The National Trust has appointed Fielden Clegg Bradley Architects to design its new headquarters building in Swindon. The building will have 6,500-7,000m² of office space and house 450 staff.

#### **FERRETS EYE URBAN SITES**

A new architect-led regeneration service is being launched this week. Urban Ferrets will target 'Cinderella' buildings and sites ignored because they are difficult to develop. The network of design and construction specialists, set up by Harrow architect Nick Waterhouse, aims to persuade developers to look again at empty and underused buildings.

# Lord Rogers dismayed by new Prescott density targets...

The government's own urban regeneration guru Lord Rogers has attacked John Prescott's pledge to call in housing schemes that fall below his target of 30 homes per hectare.

The leader of the Urban Task Force told the AJ that the government's commitment to increase housing density goes 'nowhere near far enough'. The deputy prime minister made the policy commitment on density during his opening speech at last week's Urban Summit.

But Rogers said the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) is being too conservative. 'We would have liked to have seen the figure at more like 40 homes per hectare,' Rogers said. 'It could even be doubled to 60.

'Only Bangladesh and Holland have a more

dense population [than the UK]. Yet we continue to build at a ridiculously low density.'

He added: 'We consume what little countryside we have and destroy any chance of a vital, compact, urban society that is eco-sustainable, based on the principles of easy human contact, the encouragement of walking, cycling and the use of public transport.

'A fear of cramming still exists, but cramming has nothing to do with density and everything to do with good design,' Rogers said.

'However, it is better than the 23 or 24 [homes per hectare] that we have at the moment, and I can see why the government is being slow about this,' he conceded. 'They believe that is has to be a step-by-step approach.'

Prescott – in his speech – also admitted that the new minimum is not particularly adventurous. For far too long we've allowed low density housing on



Skidmore Owings and Merrill has produced revised designs for two landmark sites on the Isle of Dogs. The two residential-led towers at Arrowhead Quay and 1 Millharbour (pictured), replace two schemes which had already won approval from Tower Hamlets. Developer Ballymore Properties said the late change was a response to economic decline and the dip in demand for office accommodation. The 1 Millharbour scheme includes two 46- and 24-storey towers containing 786 residential units with retail space, a restaurant and health club. At Arrowhead Quay, a mixed-use scheme comprises a 35-storey residential block on Marsh Wall along with an additional 14-storey office building.



our precious land,' he told the assembled delegates.

'In the South East, it has been around 20 homes to the hectare. Compare that with many parts of London, like Islington, where it is around 50, the new Greenwich Millennium Village is over 80, or Edinburgh where it is over 250,' he said. 'And we are arguing about 20 or 30.'

Royal Town Planning Institute senior vice president Vincent Goodstadt agreed that Prescott's announcement could have had more impact. 'We have to take the issue of housing density very seriously,' he said. But he added that his organisation supports the notion of a restrained target.

'We support the government for setting out targets that are demonstrably deliverable,' said Goodstadt. 'It wants to move the agenda on and prove that it is serious, while not scaring people off.'

The Urban Summit was launched two years ago with the publication of the Urban White Paper, as a way for regeneration experts to influence government policy.

Prescott said in his opening address that the 16 ministers convened in Birmingham were there to learn. 'I want to hear from you,' he told the 1,600-strong audience. 'I want to listen to your views so that you can influence our major statement on sustainable development, which will be presented to parliament in January.'

• The RIBA's planning policy group used the Urban Summit to launch its guide for planners, 'Achieving Quality in Design in Local Plans'. The document is a response to the government's Planning Green Paper which recommends a series of

changes to the new Local Framework Plans. It is aimed at those involved in drafting, administrating and executing Local Plan Policy.

Its main recommendations are a strategic approach to design, detailed design considerations to be issued under special planning guidance, and the encouragement of policies 'which allow brave architecture in smaller low impact schemes to help develop a unique local aesthetic and encourage younger architects'. See page 17.

Ed Dorrell

# ...while Parliament embarks on probe into regeneration

The Parliamentary Committee for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) has launched an investigation into the success rate of the government's regeneration policy.

It aims to discover whether current urban renewal policy is cost-effective and whether decision-makers in the ODPM learn from past mistakes. It will be the first time a parliamentary committee has investigated the success of the government's urban renaissance agenda.

'The chairman and the committee have been waiting to do this for quite some time,' the committee's clerk Sarah Hartwell said. 'It will look at specific case studies and particular cases. It will search for successes and failures and will attempt to highlight best practice exemplars,' she said.

The committee heard the first submission last Tuesday and will continue its investigations over the forthcoming weeks.

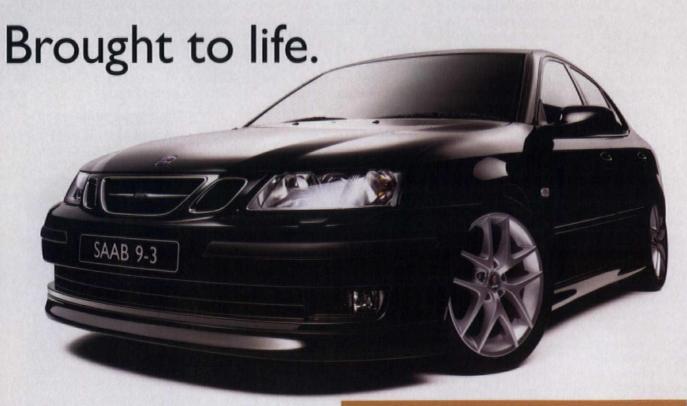
#### LIGHTHOUSE OPENS DOORS



Lighthouse, Poole's £8.5 million centre for the arts designed by Short and Associates, has opened to the public. It is the largest UK arts centre outside London and facilities include an art gallery, cinema and 150-seater theatre.

#### **FARRELL LANDS AWARD**

The first European Hotel Design Awards took place last Tuesday. Among the winners were Terry Farrell & Partners' Sheraton Grand in Edinburgh in the Best New Hotel (interior design) category and University of Westminster student Alex Jones, who won the Rearden Smith Student Award for Hotel Architecture.



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#### BALTIC SET FOR NEIGHBOUR



Ryder is seeking planning permission for this £20 million mixed-use project at Gateshead Quays. South Shore One, for developer Yuill Group, includes office space on the first two floors, 76 apartments over six and a half floors, with 76 apartments and five penthouse apartments. The scheme also includes plans to create new public space along the quayside.

#### **RSAW ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

The Royal Society of Architects in Wales is holding its annual conference tomorrow.

Commissioning Quality takes place on Friday at St David's Hotel and Spa in Cardiff. A talk by Icelandic practice Studio Granda is included, as is a speech on small practices as design champions by RIBA president Paul Hyett. Contact Eleanor Russ on 02920 874754.

#### GREEN LIGHT FOR REGENT ST

Sheppard Robson has won the go-ahead from Westminster City Council for its £200 million mixeduse development at 229-247 Regent Street. The scheme includes 5,800m² of retail space, 11,500m² of office space and 1,100m² of residential space constructed behind the existing facade.

#### CITY OF CULTURE SHORTLIST

The shortlist for the 2008 European Capital of Culture is: Birmingham, Bristol, Newcastle/ Gateshead, Cardiff, Liverpool and Oxford. The six were whittled down from a 12-strong group of cities vying to represent the UK, which is next in line to hold the title.

#### **BIAT'S ANNUAL SUMMIT**

The British Institute of Architectural Technologists will hold its annual summit at the British Museum on 29 January. Technical Innovation in Design and Construction will be hosted by RIBA member the Duke of Gloucester and will feature speakers from Buro Happold and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. Tel 020 7278 2206.

# BDP grows with acquisition of Whicheloe Macfarlane

The UK's largest architecture practice, Building Design Partnership (BDP), is set to grow even larger following a merger agreement with Whicheloe Macfarlane MDP.

BDP, ranked number one in the AJ's top 100 list of practices, will add Whicheloe Macfarlane's 80 staff to its 807-strong practice. Two directors from Whicheloe Macfarlane will join the board of BDP.

Chairman of BDP South Peter Drummond said the firm wanted to develop its work in the health care sector, and would benefit from Whicheloe Macfarlane's experience in hospital design.

'We see an enormous amount of hospital building about to take place and we want to push up the quality. We believe together the two of us can do something better,' he said.

Drummond said that taking on Whicheloe Macfarlane's offices in Bristol and Southampton will help BDP to strengthen its network, adding that the two practices shared a common philosophy. 'There is a similar culture. We both believe in multidisciplinary integrated working.'

The merger by acquisition is BDP's first for 30 years. The practice has expanded by organic growth over the past 10 years as it has developed a variety of specialisms.

However, Drummond ruled out any suggestion that the firm might float on the stock exchange. 'It's not in our culture. And I'm not sure it's been a blessing for those who have.'

Zoë Blackler

#### CABE set for new role as champion for urban space

CABE is set to take on a new role as the nation's champion for urban space as the commission continues to expand its activities.

Deputy prime minister John Prescott has given CABE responsibility for raising the quality of the nation's urban spaces, in particular, its green areas.

The move builds on government recognition

that improvement to the state of urban parks, squares and streets is vital to delivering an urban renaissance and restoring local pride in town centres and neighbourhoods. And it follows recommendations by the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce, which argued for a new body to promote the best use of green space.

A new unit, CABE SPACE, will promote and develop skills training, disseminate good practice and provide help and advice to local authorities on delivering improvements to the public realm. Early priorities will be to encourage local authorities to put in place a strategy for improvements to urban space and to run a national campaign to raise public awareness.

Chief executive Jon Rouse said CABE believed the spaces between buildings were as important as the buildings themselves.

CABE will be looking for a high-profile director to head up the new unit.

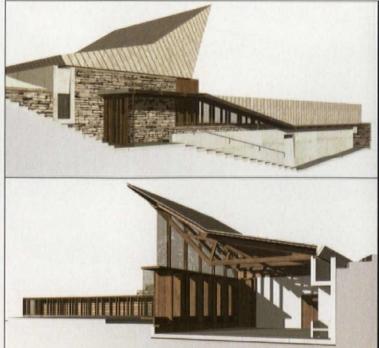
# Archigram World Rally to celebrate Gold Medal award

The surviving members of Archigram are holding a World Rally to coincide with their acceptance of the Royal Gold Medal.

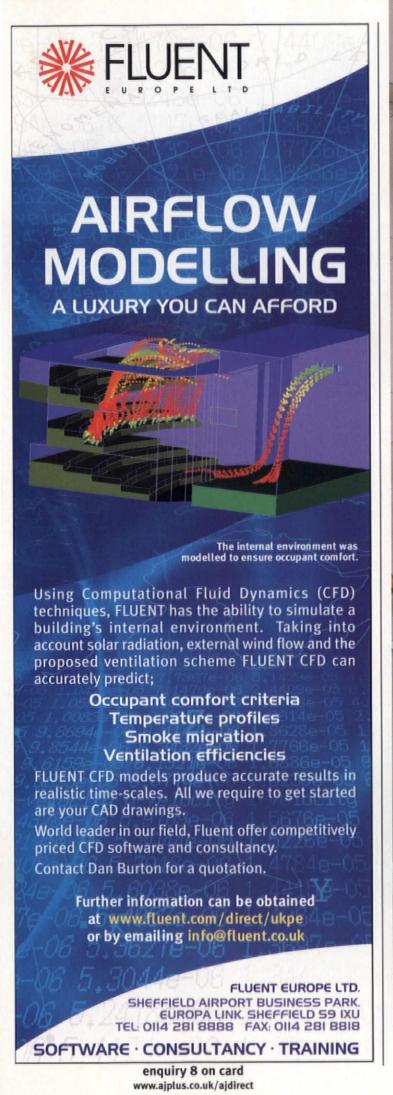
The group has recruited an impressive list of friends to take part in a series of events between 18 and 28 November. Bernard Tschumi, Zaha Hadid, Will Alsop, Jan Kaplicky and Mike Davies are among those helping to revive the group's 1960s rally tradition. There will be film screenings, discussions and talks across London with an introduction to the rally by Peter Cook entitled 'The Archigram Effect: In and out of History' and a lecture by all the members at the RIBA.

Peter Cook, Dennis Crompton, David Greene and Mike Webb will receive the Royal Gold Medal at a ceremony at Portland Place on Wednesday 20 November.

For details of the World Rally, e-mail Laura Allen at l.allen@ucl.ac.uk, For tickets to the official presentation and RIBA lecture contact the RIBA Gallery ticket line on 020 7307 3699.



**Sutherland Hussey** Architects, which scooped this year's AJ First Building Award with Barnhouse, has won a competition to design this £380,000 Education Centre at Grizedale Sculpture Park in Cumbria. The scheme uses an existing stone out-house building for the support services, and creates a new structure for the classroom on high ground to the rear. The centre is intended as an exemplar of sustainable building methods and uses locally sourced materials. The practice beat Stephen **Hodder Associates and local** practice Mason Gillibrand to the job, which is due for completion in June 2003.







#### YORKSHIRE GOES GREEN

Regional development agency
Yorkshire Forward is set to host a
major conference on 21
November. Sustainable
Development – The Way Ahead
for Yorkshire and Humber will
follow up the conclusions of the
Johannesburg Earth Summit and
will look at how its findings can be
implemented on a local level. For
further information on the
conference, contact events@
yorkshire-forward.com or
telephone Jennifer Bone on
0113 3949711.

#### **NEW DOME FOR HULL**

London- and Warwick-based architect SMC Corstorphine & Wright has designed The Pod, the first of a planned national chain of outdoor retail parks. The scheme commissioned by The Junction, a joint venture between Capital and Regional and Morley Fund Management - will be located in Kingston-upon-Hull and includes an 11m-high climbing wall, interactive games machines and customer services. The 1.023m2 structure will take the form of a three-storey dome of glass and metal.



Cartwright Pickard has completed this £5 million headquarters building for Phoenix Natural Gas in Belfast. The 5,000m² project, on a 0.9ha brownfield site, is an operations and control centre for Northern Ireland's first natural gas supplier. The four-storey building faces Belfast Lough and the city's harbour on the opposite shore, and the large glazed front entrance is designed to be seen from across the water. The building integrates the different branches of the company and includes a central atrium space at the rear that houses a restaurant on the ground floor.

# 'Social housing will adopt prefab within 10 years'

The chief executive of housing association giant the Peabody Trust believes most social housing developments will have prefab factories onsite within 10 years. Richard McCarthy told an Urban Summit-themed session that the future of mass social house building lies with prefabrication.

'There is some very good work going on in Scandinavian prefab,' he said. 'It is highly likely that there will soon be much more in the construction of housing in the UK.'

Modular building manufacturer Yorkon, which gave evidence last Wednesday to the House of Commons Select Committee investigation into affordable housing, reinforced this message. The firm's managing director Keith Blanshard said the government's ambitious affordable housing targets will only be hit if architects and the construction industry adopt prefabrication.

However, Professor Anne Power of the London School of Economics said there was little chance of the widespread use of prefabication, stressing it would be destructive for the future of good design in social housing.

Ed Dorrell

#### Rogers backs Gavron in London mayoral election

London's deputy mayor Nicky Gavron has won the backing of Lord Rogers in her bid to become Labour's candidate at the next mayoral election.

Labour Party member Rogers insists his full support for a second term still lies with Ken Livingstone – whom he advises on regeneration – but that Gavron would win his backing out of the possible Labour candidates.

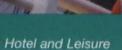
Gavron is fighting to see off competition from former sports minister Tony Banks and outsider Bob Shannon, the trade unionist.

# Imagine



Retail Industrial





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# Design set to take pride of place

Following the launch last week of the RIBA's design guide for planners, president Paul Hyett looks to the future

Planning's best-kept secret is that most planners were not trained to 'plan'. I should know – I trained at the Bartlett.

When I started in 1991, most of my class had first degrees in geography; only three of us had any design experience. That, then, was the brigade who would graduate from one of the UK's elite schools as planners.

To say that those destined for development control would understand nothing of the process or product of place making is no understatement. Hardly surprising however — their tutors didn't have a clue either. Few staff members had any sensibility for urban design, or town planning, in the traditional sense of the term.

Only once in my three-year course were we ever shown slides of buildings. There was no discussion or critical review of townscape for architecture – unless you were on good old Alan Simpson's course, or with the Space Syntax crew. Most staff had no interest or comprehension, and certainly no love of place making. You could have asked the entire staff at the Bartlett Planning Department – except Simpson – to plan a new town for, say, 35,000 people. Planning output in real terms? Zero. They would have generated policy statements a mile long but no one would have dared draw a line on paper. Little has changed...

Contrast that with the output of any bunch of architecture students and you get the point. Yet planning students go on to lead in local plan making and development control.

Now, at last, things are beginning to change. Design and public place making are back on the agenda. The likes of Ricky Burdett and Richard Rogers have inspired hope, while Farrell, Mather, John Thorpe and others have shown how to make public places once more. At last planning is being returned to those like Manchester's chief executive Howard Bernstein, who like to, and can, plan at the civic scale – whatever their backgrounds.

That is why Achieving Quality in Local Plans – a new publication launched by Wendy Shillam's Planning Policy Group during last week's Urban Summit – is so important. It endorses all these efforts and sets a new direction for local plans. This direction is evident in the leadership of 'proper' planners like Emrys Jones of Birmingham, and in Manchester, Cardiff, Leeds, Bristol, on Tyneside and in a host of other cities now being successfully 'worked over'. It looks like we are at the end of a dark era – planning is emerging as a 'design' activity. As such it will be increasingly demanding of planners who understand the process and product of design. Hope at last. Hooray!

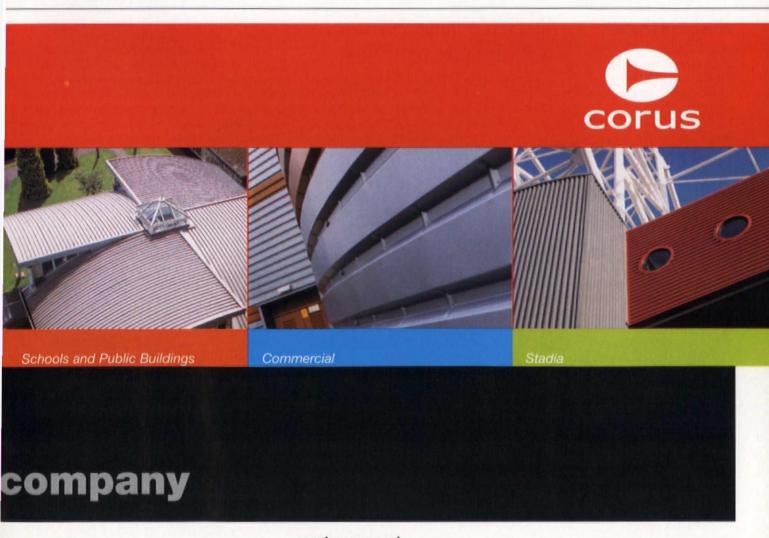
#### CABE BACKS ACADEMY



Aedas AHR's £16.5 million Evelyn Community Academy has won the support of CABE. The project, adjacent to Stockley Park in the Yiewsley and West Drayton area of London, is part of the government's City Academy programme and will specialise in science and technology. The building is organised around a central, flexible space, which is flanked by teaching areas. The project, which is awaiting planning approval from Hillingdon council, should begin on site in March 2003 for completion in August 2004.

#### ARUP WINS OLYMPIC DEAL

Turin's 2006 Winter Olympics Committee has appointed Arup to carry out the engineering for the city's £26 million Olympic Ice Hockey Stadium. The design element will be by Tokyo-based practice Arato Isozaki Associates together with local firm ArchA.





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#### vital statistics

- The recent storms that swept across the UK, the Netherlands and western Germany caused damage of €1 billion (£620 million), according to Risk Management Solutions. However, insured damage is unlikely to exceed € 300 million, it said.
- Residents of a small market town in Northumberland have the highest standard of living in the country, according to a new survey by Country Life magazine. Alnwick was found to be the best place to live in in terms of house prices, crime rate and amenities. Midhurst in West Sussex came second, with Fowey in Cornwall and Tetbury in Gloucestershire joint third.
- Nearly half the world's 310,000 to 422,000 plant species could be threatened with extinction. Scientists had put the number at 13 per cent but have now said that between 22 and 47 per cent of the planet's flora is under threat.

#### Clare Melhuish reviews...

# a Swedish critic's failed attempt to 'take a position'

Most monographs on individual architectural practices are paid for, wholly or at least in part, by the practices concerned, rendering the position of the author, or 'critic', in such situations far from autonomous. The role necessitates wholehearted support of the practice's work, or a willingness to compromise; so what of the role of a critic who is actually employed to work within a practice?

Katje Grillner is a Swedish historian and critic of architecture who was employed by a large practice in Sweden, named White, to 'raise critical issues from within'. She was invited by the Bartlett School of Architecture to discuss 'ways of performing critical practices in architecture today', but, lacking real detail about the nature of either her work there or its impact on the practice's output, her talk promised more than it delivered.

White Architects was established in 1951, and now has nine offices. According to Grillner, it has historically enjoyed 'close contact with the political establishment', by virtue of its involvement with public building projects such as housing and schools.

But such contact became 'more dubious' in the late 1980s, when public authorities began to act more like private bodies. Until then, Grillner suggests, it was easy to be 'good' in the sense of sustaining a sound ethical position in the professional sphere, but after that the scope for realising

ethical ideals within the framework of a marketorientated business became increasingly difficult.

White has just dropped the term 'Architects' from its name on the recommendation of marketing consultants, showing an awareness of the need for effective branding in a competitive world. Yet Grillner's appointment reflects an apparent desire to realise other, more idealistic, aspirations as well.

However, she did not explain what the terms of her employment were, nor even what she did – other than organise 'seminars and workshops' of an unspecified nature within the practice. Instead, she focused on the production, which she oversaw, of a publication to celebrate the practice's 50th birthday. In contrast to the conventional monograph, this took the form of a 'manifesto' comprising 11 'commandments', starting with the provocative statement: 'Do not accept reality as it is.' This is followed by similar slogans, such as 'Take a stand, take a position', 'Dare to be a populist', 'Compromise, but just enough', and 'Be curious' – ending with the command, 'Attack!'

Grillner suggested this was a radical production for a practice of this size and commercial status, but in the absence of any substantive detail about the content sandwiched between the slogans, or their application to the practice's work, this seemed an empty claim. Grillner says it is 'about taking away the strong "we", the collective statement but, designed by a branch of one of the largest PR firms in Sweden, the book could easily be viewed as just another publicity stunt.

Katje Grillner's lecture, Under White Cover – Performing Critical Practices in Architecture Today, was part of the Bartlett's Thinking Space series.

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### Empowering 'democratic' design in Wales and beyond

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### editorial

The Royal Society of Architects in Wales begins its conference in Cardiff tomorrow on the subject of commissioning quality, something the Principality has had no small degree of trouble with in the past.

Now, though, things appear to be on the mend. The conference itself is in one of the better-designed hotels the UK has produced, St David's, and the programme of events promises to address housing, health, and those Design Quality Indicators, predicated as they are on getting the whole construction team talking the same language. Furthermore, one of the conference's key speakers, Richard Parnaby, is the head of the nascent Design Commission for Wales, currently seeking to bolster itself with a 'dynamic' chief executive after final interviews took place this week. Parnaby, profiled on page 22 this week, is on a mission to steer Wales away from a track record in bungling big building projects, such as the Cardiff Bay Opera House, towards better examples of construction programmes such as its 'replacement', the Wales Millennium Centre, or Foster and Partners' Great Glasshouse at the National Botanic Garden of Wales. If the design commission performs half as admirably as CABE has done so far in getting the message across - now given its wider 'urban green spaces' remit by John Prescott at the Urban Summit - it will have done well.

Projects like the vital Welsh Assembly could well do with a national design body's steadying arm in order that the process of shortlisting is not so obfuscated or the building programme so hit by delay after delay. It could even campaign with vigour for the reinstatement of Richard Rogers on the project he designed.

That scheme is about civic pride, and will stand through its building form as a metaphor for democracy. In England the ippr, in association with the AJ, is also attempting to send a charge through civic, 'democratic' buildings, with the competition to design three town halls of the future. If they can be as open, airy and as light-filled as Southampton's Magistrates Courts (see page 26), then the actions within can be affected with the same sense of clarity. And civic pride can return.

David Taylor

### letters

#### Keep the passion in the Stirling judging process

Hugh Pearman's jolly decent fret about the Stirling Prize's secret ballot system (AJ 24.10.02) is admirable in its desire to re-kindle the blue remembered hills of caring, sharing collectivism. He says that open discussion, even in the presence of a blustering bully of a judge, is preferable to the anal retentions of the folded missive.

Two points. In most cases, the results of secret ballots would match those of the consensual method; and even under the cloak of secrecy, wimpish judges will still defer to 'big boomers'. But in the case of judges who really prefer not to bend, and who wish to trip-tackle a decision they simply cannot swallow, the covert process can be highly satisfying to the principled – or to the genetically vicious.

A compromise winner would not, of course, always be the result. And, with luck, there would be useful collateral damage: the Stirling Prize would provoke an entertaining row.

There is too little obvious passion in architecture, and very little in the discussion of it. Jay Merrick, via e-mail

#### Bristol fashion? Mediocre, more like

Robin Wilson's article on Sophie Warren and Jonathan Mosley's new house (below) in a Bristol suburb was both educational and informative (AJ 31.10.02).



'Flogging a dead design' may have been a more suitable headline for this article which describes as 'a true and functional pocket of contemporary domestic design' this pedestrian Modernist shell contradicted by its non-functional interior. No amount of speculation can paper over the mediocrity of this sad contraption.

The house, defined by funereal black timber boarding, dark recesses echoing a nearby tunnel, is the opposite of a home and no gimmick (angled mirror reflecting sordid street, angled wall) can jolly up the place.

I do agree with the non-elitism promoted by the AJ but the presentation of such buildings may find a better outlet in TV programmes like *House Doctors*, with the advantage that instant design improvements could be performed.

"... such things were the norm in Britain" marvels Robin Wilson about Number 2 Alfred Place, Bristol. I sincerely hope not.

V Toch, via e-mail

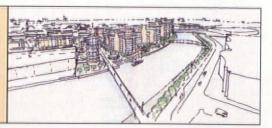
#### Show a rebuilt South Bank at next Biennale

Having just returned from the Venice Biennale I was entertained by Will Alsop's usual candid take on proceedings (AJ 17.10.02).

It is gratifying to know that the Arsenale exhibition was 1km long, and with no cappuccino bar at the end (only a pretty severe Peter Zumthor number up and coming for Cologne) the exhibition was exciting, but exhausting.

I was therefore more appreciative of the tasteful background order brought to the exhibition by the Brits – John Pawson and Deyan Sudjic. It made the whole thing a little more digestible and didn't stop Alsop Architects doing its wonderful thing with the periscopes on the Barnsley project.

Check out the latest news stories, including Mediawatch – Astragal's wry look at the architecture stories covered by the weekend newspapers. Mediawatch goes up every Monday. Or look up stories on project news – this week's offering includes Penoyre and Prasad Architects, which is launching its masterplan for the redevelopment of a 12 acre site at Poplar Riverside, just north of Canary Wharf. The first phase of the scheme comprises the restoration of the Old Poplar Library to provide 600m² of office space. The rest of the scheme includes 337 flats, 74 live/work units, a 60-bed hotel and two bridges over the River Lea to link Tower Hamlets with Newham.



The Architects' Journal welcomes your letters, which should preferably be typed double-spaced. Please address them to the editor at 151 Rosebery Avenue, London EC1R 4GB, fax them on 020 7505 6701, or e-mail them to angele newton@construct.emap.com to arrive by 10am on the Monday before publication. Letters intended for publication should include a daytime telephone number. The editor reserves the right to shorten letters.

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I agree with him that the British Pavilion was fantastic, as (it would seem) is Foreign Office Architects' project for Yokohama (pictured above), which I would welcome travelling halfway round the world to visit. Indeed, it is a great advert for the British architectural scene that architects of their calibre choose to work from this country.

While there have been some much better things happening in British architecture – Tate Modern, Imperial War Museum of the North, Straw Bale House, Peckham Library, etc – these have all been instigated by individuals who bring a global perspective to the institutions they choose to work for.

Walking around the Gardini with its national pavilions is a great place to reflect on our own architectural standing in an international context. However, wandering around the British Pavilion and getting a sense of the boardwalk in Yokohama, I immediately got a rumbling of discontent. I suppose it was all the references to water which transported me back to thinking of the Thames and the South Bank in London.

This continuing saga of taking architects for a ride through competition after competition, committees, over-zealous planners and politicians doesn't serve us well. Wouldn't it be great if the British Pavilion at the Biennale in four years' time could be filled with a vision for the South Bank that has been built? To surpass the quality of the present incumbents would be a revelation, but one that we all deserve.

Ken Taylor, Peckham London SE15

### Defending Kaplicky: his ideas are all around you

I cannot see that the review by Richard Weston of Kaplicky's book *Confessions* serves any useful purpose. It does not amount to criticism.

Laying into production values is always the lowest form of analysis. Incorrect proper names I grant you – I am also mangled in there somewhere, but otherwise in this case the lack of editing adds to the immediacy of the document. My facsimile copy of *Vers une Architecture* shows the joins and is all the better for it.

Despite the saintly title I find the book very unpretentious. It looks more like a very un-English flaying and baring of the soul; a strong antidote to sanitised vanity publishing and academic monographs that distance their subjects from the immediacy and difficulty of design.

Your reviewer's preoccupation with sex might be salved if he were to read more widely among the East European authors. There are other consciousnesses out there.

The unjustified value judgements made in the review just won't do. Look around London, Mr Weston, and you will see this man's ideas now being appropriated by some of our best designers. To me that is the best vindication of his contribution to architecture.

Matthew Wells, Techniker

#### Farrell was first in High Tech, before Archigram

As the director here responsible

for the Hatton Gallery exhibition 'Sir Terry Farrell – Designs for Life', I appreciated Brian Edwards' very supportive review in the AJ (10.10.02). One important detail, however, is that Farrell's Blackpool Climatron project, with its zippered neoprene gaskets and tensegrity structure, predated Archigram (and indeed all of Britain's High-Tech practitioners) by several years – rather the reverse of being 'inspired' by them as reported.

Julian Tollast, Terry Farrell & Partners

#### Deregulation is not the answer over MBIAT

I have just been told that I have successfully passed the RIBA Part 3 examination; and that I am now eligible for registration as an architect with the ARB and the RIBA bodies respectively.

While I applaud the idea of 'inclusion' (such that many different members of the construction community now share more and more skills and could rightly seek recognition as members of other professions), Larry Parker's (AJ 17.10.02) and Lee Mitchell's comments (AJ 24.10.02) failed to touch on two points.

First, why hadn't they sought to be architects in the first instance – rather than now seek deregulation across a profession in order to achieve their aims?

I was once an army paramedic, but did not seek to deregulate the medical profession in order to become a A+E registrar – even though some of our skills appeared to be the same! As you will agree, the notion is absurd.

Second, the RIBA has not promoted an 'elitist or discriminating profession' to students from low income backgrounds (well, not to full-time soldiers getting paid a measly £11,000 a year, that is).

Low income is an important consideration and cannot be treated lightly by the RIBA, but it is a poor excuse for Mitchell to make, given that a great number of architects do indeed come from low income families, or in my case, previous careers which demanded a great deal of their attention while they studied.

Any proposal to deregulate the profession should be made for reasons far more profound than those stated by Messrs Parker and Mitchell.

A constructive solution would be to propose that MBIAT members be allowed to undertake the RIBA Part 3 examinations (or similar) and not seek to deregulate the profession (as suggested in the aforementioned letters) undervaluing the efforts of those people with the foresight and tenacity to follow the conventional route into architectural profession. Nick Lockhart, Guildford

#### The final word on those blessed building regs

There should be a law passed to prevent letters being published in architectural magazines about staircases not being in accordance with Building Regulations (AJ 31.10.01).

Last week's one was the latest in a long series in various architectural magazines on a variety of projects. Yes, the authors of these letters are invariably correct, but they are also invariably utterly pompous, pedantic and boring.

Paul Zara, via e-mail

### What the butler wore - new museum required?

Given that we now have another authorised Burrell Collection, perhaps the Queen can be persuaded to endow a new museum in which to house it?

Tim Battle, Timothy Battle & Associates, Putney, London SW15



# will alsop

# Conservative attitudes that halt the acceptance of change

Train tracks are indiscriminate in the places that they link. The connections are often surprising. Although a short distance, the track between Liverpool and Euston has some unlikely bedfellows and some extraordinary likeliness. The overpriced day return ticket permits views of places old and new, famous and inconsequential, ugly and beautiful.

Liverpool will celebrate its 800th birthday in 2008; it is, by many standards an ancient city, but it was not until the advent of the industrial revolution and steam-powered boats that the full impact was felt at a national and international level.

This city sucked in goods from the North and spat them out to foreign parts. The destruction of war, and worse, the lack of vision and consequently investment into the docks, brought a downward spiral of fortune. Liverpool folk indulged in the past and developed an inner nostalgia which allowed the world to bypass it. It is only now that life seems to be improving as we understand what an extraordinary resource they possess.

London also allowed its docks to disappear. These two great ports, which represented the mouths to receive the rich pickings of the empire, became gagged by lack of courage and a refusal to take risk. London's geographical position and status ensured that no downward spiral occurred. It continues to receive and accept a cosmopolitan population. Even so, the docklands lay in degradation for decades, while the Port Authority continued to pretend it still had a shipping industry to operate.

Both London and Liverpool have new towns relatively close to them. Liverpool in part spawned Runcorn, which in its day sported housing by James Gowan and Jim Stirling. At this time, the idea was quite new, in spite of Welwyn Garden and Harlow, and towns were marketed as wholesome places to reside in.

These towns were supported by motorways as well as rail links to encourage the commuter. This lifestyle was a poor man's version of the stockbroker belt; enjoying a better quality air at home without the rough edges of the city. Both Runcorn and Milton Keynes, London's version, have promoted this lifestyle most successfully, resulting in the 'market-led' attitude of housebuilders who insist that this is how people want to live. They continue to squander vast tracts of the British countryside.

There is a lifestyle that is completely new which has emerged from this style, and that is one of living in the middle of Britain and being prepared to travel anywhere; subsequently putting pressure on our roads. The home becomes the centre of the universe and the wage earner sits in an ever-thickening traffic soup. The children's school is a major factor in deciding to live this way. Call centres thrive on the labours of those left in the home. No longer do people relocate, they simply travel further and return home exhausted and beat up the family, resulting in divorce.

The two stations in the centre of my journey are Crewe and Rugby. Both these towns enjoyed rapid expansion as important railway junctions. In both cases, their decline was initiated by Dr Beeching. As you roll though both places, you witness a landscape littered with rail detritus, which takes on the air of an archaeological dig. Perhaps both these places could re-emerge as inland ports, taking goods by train deep into the heart of Europe. This is unlikely, as the workforce is lost in an unreality of a windowless retail environment.

My train journey exposes the realities of change, and underlines the wicked conservative attitude we possess that prevents an acceptance of change as opportunity, as opposed to an inevitable diminishment of life. WA, from seat 7F, Flight No G7-745 Brussels to Trieste

'No longer do people relocate, they simply travel further and return home exhausted and beat up the family, resulting in divorce'

## people

Richard Parnaby still misses the pleasures of architectural practice – 'the smell of wet cement, the thrill of building something' – if not the chores of running a business and making it pay. For 16 years (1980-96) Parnaby was in partnership with Peter Brown in the Abergavenny practice of Parnaby & Brown. (Brown continues to work solo from the small Welsh market town.) But in 1996, Parnaby took up the full-time post of principal lecturer in the newly established Faculty of the Built Environment at the University of the West of England in Bristol.

He is proud to have been in at the beginning of 'a very different sort of school – multidisciplinary by definition'. Britain's newest school of architecture is 'doing well', he says – the former school at the University of Bristol had been wound up in the 1980s.

Parnaby combines teaching – happily, it seems – with a very active role in the RIBA and the Royal Society of Architects in Wales (RSAW), of which he was president from 1997-99. (His wife, Mary Wrenn, is the regional director.) He serves on the RIBA's board and council and on the education committee. Parnaby is also chairman of the Design Commission for Wales (DCfW), the Welsh version of CABE, a role he took up this year.

Trained in Liverpool, Parnaby spent six years teaching and practising architecture in the US and Canada before coming to Wales in 1980. He has a long association with the Welsh School of Architecture, and he and his wife live just outside Cardiff.

As an adopted Welshman, Richard Parnaby might be expected to err on the side of caution when it comes to the state of architecture in Wales. But he freely admits that there have been disasters in recent years, most famously the debacle of the Cardiff Bay Opera House. However, Parnaby is hopeful that Percy Thomas Partnership's Millennium Centre (the substitute for the abandoned Hadid project) will be a very good building. 'Jonathan Adams has done a remarkably bold scheme,' he says. 'It's a challenging take on the idea of Welshness.

'We get a very bad press outside Wales – not entirely deserved,' says Parnaby. True, the unfortunate matter of the Welsh Assembly building remains unresolved, with the RIBA and RSAW campaigning for the reappointment of Richard Rogers Partnership. But Richard Murphy is designing an arts centre for Caernarfon, and

# Richard Parnaby plans to lift design quality in Wales and put the country's chequered architectural past behind it through the new Design Commission for Wales and the RSAW conference, which starts tomorrow in Cardiff

by kenneth powell, photograph by robert greshoff

# Restoring Welsh pride



Wilkinson Eyre is doing a maritime museum for Swansea, a city, says Parnaby, where 'there is a lot happening' (and where the farcical binning of Will Alsop's Literature Centre is presumably regarded as best forgotten). The issue of 'Welshness' in architecture remains elusive. 'Dewi Prys-Thomas [a leading light on the Welsh scene for many years] tried to merge modernity and the Welsh vernacular, but it didn't really work,' Parnaby says.

Wales is a small country. To outsiders, it seems deeply parochial, with the Welsh sadly divided among themselves – not only town versus country, but North versus South, and Welsh-speakers versus the English-speaking majority. Richard Parnaby was closely

involved in the establishment of the annual RSAW conference as a major event on the Welsh scene – but the first few conferences had to be held in Llandrindod Wells, exactly halfway between Cardiff and Snowdonia. The conference is now firmly rooted in Cardiff, but the RSAW runs an annual 'spring school' at Clough Williams-Ellis' Portmeirion, within sight of Snowdon.

'The two are complementary,' says Parnaby, 'though the spring school is very much CPD-oriented and focused on issues of practice. And we have no problem in attracting excellent speakers – Portmeirion is an attraction in itself.'

The RSAW also runs 'surgeries' for members around Wales, looking at key issues – for example, disability legislation. And its magazine, *Touchstone*, of which Parnaby was a co-founder, is an impressive production. The total membership of the RSAW is fewer than 800 – the fact that more than 100 members have booked for the conference, which starts this Friday, is therefore quite impressive.

Accepting the chairmanship of the DCfW was clearly not something that Parnaby undertook lightly. The initial funding from the Welsh Assembly is a mere £100,000 a year, and the seven-person commission is only now considering the appointment of a chief executive. 'All I can say is that is likely to be a man – no women applied,' says Parnaby. Two design panels, for North and South Wales, are to be appointed – 'but, given our limited resources, we don't want the design review function to dominate our work. Major issues like sustainability and procurement methods need to be examined'.

The DCfW is in dialogue with CADW (the Welsh equivalent of English Heritage) about approaches to development in historic towns - the trend to pastiche, Parnaby believes, needs to be curbed. Then there is the continuing issue of Cardiff, a capital city which often seems to set its sights low, despite its (now shortlisted) bid for the title of Capital of Culture 2008. The big issue locally at the moment is the forthcoming planning application for a major city centre retail development with Eric Kuhne of Bluewater fame as lead designer. Given his position at the DCfW, Parnaby cannot comment on the merits of the scheme, but he does insist that it will be judged as much on its qualities of urban design as of architecture - 'some civic gestures are badly needed'.

The relationship with local authorities, Parnaby believes, is 'absolutely fundamental' for the DCfW. 'We've got to raise sights, encourage a sense of vision and discourage the bland and the purely safe.' There is a problem, he adds, in that very few planners have an architectural training. Which brings our discussion back to the University of the West of England, where students pursue an integrated planning/architecture course to degree level. 'A third of our graduates so far have gone into planning,' says Parnaby. Most, however, have gone into private practice, not into local authorities. Understandable, but regrettable, since Wales, as much as anywhere, has need of their talents.



martin pawley

intra-species

aggression,

territorial

dispersal must

# Human nature means mythological metropolis is always out of reach

There is a pattern to totalitarianism, whether of the left or the right, and you can recognise it immediately. It starts when a goal is widely endorsed. To be topical, let's say the goal is more urban living. Overcrowding, did you say? If so, on every side the cry will go up: 'Double the density! Double the density!' And, immediately, the planners will open the floodgates on all infill sites. Suddenly opera houses, art galleries, restaurants and minimalist hotels will 'The animal sciences show

become fabulously important. The words 'culture', 'vibrant' and will ricochet around like bullets. Soon pretty 'regeneration' everything will be deemed worthy of a prize.

us that, in our Stage two starts when 'the version of proof'kicks in. That's when'urban researchers' discover that free people in a democratic society have always wanted to be urbanites. From Ur of the Chaldees to Milton Keynes, rural man has always yearned for life below decks, packed like a sardine into a terrifying municipality as famous as the Titanic.

Up to this point, opposition to the pro-city bandwagon has been encouraged - for target practice, naturally - but also to help the urban crusaders get yet

bureaucratic layer, yet more consultants and advismore money for yet another ers to ensure that everything is of good quality, at

For now the lack of money is becoming a burden. the very least 'world class'. Despite the irresistible tide of world urbanisation found by earlier researchers, time is beginning to take its toll. What? Five years already and nothing done! The gang of urban promoters gets together again and decides the city needs encouragement of a different kind. From now on, it's no more Mr Nice Guy. If mankind's great dream doesn't get them another £3 billion, well... there won't be any urban revolution after all, only unspeakable subur-

Which, of course, is correct, because what is really banisation everywhere.

happening in the city today is a counter-revolution, not a revolution. If it were otherwise, we should not see flats and houses priced far above what salaried workers can afford, nor find standing room only on unreliable commuter trains with runs of an hour or more. These indicators have their effect, it is true, but it is not to increase the appeal of the sidewalk cafes, art galleries, paralysed traffic and acres of

pedestrianisation of the new city.

Instead, these and other pressures join the great push for decentralisation that began with Victorian public health measures, enlisted the aid of the railway boom, gained irresistible force as a result of the fear of destruction engendered by the bombing of two world wars, and attained its greatest success in the decades of planning for disdevelopment persed followed them.

No matter how much money is scattered in the pursuit of the mythological metropolis of the future, it can never overcome the centrifugal force of technology and the will of individuals to live where they wish and at a reasonable distance from one another.

Examples from many fields prove this. The animal sciences

be the only way show us that, in our version of intra-species aggresto avoid conflict' sion, territorial dispersal must be the only way to avoid conflict. In the same way, the communications revolution of the 20th century legitimises dispersal by reducing the need for face-to-face

These truly are powerful forces, whose tendency can neither be refuted nor easily reversed, even if encounters. they were not deemed worthy of support at last week's Urban Summit in Birmingham - one of a number of cities invited to take measures to ensure that their present net loss of population will be reversed by the time of the next census. Permits to live in the country perhaps? All things considered, urban enthusiasts should not hold their breath.

# a life in architecture

sheila kitzinger



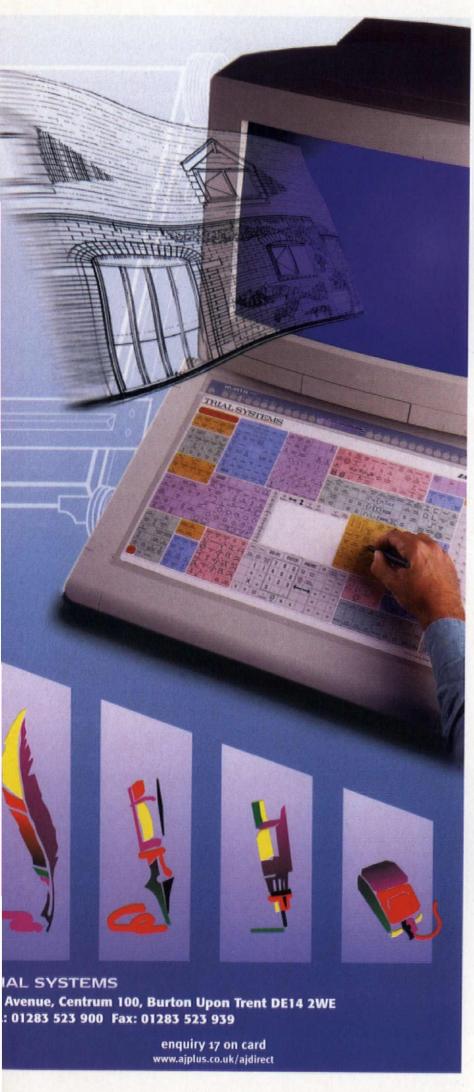
A pioneer of choice for mothers when giving birth, and the freedom to be in control during delivery, has made Sheila Kitzinger MBE synonymous with the National Childbirth Trust. It comes as no surprise, then, to learn that her favourite building 'somewhere in Spain' - she thinks it may be Barcelona'though the design has a Moorish feel to it' - is a birth room (pictured)'designed by midwives, based on their understanding of how women act spontaneously in childbirth'.

She goes on to say: 'Almost any delivery room in hospitals all over the world is an example of how birth rooms should not be: clinical, cold, flooded with white light, with a central bed or delivery table, a huge clock opposite and a peephole through the door through which all and sundry can look at the woman and then wander in.' She cites a typical example at the University Hospital in Berlin, with 'black rubber tiles to soundproof the floor, walls and ceiling, a high narrow delivery table, and monitors banked outside in the corridor, so that midwives and doctors don't need to be with the mothers but can keep an eye on them from the hall. Happily, Kitzinger remembers

more appropriate surroundings, and talks with pleasure about her second favourite piece. 'A birth nest constructed by native Americans on the Great Plains - an avenue of vertical stakes set in the ground, leading to a circular, openair hedged sanctuary, the interior of which is lined with rabbit fur or Eleanor Allen moss.

7 November 2002

24 the architects' journal



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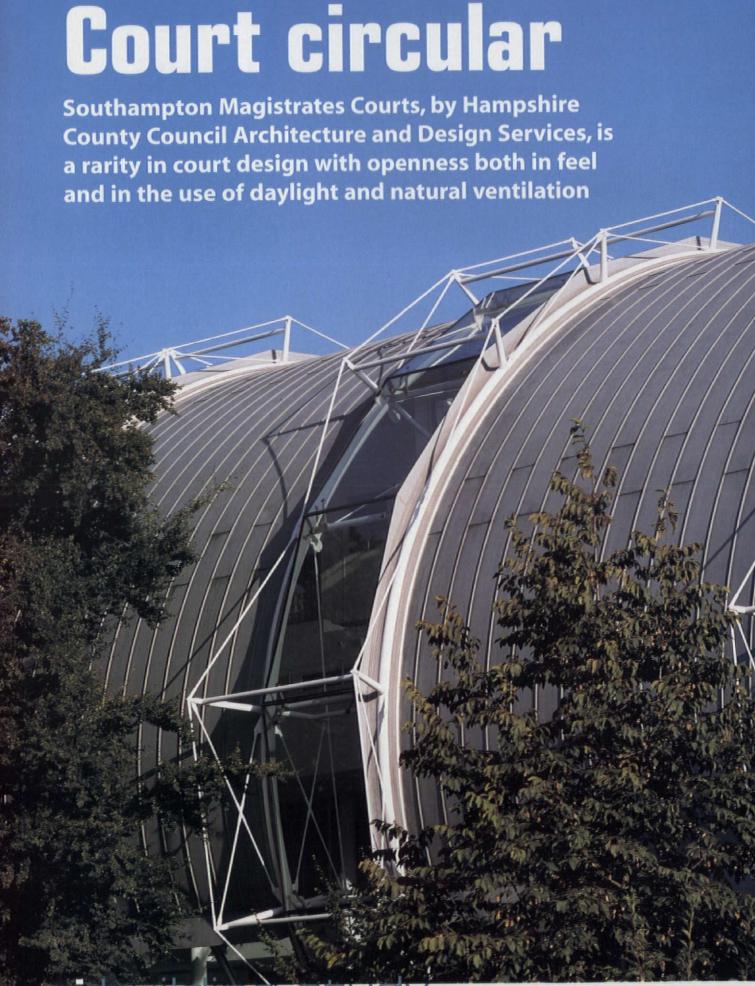




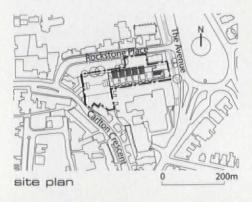
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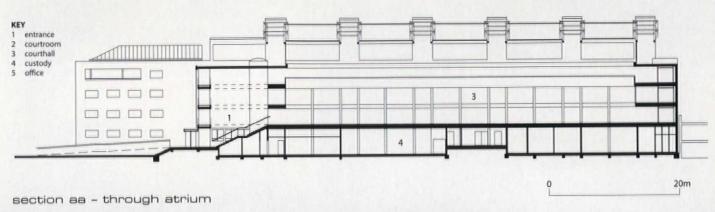


As you travel around the country, law courts are often to be found in prominent city-centre sites, looking as welcoming as a fortress. Despite the principle of law that you are innocent until proven guilty, the message to defendants appears to be that they are already halfway to prison. Let alone the unwelcoming messages being sent to witnesses and to all the others for whom courts are everyday workplaces – permanent staff, magistrates, police, care officers and more. So is security inevitably dominant

and stultifying? Refreshingly, not.

Southampton Magistrates Courts provides an approachable openness, a building that can be enjoyed, even if for the minority, the visit can be very stressful. Indeed, the quality of the public atrium space, in particular, open to gardens on one side, is deliberately intended as a stress-reducer.

There is no 'trick' here but design ingenuity. Like all courts, the designers have to follow the strict White Book set of rules from the Lord Chancellor's Department (it



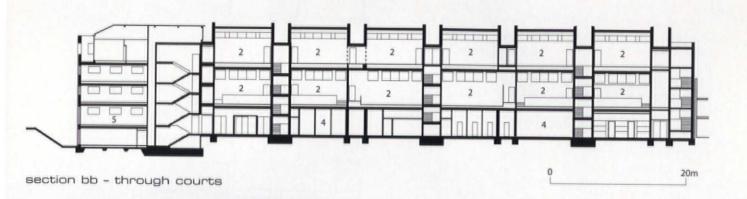


was the Blue Book from the Home Office when this long, drawn-out job with a shifting brief began). Not surprisingly, the book is highly prescriptive. Some of the space allocation diagrams are proto-design layouts. Most of it can be talked about here, except for the custody area in the basement, which is run by a private security firm.

Court procedures are, of course, a key driver of design. These vary a lot, covering family, youth and adult courts of different levels of security. At one end of the scale, a family court may be conducting what can be a round-table discussion. At the other end of the scale is a court with a defendant's box enclosed with bulletproof glass. However serious the charge, most cases come to a magistrates court, if only for an initial hearing. (There is a growing use of video links for defendants in custody to make a virtual appearance at these first occasions.)

If court procedures with the multiple, separated circulation routes that they entail were not enough constraint, there is also the shape of the site. Long and narrow, it is what remains of a larger site after the adjacent crown courts were built a few years ago. Even within this curtilage, the building must keep back 15m from the roads on three sides, for security reasons, leaving an even narrower potential footprint.

The building layout is made legible, even at the detailed level, by its simple overall organisation. You approach the reception from one end on foot alongside the administrative offices. Beyond these, the building





divides into two vertically - the court side and the public side, the latter wrapped in a north-facing curved atrium that sweeps down as roof and wall.

The public side is predominantly two open-sided floors within the atrium, alongside two levels of courts. These public floors look out onto a new garden and the domestic-scale street beyond. In these areas of uncertain waiting, the architecture is anything but oppressive - flooded with light, a minimal sense of enclosure. (As the section shows, a level of admin offices has been slipped in between these two public floors - section dd.)

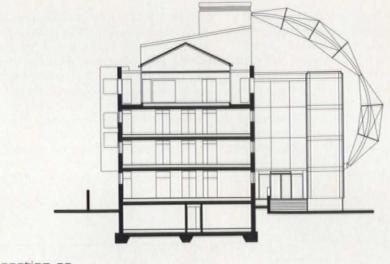
Most of the time the public floors are divided into half-lengths, with a 2.5m-high opaque secure barrier. It is a noticeable contrast to the lack of opaque barriers generally, but allows the courts to be divided into four groups for different users and levels of security. The family and youth courts at upper level also have a separate entrance to the building through the garden area on the side of the atrium. This is below glazing level, which stops at the first floor, with the solid ground floor wall clad in 12mm steel plate.

On the two public floors, the walls adjacent to the courts are faced with small offices such as interview rooms which borrow light from the atrium. Here are the public court entrances. Court officials and magistrates have backstage entrances. Defendants in custody come up from the lowest floor via separate stairs set between pairs of courts.

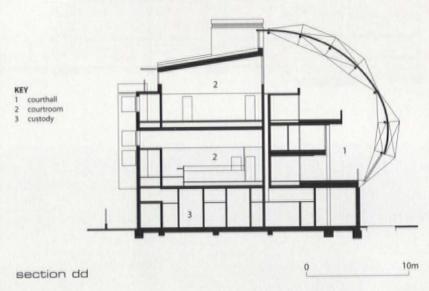
On the court side of the building, the courts themselves are largely enclosed boxes. This arrangement allows welcoming broad and daylit corridors with frequent opening windows on the south, used by magistrates and court staff. A lot of time is spent circulating. There are bays projecting out from this south wall, which on the two court levels house retiring rooms for magistrates to confer.

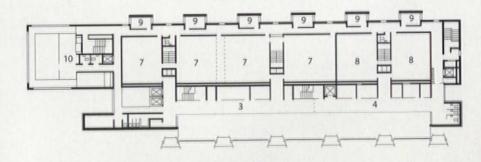
If so much daylighting (and summer natural ventilation) of the public side atrium is a rarity for court buildings, equally so is bringing a taste of the outdoors into the courtrooms, albeit high in the walls for security reasons, among others. The upper level courts are lit from two sides - by a panel of glazed blocks at the top of the atrium and by louvre-shaded opening windows to the south. For lower level courts, opening windows between the two levels of retiring rooms admit light and ventilation, which is ducted across the corridor into the courtrooms. Less striking in effect than in the upper courts, these windows nevertheless provide palpable outside contact. The windows have individual opening/closing switches in each courtroom, as do internal blinds which provide darkening for audiovisual presentations.

While these windows open, ventilation is predominantly by displacement (see Services). The rooftop 'chimneys' have a mixed

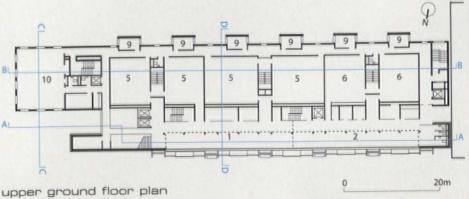


section cc





second floor plan



- courthall adult
- courthall informal adult courthall - family
- courtroom juvenile/youth courtroom informal adult
  - magistrates' retiring room

- courthall youth
- courtroom formal adult
- courtroom family



#### Services

The design of building services caters for two very different types of use. It provides flexibility of use for the general public but also offers extremely secure facilities for defendants in custody. The services also need to be vandal-proof.

Primary services were routed via raised floors and, where appropriate, in high-security ceiling construction. Displacement ventilation is introduced into the courtrooms via raised floors and exhausted naturally at high level. Additional cooling is provided for the magistrates' benches. For out-of-hours usage, background heating is provided via fan convectors. Fresh air plant is located in the floor plenum, which also contains the extensive cabling systems necessary for modern court facilities.

The holding cells need to function during a fire and security alert and have been provided with air-handling plant. This operates continuously

and is served from the emergency generator.

To offset cold down-draughts in the atrium, trench heating and underfloor heating have been employed. Summertime natural ventilation is provided by linear louvres, which automatically open to promote summer cooling.

To fit in with the exposed concrete soffit, light fittings have been cast into the structure. This also reduces the risk of vandalism. To further assist this, all louvres and diffusers are screw-fixed to the fittings. The remainder of the ceiling-mounted equipment was also cast in, requiring a good level of coordination prior to the construction of the concrete frame.

The building also has a high level of security via CCTV, intruder and door access systems – all designed to segregate the staff, public and defendants, and provide monitoring of all risk areas.

**Buro Happold** 

servicing role as air outlets and services housings – this is not a totally stack-driven ventilation building.

All the courts are lined to about 2.5m high with American white oak acoustic panelling, with plaster above. Striking light fittings – providing downlight, uplight and emergency lighting – were designed by the architect, as was the carpet. Most of the building has raised floors with increasing

use of IT in the courts. The more formal lower-level courts also have a 600mm dais. Court furnishing varies from loose to fixed formal arrangements, all neatly detailed. Two of the upper courts with loose furniture can be combined into one large meeting room. (There is also a large meeting room with self-servery for magistrates on the ground floor.)

This is a building of detailed arrange-

ments matched to formal procedures and the separated circulation routes that these entail. But the building is not a victim of this prescriptive programme. Rather, it succeeds in providing organisational clarity and openness. While it may not be worth committing a crime just to savour the full user experience, it is evidently a building that provides the judicial system with a civilised, humane face.





#### Structure

requirement for three discrete areas.

criss-cross of surface-mounted steel

within a simply-positioned jigsaw of reinforced concrete walls and floors. These are stacked as four sets of three rectilinear vertical boxes, between which are slots for staircases to custody areas. The staircase walls not only provide stability cores but also allow integration of the vertical service risers. The Home Office requires the structural frame to be able to resist bomb blast. The reinforced walls were viewed as providing stiff lateral elements to resist the longitudinal forces diaphragms to absorb the blast energy

compression booms set in the plane of the curved cladding. Tension bars act compositely in resisting the various weather and other loadings. To hold the solid spigot struts were used which had to be discontinuous where they intersected with the boom to prevent cold bridging this thermal break, a high-strength neoprene bearing pad was set with a

**Buro Happold** 



#### Costs

The analysis is based on the tender sum (main development), per m² of gross floor area

#### SUBSTRUCTURE

£66.70/m<sup>2</sup> FOUNDATIONS/SLABS Bored piles with ground beams and a RC suspended slab

#### SUPERSTRUCTURE

£76.97/m2 FRAME Tubular steel frame to north facade, RC columns and attached beams generally

£52.86/m UPPER FLOORS

Reinforced in situ concrete suspended slabs

#### ROOF AND ROOFLIGHTS

Part glazed/terne-coated steel to north facade; main court roofs terne-coated steel on RC suspended slab; flat roof lower roofs of single ply membrane on RC suspended slab

#### STAIRCASES

Reinforced in situ RC, tiled in public areas, with epoxy treatment in custodial areas

#### EXTERNAL WALLS

Rendered blockwork in cavity wall construction to

south and east facade and at high level; metal plate cladding to entrance block, glazed faced blockwork at low level to north facade; below cladding and public hall steel and glass facade

WINDOWS AND EXTERNAL DOORS £56.17/m2 Velfac aluminium/hardwood window system; purpose-made, powder-coated screens and doors

INTERNAL WALLS AND PARTITIONS Concrete blockwork and purpose-made, powdercoated steel, fully glazed screens in public areas

£69.03/m2 INTERNAL DOORS Shapland and Petter doorsets with ironmongery by Higrade

#### INTERNAL FINISHES

#### WALL FINISHES

£27.89/m2

Gypsum plaster throughout with fibre-reinforced plaster in custody areas; tiling to WCs and in some public spaces. Hardwood-faced acoustic panelling to courtrooms

#### £52.21/m2 FLOOR FINISHES

High-quality carpet tiling in courtrooms and offices, tiling in all public spaces, epoxy floor finish to custodial areas. Raised access floors throughout except to custodial areas

#### CEILING FINISHES

£25.64/m

Painted concrete and plastered soffits generally, with robust suspended ceiling systems in custodial areas and in public WCs

#### FITTINGS AND FURNISHINGS

£48.73/m2

Purpose-made, hardwood-faced courtroom furniture; kitchen fittings; fixed furniture in custodial areas to Home Office Standards

#### SERVICES

£51.74/m

#### SANITARY APPLIANCES,

SERVICES EQUIPMENT

£7.74/m2

Proprietary ceramic and metal fittings throughout. Robust fittings in custodial areas

#### **DISPOSAL INSTALLATIONS**

£7.06/m2 Rainwater disposal and internal drainage

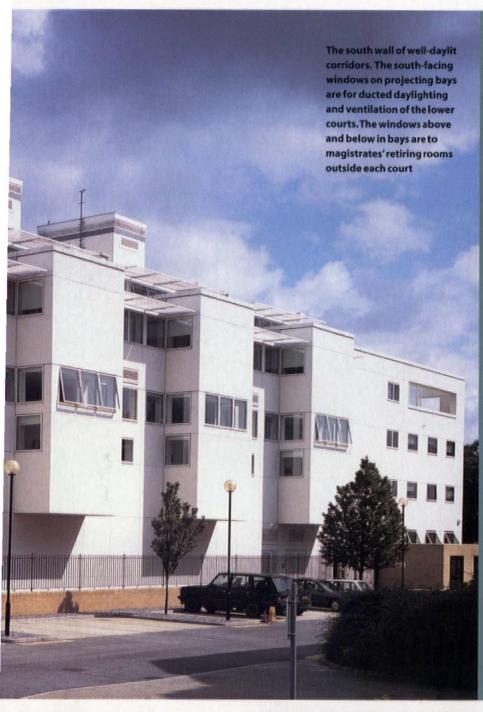
#### WATER INSTALLATIONS

£13.41/m2

Mains water to storage tanks and fire hosereel tank. Cold water booster pump system throughout the building. Hot water supply from two gas-fired hot water units with hot water recirculated throughout the building

#### £94.22/m2 SPACE HEATING AND AIR TREATMENT

Two gas-fired boilers to air handling units. Individual



#### CREDITS

TENDER DATE START ON SITE 27 May 1997
ORIGINAL CONTRACT PERIOD GROSS INTERNAL FORM OF CONTRACT
JCT 80 with Quantities TOTAL COST £9,907,917 plus separate phase (£1,091,000) related to car park and external works Lord Chancellor's Department with Hampshire and Isle of Wight Magistrates Courts Committee ARCHITECT Hampshire County Council Architecture and Design Services Hampshire County
Council Architecture
and Design Services STRUCTURAL ENGINEER Buro Happold
SERVICES ENGINEER Buro Happold LANDSCAPE Hampshire County Council/John Brookes Landscape Design

Norwest Holst Construction SUBCONTRACTORS AND SUPPLIERS M&E subcontractor Lorne Stewart; structural steel fabricator Tube Engineering (Bristol); Terne-coated stainless steel standing seam roofing Kelsey Roofing Industries; frameless glazing, truss glazing CMI; electric hydraulic lifts Otis; courtroom wall panelling (Quadrillo) Lignoform Benken (Switzerland); internal doors Leaderflush Snapiand; door ironmongery Higrade; raised floors Hewetson; carpets Milliken; blinds to courthall Western Avery; general metalwork AW Jeffereys (Southampton); windows Velfac: windows Velfac; courtroom fixed furniture TTS Shopfitters; single membrane flat roofing Sarnafil; courtroom light

MAIN CONTRACTOR

#### WEBLINKS

www.hants.gov.uk Buro Happold www.burohappold.com Norwest Holst Construction www.norwest-holst.co.uk

air handling to each courtroom. Public hall underfloor heating. Offices hot water radiators. Public hall exhaust fans which also for smoke exhaust. BMS

**ELECTRICAL SERVICES** Sub-station within building; switchboards. Energy efficient lamps. Emergency lighting by uninterruptible power supply

LIFT INSTALLATIONS £31.92/m2 Five electro-hydraulic lifts

PROTECTIVE INSTALLATIONS £29.56/m2 Fire protection by addressable smoke detection system. Lightning conductors

**COMMUNICATIONS INSTALLATIONS** Cabling for combined IT and telephone system.

Security by door access control system, intruder alarms and CCTV. Affray system from custody area to the gaolers' room and incident room from various locations

**BUILDERS'WORK IN CONNECTION** £47.60/m<sup>2</sup>

#### **EXTERNAL WORKS**

LANDSCAPING, ANCILLARY BUILDINGS £160.81/m2 Multi-level reinforced concrete car park; hard paved areas; water feature; boundary walling and gates. Drainage and external services

PRELIMINARIES AND INSURANCE	ES
-----------------------------	----

PRELIMINARIES £178.31/m2

#### Cost summary

	Cost per m <sup>2</sup> (£)	Percentage of total
SUBSTRUCTURE	66.70	4.30
SUPERSTRUCTURE		
Frame	76.97	4.96
Upper floors	52.86	3.41
Roof and rooflights	95.96	6.18
Staircases	27.89	1.80
External walls	109.59	7.06
Windows and external doors	56.17	3.62
Internal walls and partitions	114.33	7.37
Internal doors	69.03	4.45
Group element total	602.79	38.85
INTERNAL FINISHES		
Wall finishes	51.74	3.33
Floor finishes	52.21	3.37
Ceiling finishes	25.64	1.65
Group element total	129.58	8.35
FITTINGS AND FURNITURE	48.73	3.14

#### SERVICES

Sanitary appliances,	7.74	0.50
services equipment		
Disposal installations	7.06	0.45
Waterinstallations	13.41	0.86
Space heating and air treatment	94.22	6.07
Electrical services	87.93	5.67
Lift installations	31.92	2.06
Protective installations	29.56	1.91
Communications installations	45.11	2.91
Builders' work in connection	47.60	3.07
Group element total	364.53	23.50
EXTERNAL WORKS	160.81	10.37
PRELIMINARIES		
AND INSURANCES	178.31	11.49
TOTAL		
(EXCLUDING CONTINGENCY) 1	,551.46	100

Cost data provided by David Corcoran, Hampshire County Council

# Southampton Magistrates Courts Hampshire County Council

# working details

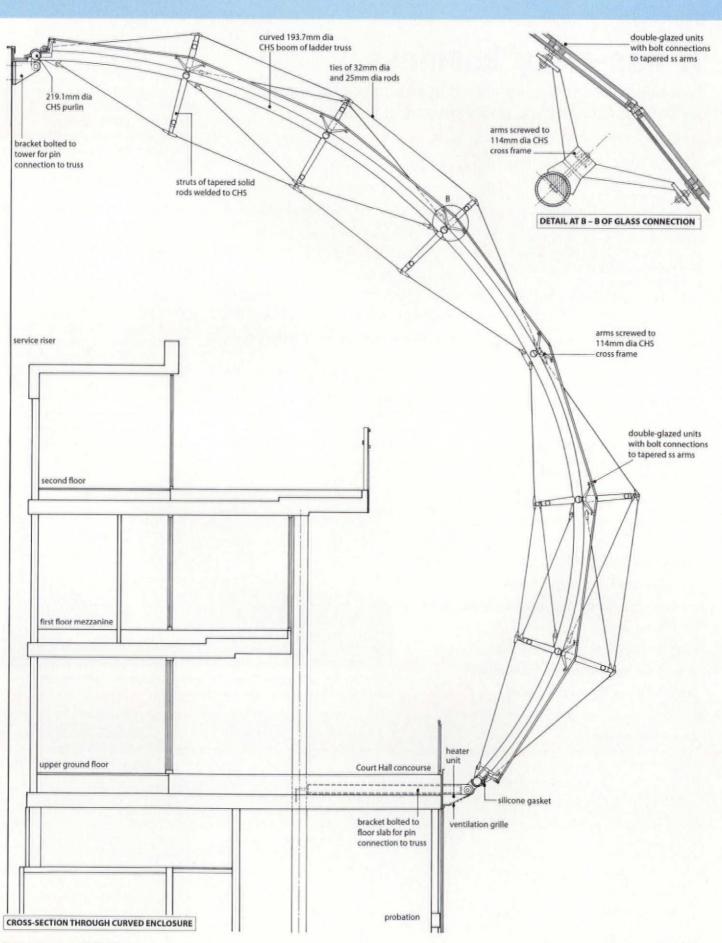
The building houses 12 courtrooms on two upper levels, separated by custodial stair and service towers, and constructed of cast in situ concrete frames with blockwork infill. The courthall, which gives access to the courtrooms, runs at the north side. In contrast to the courtrooms, it is a light and formed by six glazed steel ladder trusses which spring from the upper ground floor, and terminate at high level at the staircase towers.

Each ladder truss is formed of a pair of curved 193.7mm-diameter CHS booms, which are pin-jointed to brackets at top and bottom connections. Cross-frame members and projecting tapered struts to which the solid rod ties are connected, are welded to the CHS booms. The disposition of the struts and ties along the curve reflects the structural forces.

The trusses are glazed with glazed units, supported by fixed directly to CHS crossframe members. The glass edges are bonded to rigid insulated aluminium panels; the lower edge of each panel is curved to follow the line of the truss and is connected with a double extruded silicone gasket to the adjacent CHS boom. A series of 219.1mm-diameter CHS trusses to support insulated solid panels which follow the curve of the trusses. They are lined on the inside with semiperforated trapezoidal steel liner sheets with polyester powder-coated finish. On the outside, they are clad with terne-coated stainless steel. The edge of each panel is CHS boom by a double

Susan Dawson

curved 193.7mm dia CHS boom of ladder truss line of insulated panel. tapered to follow line of faceted glass at top and curved to follow ss roof below double-glazed units with bolt connections to tapered ss arms curved 193.7mm dia CHS boom of ladder truss curved roof panel of terne-coated stainless steel on ply and insulation 219.1mm dia CHS purlin 114mm dia CHS cross-frame perforated steel liner providing acoustic insulation 88.9mm dia CHS cross-frame ties of 32mm dia struts of tapered solid and 25mm dia rods rods welded to CHS **CUT-AWAY ISOMETRIC DETAIL OF STRUCTURE** double-glazed unit with bolt connections to tapered ss arms nanel fixed to silicone gasket with aluminium channel arms screwed to 114mm dia CHS double extruded insulated cowl to cross frame 193.7mm dia CHS boom silicone gasket curved terne-coated ss roof panel on ply deck double extruded and insulation silicone gasket roof panel secured to silicone gasket with aluminium channels line of 114mm dia insulated aluminium panel, tapered to follow line of CHS cross frame welded to CHS boom faceted glass at top and curved to follow ss roof below lug connection to perforated 219.1mm dia CHS purlin internal steel liner DETAIL PLAN AT A - A OF TRUSS, GLAZING AND ROOF PANEL CONNECTION



# technical & practice

# A 'non-risky' business

Minimising fire risk in sandwich panels might be sensible but it depends on what you understand it to mean

BY AUSTIN WILLIAMS

Due for release last month, the Association of British Insurers (ABI) has postponed indefinitely the publication of its new guidance document on the fire performance of sandwich panels. A conference about the guidance, which had been organised for 9 October, was also cancelled at the last minute.

Nobody seems willing to explain the reasons why, but the AJ has been informed that it is due to a legal challenge by a particular manufacturer regarding what it perceives to be misleading content. Hardly surprising really, given that some products come out of the review badly.

Since various manufacturers' interest groups have lobbied hard for their products' fire safety credentials, in recent years, some campaigning has turned nasty: no one wants to admit that their product has failings in this particularly fraught, costly and litigious area of the construction market.

'Designing and building fire-safe buildings of stone wool panels requires knowledge in how such constructions behave in case of fire. A fire-proof stone wool panel is not a fire-safe solution without correct fastening systems and details.'

John Brauer Lynderup, manager, marketing communications, Paroc Panel System

'Current insurance issues with insulated panels appear to relate to concerns about the risks of polystyrene panels – particularly in the food and drinks sector. The record of rigid urethane external cladding panels – both polyurethane and PIR cores – over the last 30 years has been excellent and this should be taken into account when assessing risk and insurability.'

Mark Harris, fire engineering services director, Kingspan

Avoiding the risk of fire in buildings, the fire performance of various insulation products in composite situations, and the minimisation of risk in the insurance industry have jointly and severally created a minefield for specifiers, clients and contractors alike. Each party seems to have a different interpretation of the requirements, and of the performance characteristics of their own particular product, and this has led the insurance industry – the sector that, apparently, picks up the tab for fire damage – to seek to harmonise the standards and give a clear lead to manufacturers. Unfortunately, this harmonisation will have to wait.

### Money to burn

Commercial and local authority fires exceed £1.2 billion each year. Taking into account the knock-on effects of fires, the Norwich Union Risk Services assesses the cost to the UK economy to be nearly £7 billion each year. Most of these fires are minor incidents and relatively few, as it happens, relate to sandwich panels.

But the insurance industry, for its part, has responded in a sweepingly arbitrary fashion. First, it has taken a



When it comes to fires in buildings with insulated panels, the insurance industry seems to be hiding behind a risk-free smokescreen

### Fire safety reform

In July, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) published 'A consultation document on the reform of fire safety legislation' which outlines proposals to 'simplify, rationalise and consolidate the law with respect to fire safety in buildings in use.' Public comment in this document is required by 22 November – although the consultation is actually reserved for a selected collection of vested/expert opinion – and it is expected that the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order arising out of this process will be brought into force from spring 2004.

The proposals enshrine the risk and goal-based approach to fire safety that was introduced a few years ago and encapsulated in the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997, as amended in 1999. Compliance is now the duty of the employer rather than the fire authority, although the fire authorities will be expected to identify and

pursue all high-risk premises. The proposed changes to fire legislation could result in more fire safety provisions being required.

Currently, fire safety legislation mainly concerns itself with life safety provisions for building occupants. Requirements under Building Regulations and the Fire Precautions Act are geared to ensure that people in a building get adequate warning of a fire and are able to escape from the building in a safe manner. It does not concern itself with property protection, environmental issues, or even the safety of firefighters.

The new fire safety legislation is likely to see substantial changes – so firefighter protection will be embraced, for example. Property protection, and the need to limit damage to the environment, may be included, thereby lifting community fire safety onto a statutory footing.

broad-brush stroke approach to the subject and, instead of understanding the various pros and cons of different composite insulants, tends to brand all foam-based materials in the same flammable risk category as polystyrenes. Insurance agents do not have the time, it would seem, to realistically appraise the fire performance of polyisocyanurates, for instance, or even rigid polyurethane, in situ.

Second, on major projects, insurance companies are pushing manufacturers (and ultimately, architects) to provide disclaimers showing that the composite panel system in situ will not pose a fire hazard. Aside from the ludicrous scenario of insurance companies only providing risk cover after they have been assured that there is no risk, the consequent risk assessment process can bring liability back to unsuspecting parties to the contract.

The idea that the insurance industry should be in a position to determine design and specification decisions, over and above Building

'As a manufacturer of insulation products derived from non-combustible volcanic rock, we welcome the more stringent demands of insurers. However, we would not like to see business livelihoods jeopardised by impossible premiums. Our interest is in the underlying message — buildings which contain fire-resistant insulation materials are inherently safer, so why even consider combustible products in the design?'

Craig Bligh, marketing director, Rockwool

'Composite panels are only one issue of many affecting the insurance market. All types of composite panel have their virtues and vices and unfortunately many have been inappropriately selected for their specific purpose. It will be extremely difficult to insure a large warehouse or factory at affordable rates unless sprinklers are fitted and the presence of composite panels is almost a secondary issue. In the current hard insurance market it is essential that the designer and specifier consult with insurers at the earliest possible stage.'

Mark Newton, property technical manager, risk control, Royal & Sun Alliance

Regulations compliance, should be troubling to many of those involved in architecture and construction. It is hardly surprising that some members of the industry have taken umbrage at the ABI document; perhaps it is more surprising that other parties have not.

### The issues

The issue is fairly straightforward. The insurance industry is demanding a high standard of fire resistance and condemning some materials because they fare less well in fire tests than others.

For example, the ABI describes sandwich panels (designed for food prep locations) tested for relative fire growth performance. It indicates that mineral wool/rock fibre performs 'best' (achieving ABI 'non-combustible' classification); polyisocynurate (PIR) is classified 'combustible' and warrants 'caution'; whereas expanded and extruded polystyrenes (XPS/EPS) are deemed to be 'highly combustible'.

While certain manufacturers such as Rockwool are delighted at such a clear endorsement, other manufacturers point out that the insurance industry needs to fall into line with current fire safety practice and adopt a more holistic appraisal of panels in their particular circumstances. Kingspan, for example, which uses rigid urethane cored panels, argues that: a) they should not be equated with polystyrene products as they have much better fire retarding characteristics; and b) they should be assessed together with the actual building's overall fire engineering strategy.

Obviously, in terms of clients now having to provide their own fire risk assessment (see box), commissioning a fire engineering strategy is commonplace, but this is often undermined, or distorted, by insurance demands for greater risk aversion – and hence more precautionary measures than might realistically be necessary.

Ultimately, all insulation products have their pros and cons which should be rationally determined by independent test centres, but, at the moment, the insurers are in the driving seat and do not seem to be listening.

I am indebted to Anna Cherry for her assistance with this article

It is also proposed to reinforce the fire authorities' powers of investigation, and the ability to prosecute deficient contractors. If this proves to be the case, more money may well need to be spent by industry and commerce on effective fire protection measures. It could also result in more contractors going to the wall as industry will be required to gear up for tougher performance standards.

Another aspect of the reform of fire safety legislation is that we are likely to lose the Fire Precautions Act. The introduction and use of this Act has improved fire safety considerably. Losing it could mean that businesses will no longer benefit from fire service inspections of their premises and the subsequent provision of a Fire Certificate. The statutory duty for fire safety will lie with the employer.

### The cost of fighting fires

- There are more than 200 fires in the workplace every day, although most of these are minor.
- Fire losses in food factories (the highest risk category) have risen in the past 10 years, from £12 million in 1991 to £65 million in 1999, although that does not mean there are more fires, or that they are more severe.
- One in four businesses never recovers from a serious fire.
- The total fire and business interruption claims for commercial premises reached almost £960 million in 2001; more than £2.6 million every day.
- 67 per cent of fires occur at times when the building is closed (after 6pm).
- 48 per cent of all serious (classified as causing damage in excess of £50,000) is arson related, although with reference to fires in external claddings this amounts to just 30 incidents per year.
   All data sourced from latest Home Office and FPAS/ABI figures

# Farming out design

A discreet timber-clad administration building for the European Commission has been cleverly integrated into the Irish landscape

BY AUSTIN WILLIAMS

As we go to press, the Irish Republic has given the 'green light' for European enlargement; voting 'yes' to the Nice Treaty by 63 per cent to 37 per cent, with a 48 per cent turnout. Whatever the ins and outs of the ballot (after rejecting the same proposition 18 months ago), Irish PM Bertie Ahern declared that 'what is good for Europe is good for Ireland' and further developing the country's European identity.

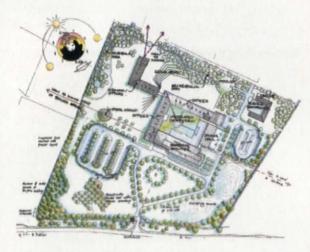
One of the many reasons for the 'no' vote was that the farming sector fears a diversion of the agricultural subsidy to needier economies in eastern and southern Europe. And so it is interesting that the European Commission decided to locate its new European Union Food and Veterinary Office (FVO), and administration department, in Dunsany, Co Meath; the prosperous farming area in the north-east of Ireland. Indeed, as we described last year (AJ 8.11.01), the state of Irish architecture is flourishing in a recognisably European style. Where better, then, to site this project?

### **Design vetting**

The new headquarters, designed by the Office for Public Works, has just won the National Trust Irish Sustainability Award and the Regional Irish Architectural Award. It is described as incorporating 'bioclimatic and sustainable design' and manages to achieve a synthesis between the surrounding agrarian landscape, the structural form and the materials used.

The architect has made a point of planting a wide variety of trees around the site comprising a blend of formal and natural/rural layouts. It is this inter-relationship of the building with the original and designed landscape that has informed the design. By mounding the site and carrying out careful planting, the building's visual impact is intentionally lessened and sits comfortably in the landscape.

The building is predominantly built of timber and is cited as the largest timber-clad building in Ireland. Timber



The building is set back from the road in a mixture of formal and informal landscaping. Below: ground floor plan for the scheme – primarily sourced from the American Hardwood Export Council – consists of slow-grown north American oak for external cladding; solid American ash and cherry for the large-scale ceilings and interior joinery; light beech veneer for panelling; and solid American white oak for the floors throughout. Considerable attention was paid to the need for oak kiln dried to a moisture content (MC) of 16 per cent +/-3 per cent, in order to accommodate the Irish climate (as the normal American MC standard is 6-8 per cent).

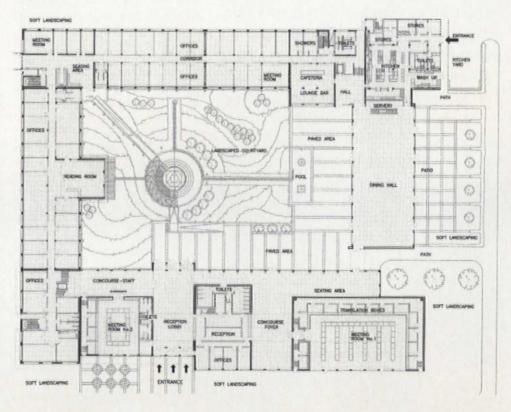
### Translation facilities

The building comprises a large and small conference hall providing translation facilities for 15 languages and four languages respectively, dining hall, library, cellular offices and car parking for 150 cars. A staff creche facility was included in the scheme design just prior to completion.

Built as a courtyard enclosure, set back from the main road, it has a two-storey, L-shaped wing to the south-east/south-west, and single-storey public circulation blocks on the other two sides. By so doing, direct sunlight glare has been reduced throughout the building. The southernmost elevation has openable windows protected by timber louvred brise-soleil.

### Public/private

The public areas comprise a dining hall, conference facilities and entrance foyer with circulation routes directly



facing onto the courtyard, benefiting from the views over dramatically spartan enclosed garden. Playing with opposites, the private wings have cellular offices aligned on the external window walls served by an enclosed, central corridor.

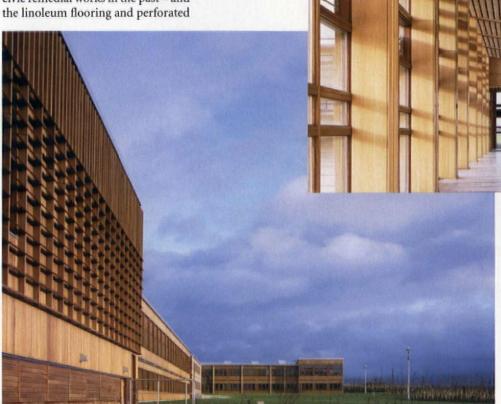
The public realm elevations are constructed from full height oak or glass panels on a rigid grid pattern. The single-storey circulation spaces are relatively light, airy and uncluttered, with full-height glazing. The offices and private function spaces have 1.2m gridded windows with horizontal iroko boards and stainless steel detailing. A rash timber framework is fixed externally at the junction of the dining hall and office block as a decorative flourish. It oversails the windows and the background oak cladding in a relentless grid.

The 1.2m grid has been maintained throughout the office areas internally. These cellular units are demountable - allowing the client flexibility of room maximum arrangement. The structural frame is provided with filler pieces to mask the end elevation of internal walls - a notorious ill-considered feature of civic remedial works in the past - and

metal ceilings in these areas are modelled on the same grid to ensure that future partition movement does not conflict with the interior layout.

The principal conference room is an open flexible space with a large glazed wall to the north-east, with translation booths set at high level around the other three sides. The roof is a dramatic sweep of ash boards with a massive roof light void running across the full length of the space, separated only by structural spacers. The dining room has two fully glazed external elevations with views into and away from the courtyard. A slate and granite floor spills outwards into the terrace, while the rest of the room follows similar detailing and quality of finish as described in the main conference hall.

The building is now open after the relocation of more than 250 senior European Commission staff from Brussels.



The building

a relentless

framework

is decorated in

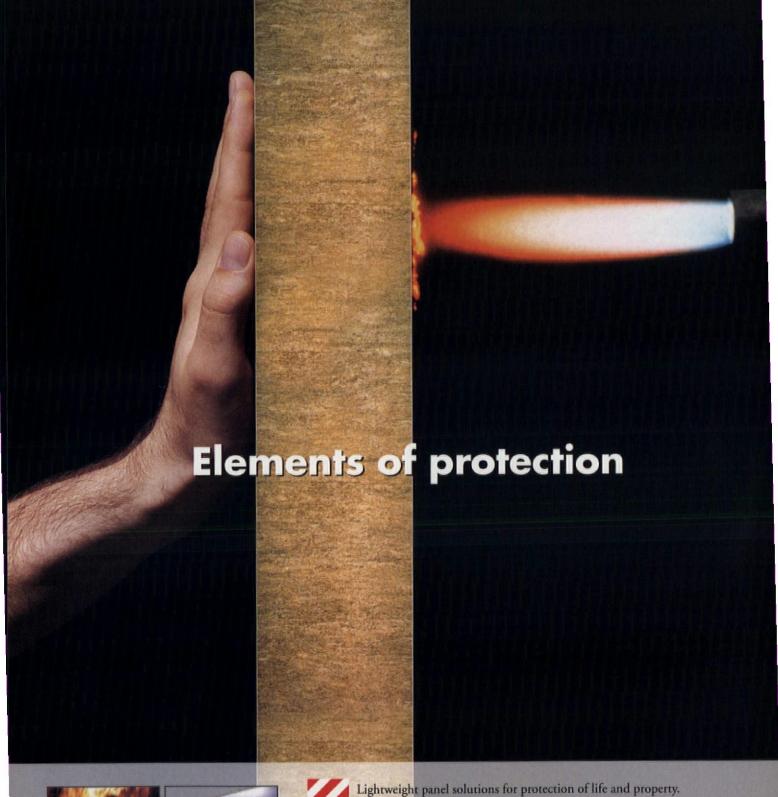
grid of timber

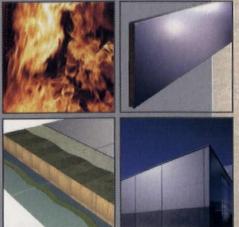
CREDITS VALUE €32 million (£20.2 million) SITE AREA 10ha BUILDING AREA 1,2600m<sup>2</sup> COMPLETED June 2002 CLIENT European Commission MAIN CONTRACTOR McNamara MECHANICAL

**ENGINEER L** Lynch

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FIRE PROOF PANELS

# Planning delivery

We examine the implications of the latest planning reforms and the creeping requirement for sustainability statements

BY BRIAN WATERS

Fast-track changes are in the works for planning and these will make life more difficult, especially for all those architects who feel that planning is remote from what they do.

The challenges will take several forms. The most productive will be the testing of design skills in achieving successful high-density housing and mixed-use schemes.

Deputy prime minister John Prescott, in his 18 July statement, said he would intervene if councils failed to meet housing targets set out in regional planning guidance. This is his bid to reverse the current shortfall, estimated to be 10,000 houses in just the past two years. His threat of intervention is backed up by the minimum density standard of 30 units per hectare in PPG3 Housing. Expect to deal with reluctant local

councils under not-inmy-back-yard (Nimby) pressure from the voters, reluctant house builders, too. The role of architect, as mediator between developer and planning authority, will not be getting easier.

Prescott promised to toughen Green Belt protection and establish a register of surplus, publicly owned brownfield land (an Urban Task Force demand). This, especially when combined with the demand for higher density development, should expand architects' share of the house building market.

The document, released with Prescott's statement1, says: 'Authorities are now on notice that they will have to sharpen up their performance.' He has found £350 million to help them along over the next three years and has attached a bunch of carrots. The money will be allocated in tranches and tied to how they per'Expect to deal local councils under not-in-(Nimby) pressure... The role of architect will easier'

with reluctant my-back-yard not be getting



Prescott: has threatened to intervene if councils fail to meet housing targets

form against 'best value' targets.

Thus, better performing councils will get the dosh, presumably leaving the others floundering. Knowing how effective a particular authority is will be even more significant for you and your client.

It is not as good as it may sound, though, since improved authorities may be able to charge higher fees and a current review is expected to allow them to charge for pre-application discussions.

Meanwhile, expect even more councils to get up to tricks in order to manipulate statistics, especially the quick delegated-refusal-withoutconsultation-with-applicant practised by several London boroughs: refusal followed by quick chat followed by unadjusted application followed by quick permission. But

in reality: embarrassed architect, annoyed and puzzled client, extra paperwork and a decision in about 14 weeks, not eight.

Other proposals in the government statement will keep architects on their toes and open them to being liable to their clients if they miss deadlines or fail to advise their clients of them: the abolition of repeat applications when the first gets refused and is not appealed; of 'twin tracking' outline applications; and the reduction to three months of the period when an appeal may be lodged.

Despite the weight of objection to the proposition, permissions generally will have a shorter shelf-life of three - rather than five - years, too.

There is a prospect of much tougher enforcement action mooted in a new consultation paper: no more getting away with development (operations) after four years or after 10 years for changes of use; and the prospect of criminalising breaches of planning law.

Implicit in the reforms, especially as they affect new housing, is better design quality, and while both planning policy statements and house builders mouth encouraging platitudes, it is how policies are implemented, how clients instruct their architects, and how skilfully the architects respond that really will

### Quantifying sustainability

Adding to the burden of new demands being placed on applicants for substantial developments is the notion of sustainability.

Already, sub-industries have quickly grown up to produce EIAs (environmental impact assessments) and TISs (transport impact statements) and so forth, but on two of my recent jobs a sustainability assessment and a sustainability statement have been demanded.

The assessment has arisen out of a policy in Ealing, west London. The project: replacement of an obsolete office block with a mixed hotel, retail and housing scheme. 'The economic sustainability of demolition versus conversion will have to be demonstrated'. The statement is being sought (by Greenwich council) as a last-minute demand as an item in a 'Section 106 Agreement' which, if it is to be more than platitudinous, would require construction details and evaluation of alternative energy sources, and so forth, for its financial feasibility to be established.

Some things may be better left to the (admittedly imperfect) judgement of the market. Anyone for planning permissions in eight weeks? Brian Waters is principal of the Boisot Waters Cohen Partnership, e-mail brian@bwcp.co.uk

### References

1 ODPM: Sustainable Communities delivering through planning ODPM Review of the planning enforcement system in England, (published 27 September 2002) both available from www.planning. odpm.gov.uk/consult/greenpap/ scdtp/index.htm



# legal matters

# ⊕ .column

# Dispute resolution – when to litigate and when to arbitrate

'Arbitration still

appears to be the

default option for

most building

contracts'

Most standard forms of building contract include an agreement to resolve any subsequent disputes by arbitration. Why this should be the case has, apparently, something to do with the voting rights within the Joint Contracts Tribunal (JCT), which is responsible for drafting the standard forms, and a long-held belief by the contracting lobby that arbitration offers quick and cheap dispute resolution.

For decades, this belief has represented something of a triumph of optimism over experience. Ironically, a shift of power within the JCT, which permitted contracting parties, for the first time, to opt for litigation as the preferred dispute resolution forum, coincided with the passing of the 1996 Arbitration Act, which has enabled a new

breed of arbitrator, at last to live up to the industry's expectations. Nevertheless, arbitration is still the default option for most building contracts.

Before the 1996 Act, the existence of an arbitration clause did not preclude court proceedings. It simply gave the defendant the option of staying with litiga-

tion if they liked, or applying to the court to stay the proceedings for arbitration if they did not. The remedy was discretionary, and many a young barrister was kept employed by attempts to persuade the judge that although arbitration was generally a very good idea, there were even better reasons why this particular case ought to stay with the courts, or visa versa.

The Arbitration Act changed all that. It took away the discretion of the court and provided that if you had an arbitration clause, you were bound to stick with it, unless the arbitration agreement was 'null and void, inoperative, or incapable of being performed'. Now, if you have second thoughts about arbitration after signing up to it, you have to show not simply that litigation has the edge, but that the arbitration option is a non-starter.

The recent Court of Appeal case of John Downing v Al Tameer Establishment (2002) shed some light on how this might be done. The claimant was the inventor of a process, called 'Black D', for separating crude oil from water, but lacked the funds needed for its exploitation, marketing and manufacture. The claimant was put in touch with

the defendant, a Saudi Arabian company, and it entered into a written agreement jointly to exploit 'Black D' for commercial gain. The agreement included an arbitration clause which required the parties to try to settle their disputes amicably, failing which, to submit them to arbitration by three arbitrators.

It seems that, shortly after signing up to the agreement, the defendant lost faith with 'Black D', withdrew its funding and refused to communicate with the claimant. It even went so far as to deny the existence of the agreement. The claimant sought to operate the arbitration clause and invited the defendants to cooperate in the appointment of three arbitrators. All attempts fell on stony ground. Ultimately, the

claimant issued court proceedings and embarked upon a three-year marathon to serve the writ and translations in Saudi Arabia. The defendant's response to the court proceedings was to apply instead for arbitration.

The Court of Appeal described the matter as a straightforward case of a

claimant which, having being rebuffed in its efforts to implement the arbitration agreement by a defendant which denied its existence, resorted to proceedings only to have the defendant perform a *volte face* and rely upon the very agreement that had been hitherto denied.

The court observed that the existence of an arbitration agreement does not prevent either party from starting court proceedings. But if court proceedings are started in breach of the arbitration agreement simply, as it were, to test the water, it falls to the court to intervene.

The arbitration agreement operates independently of the primary contract and the ordinary rules of contract law apply to it as much as to the main contract. In this case, the defendant had breached the arbitration agreement and were now prevented from relying on it. Instead, the claimant was entitled to accept the position by commencing proceedings.

This useful case offers some assistance to those who seek to avoid their arbitration agreement by showing that it has come to an untimely end, thereby opening the door to the court.

Kim Franklin

# No hiding the fact that PCs look like processed cheese

You're doing your hourly random inspection tour through the drafting factory, making sure the CAD jocks are working hard on that new-spec office block and not downloading pictures of chests or running webcams of the typing pool. Ahead there's a vacant seat.

Simpkins has obviously gone out for his allotted two-and-a-half minutes on the loo. But wait. There's an unholy glow coming from under his desk. The evil pervert has modded his computer case. No longer is it a uniformly beige box with a forest of cables out the back. It is a beige box with a forest of cables out the back with an irregular hole cut out of the side covered by a click-in plastic window. The eerie light comes from a purple neon string feeding off the computer's power supply. And in there are deep blue light-emitting diodes blinking in time with the central processor fan.

Poor soon-to-be-redundant
Simpkins. He's been hideously caught
up in the latest craze sweeping the PC
community. And the computer supplies
shops. Fuelled by collective envy of the
sheer beauty of recent Mac kit, sad PC
people have taken to their horrid
beige lumps with cutouts, strip neon
lighting, decals, go-faster stripes and
stick-on aluminium fascias for floppy
and CD drives.

It's all that Apple designer bloke
Jonathan Ives' fault. PCs may be
virtuously modular and faster but the
aforesaid decorations can never conceal
the fact that, compared with his objects
of beauty, they still look like lumps of
processed cheese.

I think I have mentioned this before but I had forgotten how to do it, so maybe you too. When you are surfing with Internet Explorer, you do not have to type in the http:// header of an address. If the url is a dot com (and only a dot com) you just type in the name, say ajplus, and, holding the Ctrl key down, hit the Return key. Up comes http://www.ajplus.com and in a trice you are at our site ready to log in.

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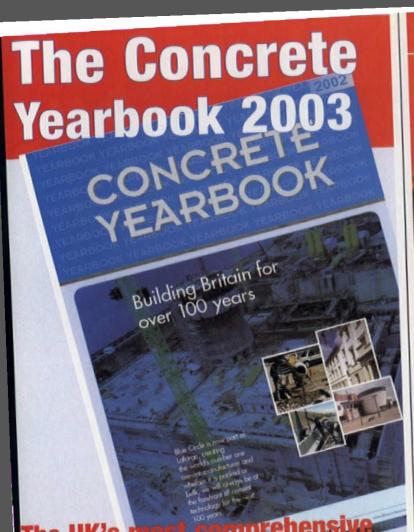
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# diary

### London

\$333 Tuesday 12 November, 18.30. A lecture at the RIBA, W1. Details 020

**Country Houses and Secret Agents** Wednesday 13 November, 19.00. Marcus Binney gives the annual Soane Lecture at the Royal College of Surgeons, 35-43 Lincoln's Inn Fields, WC2. Tickets £6 on the door.

Le Corbusier and the Art Sacre Movement Wednesday 13 November, 19.00 for 19.30. A Docomomo lecture by Judi Loach at St Andrew's Church, Thornhill Sq. N1. Details 020 7253 6624

John Piper Thursday 14 November. 18.30. A Twentieth Century Society lecture by Frances Spalding at The Gallery, 70 Cowcross St, EC1. Details 020 7250 3857.

Shigeru Ban Sunday 17 November, 15.30. A lecture at the V&A. Details 0115 912 9184

Richard Wentworth: An Area of **Outstanding Unnatural Beauty** Until 17 November. An Artangel project at 66 York Way, N1. Details www.artangel.org.uk

Bostjan Vuga Tuesday 19 November, 18.30. A lecture at the AA, 36 Bedford Sq, WC1 (020 7887 4000). Richard Barrett Wednesday 20 November, 18.30. A lecture at the Building Centre, Store St, WC1. Details 020 7692 6209.

Teamwork 2002 Conference Thursday 21 November, At the RIBA, Details Clare Bendon 020 7505 6850

**Understanding Complex Movement Environments** Thursday 21 November, 18.30. A Space Syntax event at 11 Riverside Studios, 28 Park St, SE1. Details 020 7940 0000.

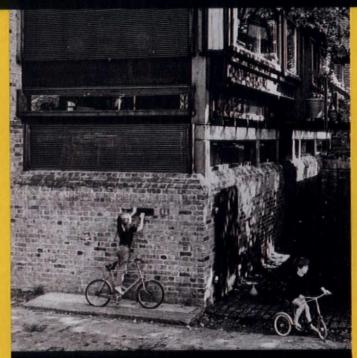
New York and its Future Tuesday 26 November, 18.30. A lecture by Alex Garvin at Clement House, LSE. Details Emily Cruz 020 7955 7599. Sphere Until 21 December. An exhibition with loans from the nvisible Museum (sic) at Sir John Soane's Museum, 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, WC2. Details 020 7405 2107.

**Coming Homes: Housing Futures** Until 11 January. An exhibition at the RIBA, 66 Portland Place, W1. Details

The Adventures of Aluminium Until 19 January. An exhibition at the Design Museum, Shad Thames, SE1 (020 7940 8790).

### Eastern

Face/Off: A Portrait of the Artist 9 November-5 January. An exhibition at Kettle's Yard, Castle Street, Cambridge. Details 01223 352124. **Asset Knowledge for Infrastructure** 



### THE SIXTIES SCENE

With Gavin Stamp in the chair, a Twentieth Century Society conference on the architecture and culture of the 1960s will include Elain Harwood on theatre design, John Weeks on hospitals, Simon Sadler on Archigram, Neil Jackson on American influences, and Ted Cullinan on his own house in Camden (above). On Saturday 23 November in London (020 7250 3857).

Tuesday 12 November. A BRE seminar at Garston, Watford. Details 01923

**HAA Annual Dinner, with George** Ferguson Thursday 21 November, 1915. At Tewin Bury Farm, Welwyn. Details Francesca Weal 01438

### East Midlands

RIBA CPD Event: VAT - The Latest Changes Thursday 7 November, 14.00. A seminar at Edward King House, Lincoln. Details 0121 233 2321.

RIBA CPD Event: Does Your Public See You? Tuesday 19 November, 14.00. A seminar at Highpoint, Leicester. Details 0121 233 2321.

Neil Canning, David Holmes Until 24 November (Sundays 14.00-18.00 or by appointment). Paintings and prints at Fermynwoods Contemporary Art, near Brigstock (01536 373469).

### Northern

**Knowledge Management** Wednesday 20 November. A CPN course at Durham. Details 020 7222 8891.

### North West

Historic Buildings in the Countryside: Change and Renewal Wednesday 13 November. A one-day EH conference at Urbis, Manchester. Details Marion

Barter 0161 242 1400.

**RIBA CPD Event: Energy Conservation** Thursday 21 November. A seminar at Knutsford. Details 01565 652927.

### South Eastern

**Under the Surface: Special Interest** Tour Wednesdays from 13 November-19 February. At the Weald & Downland Museum, Singleton, Chichester. Includes the Downland Gridshell. Details 01243 811464.

### Southern

Machu Picchu & The Camera Until 31 December. An exhibition at

the Oxford University Museum, Parks Rd, Oxford.

### Wessex

Alex de Riike Thursday 14 November, 19.00. A lecture at the Architecture Centre, Narrow Quay, Bristol. Details 0117 922 1540.

Translating the Vision: City and Islington College Until 22 November. An exhibition at the Architecture Centre, Narrow Quay, Bristol. Details 0117 922 1540.

John Hubbard: Between Sea and Sky Until 1 December. An exhibition of paintings at the New Art Centre. Roche Court, East Winterslow, Salisbury. Details 01980 862447.

Information for inclusion should be sent to Andrew Mead at The Architects' Journal at

Workers' Playtime Until 12 January. An exhibition at the National Monuments Record, Swindon. Details 01793 414797

### West Midlands

**JCT 1998 Standard Form of Contract** Thursday 21 November. A Construction Study Centre course at Birmingham, Details 0121 434 3337. RIBA CPD Event: Planning Supervisor Course 22, 29 November & 6 December. A three-day course at Birmingham. Details 0121 233 2321.

### Yorkshire

Niall McLaughlin's Bexhill Bandstand Until 20 December. An exhibition at the Site Gallery, 8 Woodhouse Sq. Leeds. Details 0113 234 1335. Sculpture/Architecture in 50s and 60s Britain Until 5 January. An exhibition at the Henry Moore Institute, 74 The Headrow, Leeds. Details 0113 234 3158.

### Scotland

Richard Wilson: Irons in the Fire 9 November-14 December, Models for Wilson's architectural works at the Talbot Rice Gallery, University of Edinburgh. Details 0131 650 2210. Oliver Chapman Wednesday 13 November, 17.30. A lecture at Edinburgh College of Art. (ARCHIE@eca.ac.uk)

Fieldwork: Art & Architecture & Urban Regeneration Until 17 November. An exhibition at The Lighthouse, 11 Mitchell Lane, Glasgow. Details 0141 225 8414.

Creative Conservation: Simpson & Brown Architects Until 21 November. A retrospective exhibition at the RIAS, 15 Rutland Sq, Edinburgh. Details 0131 229 7545.

**Bennetts Associates North South 22** November-26 January. An exhibition at The Lighthouse, 11 Mitchell Lane, Glasgow, Details 0141 225 8414. The Regeneration of Glasgow's Clyde Waterfront Friday 29 November. A RIAS conference at the Glasgow

Science Centre. Cost £17. Details

### 0131 229 7545. Wales

**RSAW CPD Event: CDM Regulations -**An Update Thursday 14 November, 12.00-15.00. At the Welsh School of Architecture. Details 029 2087 4753.

### International

Arne Jacobsen Until 12 January 2003 A major centenary retrospective of Jacobsen's work at the Louisiana Museum, Humlebaek, nr Copenhagen (www.louisiana.dk).

the architects' journal 47

# Home grown

JEREMY MELVIN

### **Coming Homes**

At the RIBA, 66 Portland Place, London W1, until 11 January

If one were to characterise the past century or so of architects' engagement with mass housing in epic terms, it would start with heroism and continue to the inevitable tragedy, before proceeding through farce to irony. With the exhibition 'Coming Homes' at the RIBA, rather as some people think Post-Modernity foreshadowed Modernism, we seem to have bypassed irony and gone straight to the post-ironic period.

It should be the summation of a century of experience, of lessons learnt, unsuccessful experiments abandoned and successful ones applied, and above all showing an emergence Occupying Gallery One, it greets visitors with a wall whose (tinned) salmon-pink is uncannily like that of Bob the Builder's yard. Inside, a load of broomstick handles hold up cardboard boxes in the shape of houses, among which the exhibits seem sparse and overwhelmed.

If not intentional, the effect might be appropriate. One panel proudly displays the results of CABE's survey which 'proves' that while many people want to live in a house or bungalow, no one wants to live in a tower block, and housebuilders' normative products vastly outnumber the best efforts of

oration with Wimpey in Gateshead, Piercy Connor's ingenious, prefabricated microflat (pictured), and AHMM's Raines Dairy, one of the projects where Peabody is investigating what new production methods might achieve.

Glenn Howells' scheme for Urban Splash in Manchester looks ravishing, even after seeing how similar it is to one of the examples in the associated exhibition of London Region schemes in Gallery Two, the socially deprived Loughborough estate in south London. The point about each example, and others like Buschow Henley's Chatham Dock and Proctor Matthews' at the Greenwich Millennium Village, is that all are unique in programme, site or both, and while they might suggest particular improvements to elements of house building, do not provide blueprints for it.

A context that explained this would make



of mature attitudes. And the period, as represented in the exhibition at least, does bear traces of all its predecessors – but rather than adding up to more than the sum of its parts, it conveys a series of erudite fragments barely holding their own against a sea of reaction.

In the ironic phase there would have been some critical self-awareness, a sense that the modalities of architectural practice might have been turned on themselves to advantage. Here, at least in the overall exhibition design, if not in the exhibits themselves, those modalities are alive and kicking in more or less unreconstructed form, unable to redefine themselves and unwilling to address the way others see them.

Consider the exhibition's installation.

Peabody and Urban Splash. So here we have yet another depiction of the RIBA's siege mentality. Like a brotherhood of 19th-century missionaries, it characterises itself as evangelising to the heathens, always in danger of ending up in the cooking pot, but ever awaiting that glorious enlightenment when everyone will want to follow the way of Corb.

Many problems spring from this version of its position. It is based on the false predicate that architects, prophets misunderstood in their own land, hold the key to happy housing, and this assumption sets an all-pervading aura which makes it hard to appreciate qualities of the individual exhibits, most of which are to some degree 'experimental'.

They include Wayne Hemingway's collab-

the exhibition much more accessible to members of the public who, after all, do not need to be reminded that they eschew living in tower blocks (although the buyer of the £1.45 million penthouse apartment in one of the Barbican towers might disagree).

What emerges from this is the suggestion that architects are good at the experimental and the one-off. Volume housebuilders, as the rubric makes clear, build very cheaply but leave no room for innovation; but surely there is a better characterisation of the relationship than that between the infidel and the enlightened. And it is here that irony – at least as opposed to confrontation – might be useful. Jeremy Melvin is a writer and teacher at South Bank University



# **Grant aided**

PHIL GRIFFIN

### **Land Marks**

At Imperial War Museum North, Manchester, until 28 February 2003

Twelve years ago, Len Grant was selling advertising space for Central TV, taking blackand-white portrait photographs in his spare time. Then he decided to try to make a living from his hobby. He made a shrewd decision to photograph Manchester's movers and shakers: all the people in the city who were about to drive it through a decade of transformation. 'City Shapers' portrayed the politicians, business people, designers and architects who shunted the city into the blocks for the XVIIth Commonwealth Games.

By the time Daniel Libeskind was pacing out Trafford Wharf for his Imperial War Museum North, Len Grant was Manchester's photographer laureate. He had already produced books on the Manchester Arena, Bridgewater Hall and The Lowry, and was on first-name terms with half the construction workers in the North West. He photographed IWMN from breaking ground to royal opening, occasionally pinning a radio-mike onto some of the people he photographed, including site workers, the museum's director and Daniel Libeskind.

There is no book of the scheme as yet, but there is 'Land Marks', an audio-visual presentation of the making of the building - the inaugural show in IWMN's temporary exhibitions gallery.

But the museum itself is not the first thing to register in Grant's display. The back wall of the space is hung with 17 large blackand-white portraits of site workers - all mid-shots, posed straight to the camera. Other than as proud personal momentos, it is difficult to know why I am looking at them. They are not firefighters or lifeboat men. They worked for Sir Robert McAlpine and put up a building. Maybe that's enough - I am sure their mothers are proud of them. As openers to an exhibition, though, they are as inviting as a building site in February.

The main bit of the show is a much more engaging four-part projection. On one wall are single, large-scale projections of about 10 x 10m; on another is a mix of three smaller images. The soundtrack is site activity and a commentary (with a Libeskind eulogy by Jonathan Glancey). The whole sequence, including the construction of the so-called 'air shard' in aluminum and galvanised steel, lasts about seven minutes, and it is impressive. These images are favoured by scale.

As a closing coup de théâtre, a high-level shot of the cleared site, under a wide blue sky, reflected in the Ship Canal, is held on screen for more than a minute. Do not blink or look away: the shot dissolves into the same point of view of the finished building, gleaming in spring sunshine. The transformation, unlike the building, is easy to miss.

I don't think this reflects badly on Grant, but it does strike me as extremely narcissistic. The entire building seems infused with the air of people feeling pleased with themselves. Maybe I am a touch jaded by the Libeskind effect.

Grant's show is enjoyable to sit through. Whether it offers an insight into the making of a great piece of architecture depends on your take on the building you are sitting in. It certainly photographs well.

Phil Griffin is a journalist in Manchester

### Margherita Spiluttini: Beyond Nature -**Constructions of Landscape**

Technisches Museum Wien/Fotohof, 2002. 136pp. £22. Distributor 020 8747 1061

'My interest focuses on cites and landscapes, on materials, on streets, on all the things we have created our world with - irrespective of whether it is a formed type of architecture or just something that came about anonymously and by chance,' says the Austrian photographer Margherita Spiluttini. In Beyond Nature she scrutinises the Alps:not the Romantic territory of Caspar David Friedrich's Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog, where the only trace of man is the solitary climber on the foreground

peak, but a region progressively annexed by human intervention - spanned by bridges and motorways, pierced by tunnels, terraced by quarries and reconfigured by damns. In the past, such subjects have been given the 'heroic technology' treatment, or their aesthetic qualities have been maximised (Robert Maillart's bridges); more dominant of late (in newspapers at least, if not in galleries) has been a lament for ravaged nature. Spiluttini, though, is hard to pin down: while many images here are candidates for the 'ravaged' category, with rawlooking banks of rubble, quarry debris in the mist, one curving dam by a sunlit blue lake is as graceful as an advertiser could wish.

Andrew Mead



# Out of the ashes

JAMES DUNNETT

### Justin Knowles

At Austin Desmond Fine Art, Pied Bull Yard, 68 Gt Russell St, London WC1, until 14 November

Austin Desmond is a gallery that since its foundation at Sunninghill in Surrey in 1979, and subsequent move to Bloomsbury, opposite the British Museum, has promoted the category of art known as 'Modern British', in which it was a pioneer. It has mounted exhibitions of British artists of essentially Modern character 'from 1910 onwards – the date of Roger Fry's first Post-Impressionist exhibition'.

They have tended to be artists who had a significant reputation in their time, often submerged by the tide of American-influenced art of an inflated scale from the 1960s onwards, and so there has been an element of rediscovery. Austin Desmond also continues to promote the work of contemporary British artists (including occasionally a ceramicist) of a humane and intellectual character and manageable scale,

Their current and immediately past exhibitions illustrate these themes. Just finished is a joint show of the ceramicists Jason Wason and Yasuo Terada. Wason, born in Liverpool, is arguably Bernard Leach's last true pupil, Terada is the scion of a long-standing family of Japanese potters and a



master of raku kiln construction, a medium in which Wason excels.

The two worked together in Japan and subsequently in Cornwall, but Wason is by no means a tame follower of the Japaneseinfluenced tradition. Indeed, he is arguably the 'brutalist' of the ceramic world, his pots often studded like a biker's jacket, who appreciates the feeling that they 'have been to hell and back' in the high temperature raku firing process. The powerful geometry and harsh textures of his pots owe as much to Africa as Japan. Terada's work is softer, more crumbly – often literally fractured and repaired with gold.

In complete contrast to this is the current show of the sculpture of Justin Knowles, which follows on from a major British Council-supported retrospective at the National Technical Museum in Prague. This is arguably a rediscovery, though of a different sort, because Knowles' work has always taken on board the American influence. But after showings at the famous Whitechapel Young Contemporaries exhibitions of the 1960s, Knowles' work was almost all destroyed in a studio fire in 1973. This seems to have led to a long period of near silence from which he only began to re-emerge in the early 1990s, often picking up themes from 30 years earlier.

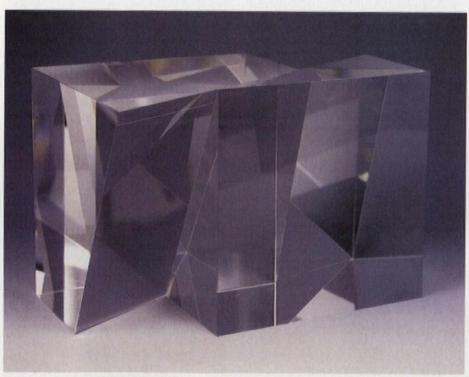
Where Wason and Terada's work was rough, textured or rounded, Knowles' is



highly polished and rectilinear. He uses what seem like the very simplest of formal means -- such as a pile of gold-painted blocks like a child's play bricks - to make witty compositions. Highly polished glass cubes are stacked up, creating kaleidoscopic patterns of internal reflection which move constantly with the viewer - mobiles without moving parts. Play is made with the differing translucency and colour saturation of rectangular blue glass blocks, depending on whether they are seen end-on or across. Sheet metal panels, of slender section and dead-flat coloured surface, are fixed to the wall in commanding but very simple designs.

Despite the High-Tech image of his work, Knowles admits to being a technophobe ('I will not use a computer other than via a third person'), whose work is made-to-order by others – a specification art. But he points to the spiritual content of his work, honed by many visits to the Buddhist East, and a three-part blue-glass 'altar group' stands in the cathedral at Exeter, his native city.

James Dunnett is an architect in London



Above: Knowles' Split Cube II. Top: Terada's Structure II. Above right: Wason's Preservation Box





**MIPIM PROJECT PREVIEW 2003** 

An international review and catalogue of future projects in association with The Architectural Review

### **AR/MIPIM FUTURE PROJECT AWARDS 2003**

MIPIM, the international property market, attracts over 16 000 delegates, the elite of the property world, to Cannes every March. To mark MIPIM's 12th anniversary, The Architectural Review is to offer Awards to distinguished, but as yet unbuilt projects. Awards will be given for unbuilt office, hotel and leisure, residential, retail and mixed-use schemes. There will also be a Best of Show Award.

Selected commended entries will be reviewed by an international panel at Cannes. Since its inception in the nineteenth century, The Architectural Review has been devoted to excellence in architecture and environmental design and now invites entries to the AR/MIPIM Future Project Awards. All submissions will be displayed at MIPIM and will be published in a catalogue which will be given to all delegates.

Closing date for entries is 6 December 2002. For further information and an entry form see the Architectural Review website at www.arplus.com. Email enquiries to peter.davey@ebc.emap.com

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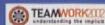




CHAPMAN TAYLOR

REVIEW













# **LAYING TOGET**

### The Teamwork2002 Conference

Thursday 21 November 2002, RIBA, London

CON	EEDE	NICE	DDO	CDA	MME

- Registration and coffee Welcome 09-00
- 09:30
- Teamwork2002 09-35
- 09:50 Keynote address: Teamwork 2007 construction and facilities management converge into provision of Built Environment Solutions.
  - Richard Saxon, Chairman, Reading Construction Forum and Vice President, RIBA
- 10:10 Client session I Shaun Darley, Director of Construction, Six Continents Retail \*
- 10:30 Designing together Nick Terry, Chairman, BDP
- Modelling together Mike Cook, Partner, Buro Happold \* Mike Hitchens, Director, Whitby Bird & Partners
- Servicing together Don Leeper, Rethinking Construction Champion, David Saffin, Managing Partner, Zisman Bowyer and Partners
- Lunch
- Client session II
- Alex Wills, Head Teacher, Alperton Community School
- Supplying together Alan Pillinger, Technical Director, Bourne Steel Roger Blundell, Director of Engineering, Taylor Woodrow
- Managing together Simon Rawlinson, Partner, Davis Langdon & Everest

Signature

- Working together
  Martin Howe, Partner, Bevan Ashford
  Andrew Thornton, Partner, Jardine Lloyd Thompson
- 15:40 Client session III
- 16.00
- 2003 and beyond Paul Fletcher, Co-founder, Teamwork
- Closing Remarks

During Teamwork2002's Live Week held in May and June of this year, six teams of keen design professionals, with support from other industry professionals, learnt the lessons of collaborative working, improved their technical skills dramatically and innovated in IT. The teams improved their skills, innovated and learned through executing hands-on challenges. The experience of Teamwork 2002's Live Week has implications for the whole industry and is helping to bring about a quiet revolution.

The invaluable lessons learned from Live Week have been condensed into a cutting-edge conference, which will focus on the key outcomes of Teamwork2002. All elements of the supply chain will benefit from attending this practical, interactive and strategic forum - so book now to guarantee your place and find out how the experiences of Teamwork2002's Live Week can help you to optimise your business practices.

For further information contact Clare Bendon on 020 7505 6850, email clare.bendon@emap.com or visit www.ajplus.co.uk/promotions/teamwork

### What is Teamwork2002?

collaborate on designs for a virtual construction project on a real brownfield site. Six teams were fielded by leading firms in design and associated areas. Each team was given a design challenge during a highly public Live Week held in June at the RIBA. As the teams worked and played together, practical lessons for teamworking on real-world projects emerged.

Places are limited and priced at £295 + VAT. Teamwork and ITCBP members pay only £195+VAT. Book now to guarantee your place

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# recruitment

### people & practices

Raul Curiel has been appointed chairman at Fitzroy Robinson. Nicholas Thompson becomes

The new Construction Research and Innovation Strategy Panel (newCRISP) has appointed Michael Dickson as its chair.

Ushida Findlay has moved to

Clare Sargeant has joined breathe architecture as

**Chapman Taylor Architects** 

Norman & Underwood's appointed Simon Mace as and Mick Duff as quality

Lindsey Parnell has been Interface Europe.

Asite has appointed Tom Dengenis and Mike Henry to the board of directors.

The Urban Regeneration Company shadow board has interim by Graham Hall. Other appointments include David Anderson, Trevor Lewis, Prof Chris Taylor, Amjad Pervez, Heather Hancock, Margaret Eaton and Ian Greenwood. Ian Stewart becomes

 Send details of changes London EC1R 4GB, or e-mail



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CAD Technician

Ref: 5133

Permanent

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Project/Senior Architect

Ref: 5034

Contract This client is seeking a person with a sound architectural background ideally gained in the Pharmaceutical sector. Initially for a 6 month period it is fully expected that

the contract will be extended to over 18 months. Ref: 5060 Senior Technician

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NOTTINGHAMSHIRE VACANCIES

**Architectural Technician** Ref: 5135

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nior Technician This client is seeking a Senior Technician with at least 3 years' experience gained in any architectural sector who has the ability to take charge of a job from inception

Ref: 5084 CAD Technician Permanent You are an enthusiastic recent graduate with some in-practice experience gained in any architectural discipline. The right candidate can expect rapid career

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Architectural Technician Ref: 5072 Permanent

Technician with Autocad skills, with a minimum of 3 years experience in the housing sector. The client covers everything from terraces to luxury houses

LEICESTERSHIRE VACANCIES Ref: 5101 **Cad Technicians** Permanent/Contract

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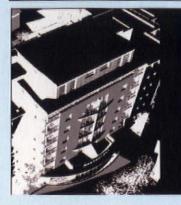
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# recruitment

### competitions

### RIBA-APPROVED

Details are available from the RIBA Competitions Office, 6 Melbourne Street, Leeds LS2 7PS, tel 0113 234 1335, fax 0113 246 0744, e-mail riba.competitions@mail.riba.org

### MARSHCROFT CENTRE

Expressions of interest are invited for a competition to rebuild the Marshcroft Early Years Centre in the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham, to create a state-of-the-art facility delivering a multidisciplinary service for children, their families and the wider community. The deadline 26.11.02. Contact the RIBA Competitions Office.

### **OTHERS**

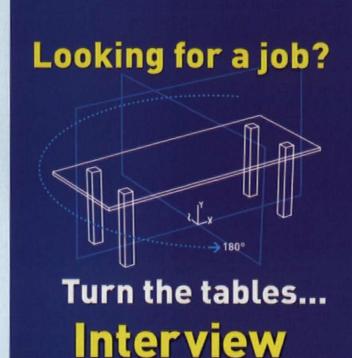
### **BUILDING CONDITION SURVEYS**

**Building Condition Surveys to** the non-housing stock of Leeds City Council. Likely to include libraries, sports centres, museums, galleries, public buildings, aged persons'homes, and light industrial estates. Contact Julie Brennen, Leeds City Council, Department of Legal Services, Corporate Procurement Unit, 4th floor West, Civic Hall, Leeds LS1 1UR, tel 0113 247 4088, fax 0113 247 4677, e-mail julie.brennen@ leeds.gov.uk.Questionnaire Allan Farrell, tel 0113 247 5486, ref EU/2786. Application by 25.11.02.

### HOUSING MASTERPLANNING

Masterplanning design teams to undertake and manage a range of services for development of social housing in the E3 and E14 postal areas of London. Contact Rob Hannabus, Poplar Housing and Regeneration Community Association, 167A East India Dock Road, London E14 0EA, tel 020 75100573, fax 02075 108586, e-mail Rob. Hannabus@Poplar Harca.co.uk. Application 29.11.02.

Richard Haut operates the weekly 'competitions' e-mail service – telling architects about thousands of projects that they can apply for across Britain, Ireland and Europe.
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the industry

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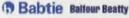








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dh.architect@btopenworld.com Springwood Studio, Murchington, Chagford, Devon TQ13 8HJ

John Baxter Associates

### Architectural Assistant

Small busy practice requires motivated Part 2 Architectural Assistant or equivalent. Initiative, ound technical knowledge, good manual draughting and telephone communication skills essential. Clean driving licence preferable. Salary reflective of office experience.

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### John Baxter

John Baxter Associates 58 Streatham High Road, London SW16 1DA Telephone: 020-8769-6561

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11.30-12.00 Skanska Construction A Career in a Global Economy

12.00-12.30 Tony Gee & Partners The Falkirk Wheel

12.30-13.00 Hill McGlynn - Jarrid Lee & Mike Bower 'Get That lob'

13.00-15.00 Construction Industry Council Construction Industry CouncilVideo Event The Construction Industry Council will screen a recruitment video showing the diversity and challenges that a career in the construction professions offers young people.

15.00-15.30 Costain **Building Awareness** 

15.30-16.00 Railtrack Experiencing the attractiveness of an engineering career in the railway industry

16.00-16.30 **Babtie** Safety in Tall Buildings - Lessons learned from WTC

16.30-17.00 Gifford & Partners

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13.30-14.00 Balfour Beatty Career Opportunities with Metronet

14.00-14.30 Railtrack Experiencing the attractiveness of an engineering career in the railway industry

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We have ongoing requirements for a range of staff, from Project Architects to Cad Technologists. To discuss your options in the strictest confidence, please contact: Sally Winchester on 01908 672 906 or email

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Salary: £23-27 k

Location: N. London/Hertfordshire Borders

Ref:4146

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Architect with a minimum of 2 years post RIBA III experience required to work on hotel, retail & leisure projects. This key role involves concept and Project Management skills and the ideal candidate will be ideally experienced in similar mixed-use projects from feasibility to completion. Must have AutoCAD skills, and be a team player and looking for a progressive career move.

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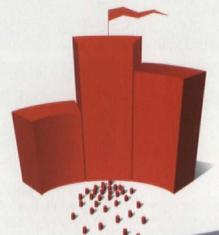
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London Zoo 4 December 2002

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### **Rethinking the Marketing Mix?**

CMA 2002 is hosting a 2 hour seminar from 11am - 1pm at London Zoo, followed by a buffet lunch. Rethinking the Marketing Mix? Is for senior professional marketers and MD's from the construction industry supply chain. The seminar is free to all those who book to attend the CMA 2002 Awards and Gala Dinner, or £95 + VAT if attending the seminar only.

### Seminar Agenda

- The role of the brand in the specification and the role of advertising in brand development Mike Lefroy, Marketing Consultant
- The role of research Identifying the relevant benefits, 11:25 what needs to be communicated and how Sarah Nelson/Susan Riley, BluePrint Research
- Converting strategy and research into effective advertising 11:50 Jeff Fugler, The Charlotte Street Agency
- 12:15 The business benefits of long term advertising investment Patrick Wilson, Managing Director, Thrislington Cubicles
- Getting advertising back to the top of the marketing agenda 12:40 Roger Patey, Optima
- 1:00 **Buffet Lunch**

### **Awards and Gala Dinner**

Celebrate innovation and achievement in construction marketing at the 2nd annual CMA 2002 Awards and Gala Dinner. The CMA 2002 Awards and Gala Dinner will recognise and reward marketing excellence and best practice in the construction supply chain. This gala event showcases the marketing campaigns that delivered success for their company. After some black-tie mingling, sit back, relax and experience a multi-media presentation recognizing brilliant strategies, the breakthrough creative and the stunning results! Join the cream of the construction sector, and book your table now.

### Conference and Dinner cost

Table of Ten £1,050 + VAT

The conference is free if you book for the CMA 2002 Awards and Gala Dinner. Conference Fee £95 + VAT Gala Dinner £110 + VAT per person

### Don't just sit there ..... **Book your place today**

To book places, or for further information on the CMA 2002 Seminar or Awards and Gala Dinner visit www.ajplus.co.uk/cma2002, email tracy.collins@emap.com, call 020 7505 6813, or complete and return the booking form below:

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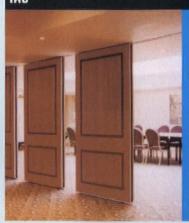
### AJ ENQUIRY NO: 301



Wellman has designed, supplied and installed kichens in a 200 year old mill conversion near Ilkley. The development of 15 homes by Country and Metropolitan used Wellman's light maple laminate cabinets with wenge laminate worktops in the show apartment. The contemporary layout uses one of the original iron columns as a dividing post between living areas.

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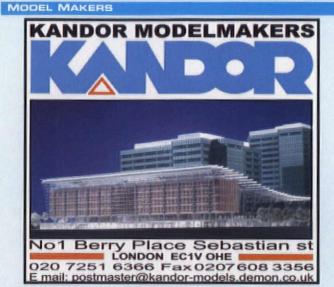


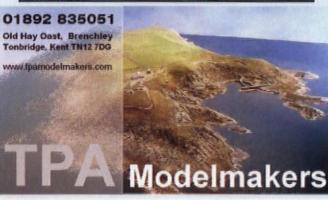
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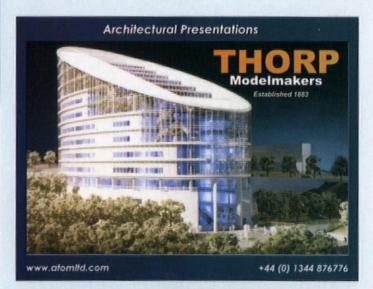
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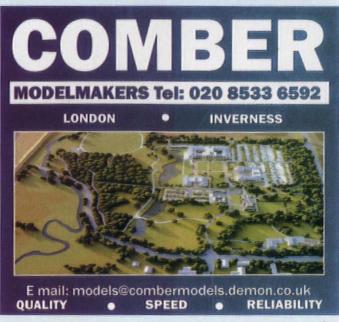
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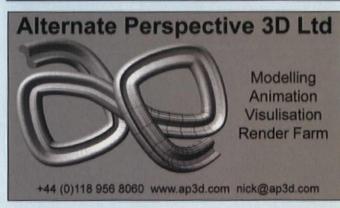


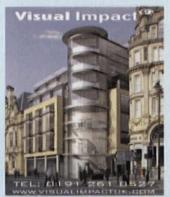
















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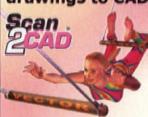
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### archicharades





Champagne goes to Charles Knocker from Marlow, Bucks, who correctly identified Imhotep from the clues in our 'archicharades' competition last week. Can you identify the famous architect from this week's clues? Send your answers on a postcard please, by first thing Monday morning, to: AJ Astragal, 151 Rosebery Avenue, London EC1R 4GB, or fax your entry on O2O 75O5 67O1. The first correct entry pulled out of the hat wins a bottle of bubbly.

### Summit style

he big names were out in force at last week's Urban Summit, graced unexpectedly by chancellor Gordon Brown, who made a significant rather under-reported speech, dealing with a host of issues from stamp duty to the 'third way' for regional assistance programmes. Politically, it was Labour minus Blair, no doubt what Gordon had in mind. Conservationists were immediately up in arms over Gordon's announcement that Business Planning Zones would indeed come into being - provided the relevant local authority wanted one in its area. Given that he had attacked the Tory enterprise zone idea earlier in his speech, this all sounded a shade hypocritical. BPZs are, philosophically, pretty much the same idea; the fact they are voluntary is only really saying that the most important wave of areas have already been dealt with. One question which did not get asked at the conference concerns the Thames Gateway, where one million homes are planned. Here is the question: Isn't this area in a flood plain? Won't it require massive infrastructure work to bring it to acceptable levels (unless the homes are built on stilts)? Why can't we build the homes within a real urban area rather than as an outpost of Dagenham, which, as the old joke has it, is two stops short of Barking?

### Right result

ne fringe summit event highlight was a CABE housing debate, on the

motion 'This house does not believe that house-builders possess the skills necessary to build the quality of and quantity of new homes we require. The highlight of this was a thoughtful speech by AHMM's Simon Allford. Cleverly, he started by appearing to defend the poor old builders, wondering why they were being attacked; perhaps it was because they were too successful, and succeeded in dominating districts and planning authorities: 'I have worked in villages in England where I have been told that a dormer was part of the local vernacular when in fact the first one appeared in 1991.' But the real tenor of the argument soon emerged: that house-builder product is akin to the Lada or Trabant in the bad old days. Allford slammed the five great inventions from the volume boys: the 'link road'; the 'estate'; the 'forecourt'; the 'strip uevelopment'; and the 'en suite at all costs', provided within 'acoustically disastrous cramped boxes which demand that their occupants acquire new levels of tolerance for both families and neighbours'. A lively debate ended up with the motion being supported on a ratio of 6:1. Some measurements are useful.

### Concrete result

rom the Seattle Post-Intelligencer last week: headline – 'English tourists get eye-opener after winning trip to Concrete'. The story begins: Two Englishwomen who won a trip to this little Upper Skagit city head home today loaded down with tulip bulbs, fleece blankets, scenic calendars, flags and T-shirts that say: 'End of the world: 9 miles.

Concrete: 12 miles.' They'll also be taking home memories of a generous community and staggering scenery. 'The mountains are enormous,' said Janet Davies. 'I had absolutely no idea of the scale of it all.' Davies' daughter Imogen Gartrell won the trip in a prize-drawing at a London architectural exhibit touting highstyle uses for concrete. She invited her mother along. 'It's funny they call it a city,' said Davies. 'In England, a city has to be enormous.' Their home town, London, has more than six million people. Concrete has fewer than 800. On their itinerary were a church potluck (sic), a Kiwanis meeting and a visit to the local school. They also rafted down the Skagit River, where they spotted an eagle and a bobcat and marvelled over the unpolluted water. Everybody wanted a chance to meet the new strangers. But Davies and Gartrell didn't remain strangers for long. 'This place has a real sense of community,' said Davies. 'In London, most people don't even know the people who live on their own street.' Locals, who took a good deal of ribbing over the contest, felt vindicated by week's end. 'People said there's nothing to do in Concrete,' said 80-year-old Verna McClure. 'They laughed at us. But we showed them, didn't we?"

### Harris revisited

n the style of his entertaining No Voice from the Hall, curator emeritus of the RIBA Drawings Collection John Harris supplies more reminiscences from his life in architecture, especially as a country house visitor (mostly uninvited!) in Echoing Voices: More

Memories of a Country House Snooper (John Murray, £17.99). It is like a series of anecdotes told by someone at a party who keeps topping up your glass. There are walk-on appearances by the great and (not so) good - Anthony Blunt, Basil Spence and Paul Mellon among them - and glimpses of properties as far apart as Prague and County Sligo. Along the way are a couple of nasty deaths (the archaeologist in Malaya who falls onto poisoned stakes in a pig-trap, the Argentinian aesthete in Paris who trips on the cord of his dressing gown), and plenty of digs at Pevsner: 'Nikolaus was never one for crawling under barbed-wire fences.' It's all great fun - the Christmas-present problem solved.

### Credit due

nformation reaches me that all did not run too smoothly on Paul Hyett's recent visit to Finland. Arriving at the airport to return to London, Hyett popped into the terminal shop to pick up a Bob Dylan album. The next thing he knew, a pair of scissors emerged from behind the desk and the assistant has slashed his Visa card in half. To make matters worse, two security guards appeared and escorted him away (voluntarily) to face interrogation about his use of a 'stolen' credit card. After many phone calls, it transpires that the institute's First Lady had lost her card the day before, had reported it stolen but had failed to inform the Great Helmsman. All will be relieved to hear that Helsinki's finest were very understanding and were (eventually) happy to allow the RIBA boss on his way.

astragal

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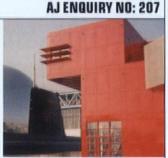
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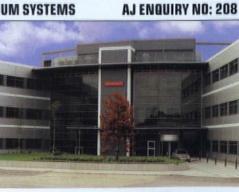
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