

14.08.08

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News



Above Allies and Morrison's hotel proposal
This image The Quinlan & Francis Terry scheme



DEVELOPER SUBMITS TWO SCHEMES IN CLASH OF STYLES

Allies and Morrison in face-off with Quinlan & Francis Terry at Hampton Court

Modernist firm Allies and Morrison has been pitched into an extraordinary battle against Classicist Quinlan & Francis Terry for a key scheme outside Hampton Court Palace, Surrey.

Following objections to a hotel designed by Allies and Morrison opposite the palace, developer Gladedale brought in Terry to draw up an alternative, Georgian-styled proposal (*both schemes are pictured above*).

Unusually, the developer now intends to let the local authority, Elmsbridge Borough Council, decide which it likes best.

Paul Lemar, planning director for Gladedale said: 'We still believe the initial [Allies and Morrison] design we put forward for the hotel represents a high-quality contemporary building and we will continue to promote it.

'But in response to the comments that have been made...

we are willing to build whichever option is preferred by the council.'

Allies and Morrison has drawn up a masterplan for the entire site for the Gladedale consortium, which includes Network Rail and Royal Star & Garter Homes.

Since Terry's arrival it is understood English Heritage has withdrawn its objection, although CABE has been less supportive.

Neither option is likely to appease the Hampton Court

Rescue Campaign (HCRC) which believes the site is being overdeveloped. HCRC chairman Brian Rusbridge said: 'This is a massive scheme in a flood zone and should be turned down.'

The council's planning committee is expected to decide on the two applications in October. *Richard Waite*

Read Kieran Long's leader on page 18

PLANS FOR THE PARK Birmingham-based Bryant Priest Newman has unveiled these plans for a £700,000 pavilion in Dartmouth Park, West Bromwich. The scheme, designed with artist David Patten, will house a viewing platform and park rangers' facilities. *Richard Waite*



JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR PART 2 GRADUATES DROP BY A FIFTH

Architectural recruitment firm reports 20 per cent drop in placements for Part 2 graduates, but 30 per cent increase for Part 3, as economic downturn takes its toll

The economic downturn has made a dramatic dent in the architectural job market, with some recruitment consultants reporting a drop in vacancies for Part 2 graduates by nearly a fifth.

London-based recruitment firm Adrem told the AJ that placements for Part 2-qualified architectural assistants had dropped by 20 per cent in the capital compared to the same time last year.

The news follows an announcement from global recruitment company Monster Worldwide

stating that vacancies in architecture and urbanism have seen the 'steepest drop' among all sectors globally for two consecutive months. Meanwhile, recruitment firm SIV said it currently has no job placements in the Midlands.

Peter Browne, SIV director, said: 'The last two months has seen a massive reduction in terms of permanent recruitment. Last year we would have had 60 live jobs on our desks, now we have five to 10.'

'Usually the regions take a little longer to feel the effects of a

downturn, but placements in the Midlands have dried up completely.

According to Del Hossain, managing director of Adrem, firms are now beginning to look at who is really essential to their practice.

'They are looking to the people who have three or four years experience in running jobs, who can churn out working drawings, and who are comfortable at using certain computer packages.'

'So while there has been about a 20 per cent drop in Part 2 job

placements, there has been a 30 per cent increase in Part 3 staff,' said Hossain.

Bespoke Recruitment, another London-based architectural recruitment specialist, said that only the 'outstanding' Part 2 candidates are getting placed.

'There's no doubt we are not as busy as we were last year, and we are now working a lot more internationally,' said Bespoke founder Lindsay Urquhart. But it's not all doom and gloom – there are still jobs for the really good Part 2 people.' *Richard Vaughan*



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NEW ART CENTRE BY FCBS

This is the Quad, Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios' (FCBS') new centre for art and film in Derby. The building will provide the city with a gallery, cinema and café bar, and is part-funded by the Arts Council, the European Union and the East Midlands Development Agency. The Quad is expected to open by the end of this month. *Richard Vaughan*



SCOTTISH PRACTICES FEEL CREDIT CRUNCH

A host of Edinburgh office schemes have hit the buffers due to the failing market in the Scottish capital.

Projects by Allan Murray Architects, Bennetts Associates and Broadway Malyan are winding down as their developer clients struggle to find funding from lenders.

The news follows the announcement that Edinburgh-based Malcolm Fraser Architects has let go of eight architects, despite

winning the £3 million Stromness Pierhead competition this week.

Fellow Edinburgh practice Allan Murray Architects' office proposals at Fountainbridge have geared down despite securing planning permission.

Murray told the AJ: 'I think everybody would say the industry is slowing at the moment, and we're no different.'

Broadway Malyan's Osborne House office refurbishment and Bennetts Associates' refurbish-

ment of a block on Torphichen Street are both on hold due to a sharp fall in the pre-let markets.

However, RIAS secretary Neil Baxter said the mood in Scotland is not all doom and gloom.

'Scotland rarely feels a depression as acutely as the South East of England,' said Baxter.

'Speculative development may have all but dried up, but just as Scotland doesn't get so high in the highs, nor does it get so low in the lows.' *Richard Vaughan*

THIS WEEK ON THE WEB

RYDER AND HKS SPLIT UP

Ryder Architecture and HKS are splitting after a seven-year joint venture, to pursue 'individual growth'. The move means HKS will now take over the joint-venture company to become HKS Architects. Ryder Architecture will operate under its existing name and is expected to open a new office in London. Former RIBA president Paul Hyett will continue to run HKS Architects' London office with Nick Shapland.

CREDIT CRUNCH HITS RMJM'S PRINCES DOCK

The future of RMJM's 33-storey Princes Dock scheme in Liverpool is looking increasingly bleak following the withdrawal of the project's financial backers. Mersey Property Company, the vehicle set up by a group of investors to develop the waterfront scheme, has called off talks with landowner Peel Holdings to acquire the land.

RIBA LAUNCHES RIVAL TO WIKIPEDIA

The RIBA has launched its answer to online encyclopaedia Wikipedia – an online architectural knowledge bank called RIBAPedia. Developed by the institute's research and development department, the website will be unveiled on Friday 15 August.

BLEARS BLOCKS KPF'S SMITHFIELD SCHEME

Communities Secretary Hazel Blears has blocked KPF's proposals to demolish Smithfield General Market in central London and replace it with a £200 million office building. The practice, backed by Thornfield Properties, had hoped to demolish the 19th-century market buildings, but Blears turned down the proposals. See comment on page 18.

Read all of these news stories in full and more online at WWW.ARCHITECTSJOURNAL.CO.UK



SBS REPLACES MAKE Work has started on SBS Architects' £15 million Digbeth coach station for National Express in Birmingham (*above*). It replaces a scheme by Make (*below*) which was ditched due to 'changing operational requirements' last year. *Richard Waite*

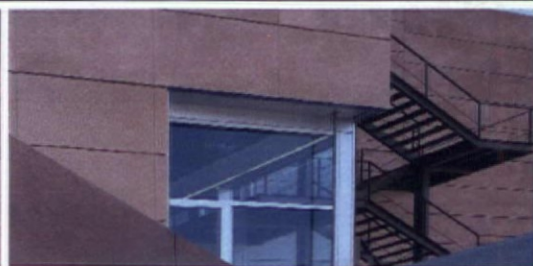
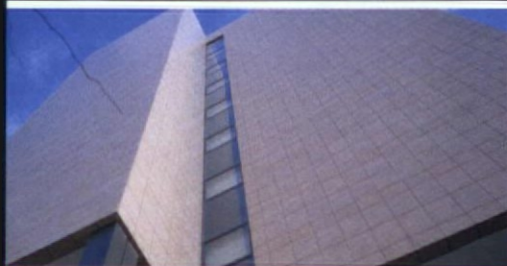


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BIRMINGHAM'S BRUTALIST LIBRARY TO BE DEMOLISHED

As Dutch practice Mecanoo designs a new Birmingham Central Library, *Richard Vaughan* looks at whether its predecessor will be missed



Last week, Dutch practice Mecanoo saw off the might of firms such as Foster + Partners, OMA and Hopkins to win the coveted commission for a £193 million library in Birmingham (AJ online 05.08.08).

But while Birmingham City Council congratulated itself on resisting the charms of lofty names in favour of the less-renowned practice, the move spells the end for John Madin's 1974 Brutalist Central Library.

To fund the scheme – which includes the complete redevelopment of the city's Centenary Square, down to the entrance of shopping centre and office development the Mailbox and around city-centre site Paradise Circus (*see map above right*) – the council will need to sell its land assets for commercial develop-

ment, including the land that Madin's library sits on. The new library will be located next to Birmingham Repertory Theatre.

Mecanoo principal and co-founder Francine Houben says: 'I'm always interested in incorporating the building with public space – I try to deal with grass and trees – and I hope to integrate that with Centenary Square.

'There is a backbone through the centre of Birmingham, and it's very interesting what the council has planned for this square, so I thought I could work with that.'

Houben admits she was aware that Madin's building could be demolished, but says: 'It's a problem for the people of Birmingham to sort out.'

Council leader Mike Whitby calls the building a 'blockage', disrupting the council's plans to

create a 'long view' – a grand vista from the West End to the newly refurbished 1834 Grade I-listed town hall, by Hansom and Welsh.

'We want connectivity,' he says, 'but it's blocked by a monstrosity in between: brutalistic, incomplete, and it's leaky. If we're not

tremendously difficult site. It took me seven years of research to design that building and it was designed to be fit for purpose in the 21st century.'

English Heritage has recommended the building for listing, and the future of the building is

'We want connectivity,' says Whitby, 'but it's blocked by a monstrosity: brutalistic, incomplete, and it's leaky'

careful we'll lose the archive because it's getting wet.'

Madin has labelled the council's actions 'disgraceful' and claims his building could be brought up to 21st-century standards.

He says: 'Selling the land on for commercial development just to make a profit is disgraceful.

I pity the architects who have just a few months to come with a design for a library on what is a

to be decided by architecture minister Margaret Hodge.

Joe Holyoak, a Birmingham-based architect and member of campaign group Friends of the Central Library, says the council's actions are akin to the way Victorian buildings – including the predecessor to Madin's library – were treated in the 1970s.

'Whitby and Dutton's opinions are clouded by their own motives,'



Far left John Madin's 1974 Birmingham Central Library
Left Site map
Below left Mecanoo's

Library at Delft University of Technology, the Netherlands
Below Francine Houben of Mecanoo

- Paradise Circus
- - - Council leader Mike Whitby's 'long view'
- 1. The Repertory Theatre
- 2. New library site
- 3. Centenary Square
- 4. Birmingham Central Library



says Holyoak. 'They want to build the new library, and to justify that they have to slag off the old one. There is a blindness to the merits of architecture of that period.'

'In the 1970s, Victorian architecture was subject to that blindness. I fought to keep the original Birmingham Central Library, an 1870s building that would undoubtedly be listed now, but Birmingham Council demolished it. It was replaced by the building I'm fighting to save now.'

'There will always be this change in cultural attitudes,' Holyoak adds.

Birmingham Council's director of regeneration and planning, Clive Dutton, the man behind the library competition (AJ 17.07.08), initially claimed that if the library was to be listed it

would 'have a catastrophic effect on the council's plans not only for the proposed library... but also the future development of Paradise Circus'.

Dutton and Birmingham Council have since altered their stance on the listing, and told the AJ that Hodge's decision would have little bearing on the new library.

'Whatever happens with the listing, Birmingham will be getting a new library,' says Dutton. 'All it will mean is a longer bureaucratic process to getting the existing library demolished. Look at what happened with Wembley Stadium [which was demolished following the granting of Listed Building Consent].'

He adds: 'It's easy for people without political or economic

responsibilities to make blithe comments on whether the library should remain. Economic viability is an important factor and it is one that is often ignored. The current library would need £160 million of investment just to bring it up to standard.'

Andy Foster, a building historian and author of the Pevsner guide to Birmingham, believes the building is as fine a piece of Brutalist architecture as the Smithson's Robin Hood Gardens Estate in East London, and could be reused.

'Dutton doesn't understand architecture at all,' Foster says, 'the building could easily be transformed into an art gallery – it just needs to be managed better.'

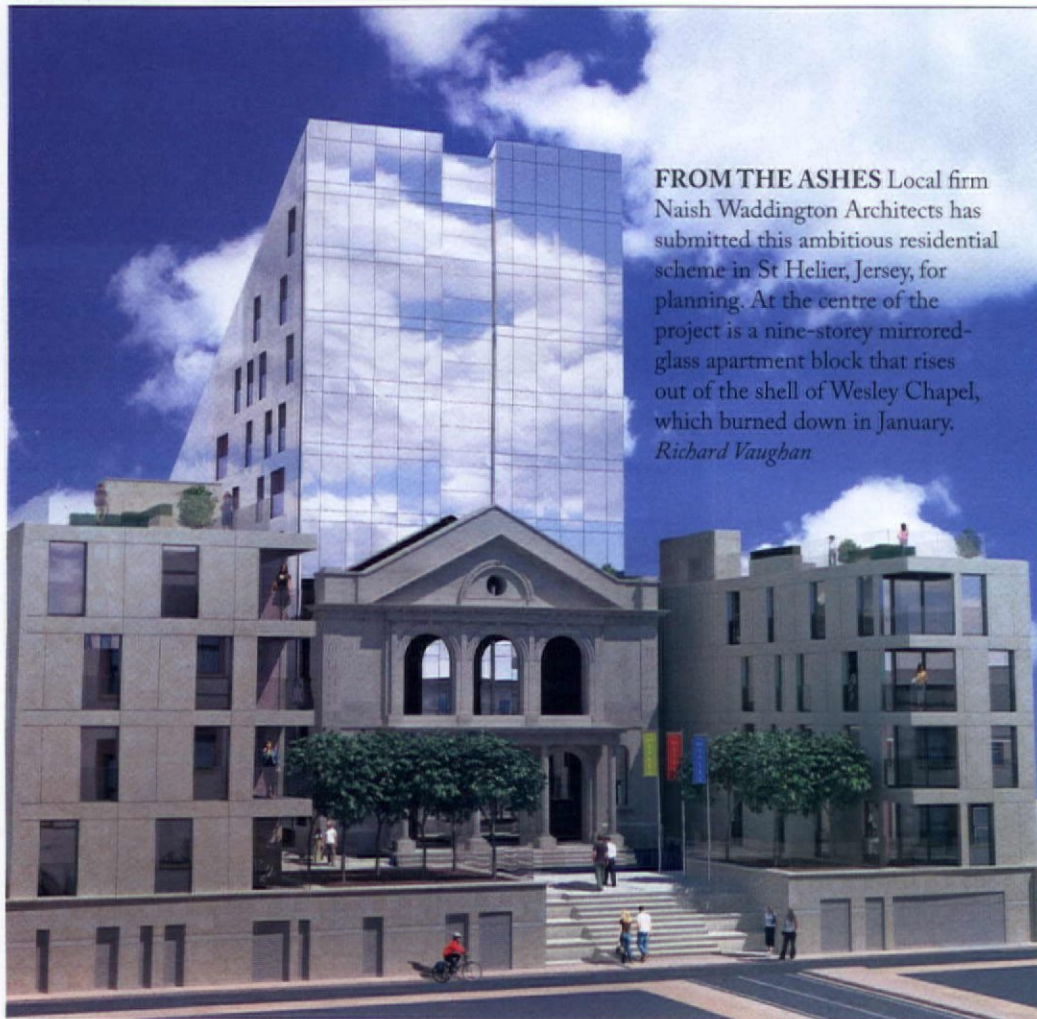
Foster adds that the difference between Robin Hood Gardens and Madin's library is that the

library lacked high-profile support from the architecture profession.

Stirling Prize-shortlisted Glenn Howells, one of the most prominent architects in Birmingham, is a fan of Madin's library but believes its design is not enough to preserve it.

He says: 'It's an interesting building, and I do have sympathy with that period of architecture. The 1960s and '70s had the biggest impact on the city since the 19th century, but while it's an interesting piece of architecture, it's fundamentally flawed.'

'It's not to do with the design of the building, but in urban-design terms it restricts links between the east and the west of the city. It was designed as part of a car-based vision for Birmingham, not a people-based one.'



FROM THE ASHES Local firm Naish Waddington Architects has submitted this ambitious residential scheme in St Helier, Jersey, for planning. At the centre of the project is a nine-storey mirrored-glass apartment block that rises out of the shell of Wesley Chapel, which burned down in January.
Richard Vaughan

EH MAULS QUEENSGATE MARKET PLANS

English Heritage (EH) has weighed into the row about the redevelopment and partial demolition of Huddersfield's Grade II-listed 1972 Queensgate Market, claiming the proposals have neither been 'fully explained nor justified'.

In a letter leaked to the AJ, EH also told scheme-backer Kirklees Metropolitan Council that its current plans – drawn up by Leslie Jones Architects – were of 'poor' architectural quality and 'lacked local distinctiveness'.

The proposals – part of a larger retail-led regeneration project – would see eight of the 21 hyperbolic paraboloid roof-support structures inside J Seymour Harris Partnership's 'seminal' halls destroyed.

EH added: 'Government guidance does not rule out appropriate intervention provided that the significance of the building is safeguarded.'

'However, the case for a development form that affects the market hall remains to be made.'

This latest salvo follows similar outbursts from the Twentieth Century Society and local campaign group Huddersfield Gem (AJ 26.06.08), which said: 'This miserable proposal dishonours the most dramatic and original English post-war public building of its time.'

Despite the opposition, the council, which is also the planning authority, refused to alter its plans.

A council spokesman said: 'In terms of the concept EH have been very supportive of what we are trying to achieve, and have been consulted. Their comments will be taken into account when [the proposals] come before committee on 25 September.'

Richard Waite

JEFFERIES HANDED TOP BIRMINGHAM UNI JOB

Tom Jefferies has been appointed as the new head of Birmingham School of Architecture, continuing this summer's merry-go-round of key educational changes.

Jefferies, currently a senior lecturer at Manchester School of Architecture, follows in the footsteps of both Jeremy Till and Daniel Rosbottom, who have recently taken on the top jobs at the University of Westminster and Kingston University, respectively.

Birmingham City University, formerly the University of Central England, has had a turbulent time in recent years. In 2004, a

staggering 93 per cent of students failed their Part 1 examinations, with only four out of 66 full-timers managing to pass their three-year degree course.

In the aftermath, previous school head Thom Gorst left and the course was only saved after a campaign by supporters of the school (AJ 18.11.04).

Jefferies is unfazed by the school's track record. 'What happened four years ago is all history,' he said. 'All the essentials are here and we are going to be up there as a school.'

Jefferies, who worked with

Maccreanor Lavington on the Whitefield Pathfinder area in Nelson, Lancashire, wants the school to become a 'centre for research into urban solutions'.

He also wants to forge closer links with the university's other design arms. He said: 'There's an insularity in architecture. But we sit next to one of the finest schools of jewellery in the country and I want us to connect, outside architecture, to other areas.'

Jefferies will take over from current acting head Hannah Vowles in mid September.

Richard Waite

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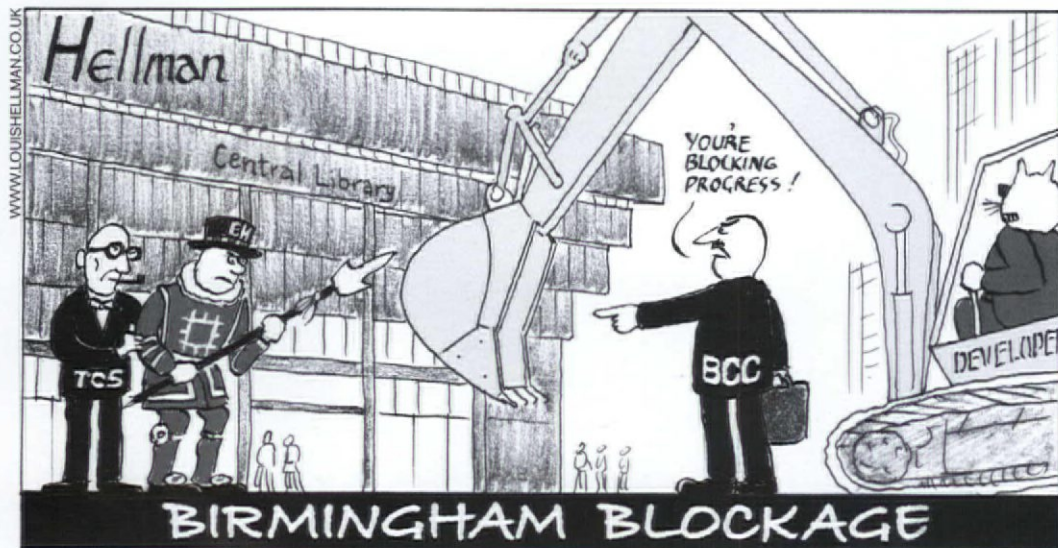


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'B' FOR EFFORT

This week Astragal discovered surprising proof that subliminal advertising works, after becoming a prisoner to unfathomable urges. Casting an eye over Bond Bryan's recently approved Oaklands College in St Albans (pictured below), Astragal felt an unstoppable compulsion to contact the practice. Was the outline of a stylised letter 'B' emerging from the car park in front of the

college – a design not dissimilar to the Sheffield firm's logo – a deliberate piece of self-promotion? The firm's response was a definitive 'No'.

ALSOP'S PUBLIC GLITCH

As if things weren't bad enough for **Will Alsop's** controversial The Public building in West Bromwich. His new work has had a bit of a mauling in the

press and, to make things worse, the blooming digi-whatsit is now having technical difficulties. Astragal understands that the flashy new building's interactive digital exhibition, Public Gallery, is to remain closed until September due to a hitch with the installation of the network. Whatever that means.

SUPER TURD

A giant, flying dog turd at **Renzo Piano's** Paul Klee Centre in Bern, Switzerland, caused havoc this week. The inflatable 'sculpture' (right) by American artist **Paul McCarthy**, entitled *Complex Shit*, was on display at the centre when its safety system

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failed after being hit by a sudden gust of wind. The poo, which is the size of a house, was supposed to deflate in bad weather, but instead flew 200m into the air, brought down a power line, and broke a window before landing in the grounds of a children's home.



THIS WEEK'S ONLINE POLL

Was Hazel Blears right to save Smithfield General Market?

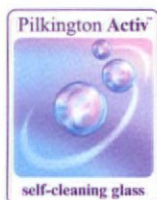
Next week's question: Do you think London 2012 will measure up architecturally to the Beijing Olympics?

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Leader Hampton Court will get an inoffensive, colourless scheme whatever is chosen, says *Kieran Long*

The spot-the-difference contest that you see on page 5 this week is certainly not the first time a developer has hedged its bets when faced with an obstinate local authority. But Gladedale, in this case, has brought into focus a stylistic debate that years ago would have exercised Prince Charles, particularly as the building sits opposite Hampton Court Palace.

What is striking to me is how utterly inoffensive both the options look. If anything the heaviness of Quinlan & Francis Terry's quoined brick and the bizarre proportions of its deep block look more of an imposition than Allies and Morrison's breezy timber-clad building. But there's not much to choose between them.

CABE, in its design review of the wider

Allies and Morrison masterplan proposals, said that 'the architectural expression, while suitably normative, has a subtle richness'. This is a Pseud's Corner way of saying that the practice does unremarkable, background townscape. We know Allies and Morrison is good at this, and within the Hampton Court station masterplan you see its variations of oversized windows as voids in facades made of brick, stone or timber making a pretty coherent place.

We've seen it so many times before that it's easy to think that A&M is the new Cubitt, having found a tactic that can be rolled out pretty much anywhere. Quinlan & Francis Terry's alternative starts, perversely, to look more entertaining, though. It is typologically

problematic, looking like a Georgian terrace from one direction and a Georgian industrial building from another. CABE's design review committee members couldn't get their heads round it at all. They write of the Georgian terrace facade that '[we are not] convinced by the introduction of party walls in the elevations. They do not reflect the internal organisation of the building...' As if the latter, rather Modernist, dogma were some kind of sacred rule.

So what should the local authority decide? I'm not sure it matters. They could just flip a coin. Both architects are just doing background, and the planners will have to decide what flavour of invisible is preferable.

kieran.long@emap.com



Opinion Common sense has triumphed over the City Corporation's ambitions at Smithfield, says *Dan Cruickshank*

The Smithfield market area, on the north-west edge of the City of London is, it now seems, to remain one of the capital's most intriguing and characterful historic enclaves (AJ online 07.08.08). Until a few days ago it was possible – even likely – that a great chunk of the historic fabric of this vibrant conservation area was to be bitten-out by the very body that has stewardship over it. This unnatural guardian is the City of London Corporation, a public body that continues to compromise its responsibility for the protection of the City's distinct character and conservation areas with its obsession with promoting high-density commercial development.

The structures that were threatened by the City are the General Market buildings, that

were completed in 1883 to the designs of the city surveyor Sir Horace Jones and form a crucial part of the setting of the listed and architecturally splendid Central Meat Market. The General Market buildings are of a handsome Classical design, beautifully built and detailed and, as even the City Corporation itself admits, make a significant contribution to the conservation area in which they stand. Rather than protecting and enhancing the character of the conservation area the City

The City Corporation should, of course, be utterly ashamed of itself

planned, with development partner Thornhill and architect KPF, to demolish the General Market Buildings and replace them with large-scale commercial buildings. It is this scheme, costing vast sums and five years of valuable time, which has now been thrown out after a lengthy public inquiry. The City should, of course, be utterly ashamed of itself. It has wasted time and money – not only its own but that of the organisations provoked into opposition such as English Heritage and SAVE – in pursuit of a scheme that was eminently absurd and unworthy.

If the inspector had found in the City and Thornhill's favour then, quite simply, no conservation area in Britain would have been safe from the exigencies of commercial development. As it is, a very positive precedent has been set, suggesting that even in the City development cannot be allowed to ride roughshod over conservation.

The next move at Smithfield will be crucial. The City has allowed the General Market buildings to fall into a state of dilapidation. The rot must stop – and quickly. The City and Thornhill must embrace the inspector's decision and speedily produce a scheme that realises the potential of the retained market buildings. If Thornhill does not want to do this then the City must find another development partner willing and able to execute a small-scale conservation scheme.

Saving the General Market buildings offers a fantastic opportunity. Repaired and made home to appropriate uses they will reinforce the character of this historic quarter and delight generations of Londoners and visitors. [Dan Cruickshank is an architectural historian and television presenter](#)

Email comment@architectsjournal.co.uk



Holidays are when architects can concentrate on imagination, not discipline, writes Patrick Lynch

Holidays are supposed to be the opposite of work, but for an architect creative work is a sort of holiday from running a professional office, and we often get a lot done in our breaks. Unsurprisingly, architects' holiday houses are a specific genre themselves. Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa, speaking about his summerhouse at Stora Berskär, tells us that 'the first week is for sleeping; the second for reading; the third for writing; and the fourth week is for

drawing'. This sounds good. Why aren't the Finns afflicted by the Protestant work ethic? Or have they simply transformed a holiday into work? Jari and Sirkkaliisa Jetsonen have just published a coffee-table book for the Marimekko-wearing classes entitled *Finnish Summer Houses* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008), which is full of the kind of mad-cap architects' houses, mainly from the 1970s, that we envy and love to hate.

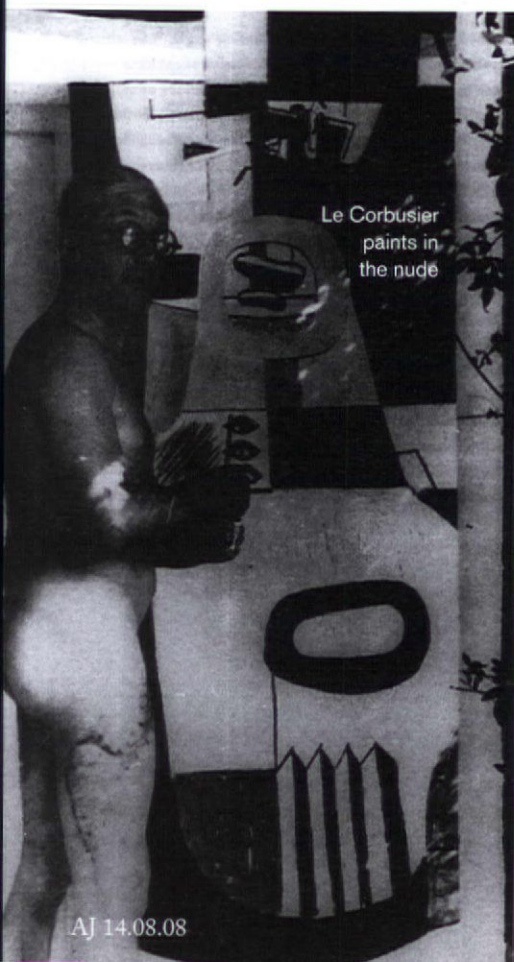
architects go a bit mad. Think of the famous images of Alvar Aalto dousing his fire in the courtyard of his summerhouse at Muuratsalo and of Le Corbusier typing shirtless in his cabin at Cap Martin – or indeed naked, daubing murals on the walls of Eileen Gray's E-1027. Pagan and ancient Christian attitudes are suggested: architect as Hermes; architect as Zeus; architect as pissed up pyromaniac, graffiti vandal, Messiah on the lash.

Even off-piste the mind never sleeps, but churns like the surf

Sat at the edge of civilization, in a perfect image of wild nature, the architects' retreats in the book are a hotchpotch of vernacular construction and mod-cons. It's as if Hi-Tech and Po-Mo fused in their month off, and made a benign truce that combined the tectonics of actually building something yourself with the ease of getting something flown-in. Such rural fantasies haunt architects, because when architecture is good it seems in concert with nature and yet channels its own energetic and mischievous impulses towards conceit and representation. On holiday, architecture takes its mask off and we get to see if we still are who we think we really are, and if not, who the hell we've turned into in the meantime.

Holidays are dangerous times of course: couples split up, babies are conceived, friendships ruined. And you might even realise that the masterpiece that you thought you were working on is actually not. Perhaps because architecture is a profession that shoe-horns imagination into a discipline, on holiday

The cult of design breaks out on holiday into an odd affection for things that haven't been designed: crap beach bars, rustic restaurants, things in themselves, stuff that just happened, happenstance, the serendipitous and the vague, the casual clots of space and terrain that are so difficult to replicate in the cold light of practice. And we are reminded that the pseudo-sanctity of modern creative activity might instead be simply the art of *not fucking things up*. In the past architects were complicit in place-making. Today, stuff that happens without architects in places that haven't yet got many 'designers' seems right. Stuff happening because some dickhead off the telly tells us that it's 'design' is always so wrong it hurts. Stuff that's so bad it becomes good is an education. And so, even off-piste, the mind never sleeps, but churns like the surf and regurgitates junk for us; hewn by the elements like driftwood, innocent, clean and ready to be appropriated, like us.



Sam Jacob. Model villages allow you to protest outside whichever building you want

The Chinese government, in a bid to present a more democratic image, has relaxed the conditions that usually make it difficult to legally protest over politically charged issues. For the duration of the Olympics, the Beijing Olympics organising committee designated three zones as special protest areas: Ritan Park, a central public green space; Purple Bamboo Park, a 14ha tourist garden; or Beijing World Park.

This is standard practice for large-scale events. Arrangements at the 2004 Athens Olympics were similar, and so, undoubtedly, will be those at London 2012. So, it's not necessarily the control of public protest at the Beijing Olympics that's unusual, but rather the choice of one of the designated sites. The Beijing World Park is a far cry from the places one normally associates with public political expression.

It's not a civic space, nor is it close to the heart of state. Instead, it's a model village that features 106 of the most famous landmarks from 14 countries around the world: the Pyramids, Tower Bridge, the Leaning Tower of Pisa, the Eiffel Tower and so on.

The idea of a model village being a site of protest is absurd – and absurdity may well be an explicit tactic to render any political message communicated there ridiculous. Model villages are not normally considered part of the same order of public space, rather they are landscapes of tourism and leisure in which nothing significant could ever happen.

But perhaps there is something more to it. In fact, if one were to think of Will Self's short story *Scale* – partly set in the miniature Enid Blyton-esque landscape of Bekonscot – model villages can become a place rich in dark

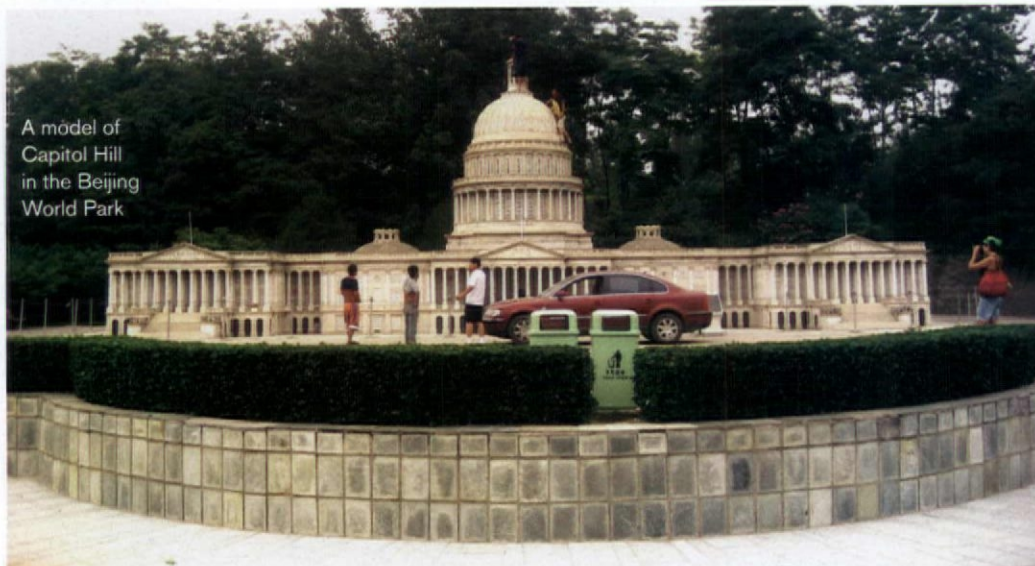
personal experience.

Potential protestors in the World Park might embark on a range of varied protests – against whaling outside the Katsura Imperial Villa, against the invasion of Iraq outside the White House, or about the treatment of Aborigines outside the Sydney Opera House.

The issues of democracy and public space and their relationship to architecture are at the core of many criticisms of the Beijing's Olympic spectacular. It's got the generation of Western architects working on some of these projects confused. They can't quite reconcile an opportunity that appeals to their baby-boomer egos with the state repression and centralised power that enables these very same projects. They argue that their buildings embody the change they would like to see, suggesting dissidents will be debating furiously behind a stray piece of structure during a quiet moment in the shot-put heats. Deep down this group of architects still believes in the protests of May '68. They would be loath to admit that their buildings were not revolutionary, politically edgy, or part of a counterculture.

Protest has changed profoundly since May '68. Contemporary protest is fragmented, lacking the leap of imagination that might create a different society.

If the form and mechanisms of protest have changed, then perhaps the places where they take place evolve too. Perhaps the World 'Protest' Park is an experiment in a new type of public space. If successful, it might mean that we will have to redesign Bekonscot in time for 2012 – a mini Downing Street, a diddy-sized Parliament Square – where we will demonstrate Britain's grand tradition of public democracy.



A model of Capitol Hill in the Beijing World Park

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GARDENS STATE

I enjoyed reading Irénée Scalbert's portrait of a visit to Robin Hood Gardens (Comment, AJ 31.07.08), but it failed to convince me that it is wrong to seek listing as the only available means of securing the estate's future. Like many of the opinions given in recent months, it is based only on a couple of visits, and extrapolates details such as the barking dog into significant symptoms of malaise.

While it is right for architectural critics to be critical, it is possible to set such high standards that only a handful of buildings can meet them. Robin Hood Gardens may not be the Smithsons' best built work, but there aren't many to choose from, and it reflects and informs their theoretical development as much as any of their other projects.

Superficial impressions, combined with a heavy weight of hearsay, have burdened the building to an unprecedented degree. These were among the reasons given by English Heritage for reversing the vote of their own expert committee, and recommending against listing. The Twentieth Century Society has requested a review of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's decision not to list, on the basis that extraneous considerations, such as the verdict that the housing was a failure and remains 'unfit for purpose', were introduced into the listing assessment.

The site certainly presented problems, but the effort to design-out excessive noise was largely successful. The flats are a good size, many with three bedrooms, and the street decks – while narrower than at Sheffield's

Park Hill, to which they have been unfavourably compared – are felt to help create good relations between neighbours.

While residents are certainly discontented about poor maintenance and management, we are told on good authority that, now they better understand their options, they would prefer to remain in the building provided it is refurbished. Only the tortuous political pathways imposed on local authorities could have led to a position where the simplest way of achieving this is to demolish an essentially serviceable building.

I feel confident in refuting Scalbert's views, including the idea that the delightful interior dripping with chandelier crystals (pictured below) is evidence of architectural failure. I would also emphasise that listing is a long-term game. If the building is kept, there is plenty of time to make

improvements and adapt its inherent flexibility to the needs of future residents. If it goes, the game is over – and only the developers win.

Alan Powers, University of Greenwich/The Twentieth Century Society

WOOD WORK

I'm delighted that the AJ found Charles Barclay Architects' new observatory at Kielder Water & Forest Park amazing (AJ 17.07.08), but am moved to write to correct some important details in the piece.

Firstly, the Forestry Commission does not own Kielder Water. The reservoir is actually owned by Northumbrian Water. Most importantly, the Sitka spruce grown in the forest is a highly versatile timber suited to a wide variety of uses, not only

the paper pulp mentioned in the article. The forest produces a great range of timber products, including constructional grade timber capable of competing with some imported timber grades from Canada and the Baltic.

We would have used Kielder timber for the observatory if had we the time to produce the bespoke dimensions needed. The Forestry Commission is working hard with the industry to encourage the greater use of sustainably produced British timber in construction.

Finally, I would like to point out that the 'rickety ride up the 2km farm track' was actually on a forest road costing around £40,000 per kilometre to build, and which is capable of carrying timber wagons with a gross weight of 44 tonnes.

Graham Gill, forest management director, Forestry Commission North East England



The interior of a Robin Hood Gardens apartment



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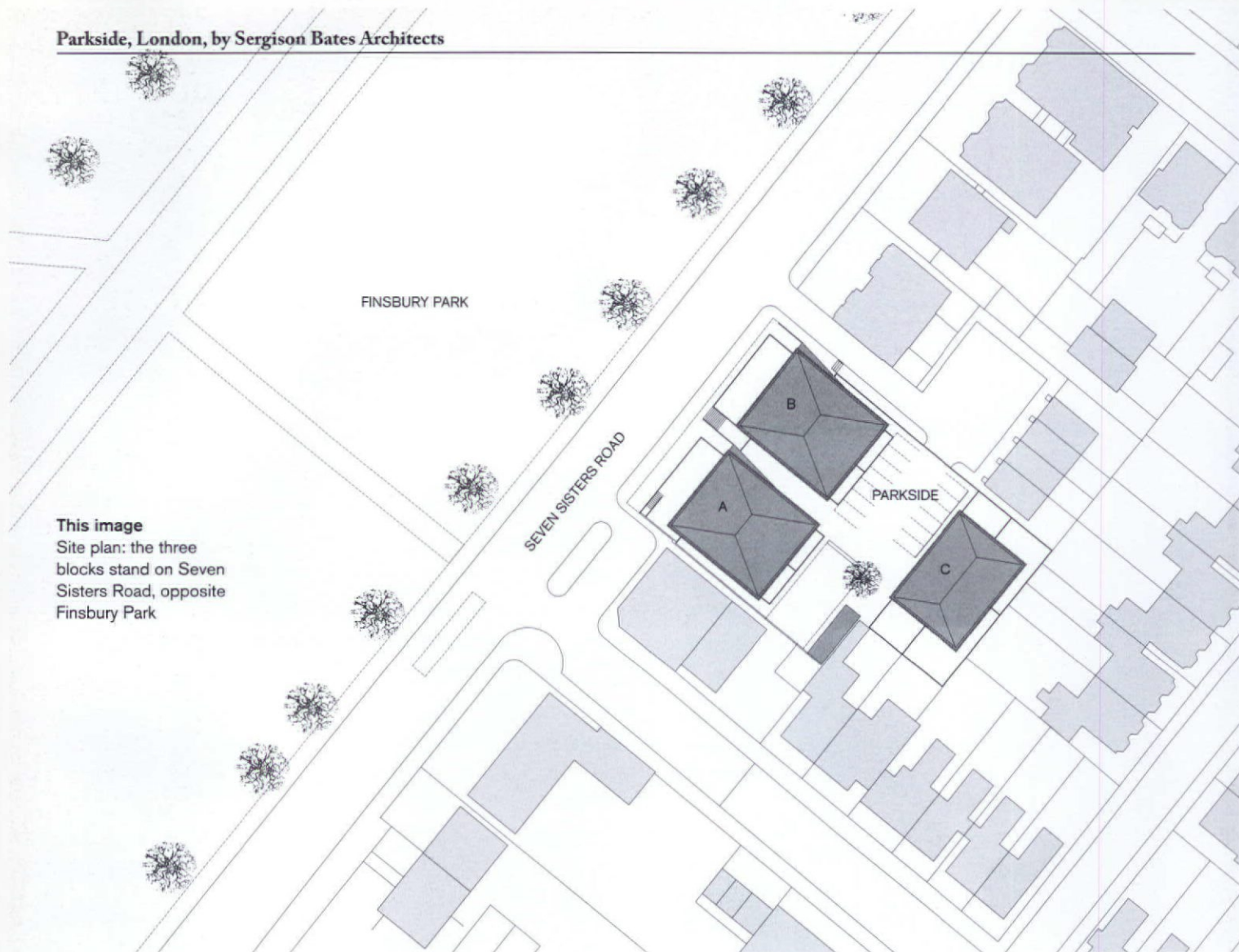
Parkside, London, by Sergison Bates Architects



*By Kieran Long.
Photography by Stefan Müller*

Does this building
scare you? If so,
ask yourself why>>





This image
Site plan: the three
blocks stand on Seven
Sisters Road, opposite
Finsbury Park

>> It's frighteningly austere, you say. The building looks heavy – too heavy. Solid. It needs to lighten up a bit.

Why do you have such a strong reaction to it? Think of the mild-mannered, paper-thin buildings that appear in urban infill sites near you – cack-handedly Cubist non-compositions of render and timber with a background of beige brick, balconies tacked on to the outside. It's Modernism, but denatured into a primordial soup of references whose origins flicker only dimly in the mind of the designer. That kind of architecture is almost a standing joke, and yet planners still encourage it and architects still design endless amounts of it.

This building – Parkside by Sergison Bates Architects, for housing association Circle Anglia (formerly Circle 33) – says: 'I could stand here for 100 years.' Is this too serious a claim for a housing development to make in today's Britain? Perhaps the profession has forgotten to make apartment buildings in any

other way than with the lightweight construction methods that unsophisticated contractors handle the best.

When the AJ published a picture of this development a few weeks ago (AJ 05.06.08), we received some strong letters criticising its austerity and hardness. Stephen Bates, partner at Sergison Bates, displays a palpable confusion about these reactions. 'People don't get it,' he says. 'This building has absolutely everything to do with 19th-century housing.' Parkside is reduced, he explains, it has order and it works within the context of an architectural history that precedes the 20th century. If those things look scary, then perhaps British architecture is in a worse state than we thought.

Parkside stands on Seven Sisters Road in Finsbury Park, north London, one of those urban highways that used to be an entrance to the city and is now a tough and diverse suburb. On the east side of this long, straight road is a smattering of large Victorian villa-like >>



Above Facades are articulated through a brick and void composition
Left Model of Parkside



This page
Sergison Bates had little to do with the design of the interior, but did provide generous hallways and balconies



When the AJ published a picture of Parkside we received letters criticising its austerity

buildings that have long since been converted into low-rent hotels with plastic windows, conservatories and signage in Comic Sans. Others have been replaced by banal housing. On the opposite side of the road is Finsbury Park itself, a large, well-used green space that has improved beyond recognition in recent years. The villas form an edge to the park, despite the road and iron fencing between their frontages and the green.

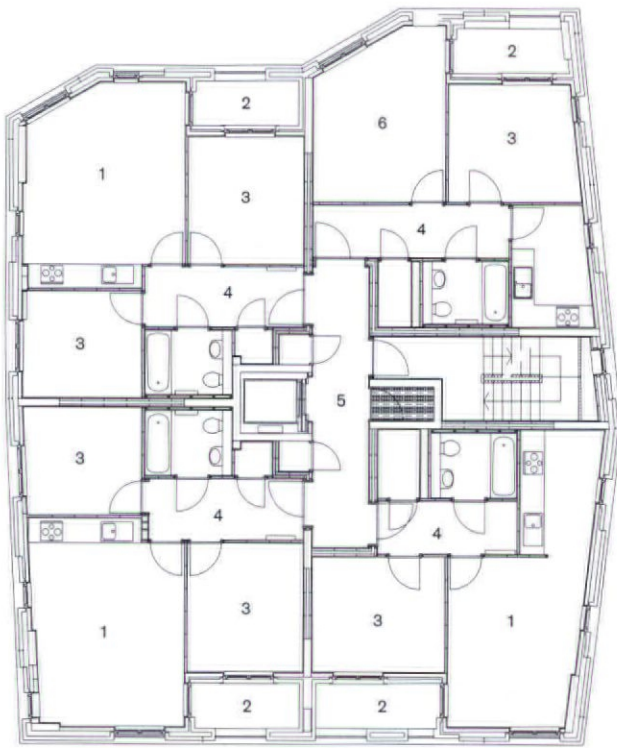
Sergison Bates clearly took inspiration from the scale of the Victorian villas, if a little supercharged. At Parkside, two buildings face the street, of six and five storeys, with a lower building behind them. The facades are of a brick and void composition, riffing on Victorian bay windows and providing subtle promontories and setbacks that articulate the facade, while carrying a historical reference to the context. The structure is cast-in-situ flat slabs and vertical posts, and you can read the slabs very strongly in the concrete rails that

run along the top of each storey. The roofs are very heavy, too, and have a different geometry to the meandering line of the facade; they project enough for passers-by to perceive the two different geometries at work.

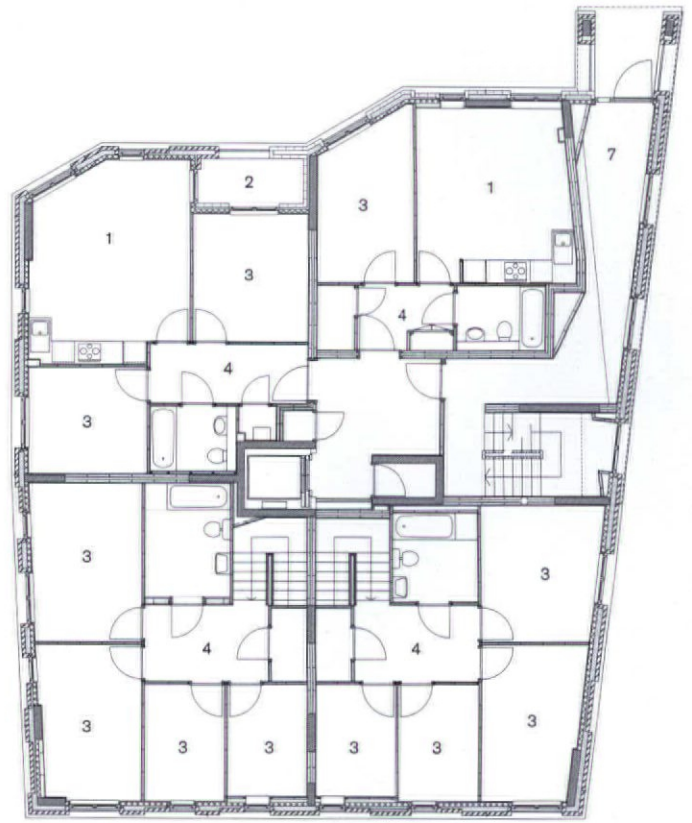
Sergison Bates had very little to do with the interiors, as the contractor did not retain the practice for that level of detail. It did, however, work on planning the layouts of the flats. Two things stand out here: the generosity of the hallways, with doors that can be removed to provide a more spacious reception area, and the balconies, which are part of the body of the building and can be accessed from two rooms in each flat – the lounge and one bedroom.

Bates is critical of the tacked-on balconies one sees so frequently on new housing. They are rarely big enough to sit out on and they look like an afterthought, but most importantly they make you feel exposed. This is especially true of buildings that face a road as busy as this one. At Parkside, people on the

1. Kitchen/living/
dining room
2. Balcony
3. Bedroom
4. Hall
5. Communal hall
6. Living/dining room
7. Communal entrance hall



Typical floor plan of buildings A and B



Typical upper-ground-floor plan of buildings A and B

balconies stand 'behind the structure' of the building, says Bates. The internal surfaces of the balconies are lighter – the brick is creamy, with a mineral wash applied to it, combined with a light-grey ceramic tiled floor and the concrete slab expressed above.

As a compositional device, these set-back, external rooms exaggerate the thickness of the brick facade, as do the window reveals. This is not a building resorting to the thin and taut skin familiar from most contemporary housing – it tries to look massive, and certainly succeeds. If there is a luxury to this building (the budget was £4.8 million; £1,700 per m²), it is made visible in the thickness of its materials and an attendant feeling of permanence.

If only the reduction of materials and formal elegance had continued to the ground floor facing the street. To my mind this is the least successful part of the project. Because the building's ground floor sits half a storey beneath the road, there is a need to deal with

the changes of level – down to the ground-floor flats and maisonettes, and up to the entrances of the flats above. I think this is where Sergison Bates' desire to make something typological has short-circuited. I can see that the idea of having an entrance that has steps up to it feels very much like a Victorian thing to do. The problem is that the building also requires a ramp for disabled access, and the layers of galvanised railings that this has spawned have compromised the building's engagement with the street. These buildings are a great pleasure to look at from the park or from a car, or bus, but not so much fun to walk past.

Circle Anglia won the bid for the site with a scheme of affordable and shared-ownership housing in 40 apartments and four maisonettes. It used a partnering contract, the rhetoric of which obscures how often architects are unceremoniously dumped at the earliest opportunity by contractors seeking to

maximise their margins. 'The risk with partnering is that it just turns into a Design and Build condition,' says Bates. 'It depends completely on the ethos of the contractor, and Hill [the contractor on this project] was limited in its flexibility. It was very resistant to building this building with in-situ concrete, but eventually did it, for the most part. But we were only involved in the planning up to working drawings, and we weren't novated. Hill Partnership decided it didn't need us.'

Hill unilaterally decided to use a more familiar, lightweight construction method on the building at the back of the site, which is made of proprietary slabs and brick and block construction of a more conventional sort. This has primarily affected the concrete rails, which here become pieces of fakery, a pastiche of the two front buildings with a metal beading revealing the lie to close observers. This, again, frustrates Bates. Formally, the building is still satisfying, less sculpted >>



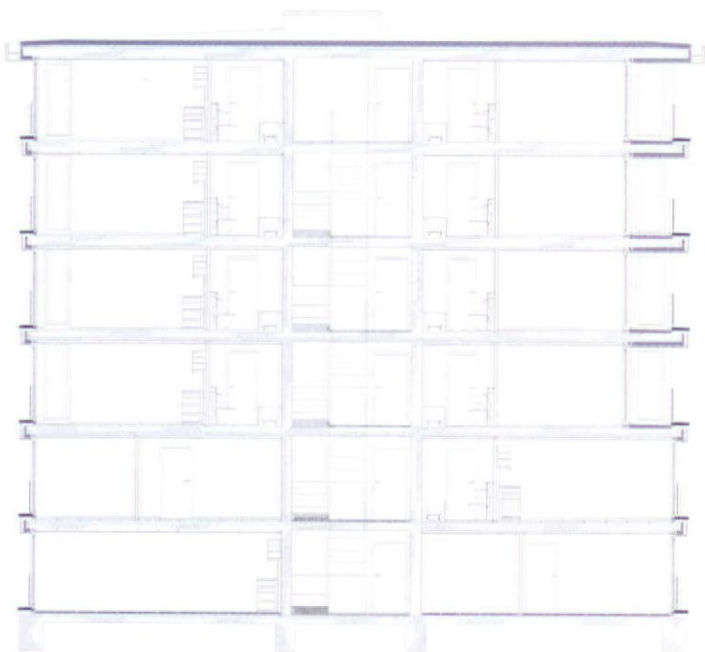
The planning situation was the ineluctable farce that accompanies building in Hackney

than the street-facing blocks, but with a grand brick column marking the entrance and holding up a canopy.

The planning situation was the ineluctable farce that accompanies the making of buildings in the London Borough of Hackney. There were four different planning officers, all in their 20s, Australian and with limited knowledge of the context. Bates praises the conservation officer, who demanded that certain details, including a 1:20 construction section drawing, were tied to the planning permission. But other parts of the conservation approach beggar belief. Sergison Bates was told to change the brick of its facades to one that would match an adjacent Victorian pub, one Bates describes as the 'best building left on the street'. The architect did so, and altered the massing of the southernmost building to defer and step back to the pub on the corner. As the buildings reached completion, the council sold the pub and the developer demolished it. The site is

empty now, but the proposed scheme, by developer Fiesta Estates and architect Stephen Davy Peter Smith Architects, looks like one of those mediocre pieces of pseudo-Modern infill Hackney suffers from. The new building has absolutely no relationship to Sergison Bates' whatsoever. As so often in Hackney, one hand didn't know what the other was doing. Or, more accurately, one hand was cut off and lay twitching on the floor, while the other gamely redrew the architect's drawings.

Parkside is a very powerful piece of architecture, and it is worth reflecting again on why it seems so provocative to British social housing sensibilities. On one level, it could be read as a deeply reactionary building. But what it is reacting to is so established – the aesthetic of Modernism-lite and the marginalisation of craft in the production of buildings in this country – that it suddenly looks to some eyes like it is trying too hard. I don't believe that it is. >>



Opposite page

The buildings' massing was inspired by neighbouring Victorian villas

Above Planners told Sergison Bates to change the brick of

its facades to match an adjacent Victorian pub, which was subsequently demolished

Left Cross section of building B

Below West elevation
Right Set-back
 balconies exaggerate
 the thickness of the
 brick facade



*This could be read as
 a deeply reactionary
 building – reacting
 to Modernism-lite*

If there is a question remaining about Sergison Bates' work, it is perhaps the degree to which the practice suffers from what philosopher Jean-François Lyotard called (with reference to the work of painter Paul Cezanne) the 'gullibility of the phenomenologist'. Sergison Bates' work has an anxious and ambiguous relationship with contemporary technology – somewhat in retreat but also trying to use it as a conceptual 'other', deriving a ground for architecture that is defined by its opposite. The desire for thickness comes from the thinness of its contemporary neighbours; the desire for simplicity and stridency in form is defined by the banal fussiness of other social housing buildings of today.

But the explicit and located critique of contemporary construction methods contained within these tough brick blocks on the Seven Sisters Road shows Sergison Bates moving forward from a rather idiosyncratic typological architecture (see its small urban housing

development on Shepherdess Walk, also in Hackney and completed in 2002) to one that concerns itself primarily with tectonics.

You may not like it, but you can't deny that Sergison Bates has made confident buildings with a generosity within and a toughness that's as appropriate to social housing in the 21st century as it was to that of the 19th. ■

Start on site date August 2006

Contract duration 23 months

Gross external floor area 3,692m²

Form of contract Partnering (NEC EEC Contract)

Total cost £4.8 million

Client Circle Anglia

Architect Sergison Bates Architects

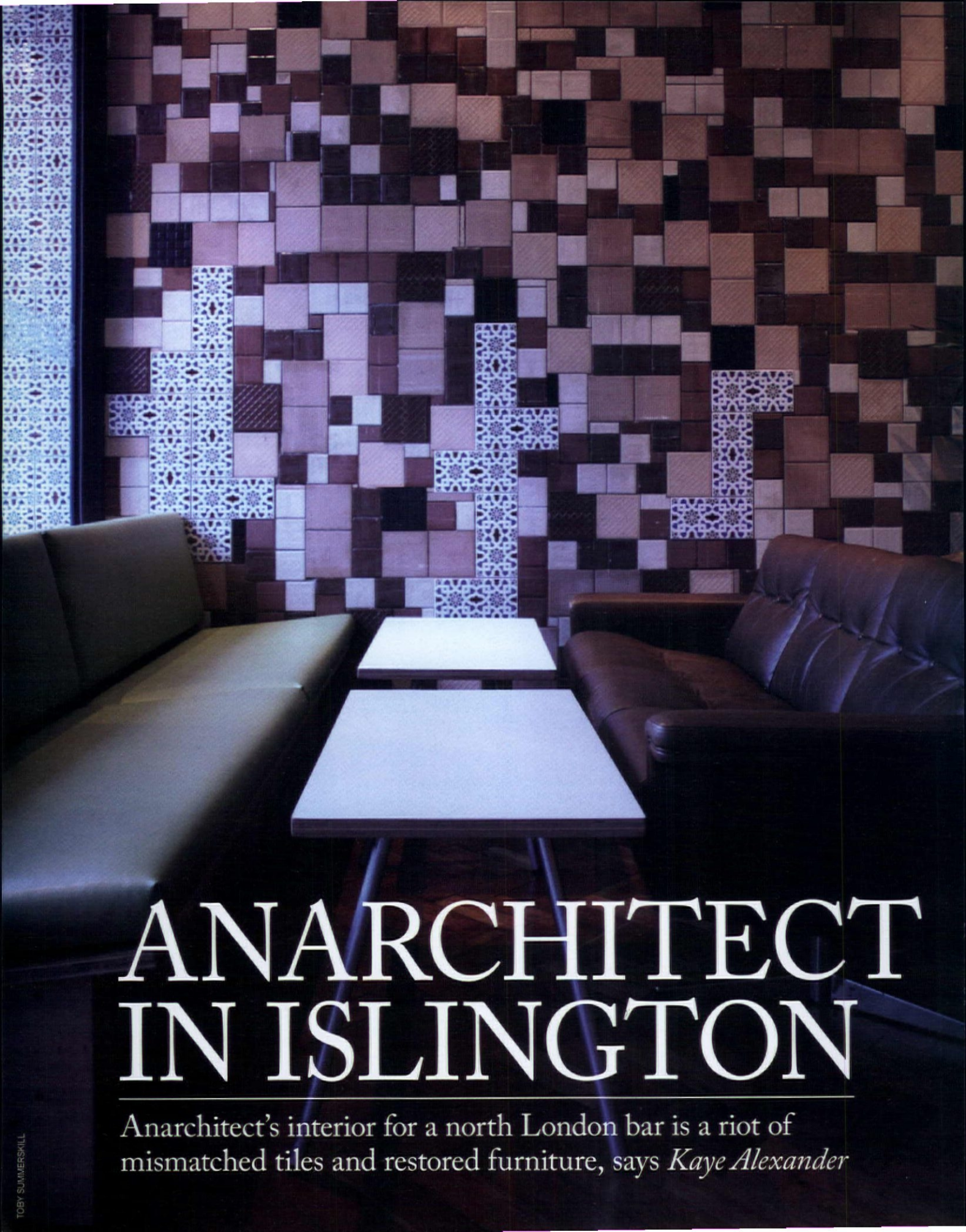
Structural Engineer Powell Tolner Associates

Services engineer NC Designs

Main contractor Hill Partnerships

Annual CO₂ emissions Not available





ANARCHITECT IN ISLINGTON

Anarchitect's interior for a north London bar is a riot of mismatched tiles and restored furniture, says *Kaye Alexander*



'I've got lots of ideas stored up that need to come out,' says Steve Jensen, director of London-based practice Anarchitect. Standing at the entrance of his newly completed bar – Barrio North in Islington's Essex Road – I can't imagine he has any ideas left, the compact, narrow space is so busy with cameo 'events'. I count 13 different types of chair, all from eBay, as is the reclaimed parquet floor. The Moroccan tiles that line the doorway and veranda are the cheapest fakes Jensen could find. Anarchitect's approach is almost anti-aesthetic, collaging ready-made objects and materials, and Barrio North is the most extreme example to date.

Anarchitect was commissioned to overhaul the aesthetic that the bar had under its previous ownership. Structural works were also undertaken, such as the opening of the front facade and relocation of the toilets to their logical position at the rear, as well as new wiring and plumbing.

Barrio North's name derives from the Spanish term meaning district or neighbourhood. 'The owner wanted a Spanish-themed bar, but we didn't feel that was appropriate – we are in London after all,' says Jensen. 'But it is fun to use some of that [Spanish] stuff, so we played some games.' The owner bought into Anarchitect's vision, which grew over a six-month design period, and helped source some of the furniture pieces. 'It wasn't about filling

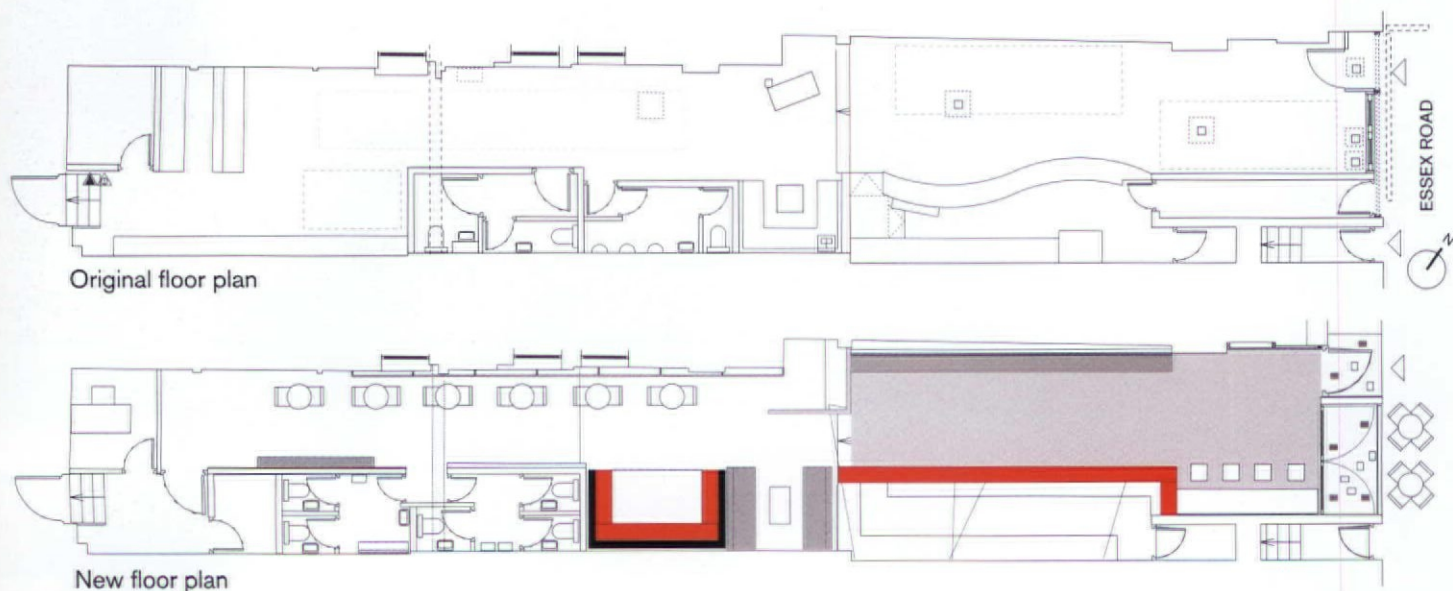
the space with junk,' says Jensen. 'We had the sort of relationship where I could say no.'

With a little help from the internet and his friends, Jensen was able to work comfortably within the £80,000 budget and deliver the project in 10 weeks. The fixed seating opposite the bar, positioned to view films that are sometimes projected on to its curved plywood canopy, was made by Jensen's friend Neil Jolliffe of Neil Jolliffe Interiors. Fold-down benches and tables can be stowed away within the structure when the bar is full. Like everything in the space, the fixings are crude, the finish a little rough, but the practical intention is clear and successful. Behind the seating is a 'pixel wall', created from random back-to-front tiles from Wickes. 'I wanted to do this in a residential project I worked on, but the client wasn't brave enough,' says Jensen. 'The idea is that friends of the owner will customise their own tile. It has filled up since I was last here.'

Two old stools have been revitalised with Jensen's secret weapon: Elastima. The product feels like it sounds – a kind of stretchy plastic. Waterproof and fireproof, Elastima is used by boatbuilders to make buoys. In the past Jensen has used it to coat furniture created for the *Big Brother* house, and two chairs which were eventually purchased by Philippe Starck. The usual spray application of Elastima is very >>

Facing page A jumble of back-to-front tiles and seating in the bar's interior

Above The open frontage of Barrio North on to Essex Road



The caravan's pine panelling gives the impression of sitting inside a Wendy house

expensive (about £1,000 for a chair), but a new thinner and cheaper paint application is now available, which Jensen has tested successfully at Barrio North.

Looking at the old plans, it is not surprising that the business failed under the previous owner. The entrance was a tiny door that led into a corridor rather than opening on to the street. Barrio North is now one long rectangle with a level change halfway along, marked by the termination of the bar and a DJ booth to the right. Up the single step is a more intimate seating area, the volume squeezed by the relocated toilet block – and a caravan.

'A caravan was always part of the plan,' says Jensen, implying that this was as normal an addition as an en-suite bathroom to a family home. The elevation formerly containing the door is cut away (a job completed by another of Jensen's friends, metalworker Victory Works) to reveal the section. Brought in through the newly opened frontage on to Essex Road, the caravan creates a discrete booth, but because its interior retains the pine panelling installed by its previous owner, it's a bit like sitting inside a Wendy house.

Artwork has become a ubiquitous feature of restaurants and bars but, as Jensen points out, 'it's difficult to have art in a bar without it getting trashed'. His solution was to protect it by placing unframed paintings behind standard

black floor grills. The result is rather heavy-handed compared to the irreverence of the pixel wall, and the work is only visible when viewed straight on.

There was little room in the budget for anything that did not contribute to the atmosphere of the bar, so accent lighting is achieved via LED rope simply nailed and strung along the walls. The suspended ceiling remains untouched, and the bitumen floor towards the rear unfinished. 'It's just a matter of priorities,' says Jensen. 'It's about the feel and attitude created by the flourishes rather than the precision.'

In this sense, Barrio North could not be more different from its refined neighbours on nearby Upper Street (a more prestigious stretch in Islington). The overall effect, however, is confident enough to pull off the mismatched materials and products, and the space doesn't feel new, so I suspect it may never deteriorate. Indeed, Jensen seems unphased by the graffiti that's already appeared on the breezeblock toilet wall. 'I thought the quality of the artwork would be better than this,' he says wryly.

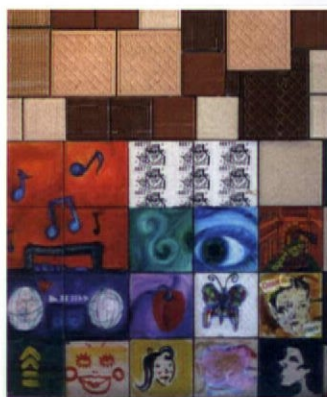
The eclectic splurge of ideas displayed at Barrio North has not left Jensen exhausted. Anarchitect is now at work on another bar five-minutes walk away on Upper Street, which has a very different brief and, from a sneak peek inside, a completely different tone. ■

This page,
clockwise from right
The caravan and
caged artwork; The
plywood bar; 'Pixel
wall' made from
customised tiles;

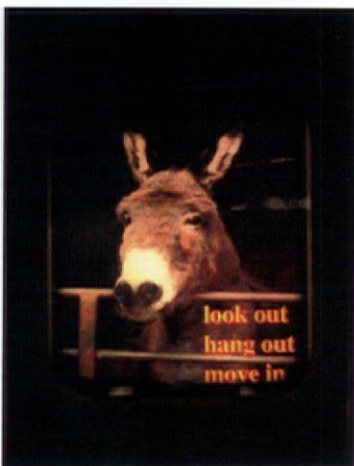
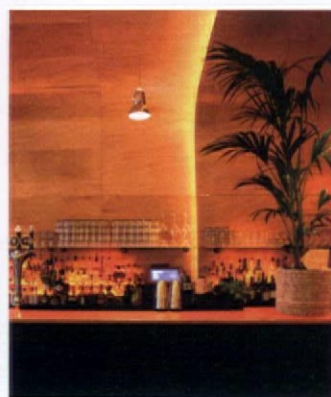
Artwork in the
caravan by Charlotte
Mew; View from the
entrance; *Larry the
Donkey* by Charlotte
Mew; Looking back at
the curved canopy bar



PHOTOGRAPHY BY TOBY SUMMERSKILL



KAYE ALEXANDER



KAYE ALEXANDER



Tender date June 2007
Start on site date September 2007
Contract duration 16 weeks
Gross external floor area 151m²
Form of contract Small Works
Total cost £80,000 excluding VAT
Client Ferdie Ahmed, Barrio North
Architect Anarchitect
Quantity surveyor/planning supervisor
Anarchitect
Main contractor Ironsides Construction
Annual CO₂ emissions All the extraction
and heating elements were existing and
maintained

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Big Fish Little Fish

*Make partner John Preve invests
some time in a future generation of
architects*

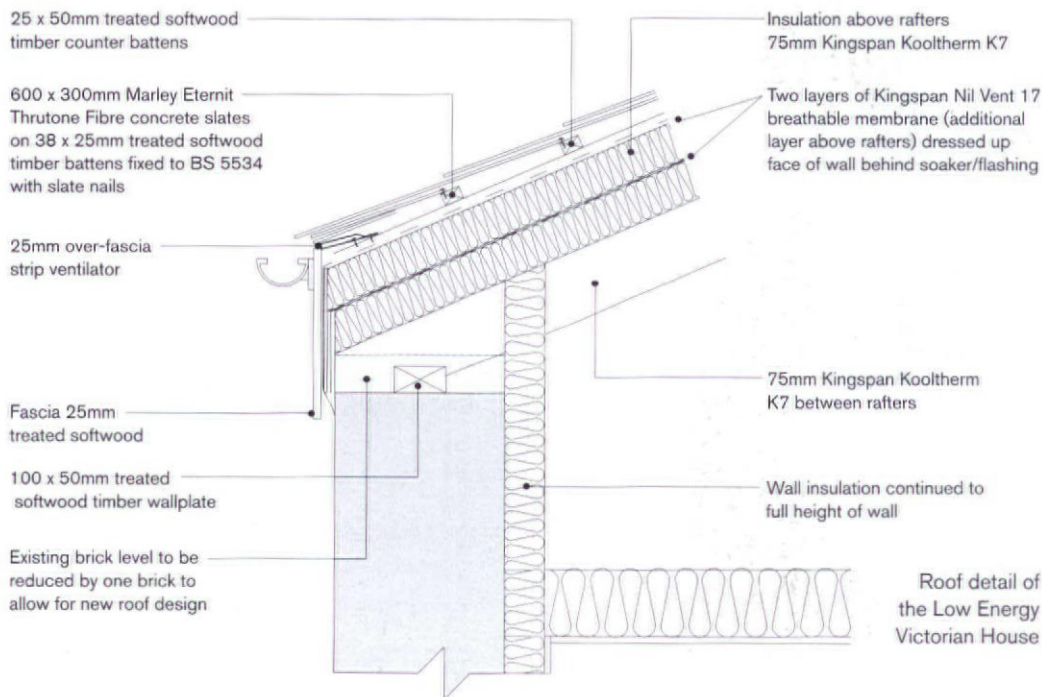
We have, since Make's inception, encouraged young people to experience the job of an architect in the hope that they might choose to study architecture at university. During the school summer holidays, we invite students into the studio to participate in the process of designing buildings and places.

The students, very politely, arrive on time on Monday morning. They are given a 'dos and don'ts' talk, shown around the studio and introduced to their mentors, who they will shadow during their time with us. We try to give them a balanced and broad understanding of what an architect does.

It's amazing to see such enthusiasm from people who, have never been inside an architect's studio. They relish the chance to make models, learn new computer skills and sit in on design team meetings. Some are invited to visit sites, where they are always surprised by the mechanics of the construction process. At the end of the week, we encourage them to design something for themselves. They are given a small brief and invited to produce a piece of work.

One student produced an entire sketchbook of ideas for a pavilion in Dublin. This was, in itself, extraordinary, but he then revealed a model of his favourite design. I suggested he kept in touch!

Next issue: Jonathan Hendry of
Jonathan Hendry Architects



Roof detail of
the Low Energy
Victorian House

VICTORIAN HOUSE GOES GREEN

On first appearance, no. 17 St Augustine's Road looks like a smart but nondescript Victorian four-storey semi-detached property, the kind typical to north London and Camden in particular. Unlike its neighbours however, no. 17 is also an exemplar refurbishment project which aims to reduce its carbon emissions by 80 per cent.

Landlord Camden Council is providing guided tours of the property – dubbed the Low Energy Victorian House (LEVH) – to demonstrate the energy-saving technology it has installed, such as full insulation, double glazing, photovoltaics and solar thermal panels.

In contrast to many exemplar projects, such as the demonstration homes at BRE's innovation park in Watford, LEVH is very much based in reality – the project is subject to a tight budget

and the stringent restrictions of the conservation area in which it stands.

'If we are encouraging people to make these changes to their homes we need to be able to quantify the positive effect they will have' says Ian Ridley of the Bartlett School of Graduate Studies, one of the researchers monitoring the project.

The house will be occupied by tenants in the autumn, which will give researchers the opportunity to monitor the building's performance under real-life conditions using sensors and recording devices. The results will be published in future issues of the AJ.

The Low Energy Victorian House, 17 St Augustine's Road, London NW1 9RL, is open to the public every Sunday from 2-5pm, until 12 October 2008.

LOW ENERGY VICTORIAN HOUSE CREDITS

Project design and management Landers

www.landars-associates.co.uk

Lengard www.lengard.co.uk

London Borough of Camden

www.camden.gov.uk

Funding

National Energy Foundation

www.nef.org.uk

Sustainable Energy Academy

www.s-ea.org.uk

UCL www.ucl.ac.uk

UCL Urban Buzz www.uclb.com

Service/product suppliers

Green Home Concierge

www.greenhomesconcierge.co.uk

Kingspan www.kingspan.com

Lindab www.lindab.co.uk

Megaman www.megamanuk.com

MH Joinery

www.mhjoineryservices.co.uk

Milliken www.milliken.com

Russell Windows

www.russelltimbertech.co.uk

Sundog www.sundog-energy.co.uk

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Worcester Bosch www.bosch.com

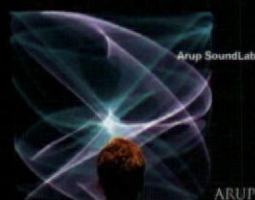
BAUMAN LYONS



LISTEN TO YOUR DESIGN

Arup's SoundLab lets you hear what your projects will sound like before they are built. *Fiona McWilliam* pricks up her ears

A projection system fills the listener's field of view



I would challenge anyone not to flinch when approached (seemingly) from behind by a speeding motorbike in Arup's acoustics division's new London SoundLab. So realistic is the 3D sound experience that you feel you're really there in the sunny, tree-lined street on the screen before you, as the bike momentarily shatters the tranquillity.

The 20m² dark-walled room, in the basement of Arup's offices in Fitzrovia, central London, has been designed from scratch as a fully isolated box-within-a-box. There are SoundLabs in New York, Melbourne and Hong Kong and there is another one in London, but the Fitzrovia facility

is the first to be purpose built. Arup's Glasgow office is planning a bespoke design for next year.

The main purpose of the SoundLab is predicting the sound qualities of a space, enabling architects and clients to 'listen' to a proposed building such as a concert hall, office or railways station – or even an outdoor development such as a public park or subway – before it is built, to assess general audibility and purposefully generated sound. 'The technology makes the science of acoustics easy for clients to understand, allowing them to make more subjective decisions on the acoustics of their building,' says Arup principal

ARUP



Neville Street Underpass, Leeds

Bauman Lyons Architects with sound artist Hans Peter Kuhn

Date of completion Autumn 2008

To improve this noisy underpass for Leeds City Council, a number of interventions are planned. These include wall cladding panels, which absorb traffic noise, and a series of 'sonic art' compositions by Kuhn, developed in Arup's SoundLab and designed to 'intertwine' with the road noise, changing peoples' perception of sound in the underpass.

Neill Woodger, 'architects can hear the sonic consequences of their designs and modify accordingly, greatly reducing the risks previously inherent in acoustic design.'

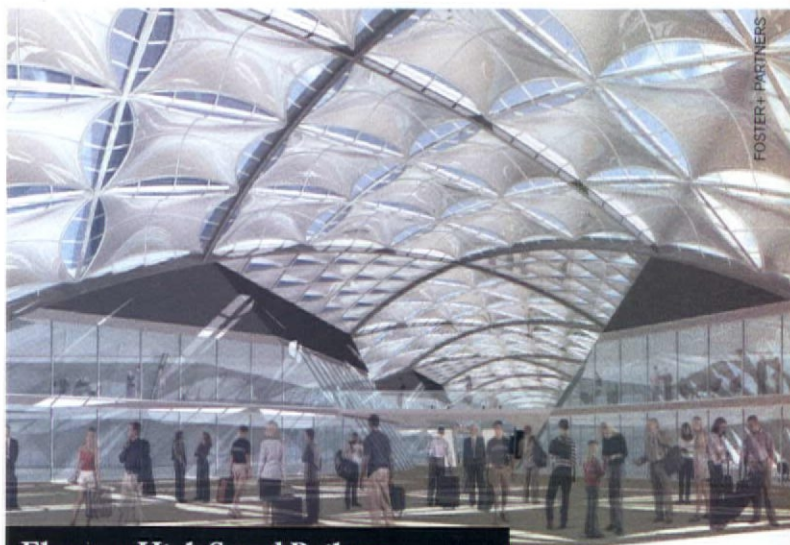
Arup calculates the acoustic value of the project by building a 3D model based on the architect's model, where available. This is imported into a number of software packages for acoustic analysis. These include CATT Version 8.0 and Odeon, which produce impulse responses from computer models of rooms, while Spat, from the IRCAM Research Lab, is used to generate 3D soundfields. The output of this is combined with 3D audio techniques to create the auralisation played in the SoundLab.

An ambisonic or 3D sound field is produced by 12 speakers arranged in a sphere around the SoundLab's perimeter. 'The listener is sitting in a sphere of sound,' says Woodger, 'and the fully 3D soundtrack reproduces sound fields just as we experience

them in real life.' The sound-absorbing walls, buried cabling and external equipment enclosure ensures there is virtually no background noise, so much lower thresholds of sound can be heard.

Music is recorded in an echo-free room and can then be listened to in different virtual environments. Arup has a vast database of acoustic 'signatures' of auditoria – listeners can hear the same orchestra playing Handel's *Water Music* in Amsterdam's Concertgebouw or Vienna's Musikverein, from two-thirds of the way back in the stalls (the best place in most concert halls, according to Woodger, who is a classically trained musician) and compare the experience of each. Arup will also provide aural references of good or bad design, preferably from environments the architect knows.

All too often in the past, architects would make an educated guess about the play of sound on yet-to-be-built buildings, or consult acousticians with technical expertise but >>



Florence High Speed Railway Station, Italy

Foster + Partners

Date of completion 2010

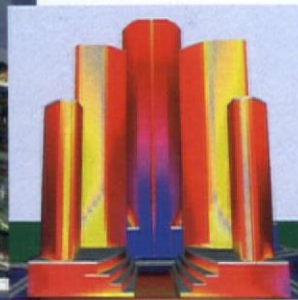
The 450m-long, 50m-wide and 25m-high main space of the station requires acoustic design to ensure that public announcements are intelligible. Arup's SoundLab was used to assess the effect of different loudspeakers and sound-absorbing finishes on the clarity of the announcements.



Tameer Towers, Shams Abu Dhabi Gensler

Date of completion 2011

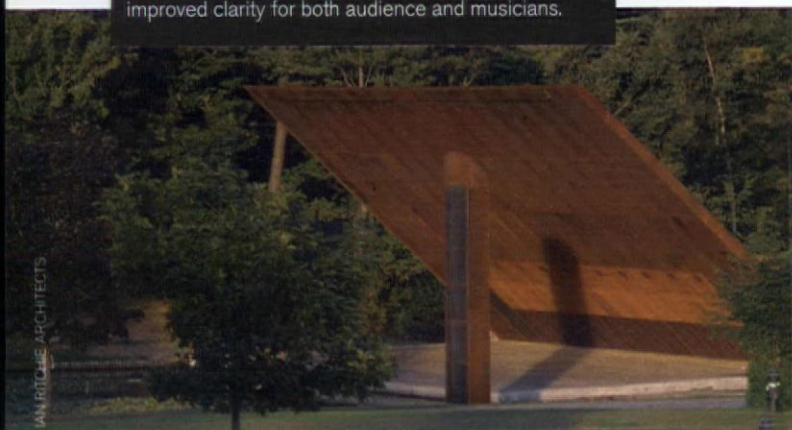
In the absence of an existing noise source that could be measured, traffic-flow information was used in a 3D noise model of the undeveloped site, produced by Hilson Moran (*pictured below*). This allowed visualisation of the variation in noise around the site and meant the acoustic requirements of the numerous facades could be specified quickly and accurately.



Crystal Palace Bowl Ian Ritchie Architects

Date of completion 1997

Paul Gillieron Acoustic Design says this project is the first orchestral shell to feature 'electronic architecture'. A subframe within the Cor-ten steel platform supports 32 speakers that amplify sound picked up from stage-side microphones. These speakers are fixed to a trimmer frame with rubber washers and overlaid with a perforated steel plate. Two Cor-ten columns on either side of the platform contain more speakers and an amplification system. The result is improved clarity for both audience and musicians.



had few, if any, practical methods of verification. Earlier acoustic laboratories were either incapable of producing a 3D sound field, or required headphones. 'You could listen to music in a particular auditorium,' says Woodger, 'but you couldn't overlay hundreds of other sources of sound on to that, such as audience applause, as SoundLab can, to produce a realistic output.'

Engineering consultancy

accessible way.' Externally, the software takes a noise source, or combination of sources, and predicts its passage over a current or future landscape, taking into account reduction due to distance, screening and reflection. The level of noise is calculated at various points on a theoretical 3D grid.

Paul Gillieron Acoustic Design (PGAD) has a 3D sound studio for composition and manipulation of sound in different formats. The firm's specialist division, surround-

Listeners can hear the same orchestra playing in Amsterdam's Concertgebouw and Vienna's Musikverein

Hilson Moran expresses and analyses sound levels using specialist 3D modelling programs – CadnaA version 3.6 for external and CATT Version 8.0 for internal – to create a noise map. 'These not only allow us to make detailed and reliable predictions,' says Hilson Moran head of acoustics Nick Jones, 'but also convey the acoustic principle in an

dAV, designs 3D sound and digital imaging for art installations, museum exhibits and large-scale performances. Its Ambisonics format, which like Arup's SoundLab employs an array of speakers to record sound in 3D, enables PGAD to turn acoustically 'dead' theatres into more reverberant auditoria by changing their virtual geometry. ■

In this section // *Hadrian's Villa* // *Critic's Choice*
// *The Beijing Olympic Opening Ceremony* // *Degree*
Shows at Sheffield and Kingston // *5 Things To Do*

The Critics

The Canopus at
Hadrian's Villa in Tivoli

EXHIBITION

Hadrian's Villa: 'serial seducer'

*As the British Museum's exhibition probes the Roman emperor's life, **Prisca Thielmann** draws our attention to his imperial villa and its rich architectural legacy >>*

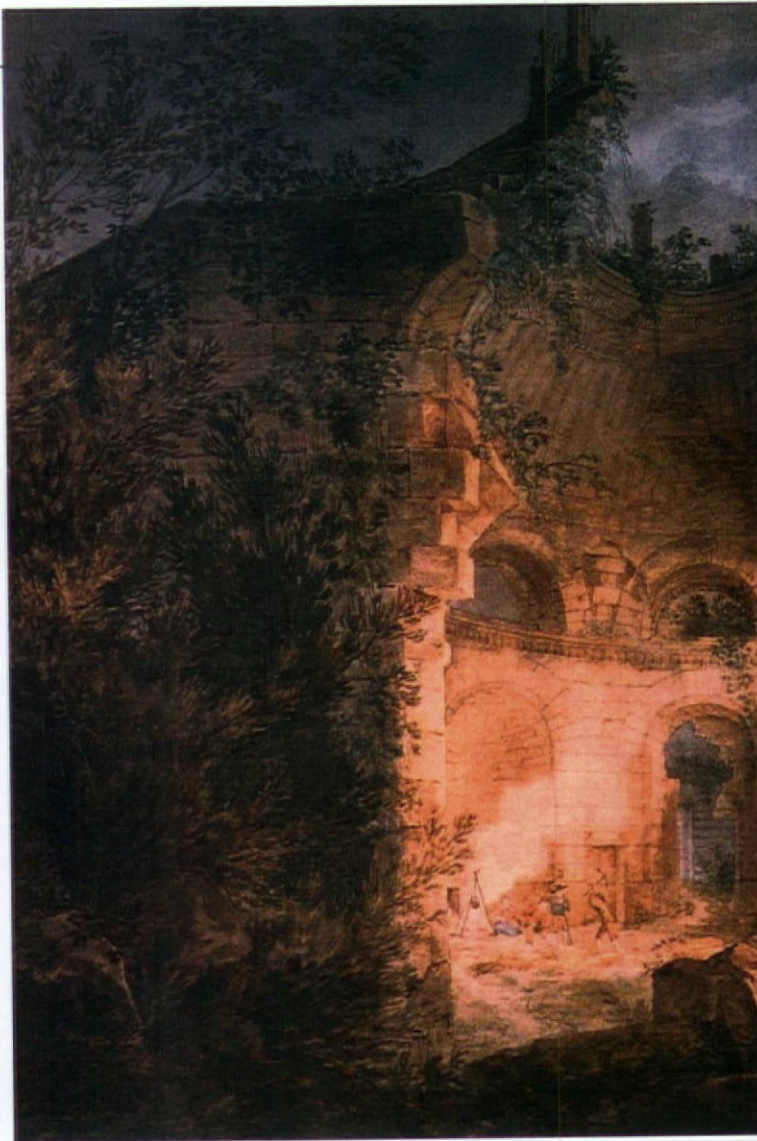
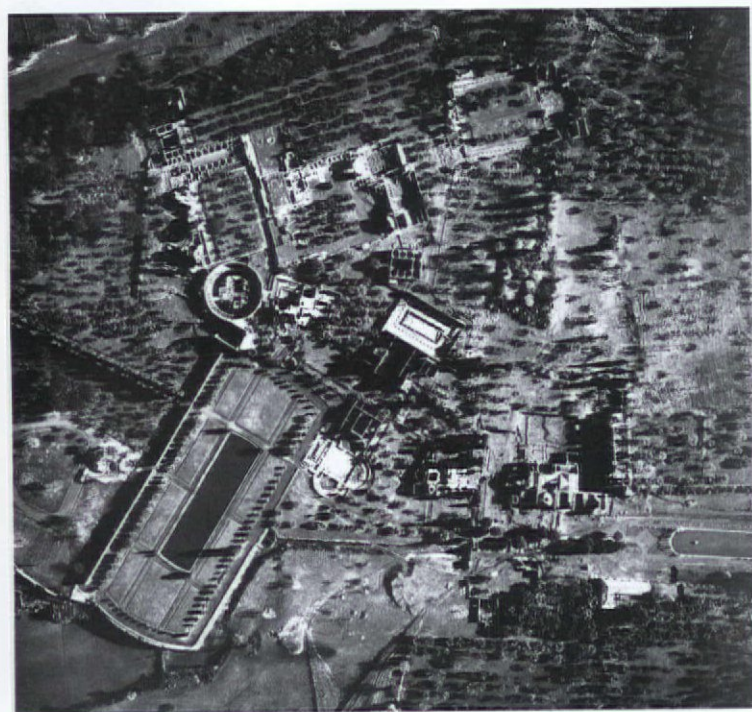
Hadrian: Empire and Conflict, until 26 October at the British Museum, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3DG. www.britishmuseum.org

Below Aerial view of Hadrian's Villa

Right *A Vision of Sir John Soane's Design for the Rotunda of the Bank of England as a Ruin*, by Joseph Gandy

Far right, top Louis Kahn's West Hostel Buildings in Dhaka, Bangladesh

Far right, below Looking at Hadrian's Villa from the Piazza d'Oro



Hadrian continued from page 43

'Go back and draw your pumpkins!' shouted the chief of works Apollodoros of Damascus at Hadrian. He was referring to the Roman Emperor's obsession with folded, unreinforced concrete domes, the newest and bravest building technology of the time. This is the only written source, recorded by Roman historian Cassius Dion, that reveals Hadrian sketched and was actively involved in design. The extent of the emperor's architectural input into his associated building projects, which include the Pantheon, Hadrian's Villa and Hadrian's Wall, is contested – and is not the only mystery that surrounds his character. The British Museum's exhibition 'Hadrian – Empire and Conflict' seeks to explore parts of his life and answer whether Hadrian was a cultured, peace-keeping emperor (as widely thought) or a ruthless military leader.

At the centre of the exhibition is a model of the Pantheon, positioned like the smallest

figure in a Russian doll within a full-size, near exact copy of itself, the rotunda of the Reading Room at the centre of the Great Court of the British Museum. The Pantheon's sheer size, perfection and age have inspired the work of many architects, and examples of its family tree (including the Reading Room) are exhibited in the show, along with St Peter's

Hadrian's Villa is too complex and too open to interpretation to be represented in a singular reconstruction

in Rome; the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul; Brunelleschi's cathedral in Florence and London's St Paul's Cathedral.

The temporary structure of the exhibition, designed in-house, seems to reference the other important Hadrianic building in the show: Hadrian's Villa in Tivoli, near Rome. The circular platform, inserted into the rotunda of the Reading Room with its edges pulled away from the walls, is strongly

reminiscent of a famous part of the Villa, Hadrian's Teatro Maritimo – an enclosed island retreat. Unfortunately, we do not get to cross over a glittering circular canal of water via a little drawbridge to enter it, as in the original – one of many unexpected spatial compositions that make up Hadrian's Villa.

A day's horse-ride from Rome, Hadrian's Villa was a conglomerate of buildings covering a 120ha site. The structure, once a miniature city and a palace of splendour, has been transformed over time into a magical pastoral landscape, its building fragments stripped of their decorative lining and cladding, leaving large sculptural objects of brick and concrete. It is largely still the ruin that Renaissance architects found at the rediscovery of the villa, forgotten for centuries, which is best captured in Piranesi's *Vedute di Villa Adriana* – 10 interpretive etchings of the building. The villa's mythic beauty and ruination have serially seduced



architects and archaeologists, which has resulted in a multitude of interpretations and attempts at reconstruction. William L MacDonald and John A Pinto's book *Hadrian's Villa and its Legacy* (Yale University Press, 1977), examines the study, reception and influence of the villa on scholars and architects such as Robert Adam who came to study the ruins.

The exhibition plays host to a huge reconstruction model, which normally lives at the Hadrian's Villa site in Tivoli. I have looked at it numerous times and although I can't withdraw from the initial excitement of the birds-eye view of the additive city-like structure, I am ultimately disappointed. I want to be offered entry into the grand rooms with glimpses of day-lit watery courtyards through colonnaded screens and to experience the atmospheres created in this interior world in 1:1.

Hadrian's Villa is too complex and, due to its ruination, too open for interpretation to be

represented in a singular reconstruction. It can be experienced, however, through reinterpretations of the Villa built elsewhere, such as the fine interiors of Borromini's baroque churches, the joyous fountains at Pirro Ligorio's Villa d'Este (also in Tivoli) and the pure grounded brick-structures by Louis Kahn. Through these works, a picture of what

I want to be offered entry into the grand rooms with glimpses of day-lit watery courtyards

may amount to the physical and idealistic richness of the original Villa begins to emerge. This thinking process could be compared to Italo Calvino's book *Invisible Cities* (Harvest Books, 1978), in which short descriptions about seemingly different cities are overlaid to illuminate the multi-faceted nature of one city as a whole.

Calvino's layering of narratives is a fascinating technique, which can be very

comprehensive, but allows scope for a personal reading. The curators of the show have chosen to use the same method to respond to the exhibition's lead question: 'Who was Hadrian?'. Rather than offering a single answer, the exhibition brings together an outstandingly rich collection of facts and artifacts, which allow an individual assessment of the question.

However, I recommend travelling to Rome and Tivoli, as well as seeing the exhibition. Only by taking in the nearly prehistoric humming atmosphere in the Pantheon and wandering between big fragments of ruin in the Villa, you can begin to understand where the myth of Hadrian the 'cultured man' has come from. ■

Prisca Thielmann is an associate at Maccreanor Lavington and has spent the last nine months as a scholar in architecture at the British School in Rome

Resume: Was Hadrian a hero or a villa-ain? His house may have the answer...

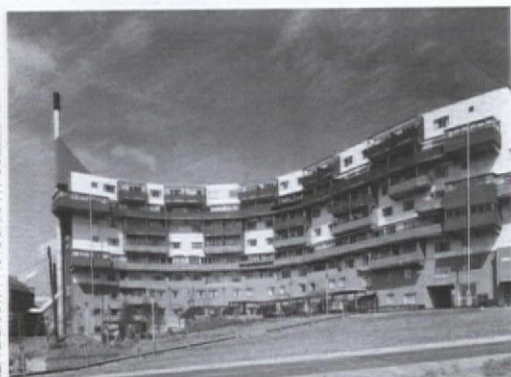


Critic's Choice

The Twentieth Century Society presents a masterful take on housing, says **Andrew Mead**

Every so often the Twentieth Century Society publishes a volume in its Twentieth Century Architecture series devoted to a building type or theme, and the latest is especially worthwhile. Called *Housing the Twentieth Century Nation* (£19.50), its focus on public housing is timely, given the debate sparked by the likely demolition of the Smithsons' Robin Hood Gardens in East London. The book follows the series' usual format, with a dozen well-illustrated and copiously referenced essays, written not just by historians but by architects involved with particular projects. Examples of the latter include John Partridge (from the former London County Council Housing Division) on the celebrated 1950s Alton estates at Roehampton, and Michael Drage on Ralph Erskine's Byker in Newcastle upon Tyne (pictured below). The books always profit from these reminiscences, but retain a scholarly air; in this case reinforced by a very good bibliography, which ranges from government documents to studies of specific schemes.

How to regenerate a sink estate is the subject of Jonah Lowenfeld's piece on the Mozart Estate in Westminster, where social scientist Alice Coleman (author of *Utopia on Trial*) and the Bartlett's Bill Hillier clashed in the late 1980s on the best course of action. In an essay on another troubled place, Cumbernauld, Miles Glendinning praises the town's 'urbanist qualities' and laments the failure of the listing system to 'provide a means of conserving important pieces of planning'. This book really is a must-read.



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Fireworks 'like a fibre-optic featherbed' explode over the Bird's Nest stadium

BEIJING OLYMPICS

Rory Olcayto tunes in to this summer's blockbuster – the televised Olympic opening ceremony

2008 Beijing Olympic opening ceremony, 8 August, televised on BBC One and available on BBC iPlayer

The debate over the political role played by the architects of Beijing's Olympic stadium is over. The eye-popping opening ceremony in Herzog & de Meuron's Bird's Nest on 8 August – an awesome, boastful display of power and technology – had a global audience of four billion. Who could now deny that the Swiss firm has designed the definitive emblem of the world's most powerful totalitarian state?

True to national stereotype, the Swiss architects adopt a neutral stance on the ethics of their work. Earlier this year at the Tate Modern, Herzog weakly argued that architecture was free of political meaning, and implied that the stadium was merely the sum of its precision-engineered parts (AJ 17.04.08).

The same cannot be said of the opening ceremony. The stadium was the backdrop for a series of spectacular set-piece events that proclaimed the superiority of Chinese culture.

Dream-like choreography of 'flying' dancers and super-scaled models explained that paper, gunpowder, printing and the compass were all Chinese creations. In a mesmerising sequence, tiny glittering lights, representative of

gunpowder, congealed on the stadium floor to form Olympic rings, which then floated gently into the air – an ominous metaphor considering China's growing military assertiveness.

Thousands of chanting drummers with glow-in-the-dark drumsticks, 40,000 fireworks and a giant model of the Earth emerging from a trapdoor – an egg for China's nest – coupled with a national anthem singalong by representatives of the country's 56 ethnic peoples, would have induced yet more shock and awe among discerning viewers.

The Swiss firm did not design the ceremony – that fell to Zhang Yimou, director of blockbuster movie *House of Flying Daggers* – but it did design the stage, and very beautiful it looked too. One still image (above) shows the stadium just seconds after a volley of fireworks have been fired from within. Appropriately, given the massive web and television audience, the snapshot resembles a nest with a fibre-optic featherbed. (It has since emerged that some fireworks were computer generated).

Stare at the image for a little longer though, or squint when you next see the stadium on TV, and the bird's-nest aesthetic fades to be replaced by an icon wrapped in wire. In light of China's crackdown on Google and free speech, could this be a metaphor for a nation bound and gagged? Iconism encourages continued interpretation – perhaps the architects are more politically subversive than they've been given credit for. 'Our strength is to design buildings that permit contradictions,' Herzog told German magazine *Der Spiegel* last month, hinting at this possibility.

Resume: The Beijing Olympics spreads its wings and flies from the Bird's Nest



CLIVE ROSE/GETTY IMAGES

SHEFFIELD DEGREE SHOW 2008

Jonathan Herbert reviews The University of Sheffield School of Architecture's end-of-year show

Sheffield University School of Architecture end-of-year show, closed 26 July, The Arts Tower, Floor 15, University of Sheffield S10 2TN

The University of Sheffield's school of architecture has a reputation for quality, and this is expressed in the work in its end-of-year show. Students are encouraged to experiment in a variety of techniques; technical drawings are liberally interspersed with rough sketches and working models. Though this approach places emphasis on process over presentation, the results remain visually arresting.

The third-year cohort exhibits a range of confident responses. Among them is Daniel Cook's Bradford Hotel, in which visitors move through a series of dramatic spaces before arriving at their rooms, each articulated as an individual element in the structure. And postgraduate Pete Jennings' pigeon-racers' clubhouse is beautifully composed.

Every weary practitioner should visit a show such as Sheffield's – it mixes the fantastic and the naive in an exploration of what architecture means to people.

Jonathan Herbert is a managing director of Bond Bryan Architects

Resume: Sheffield University – a tonic for the weary practitioner

KINGSTON DEGREE SHOW 2008

Architecture students at Kingston took to the coast this year. Doug Carson visited their degree show

Made in Kingston end-of-year show, closed 14 July, Dray Walk Gallery, Truman Brewery, 91 Brick Lane, London E1 6QL

Kingston's third-year and diploma students' project site was in Margate and it's clear that the sea air has done them good. Far from the ephemeral and would-be-iconic designs common to other London schools, the work shown in the Truman Brewery drew on modest forms and tectonic sensibilities.

The clarity of instruction from tutors came as a relief. Each student's work was displayed on a single vertical strip of A1 width. Sectional models rested on adjacent palettes, complemented by plans, sections and details.

In his book *Theoretical Anxiety and Design Strategies* (MIT Press, 2005), architect Rafael Moneo advises students that 'architecture need neither depend on externalities (function/programme) nor find personal expression (language/style)'. The few projects here that rely on overly complex programmes consequently disappoint and confirm Moneo's dictum. The more successful projects aim for a 'dignified grouping of masses... ornamental rather than disfigurements to their neighbourhoods', an approach quoted by one student and taken from a Victorian school board manifesto.

A community building designed by final year undergraduate Craig Balance goes some way to answering both Moneo's instruction and the Victorian call. A sports hall is offset against ancillary spaces with both elements in rational response to the lie of the land. Balance's tutor, Michael Gollings, studied at Kingston at a time when the diploma course had a very strong reputation, so it is disappointing that this year's show has only four diploma students exhibiting. The degree students are a fine crop, and should be courted to make the diploma course strong once more. Doug Carson is an architect with Lynch Architects

Resume: Kingston's work is clear, concise and well-considered; Margate is so bracing

5 THINGS TO DO THIS WEEK

1 Zhou Jun: Bird's Nest Project

Feast on the first European showing of Jun's urban photography documenting the changing face of China's cities, including the Herzog & de Meuron's 'Bird's Nest' stadium and OMA's CCTV building.

Until 29 August. Rossi & Rossi, 16 Clifford Street, London W1S 3RG. www.rossirossi.com

2 A Century of Olympic Posters

Still got an Olympic appetite? Swap televised razzmatazz for screen-printed elegance. This exhibition at Caruso St John's Museum of Childhood includes posters by David Hockney and Andy Warhol.

Until 7 September. V&A Museum of Childhood, Cambridge Heath Road, London E2 9PA. www.vam.ac.uk/moc

3 Sarah Morris: Lesser Panda

Last on the Olympic art podium is Sarah Morris, with her colourful abstract paintings inspired by the Olympic rings.

Until 6 September. White Cube, Mason's Yard, SW1Y 6BU. www.whitecube.com

4 Michael Collins: The Long Look

More documentation of the changing face of places, this time in Bedford, with the focus on industry.

Until 20 September. BCA Gallery, 13 High Street, Bedford MK40 1RN

5 Back to the Future: Sir Basil Spence 1907-1976

Catch this touring exhibition (*below*) in Coventry before it moves to the Swiss Cottage Library in London for the month of September.

Until 31 August. The Herbert, Jordan Well, Coventry CV1 5QP. www.theherbert.org



Basil Spence-designed flats in the Gorbals, Glasgow

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METAL TECHNOLOGY



AJ ENQUIRY 201

The four different apartment blocks of Centro in Northampton's Broad Street, with architectural glazing by Metal Technology, create a new 'residential street' in this lively area. Developed by Barratt Northampton with fabricator Deane & Amos, the 57 apartments of Omega House have System 5-20 high-performance tilt-and-turn aluminium windows.

STOAKES SYSTEMS



AJ ENQUIRY 202

Translucent Kalwall is widely used on large retail premises in the USA to diffuse daylight evenly without shadows, glare, or the need for blinds. This Sainsbury's store in Edinburgh also uses Kalwall, which provides the added attraction of a stunning entrance at night. For more information visit www.stoakes.co.uk

CORUS



AJ ENQUIRY 203

The new fire station in Ashton-under-Lyne, Greater Manchester, has used Corus Colorcoat HPS200 prefinished steel in Goosewing Grey as part of a Euroclad SF500 roofing system. The Corus product has now been superseded by Colorcoat HPS200 Ultra, which offers an improved colour range and performance.

CLAXTON BLINDS



AJ ENQUIRY 204

Claxton Blinds is one of the leading commercial window-blind companies in the UK, specialising in interior window projects for any requirement. Some notable projects from Claxton Blinds include Tower 42, the Canary Wharf Tower and the Citigroup Tower. For more information, visit www.claxton-blinds.com

INTEGRATED DESIGN



AJ ENQUIRY 205

The Fastlane Entrance Control range is designed to balance the aesthetic and security requirements demanded by today's architects and modern building design. The range includes optical turnstiles, tripods, entrance gates, barrier-arm optical turnstiles, speedgates, passgates and tailgate-detection systems. www.fastlane-turnstiles.com

TILE OF SPAIN



AJ ENQUIRY 206

Patina, from Tile of Spain member Apavisa, is a porcelain tile which has the appearance of aged copper. With very low porosity (<0.5 per cent) and extremely hardwearing properties, the tiles are ideally suited to external facades, including cladding and roof coverings, and to interior applications, both wall and floor.

ACS SYSTEMS



AJ ENQUIRY 207

FastClad is a proven prefabricated brick-slip cladding system, enabling internal and external masonry to be assembled with speed and efficiency without specialist tradesmen. FastClad is ideal for new or existing timber-frame and steel-framed buildings. Recent projects include developments with Tesco, Taylor Woodrow and JS Bloor.

SAS



AJ ENQUIRY 208

Market leader SAS International has introduced a new comprehensive reference guide to specifying and installing metal ceilings in a range of different environments. It provides advice on how ceilings should be suspended, and shows the advantages of different ceiling types. The brochure can be requested at www.sasint.co.uk/newbrochure

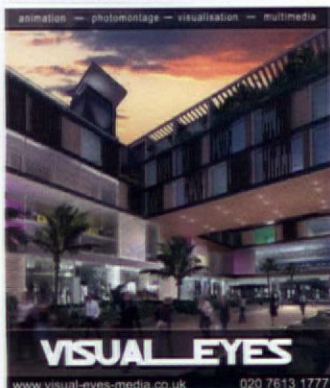
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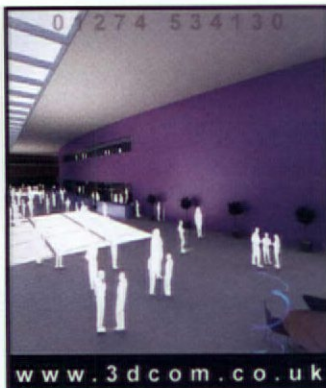
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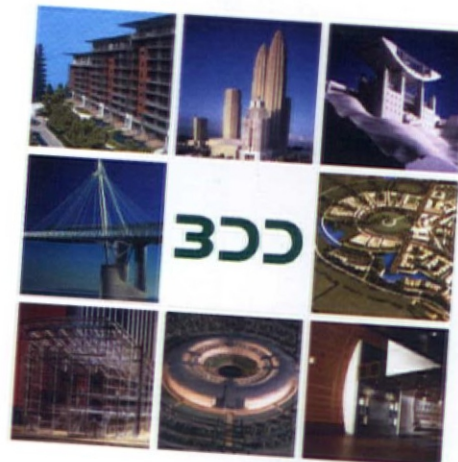
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TENDER

Borough of Poole



POOLE PARK PAVILION & CYCLE TRACK PROJECT

The Borough of Poole seeks fee quotations from consultant teams that may be interested in a linked project covering design work associated with the restoration/conversion/extension of an existing Victorian Pavilion, whilst exploring opportunities to return into use the adjacent 1890's cycle track. Poole Park is on the English Heritage's National Register of Parks & Gardens of Special Historic Interest. This is an exciting and challenging project for the right team.

Please contact Paul Hillman on (01202) 261322 or by e-mail p.hillman@poole.gov.uk to request further background information and a project brief.

The closing date for fee submissions will be 29th August 2008.

INVITATION TO TENDER

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT COMPANY LIMITED

Design and Construction of the Maracas Beach Redesign and Restoration Project at Maracas Bay, Trinidad

The Tourism Development Company Limited (TDC) invites qualified and experienced contractors/ firms to submit tenders for the Design and Construction of the Maracas Beach Redesign and Restoration Project at Maracas Bay, Trinidad.

The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, through the Ministry of Tourism, has embarked on a programme to improve the beach tourism infrastructure of Trinidad and Tobago to international standards. The current project to be undertaken is the redesign and restoration of the Maracas Bay Beach Facility.

Skill and Experience of Tenderer

Tenderers are expected to have the financial capability, adequacy of plant, equipment and organisation to meet the design and construction requirements. They are also expected to possess design and construction experience and practical skill in the type of work outlined in the Tender Documents.

Tender Security

Tenderers are also required to enclose in the sealed tender, a tender security in the form enclosed, duly stamped by the Board of Inland Revenue, to assure their intent to enter into and execute the Contract Agreement, should they be called upon to do so. The amount of the Tender Security for this Contract is One Hundred Thousand Trinidad and Tobago dollars (TT\$100,000.00). **Should no tender security be enclosed, the tender will be rejected.**

Award Criteria

TDC will award the contract to the tenderer whose tender has been determined to be fully responsive to the Tender Documents, and who has offered the best value for money, and has satisfied the required qualification requirements as outlined in the Tender Documents.

Bid packages

Interested firms are invited to obtain tender packages from the TDC. Tender Documents may be collected upon payment of a non-refundable fee of T&T Currency, Five Thousand Dollars (TT\$5,000.00). Bidders can contact the TDC for details on international payment procedures and collection of Tender Documents. A Pre-tender Meeting, which includes a Site Visit, is scheduled for August 22nd 2008. Failure to attend will result in disqualification from further participation in the tender.

Submission of Tender

One (1) complete original and six (6) copies of the Technical and Financial Proposals must be submitted in an otherwise unmarked envelope labelled and addressed to:

"TENDER FOR MARACAS BEACH REDESIGN AND RESTORATION PROJECT- DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION"

Tourism Development Company Limited
Level 1, Maritime Centre
#29, Tenth Avenue, Barataria
Trinidad and Tobago
Attention: Secretary Tenders Committee

Closing date: September 30th 2008. Bids must be submitted by 4 p.m.

For further information please email Michelle Low Chew Tung at mlochewtung@tdc.co.tt or call 1 868 675 7034 ext 225. Bidders can also view the tender notice on the following websites: www.mymaracas.com; www.tdc.co.tt; www.dgmarket.com; www.caribbeanenders.com; www.enr.construction.com

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If you are interested, please forward a CV and covering letter (including an idea of your salary expectations) to the deputy editor Christine Murray at christine.murray@emap.com.



Architects Registration Board

INQUIRERS

The Architects Registration Board is the UK's statutory regulator of architects. We are looking to recruit a minimum of 12 Inquirers from around the UK to assist the Board's Investigations Committee in considering complaints about an architect's conduct or competence.

The Inquirer's role is to gather technical information and confirm matters of fact before reporting back to the Committee. Inquirers may be required to make site visits or to interview the parties to a complaint, and they may also be asked to give evidence at Professional Conduct Committee hearings.

If you are an architect with experience of investigating and reporting on disputes, and you would like to be considered for the role of an Inquirer, please send your CV with a covering letter to:

**Simon Howard, Professional Standards Manager, ARB,
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or call us on 020 7580 5861 for more details.**

Closing date for receipt of applications is Friday 12 September 2008.
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Ref: L1008 (Lee)

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Ref: 3757 (Philip)

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Ian Martin. One Olympic world, one Titanic dream, one 'legacy offsetting' scam

MONDAY. I'm in China for a few days, with the rest of the Olympic Rebadging Task Force. Not on some morally dubious junket subsidised by hard-working British taxpayers, either.

I can't go into details for reasons of national security, but rest assured our trip is being funded uncontroversially by certain 'lazy taxpayers'. Anyway, with so many billions of pounds needed next year for the 2012 sponsor recruitment campaign alone, now is not the time to quibble over luxury hotels and working banquets.

Tonight, in some provincial city beginning with X, we are the guests of a junior economic development minister. Li Chungchan or something, unless that was the toast. Eager, shortish, charcoal suit, monopitch hair, glasses, gurning Halifax-ad face... God, they all look the same don't they? Bloody economic development ministers. Apart from the automatic weapons everywhere and the edible food we could be in Doncaster exchanging business cards with Ed Miliband.

In the evening we visit the theatre to see a version of *Starlight Express* with pandas. Admittedly there are several high-speed rollerskating incidents, but thanks to the efficiency of state capitalism there are also spare pandas.

TUESDAY. To Blingnang, China's exciting new Second City. At the moment it's teeming with shuttle buses. Incoming Beijing residents are offloaded to a vast hospital for respiratory diseases, then the empty buses are filled with a fresh supply of good-looking young people to fill the Olympic venues.

Our task force is here to see world-class city-making in practice. We get some top tips. **For a start, you need to separate architecture from buildings.** Architecture's great because you can lump it in with art, culture, any sort of entertainment you like. But buildings are shit. Buildings are boring. Architecture should have nothing to do with buildings.

We visit Blingnang Architect School #17, where the students are impeccably dressed and not at all sulky looking and 'indie' like the ones at home.

They stand, salute the flag and chant an affirmation of their faith: 'Architecture creates new social, economic and cultural tools and spaces! Architecture is accessible and flexible and improves citizens' living perceptions! Architecture is both a model and a platform for organic growth!'

Oh wait, this is all starting to sound horribly familiar.

WEDNESDAY. Today we're briefed on the principles of 'legacy offsetting'. This could be very handy indeed for our Olympics, as it's just like planning gain.

Instead of getting bogged down in all that tiresome paperwork 'demonstrating' that an Olympic archery range can be converted to a post-Games urban farm or whatever, legacy offsetting allows you to calculate the costs of enduring community benefit so you can spend the money somewhere more convenient.

Before we leave Blingnang there's a chance to see this in action. As reparation for house demolitions in Beijing, and in lieu of social benefit, **a gigantic prison is being constructed here.** It is more practical than 'public open

space' and in order to silence any criticism has been designed by an acclaimed 'international' architect.

Samantha from Treasury is very interested. Her blue-sky unit is looking at ways to pay for a new generation of 'Titanic' prisons, as a cost-effective alternative to full employment and affordable housing. I thought they were called Titanic because of their massive scale, but Sam explains it's because with no funding these days for rehabilitation everyone in them is sunk.

THURSDAY. To Beijing, where at a glittering disco reception we meet up with thousands of other fact-finding Brits. Civil servants, consultants, media visionaries... hey, there's my mate Loaf, mayor of London. And Suzi Towel, our minister for Olympics, yay! **They're doing the legendary John Travolta and Uma Thurman routine from *Pulp Fiction*.** She's pretending to be passed out on the floor and he's miming the adrenaline injection.

FRIDAY. Weather's awful, the sky a low grey ceiling of ominous cloud. People are now openly acknowledging the possibility of **moving the 2012 Games to Tamworth.**

SATURDAY. Architectural tour of Beijing on the plane home, though can't be arsed with the headphones. **The beauty of the ancient hutongs is rare indeed,** and bear in mind the DVD was made a couple of years ago so they'll be even rarer now.

SUNDAY. Olympic breakfast followed by **random drug testing** in the recliner.



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