Dwelling on the Future

Architecture for the Seaside, Middle England and the Metropolis

Pierre d'Avoine

UCLPRESS

Dwelling on the Future

DESIGN RESEARCH IN ARCHITECTURE

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Architecture for the Seaside, Middle England and the Metropolis

Pierre d'Avoine

UCL PRESS

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Front image: The cover is an abstraction of Hieronymus Bosch's *Haywain Triptych*. In the Haywain, Bosch focuses on the sin of avarice – the desire for worldly gain. The left panel depicts the creation and fall of man with the sea (blue) in the background. The right panel depicts the hellscape (red) of the city. The centre panel focuses on a haycart (gold), the symbol of greed, pride, and complacency which leads to discord and violence. The haycart is followed by men of all kinds plucking the hay, an allegorical reference that 'In the end it is al hoy'.

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'A Sort of a Song'

Let the snake wait under
his weed
and the writing
be of words, slow and quick, sharp
to strike, quiet to wait,
sleepless
– through metaphor to reconcile
the people and the stones
Compose (no ideas but in things) invent!
Saxifrage is my flower that splits
the rocks

—William Carlos Williams 1944

Project map

1:4,000,000

1. Aberystwyth Arts Centre
   Aberystwyth, Wales
2. Pleasure Holm at Birnbeck Island
   Weston-super-Mare, Somerset
3. Crowcombe Court
   Crowcombe, Somerset
4. Glastonbury Houses
   Glastonbury, Somerset
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6. A Counterproposal for Belper Derwent Valley World Heritage Site, Belper, Derbyshire
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   Letchworth, Hertfordshire
10. House + Garden + House
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    Fulham, London, SW6
12. Pembury Octagon
    Peabody Estate, Hackney, London, E5

0m 40km 200km

Foreword | Clare Melhuish

0.1

0.1 Land Architecture People, RDAFA Copenhagen, 2009

Impure medium

Architecture, the impurest medium of all, incorporates all the other arts in a Gesamtkunstwerk and it is typically not even 'looked at' with any concentrated attention, but is perceived, as Walter Benjamin noted, in a state of distraction. Architecture is not primarily about seeing, but about dwelling and inhabiting. (W. Mitchell, 2007, 398)

The exhibition Land Architecture People, a collaboration between two architects and an anthropologist – Pierre d'Avoine, Andrew Houlton and myself – at Ambika P3, London, in 2010 was about impurity: the impurity of architecture as a medium. Appropriately, it followed on the heels of Jannis Kounellis's magnificent installation of large-scale industrial found objects mixed with remnants of everyday life and social activity – overcoats, wine bottles – in the 'impure' setting of Ambika P3 itself: a former engineering workshop used for concrete construction, now used for art shows, fashion and media events. The destiny of P3 reflects the reality of the processes of reproduction of the built environment: a repetitive cycle of development and redevelopment, demolition, replacement and reuse, of the physical fabric of society in response to its evolving

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0.3

0.2 Claude viewing model, Land Architecture People, P3, London, 2010

0.3 Land Architecture People, P3, London, 2010

needs, which embodies a thick layering of social history.

Architectural history is often characterised as a narrative of ideological movements expressed in built form, as a visual statement of strongly held aesthetic beliefs. It conforms to the ocularcentric outlook which has dominated Western social discourse to a point where the contemporary culture is described as one of 'hyper-visuality' (Boyer, 1996). The centrality of the visual image, enhanced by the proliferation of new visual media through digital technology, is such that it has not only claimed hegemony over the written word, but subverts any notion of objective physical reality in the environment. But the practice of architecture has always been a difficult negotiation between the power and 'purity' of the visual image, and the confused and impure realities of architecture's functionality, occupation and transformation over time in response to social impulses and aspirations.

In the contemporary context, the very notion of a 'pure' architecture, or architectural ideology, has become more and more ephemeral, even while the compulsion to establish a clear and strong visual identity for architectural production in the context of a competitive, global market driven by brand recognition becomes increasingly difficult to resist. Historically, pattern books were used as a vehicle for circulating clear visual representations of stylistic models in architecture (Melhuish and d'Avoine, 2005) which could be copied by others. But they also served to promote the work of individual architects, closely associated with particular patrons whose social and economic status would be thereby enhanced. Today, most architectural practices invest money in promotional visual material which sets out a clear and distinctive visual style for their work within a spectrum of broadly recognisable idioms – even in a social context understood as being very conservative, where, as the developer Crispin Kelly notes, 'the least you can do is to make [a new building] look as if it was there before' (Kelly, 2009).

It is broadly understood that architects work within a planning system which imposes tight constraints on the possibilities for development of the built environment, endorsing solutions that adhere to a 'neo-vernacular' approach at the level of everyday development. But at the other end of the scale, the pressures to promote and market cities as destination environments, as a basis for economic growth, have generated the phenomenon of 'brandscapes' (Klingmann, 2007), landmark buildings and special planning dispensations (as in the case of The Shard). This is the architecture of the so-called experience economy (Lonsway, 2009), which is heavily dependent on the power of the visual image, however superficial and dislocated from underlying social realities it may be, to identify specific physical contexts with the required 'lifestyle experience' to attract the appropriate consumer to the site.

The aim of Land Architecture People was to open up a debate about the realities of architectural practice and production in a projected middle ground between these two ends of the spectrum – a context in which architecture is understood not simply as a visual phenomenon but as a

0.4

0.4 *Housey Housey: A Pattern Book of Ideal Homes*, Clare Melhuish and Pierre d'Avoine, 2005

complex, impure negotiation between land, architecture and people; a 'medium' understood in Raymond Williams's definition as 'a material, social practice', and one that evolves, moreover, during its lifespan to assume new identities. The use of large white models, built in varying thicknesses of MDF, devoid of surface or interior detail, may then seem a contradiction in terms: neutral, unoccupied, abstract – typical, perhaps, of a certain kind of architectural minimalism. But the intention and effect is quite the opposite. It is the very lack of any obvious surface visualisation or materialisation of the architecture, the lack of any projected, predetermined occupation of the buildings, that opens up the field of interpretation and imaginary occupation by the viewer. It allows for an open-ended process of self-identification through the physical activity of walking around the models in the expansive space of P3, leaning over them from above, bending down to experience them from eye level, peering in to experience the different perspectives through the internal volumes from different angles, and visiting the accompanying tables on which were strewn a collage of detailed materials generated by the design process, including transcripts of interviews with clients.

The material contained in long tables represented the detailed counterpart to the apparent abstraction of the models, revealing an array of minutiae associated with the development of architectural concepts embedded in a specific social and cultural context. The interview transcripts provided unique access to the multivocal narratives which lay behind the production of the architectural artefact, and belied its identification solely with the voice of the architect as 'auteur'. They pointed to an architecture which is intended not to be prescriptive, 'branded' or 'signature' in its qualities, while also fiercely denying the pressure to be innocuous and neovernacular. Rather, it is understood and appreciated as the acknowledged outcome of a process of dialogue and negotiation with clients, a response to their aspirations and desire for choice, and to the realities of the inhabitation which will ensue. We have defined this process as 'ethnographic' in both intent and actuality: architectural practice and production understood as an empirically based research process, based on detailed participant observation, visual documentation and interviews, with the aspiration to produce a beautiful outcome.

In this context, and belying the apparent abstraction of the models, the qualities of impurity, hybridity and responsivity were actively embraced as integral to a contemporary architectural aesthetic which reflects the diversity of contemporary society, particularly in the metropolitan centres where architectural practice tends to be concentrated. It is no longer possible or desirable to work within the parameters of specific architectural idioms, where the cultural references 'brought to the table' by clients and architects are so diverse and richly nuanced. In contrast both to the pattern books of old and to the modern-day pattern books produced by the volume house builders to aid their customers in making a choice based on limited options, the repertoire of design possibilities produced by an ethnographic, anthropologically informed approach disregards

traditional typologies and stylistic categories. Instead, it represents a contextualised notion of design and aesthetic expression that allows for a playful, inventive and interactive approach to programme and site at both the detailed and larger scale.

Central to this approach is an understanding of architecture as an expression of social relations, embedded and embodied in material form and context. But this premise foregrounds the central problem for architects working in the all-important middle ground between the innocuous and the spectacular – the availability of land on which to build, for without a site, there can be no architecture. According to the majority of respondents interviewed as part of the exhibition, the search for a suitable and affordable site on which to realise their project was the most difficult part of the process. This common experience highlights the lack of, or right to, accessibility to land as a fundamental dimension of social relations as they are mapped onto the physical environment; but it is one which architects rarely engage with, even while the inability of first-time buyers to get onto the 'property ladder' has become a malaise of contemporary life.

For anthropologists working in the context of traditional societies, land or property tenure represents one of the key areas of social inquiry, fundamental to an understanding of social organisation and relationships. In the modern context of complex urban societies, national planning systems may be understood as one of the most explicit forms of social representation, and yet the planning and development framework, and the land ownership system on which it is based, is mostly accepted as a given. In fact, as Healy notes, surprisingly little is known about its detailed workings:

> All cities require the production of space in the form of both buildings and sites for various activities. Yet we still understand little about the production processes involved. The role of land ownership, the organisation of the construction industry, the nature of the finance invested in urban development, and the significance of intermediaries, from developers to property consultants, lie hidden or are given little more than a passing reference in many historical accounts of urban development. (Healey and Nabarro, 1990, 3)

Healy suggests that part of this lack of interest derives from a general assumption that 'the conversion of economic and social processes into land use change and built form [is] unproblematic' – that it will naturally flow from demand into supply. However, as we have seen in recent years, this is clearly not the case. The planning system in the UK depends upon land being put forward for development. Hence, the role played by landowners is central to the problems experienced by architects and the public in engaging with the reproduction of the built environment more fully, especially since the passing of the Local Government, Land and Planning Act of 1980. This reform effectively re-created a free market in development land by repealing the Community Land Scheme, and acted as a catalyst for the steady rise in prices for residential development land since then. However, the implication of

the land ownership system in determining and proscribing the opportunities for a wider variety of development approaches has been largely overlooked due to a widespread public understanding that 'it is the developer and planner that dominate the development process' (Goodchild and Munton, 1985, vii).

The ownership and exploitation of land as an investment like any other, and a scarce resource, has generated a balance of power and influence which militates against individual clients and architects wishing to work at a smaller and more inventive scale. The normalisation of bargaining between applicant and planners as part of the planning process further plays into the hands of those with the greatest resources and therefore the larger bargaining power. It has been pointed out by Kevin Cahill that 59 million people in Britain live in 24 million dwellings sited on a mere 7.5 per cent of the total acreage of the country; 77 per cent of the population hold a stake of only 5.8 per cent of the total land area, and the average size of a residential plot is 0.07 acres per person (Cahill, 2002, 12). The scale and quality of new construction is a direct corollary of the scarcity and consequent high price of land, while the major private and institutional landowners sit on vast areas of land which are kept from dereliction by huge public subsidies.

Such figures make architecture look like a very 'impure' medium indeed. The aims of Land Architecture People were therefore to divert attention from the purely visual dimensions of architectural practice, and to draw attention to the need to understand architectural production in its social context. It is a powerful medium for the enactment and representation of social relations at the small, intimate scale of local environments, just as much, if not more so, than the large scale of the 'landmark' building on the global stage, and it is only right that more individuals should have greater access to the architectural process and greater freedom to explore its possibilities.

Ryan McStay

Erika Pietrovito

Urim Islami

Andrew Skulina

Eleanor Lygo

Tamir Aharoni

Amelia Baldie

Bodo Neuss

Pierre d'Avoine

Sebastian Tiew

Bryony Henson

Ana Nicolaescu

Geeta Pandith

Amy Glover

Elena Pardo

Georgia Hablutzel

Jo Greiviene

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This book could not have come about without acknowledging my extended family, as it has evolved from my childhood in Bombay to the London of my teen years and after, from the Birmingham of my student days and the wider world we all now inhabit as the electronic increasingly interacts with the organic. There is a broad as well as intimate sweep of history each of us has to acknowledge if we live as long as I have.

I would like to thank Murray Fraser and his fellow editors at UCL Press for inviting Clare Melhuish and me to make a book about housing after the exhibition Land Architecture People, inaugurated at RDAFA, Copenhagen 2009, was held at Ambika P3 in 2010 at the invitation of Kate Heron, curator of Ambika P3 and head of Westminster School of Architecture, and Murray, professor and director of the MArch course at Westminster School of Architecture. Clare sadly had to withdraw from the project owing to other commitments. I have persevered with the book which includes a series of interviews which I undertook. The idea was initiated by Clare following a similar exercise for Land Architecture People in Copenhagen in which we presented interviews of several of my clients by clients. The interviews form a vital part of this book.

Some years ago, Clare and I published *Housey Housey: A Pattern Book of Ideal Homes* in which we presented projects for houses we had designed. We used 'found' material as it existed digitally and as hand drawings and photographs in the office. In *Housey Housey*, there was an ambition to declare the work presented as part of the office. The material in this book has been considerably worked on, drawn and redrawn by a wonderful group of collaborators, principally Ana Nicolaescu, Sebastian Tiew, Georgia Hazblutzel, Amy Glover and Ryan McStay. I would like to give them my greatest thanks for helping bring the work into focus for this book.

I would like to thank the interviewees Jonathan Vining, Aran Chadwick, Bill Watts, Kim Auston, Nick Oliver, Barry Joyce, Alex Ely, John Wickham, Jim Green, Ian Abley, Alec Scragg, Jess Rayat, Crispin Kelly and Liam Dewar, who submitted themselves to my amateur interviewing technique with such good grace, for their helpful and revealing comments, as well as for their diligence in reviewing my edited transcriptions. My thanks also to Bryony Henson for transcribing the interview recordings with such care and clarity.

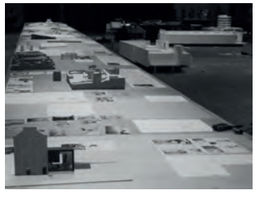
I am deeply indebted to all my collaborators, architects and assistants in my office and the consultants who worked on

the projects at the time of their inception and afterwards. The projects would not have turned out the way they have without their vital contributions. And although I take full responsibility for the work in the book, I feel that each project has been infused with a spirit of creation unique to the particular combination of people involved.

The projects in the book span a period of 15 years and would have been impossible to imagine without the involvement of four people: Pereen d'Avoine, Andrew Houlton, Jonathan Vining and Clare Melhuish. I cannot believe my good fortune that Pereen and I have been collaborators since she was a child of 10 years old when we worked together on the site model of the Invisible House. We have continued to work together at various times since, including teaching MArch at Kingston and the Cass. My thanks to Andrew, with whom I shared an office for five years, for the playful but serious conversations we had and continue to have and to whom I am hugely grateful for his support during a time of great emotional turmoil. My thanks to Jonathan Vining for his always generous collaborative spirit and for his invitation to work together in Cardiff and London during the period when I was visiting professor at the Welsh School of Architecture and consultant to WYG.

And lastly to Clare Melhuish for her unfailing support and for her immense contribution to the work presented in this book. I would like to dedicate this book to Clare and our sons Ivan and Reynard.

Introduction



0.5

0.5 Long table, Land Architecture People, RDAFA Copenhagen, 2009

Twelve projects for more than just housing—The invitation to write this book was a direct result of the exhibition titled Land Architecture People, held at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts School of Architecture, Copenhagen, in 2009 to inaugurate my guest professorship there, and held subsequently at Ambika P3 Gallery, University of Westminster, in 2010 at the request of Murray Fraser, then director of the MArch course, and Kate Heron, then head of school. The exhibition was a collaboration between anthropologist Clare Melhuish, Andrew Houlton and myself. An important element of the exhibition was the inclusion of 10 interviews by Clare with my clients. These were presented as unexpurgated texts alongside photographic portraits of each client. The aim of the interviews was to communicate directly that the architectural project is an inclusive process that is necessarily contingent upon external conditions and that the outcome is dependent on the interaction between a range of protagonists. The Danish audience commented that the presentation of the interviews as an integral part of Land Architecture People was a brave and valuable ethnographic contribution to the exhibition itself and to the wider discourse about the nature of the way that architecture can be communicated, explained and understood as process as well as outcome. The interviews existed as part of the wider exhibition which included large models, drawings, sketches, maquettes, publications, other texts and projects.

This book has evolved from a long-standing interest in the design of houses explored in an earlier book, *Housey Housey: A Pattern Book of Ideal Homes*, which Clare Melhuish and I published in 2005. In that book, we explored the idea of a contemporary pattern book. The projects included 23 houses categorised according to location, type, condition and material. We proposed a bottom-up approach to housing that does not preclude larger-scale development but challenges the hegemony of the volume house builders and advocates for new government legislation to be formulated and implemented to enable individuals and small groups to obtain land at affordable costs on which to build homes for themselves, without being priced out of the 'market'. We attempted to discuss the conditions which govern house building, and the designs were offered as opportunities for new approaches to contemporary lifestyles and the aspirations of an increasingly diverse population.

In an era when architecture and land itself has become increasingly commodified, *Dwelling on the Future* attempts to

explore ideas about identity, land use, housing and the conditions for contemporary architectural production in a process that is simultaneously questioning of the status quo and intimately engaged with interpreting the specific requirements of a particular project. This is always a messy and complex process that demands a necessarily collaborative approach – one that balances the needs and desires of the client also with the need to consider the benefit to the wider community in order to achieve a successful outcome.

The book focuses on the design of dwellings and their varied environments, and asks how an architect responds to the challenge of providing humane places in which to live for a growing, multifarious population in an increasingly divided world. Of course, it is never just housing. People – individuals, groups, societies – can and do have widely different goals and aspirations. Is it possible to imagine and implement a world in which a level of comfort and stability is available for even the poorest members of societies? The book covers a wide range, including proposals for luxury housing and designs for low-cost dwellings, which addresses the needs and desires of potential inhabitants. I am interested in an inclusive approach to the design of settlements, not just in cities, that recognises difference – an approach that demands a fresh political vision to resolve humanity's increasing inequality for the benefit of all. Can we respond with optimism to the Kabakovs's mordantly titled installation Not Everyone Can Be Taken into the Future (2001)? Ironically, a statement of fact in Russia and elsewhere in the Soviet Union during the Cold War, but always implicit, and ever more so, in the West today.

This book is not about the housing crisis. There will always be a housing crisis within a market economy. One doesn't have to scratch the surface too hard to discover a long and corrupt history here in the UK which goes at least as far back as the enclosures. Architecture too is always in crisis, always at a crossroads. Architects should always beware of complacency, anticipatory even, but not it seems in control of their destiny or able to influence the evolution of the environment in which we all dwell. The situation seems to move too quickly. How do we interpret what has gone before in order to anticipate what is to come? Are we too reactionary? Can we be more anticipatory? How do we communicate with each other and create harmonious environments where we are mutually responsive to each other and to the broader environment? Is this a possibility? Has it ever been possible, even desirable, to aim for equilibrium, or is there always tension and imbalance between individuals, groups and societies that is a necessity in order to evolve without desiccation and stasis?

The Seaside, Middle England and the Metropolis—The projects in this book form a non-linear sequence from the seaside towns of Weston-super-Mare on the Bristol Channel and Aberystwyth in West Wales facing the Irish Sea, crisscrossing the varied landscape of Middle England to the metropolis London where I set up my practice in 1979. The sequence of

projects may appear arbitrary but has been carefully considered. The projects are not in chronological order, but the decision to start at the seaside implies a reversion in the way we privilege the metropolitan centre, in this case London, over provincial Middle England and its peripheral edges. London has never been more cosmopolitan. The city is undergoing huge changes, including new infrastructure and building to accommodate a diverse and fast-growing population. The impact is mainly on the South-East of England but affects the country as a whole. However, in starting with the seaside, one is also invoking a sense of the primordial – an understanding that the ocean is where human life had its beginnings, and it may be where we need to concern ourselves more as the nature of the land is threatened with drastic change owing to the effects of climate change and environmental degradation.

0.6 Postcard, 'Parade from Pier, Herne Bay', sent by Marcel Duchamp to Max Bergmann, 1913. | Source: Image courtesy of Klaus-Peter Bergmann.

0.6

The book's subtitle 'The Seaside, Middle England and the Metropolis' is intended to suggest as much a state of mind as actual locations and places. The British seaside conjures up associations that may now appear somewhat nostalgic but continue to haunt the imagination of the generations that grew up just before and after the Second World War. The reality has been a long slow decline in the popularity of seaside towns as holiday destinations as holidaymakers have taken advantage of cheap travel abroad. There has subsequently been reinvigoration and reinvention of seaside towns as local authorities and commercial interests fight back with mixed results. Aberystwyth and Weston-super-Mare in their different ways are examples of how the architectural competition has been used to assist in such regeneration. Aberystwyth, in its more isolated location in West Wales, is a university town and less dependent on the holiday trade. Weston, on the other hand, has suffered neglect and lack of investment since before the Second World War. An architectural competition to revitalise Birnbeck Island and its derelict pier was initiated by developer Urban Splash and the local council with great fanfare and pizzazz, but was scuppered by the 2008 recession and has been dormant since. Crowcombe Court on the coastal edge of the Quantock Hills adjacent to the Bristol Channel, South of Weston, and Bengough's House near the Severn estuary at Henbury on the outskirts of Bristol to the north offer completely different understandings of seaside. They are located slightly inland and also relate to other geographical and cultural settings.

At Crowcombe, the scenario is an English stately home intimately connected to its church and village set within a landscape of outstanding natural beauty, and at Bengough's House, an existing award-winning old people's home is sited on a small suburban roundabout surrounded by postwar residential development. The land slopes down to the Severn, with distant views across to Wales. The river edge has been industrialised and is constantly changing owing to its tidal nature.

Middle England may be a shorthand way of identifying a large part of the population – predominantly middle-class and middle-income living mainly in the rural and suburban parts of Southern England. It is also used pejoratively to describe a middle-brow conservative mindset, resistant to change and philistine in its attitudes to the arts and contemporary culture. I have also taken it as a term defined by geographical location set away from the coastal edges of the country and the metropolitan centres. Four projects are located in this geographically varied heartland, including Belper in the Derwent Valley, Derbyshire, where Pereen d'Avoine, Aslihan Carapapoulle and I were invited to make a counterproposal for the development of the town centre and its meadow edge following the refusal of a planning proposal by Tesco to build a vast shopping mall; two competition proposals initiated by the Swaythling Housing Society in Hampshire and Tomorrow's Garden City at Letchworth for new house types to augment existing settlements; and a development of 60 houses at Crouches Field, Horsmonden, near Tunbridge Wells, Kent. The last is a village exception site consisting of a redundant fruit orchard that had been almost surrounded by houses as the village has expanded. Experiments in researching and designing new ways of rural habitation reflecting the varied demographic of the village and its rural hinterland have been undertaken with the encouragement of the landowner and his developer advisers.

London earns the appellation 'metropolis' owing to its overwhelming almost otherworldly scale in relation to the rest of urban Britain. However, its multifarous sprawl gives lie to any singular meaning of the word 'metropolis'. House + Garden + House is a polemical project for densifying suburbia that has evolved from an earlier project for The Invisible House located in West London and for a project to obtain planning permission to convert a large domestic garage in the back garden of a suburban semi-detached house in Feltham, South-West London. Rocket Room: Pencil Tower, a faceted cylindrical tower of 10 flats on a triangular B1 office plinth, is located in Fulham in inner suburban London. It is proposed as an extension of the Piper Building where we built two prefabricated rooftop houses on an existing 12-storey British Gas research laboratory building which had been converted into residential and B1 office units by the developer Crispin Kelly. Rocket Room: Pencil Tower may also be understood as a polemical project designed to accommodate the desire to densify, by building high in already dense neighbourhoods unshackled by successive London mayors and London councils with the need to consider neighbourliness when making a new mainly residential

0.7

0.7 Hackney Downs overground station, the Ginger Line, revitalised infrastructure – a trigger for gentrification. | Source: © 2011 James Miller.

development for the wealthy to reflect the consolidation of a changed demographic from the old working class Fulham of the 1970s to a more cosmopolitan, monied clientele. One hesitates to identify them as new residents, as the properties are often left empty and bought as investments. The final project in the book is Pembury Octagon proposed in response to an open competition held by the Peabody Trust for a new residential development to replace Pembury Youth Hall as the centrepiece of Pembury Close, a council estate in Hackney, East London. Today, the area accommodates immigrant communities from Turkey and West Africa, as well as young professionals who are attracted by its close proximity to the City of London. Revitalised railway infrastructure, including the Ginger Line, has helped to open up the area. It currently contains a lively mixed community. However, the pressures caused by gentrification are causing further change to take place. Not all of this is desirable to the more established residents.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, an understanding of the metropolis was suggested by Baudelaire, Simmel, Benjamin and the Surrealists, amongst others, as the location of a new type of individual subject to violent stimuli of urban life and situations and who has developed a blasé outlook that is both a product of and a defence against the overstimulation of mental life in the city, leading to a desensitised introverted response and withdrawal. The metropolis understood in these terms is the densely populated city first experienced in the post-Enlightenment West during the nineteenth century and exemplified by New York. In truth, even at its apogee, the skyscraper environment of the Manhattan urban grid, the foundation myth of the twentieth century city, was only a part of a wider metropolitan environment. Even then, it was only the most dominant primarily because of its visual impact and the concentration of power conferred by wealth. However, the wider city consisted of a variety of urban scenarios and inhabitants that did not comply with such a reading. The mythic dimensions of the seaside, Middle England and the metropolis may be 'understood within the dialectic of the Enlightenment, where myth and rationality compromise the two opposite poles of Enlightenment culture held in a reciprocal tension' (Leach, 1999, 38). There is always an oscillation between the impulse to make sense and order of the environment which is anticipatory and the realisation that change happens beyond our reach, and all of us struggle in our response to achieve some level of control at the scale of the city and the land outside the city. All of the projects in this book are polemical to some degree, in that although they are responsive to a lived history under bourgeois capitalism, they are also an attempt to 'construct' other histories in response to different political visions which embrace the notion of collective responsibility to the well-being of all peoples and a planet increasingly under threat from environmental degradation on an unprecedented scale. The very real threat to the survival of humanity forces us to engage with the moral cultural question of what we are in the process of becoming.

Proposals—The 12 proposals are un-built and cover a range of scales and locations:

The Seaside:
Aberystwyth Arts Centre, Ceredigion, Wales
Pleasure Holm at Birnbeck Island, Weston-super-Mare, Somerset
Crowcombe Court, Somerset
Bengough's House, Henbury, Bristol

Middle England:
Six houses in Glastonbury, Somerset
A Counterproposal for Belper, Lower Derwent Valley, Derbyshire
Swaythling Housing, Hampshire
Crouches Field, Horsmonden, near Tunbridge Wells, Kent
Patterns for Letchworth: From Garden City to Patchwork City, Hertfordshire

The Metropolis, Suburbia:
House + Garden + House, Feltham, Middlesex

The Metropolis, Inner City:
Rocket Room: Pencil Tower, Fulham, South-West London
Pembury Octagon, Hackney, East London

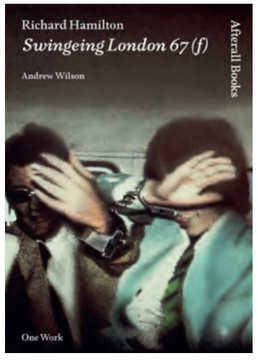
Interviews—The 12 proposals are complemented by interviews with protagonists involved in the projects, including a private client, a commercial client, a landowner, historians, a property auctioneer, a development manager, environmental and structural engineers, a construction system manufacturer, architect collaborators and the chair of a competition jury. The aims of the interviews are to provide a different context to each project and to encourage an understanding of the proposals as documents embedded in a broader social as well as professional architectural milieu. The interviewees were encouraged to discuss their personal histories, as well as their relation to the specific architectural project and their own professional position and expertise. In this way, it is hoped that something of the spirit of the times during which the proposals were designed is conveyed and helps the reader to understand a little more about the background and context to the projects presented in the book than a conventional presentation of the work alone would do. To quote Alec Scragg, an interviewee, 'it's about relating family history to a lived understanding of these abstract social phenomena and how we came about'. In different ways, each interviewee may be understood as a collaborator whose involvement in and action on the design processes, however tangential, is a factor in the way the projects have evolved and have emerged in their current form.

The interviewees include:

Jonathan Vining, architect and historian – Aberystwyth Arts Centre, Pleasure Holm at Birnbeck Island and Bengough's House

Aran Chadwick, structural consultant and Bill Watts, environmental consultant – Pleasure Holm at Birnbeck Island

Kim Auston, historian and ex-officer, Historic England – Crowcombe Court



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0.8 **Richard Hamilton *Swingeing London 67 (f)*, Andrew Wilson, book cover, 2011.** | Source: Image courtesy of Afterall Books.

David Jones, chief executive of Bristol Charities – Bengough's House

Nick Oliver, Cooper and Tanner, land agent and auctioneer – Six houses in Glastonbury.

Barry Joyce, ICOMOS UK World Heritage Committee Member and former conservation and design manager at Derbyshire County Council – A Counterproposal for Belper

Alex Ely, principal of Mae Architects and chairman of the Swaythling Housing competition jury – Swaythling Housing

John Wickham, landowner – Crouches Field

Jim Green, development manager, Baylight Properties plc – Crouches Field

Ian Abley, architect and Alec Scragg, urban designer – Patterns for Letchworth: From Garden City to Patchwork City

Jess Rayat, private client – House + Garden + House

Crispin Kelly, chief executive, Baylight Properties plc – Rocket Room: Pencil Tower

Liam Dewar, director, Eurban – Pembury Octagon

The majority of the interviews were conducted in August 2016, with some in 2017 and 2018, by Pierre d'Avoine. Clare Melhuish interviewed David Jones in 2009 for the exhibition Land Architecture People held at the Royal Danish Academy of Arts School of Architecture, Copenhagen, in 2009 and at Ambika P3 Gallery, London, 2010.

Opportunist practice—Bernard Tschumi in *Architecture and Disjunction* set out three modes in which the architect can operate: the conservative, providing form to the political and economic priorities of existing society; the intellectual, who reveals the contradictions of society and offers possible courses of action; and the revolutionary. Tschumi proposed two possible strategies for political acts: 'exemplary actions' and 'counterdesign' (Tschumi, 1996). For the artist Richard Hamilton, the dilemma of engagement and subversion was to invoke the Duchampian notion of an 'ironism of affirmation' that allowed for critique and celebration, distance and engagement to be present at one and the same time (Wilson and Hamilton, 2011). Robert Venturi, who has been an inspiration to me ever since reading *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* in 1972, in which he discussed the idea of inclusivity in the context of architectural form, preferring both/and to either/or, stated that 'architects can no longer afford to be intimidated by the puritanically moral language of orthodox modern architecture' (Venturi, 1977).

Tschumi, Hamilton and Venturi evolved their careers and developed their positions in the postwar period, which up to the late 1970s seemed to be mainly one of optimism

and celebration manifested in consumerism and youth culture and in Britain with the invention of the welfare state. However, the seeds of neo-liberalism had already been sown in the Cold War by American-led militaristic corporatism. It achieved overwhelming ideological dominance in the era of Reagan and Thatcher in the 1980s for which the intellectual underpinning and basis was provided by Hayek and Friedman, among others, and its consolidation ensured by the gradual erosion of the traditional working class in thrall to mass consumerism.

It prevails today as the model for global corporations and their nation-state acolytes, so much so that the writer and cultural commentator Mark Fisher in his book, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?*, despairs as to how the hegemony of neo-liberalism can be challenged: 'It's easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism' (Fisher, 2010). Fisher illustrates the deleterious effects of 'business ontology' on education and 'market Stalinism' in public life (Amsler, 2010) but identifies the situation since the financial crash of 2008 as a tipping point, an opportunity to create an alternative to an increasingly oppressive and unsustainable global order. Fisher argues that this does not mean a re-tread of political scenarios of the left that were obliterated during the 1980s, but that an alternative should be a rival rather than a reaction to the failed model of neo-liberalism we find ourselves living with now: the argument that a market-led approach flourishes and feeds off the ideology of individualism and incapacitates at almost every level the ability of societies to think and act collectively for the common good which has now to be understood in worldwide terms. In his book, Fisher calls for new forms of collective action.

What forms can collective action take in architectural practice in London since the start of the new millennium? I wrote nearly 30 years ago that I have been given opportunities to explore the notion of a public architecture in my work, where the social ideals of modernism still offer a broad base from which to approach designing and making buildings and their settings, and that El Lissitzky had written that the basic elements of architecture in Russia in the twentieth century are tied to social revolution (El Lissitzky, 1930). I believe this still to be true, and although the conditions in which we live may have changed, the need for forms of collective action in finding fresh ways of dwelling is ever more urgent. The situation is now irrevocably tied to the need for an environmental revolution that demands a transnational response.

The period during which I have set up my architectural practice and led my professional and personal life has been one which has seen the partial dismantling of the welfare state, resulting in the demise of local authority architects' departments in Britain and the rise of the corporate developer operating on a global scale. Successive UK governments have been complicit in initiatives such as Right to Buy, private finance initiatives and private–public partnerships which further limit and reduce the contribution the state at the national level and especially at the local government

level makes to provide decent housing and inclusive public spaces for all members of society, diminishing the potential of the architect to make a contribution beyond that of stylist – servant to a system unable to re-imagine and implement a world beyond the corrupting impact of an unfettered market.

This book is a document, a modern 'ethnography' of architectural practice lived through these conditions. To quote James Clifford:

Ultimately my topic is a pervasive condition of off-centeredness in a world of distinct meaning systems, a state of being in culture while looking at culture, a form of personal and collective self-fashioning. This predicament . . . responds to the twentieth century's unprecedented overlay of traditions. A modern 'ethnography' of conjectures, constantly moving between cultures, does not, like its Western alter ego 'anthropology' aspire to survey the full range of human diversity or development. It is perpetually displaced, both regionally focused and broadly comparative, a form both of dwelling and of travel in a world where the two experiences are less and less distinct. (Clifford, 2002, 9)

At the heart, it seems there is a loss of authenticity in our lived experience. It is almost a century since 'a truly global space of cultural connections and dissolutions has become imaginable: local authenticities meet and merge in transient urban and suburban settings' (Clifford, 2002, 4).

William Carlos Williams has written, 'In Spring and all the human future is something to be creatively imagined, not simply endured: new form dealt with as a reality itself . . . To enter a new world, and have there freedom of movement and newness' (W. Williams, 1966). But geopolitical questions must now be asked of every inventive poetics of reality. Whose reality? Whose new world? In *Women: The Longest Revolution*, Juliet Mitchell states:

I do not think that we can live as human subjects without in some sense taking on a history, for us, it is mainly the history of being men and women under bourgeois capitalism. In deconstructing that history, we can only construct other histories. What are we in the process of becoming? (J. Mitchell, 1984, 294)

The situation still persists, endures – in fact, it has been exacerbated and intensified during the past seven years that I have been assembling material for this book.

Plot and multiply—This book may have been titled 'Plot', intentionally implying more than one meaning, and principally in reference to land that has been subdivided, but also in terms of narrative, to the sequence of events inside a story which affects other events through the principle of cause and effect. In this case, these are narratives about identity, land use, housing and the conditions for contemporary architectural production, but also plot as something active and anticipatory, something subversive, planned secretively that intends and threatens change. It could be incremental change or change as revolution. Le Corbusier posited 'architecture

or revolution', and declared that revolution could be avoided, mainly by adopting his paternalistic diktats about Radiant Cities cloaked in poetic mysticism. It seems, however, in the zeitgeist of the early twenty-first century that architecture has been avoided (A. Williams, 1993).

This book could also have been titled 'Multiply' as it relates to the idea that the land on which a building is constructed is in effect multiplied and its value is increased sometimes several times over through the use of a plot ratio or site ratio. This is an overtly political idea that now widely informs development of land so that it is rigorously controlled and commodified in order to maintain a status quo.

At an elemental level, we build in order to provide ourselves with shelter, to dwell more comfortably by constructing a layer of material between ourselves and the raw environment. We need to create a mediated world in which we may exist and carry out our daily lives and a range of actions and activities that would be impossible otherwise. The only natural environment that would have provided adequate shelter, privacy and protection to our primitive ancestors is the cave, but even then, it would have been necessary to construct something additional in order to make the space secure from intruders: a gateway which provided a threshold between the private domain and the world at large. Man as an essentially social animal rarely operated in isolation but most often in family and interrelated tribal groups. These groups were inevitably territorial, whether hunter-gatherers or farmers, and thus the potential for conflict between individuals and groups over land was part of human exchange from the beginning – our expulsion from Eden presaged an inevitable conflict of interest inherent in the way we as human beings relate to each other, in families and larger social gatherings.

Land itself is not neutral but valued because of its inherent qualities and potential for dwelling, occupation and use. The balance between defensible space and land for cultivation and other forms of production is a constant in our lives as individuals and in the globally interconnected societies in the early twenty-first century. Even more so now, it has been calculated that the majority of people live in cities and urban environments, and that the world's population is ever increasing. Yet, in Britain and elsewhere, with finite, probably depleting resources, we are transfixed, struck dumb, immobile and seem unable to create the governance with which to act in a responsible and honourable manner for the common good, denying many people the opportunity of adequate livelihoods and accommodation. The potential for dwelling in the future seems more limited in an era of continuous warfare, huge economic problems and environmental degradation. To offer everyone the opportunity to live well, there needs to be a new economic paradigm, one that brings stringent, enforceable market control, sets limits to growth, profligate waste of natural resources and human capital – a world which aims to eradicate inequality, but sharing what we have, and by intelligent husbandry of the land and abundant sustainable energy, solar, wind and hydroelectric power for the benefit of all.

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0.9 Gunter's Chain, Edmund Gunter, invented 1620. | Source:

The Boke Named the Governour—In *The Boke Named the Governour* published in 1531, Sir Thomas Elyot advised that 'The first step to be taken by the governours whether of kingdoms or estates is to draw up a map of the estate'. Elyot understood that the map was a political document that described territory and asserted ownership of it. Accurate measurement of the land became increasingly important in the sixteenth century when English landowners began to commission surveyors to measure out their estates and make maps of them. In the *Domesday Book*, which was instituted by William the Conqueror in 1086, dimensions of estates were measured in virgates and hides that varied in size according to how productive the land was. A hide was enough land to support a family. Its size was less when measuring fertile land and greater in upland pastures where the soil was of low quality. Measures were flexible, as land was held in exchange for services. The number of people it could feed and so make available to render those services was more important than its exact area (Linklater, 2002, 6). The dissolution of the monasteries was instigated by Henry VIII between 1536 and 1541, when the Crown needed cash to pay for England's defences. The sale of land for cash effectively created a new land-owning class. Prior to this, land was valued in terms of the number of people it supported. In its aftermath, it became an investment opportunity and the basis for transaction involving exchange of money rather than for services. In other words, it may be understood as the beginning of modern capitalism where power increasingly laid with the new landowners whose income depended on the size of their property and how much rent could be raised from it.

Accuracy of measurement became of fundamental importance in the preparation of cadastral maps defining ownership and property boundaries. Gunter's chain invented by Edmund Gunter in the early seventeenth century became the predominant instrument for measuring land. Its genius lay in its synthesis of traditional English land measurement, based on the number four, and the decimal system, first published in 1585 by the Dutch engineer Simon Stevin, based on the number 10. Gunter's chain, which measures 22 yards, still the length of a cricket pitch, has fallen out of use. Globally, decimal measurement holds sway, with some major exceptions, including the USA where the imperial system is used for measuring length and area. Linklater contends that Gunter's chain was a device for making private property and establishing a true market in land transaction: 'Once the earth could be measured by a unit that did not vary, supply and demand would determine the price, and it could be treated as a commodity' (Linklater, 2002). This was not Gunter's intention but rather a consequence of the accuracy of his chain. It was applied to great effect in the USA where 'new' land could simply be divided into a grid of square parcels to be sold for settlement. In the old world, including England, recording the extent of land ownership has been considerably more complicated and problematic and a continual source of contention.

In successive attempts to record land ownership in Britain, including The Land

Registration Acts passed in 1862, 1875 and 1897 and 1925, landowners have been reluctant to part with information about their land holdings, and as a result, even today, only 65 per cent of the land in the UK is included in the registry (Cahill, 2002). The implication is a form of protectionism and possibly the original form of land banking, a term pejoratively used to describe the process of restricting the supply of land to increase its market value no matter how pressing the need to release the land for housing the poor and needy. This has become once again one of the major issues of this century both on a national scale and globally owing to increasing numbers of the dispossessed and disenfranchised denied the basic human right of adequate space in which to dwell. The implications are serious, given the increase in population, but also the sheer unfairness and selfishness of the political and economic system, even in crowded Britain, where 59 million people 'live in 24 million dwellings sited on a mere 7.5% of the total acreage of the country' (Cahill, 2002). We have to ask ourselves why we seem intent on crushing more and more people into smaller and smaller spaces in which to live. The situation calls for a complete recalibration to create an inclusive and humane body politic that works for us all.

Overproduction of the built environment: Richard Douthwaite, the limits of growth

Capitalism . . . is morally netural. Our mistake has been to ascribe morality to it by accepting that we could behave as selfishly as we liked because the 'invisible hand' would turn everything to good. Then in the 1950s, we compounded our error by making economic growth our primary social goal. Historically, a troika of competing influences has generally governed Western societies. The economic system was, of course, one influence, but it was constantly regulated and modified by the other two, the political system and the moral-cultural system which is made up if diverse elements such as the press, the universities, writers and artists and, of course, the churches. Unfortunately, however, this latter group largely abdicated its moderating role in favour of the 'invisible hand' almost two centuries ago and then, when the politicians made increasing national income their paramount objective, the rule of economics became absolute. In short we are all victims of an economic totalitarianism and have little freedom to determine what we think and do in the economic sphere. (Douthwaite, 1992, 314–5)

Douthwaite, an economist turned writer-activist, articulated with many others a concern that economic growth was not sustainable and the problem had to be addressed on a global scale if it was to provide a serious response to rising inequality and environmental degradation. The consequences of rapacious profiteering by the rich at the expense of the poor used to be something that happened elsewhere, and it was easy to turn a blind eye and ignore it. The situation since the economic crash of 2008 has been one of increasing instability, including in the

'developed' West, leading to extreme conditions of poverty and wealth. We are assuaged by statistics pointing out that the general standards of living have never been so high. Yet, we are now faced with evidence everywhere in our towns and cities, and in the rural countryside, of decadent affluence and of homelessness and people living in dire circumstances. It appears the situation is so intractable that governments give up the struggle and acquiesce to maintaining the dominant status quo. Other statistics suggest that there is enough to go round and that it is a question of distribution and sharing. This does not seem to be an option where the owners and controllers of the means of production, aided and abetted by the political classes everywhere, are too myopic and self-interested to see the potentially disastrous outcome to the planet, including themselves. We are bombarded with such news on a daily basis, but our leaders seem powerless to respond.

In her book *Doughnut Economics* (2018), the economist Kate Raworth encourages us to be agnostic about growth and to change from our fixation on GDP, or national output, as the primary measure of progress – a fixation that has been used to justify extremes of inequality and the destruction of natural habitat through her concept of the doughnut as a means of achieving economic balance. The implications for architecture and housing in particular are problematic in that faced with an increasing population, the first response is to build more of everything – offices, shops, art galleries, prisons, houses, surprisingly in the UK even factories and of course more infrastructure. Architects are mainly educated to build buildings, and no matter what the quality of the buildings that are built, this is a fundamental problem. It may be easy perhaps to argue for a moratorium on building if the population had stabilised, as it did in Britain for 50 years at the end of the war in 1945, except perhaps for wear and tear of the built fabric, and evolve a practice of maintenance and restoration. Something like this has happened for different reasons, including the value we place on some of the architecture of the past and the habitats that have resulted. Maybe we are all conservative in valuing continuity and the humane qualities of historic cities and towns and the bucolic image of the countryside. The ravages of war and changing social aspirations for the postwar population resulted in widespread changes, arguably not for the better, despite the ambitions of well-intentioned politicians. However, limiting growth could be initiated by a range of initiatives inspired by Raworth's participatory economics. A Commons Transition Plan which was commissioned by the city of Ghent in Belgium in 2017 aimed at exploring the potential of enabling the control of local resources, including land. by the local community in perpetuity for the shared benefit of its inhabitants. Projects in this book including Crouches Field and Patchwork City have proposed similar initiatives and explore scenarios including forms of participatory politics predicated on 'radical devolution and a fine-grained democratic control over

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0.10 Tatimania at Sainte Severe

the decisions affecting our lives' (Monbiot, 2017).

Jacques Tati and Paul Lafargue: The Right to Be Lazy—In the 1949 film *Jour de Fête* set in Sainte-Severe in small-town France, Jacques Tati, who stars as the postman Francois, creates an ambivalent scenario of rural life as nostalgic and backward looking, with a xenophobic attitude held by a broad section of the public, simultaneously celebrating the conviviality of rural France and making fun of its smelly awfulness. In the making of the film, Tati involved many of the villagers as extras, and the resulting popularity of the film has meant that ever since, Sainte-Severe has been seriously afflicted by 'Tati-mania'. In his biography of Tati, David Bellos states:

Jour de Fête is the local (Sainte-Severe's) foundation myth, the proof that such a small and unremarkable town really exist. Yet there is no powerful marketing organisation behind the Sainte-Severe spin-off business: the theme-park mentality seems to be generated by the townsfolk themselves. It is true that with the decline of small-holder farming, there is not much else of note in Sainte-Severe. But the irony of Jour de Fête as a satire of American cultural influence on French life is what can now be seen as the Disneyfication of the Severois themselves. In the film, Francois is a loveable gullible fool; in the longer-term history of the film, however, in is not entirely clear who has been taken in. (Bellos, 1999, 145–6)

Tati as performer and mime artist creates through gesture and bodily movement an intensification of everyday human interaction. In his persona as Francois the postman and later as Monsieur Hulot, he promotes an attitude of concerned ineffectiveness and inutility if not indolence at odds with modern bourgeois society's demand that man is defined by his work and has to be productive above all else. Paul Lafargue, Marx's son-in-law, in his essay 'The Right to Be Lazy' published in 1883, critiqued this attitude in political terms as a position of resistance, satirising both the promotion of the work ethic and its assimilation by the proletariat, despite, as Lafargue points out, the extreme demands placed on the human body in pursuit of increased production. As a result, the increase in leisure time promised by mechanisation has become a chimera, despite the IT revolution and the potential of robotics and artificial intelligence to liberate us from the tyranny of work.

Disneyfication had overtaken the English countryside by the late twentieth century. In an earlier mode, it was encountered in architecture as 'the castle air' in the work of Vanburgh and exemplified later by Nash's cottage orné houses at Blaise Hamlet near Bristol in the eighteenth century. The aristocratic penchant for dressing up and playing at being farmhands and milkmaids went hand in hand with the architecture. Blaise Hamlet was an enclosed garden setting of gimcrack gothick cottages for aged retainers retired from service at Blaise Castle. The attitude carries over from manners and

architecture to how the English countryside is mythologised, and was codified as the picturesque in the landscape proposals by Repton and others. Raymond Williams suggests it was the moment the countryside became a landscape of consumption as well as one of production and that the 'naturalising' of the English landscape throughout the eighteenth century took place at the cost of depriving rural workers of their livelihood. Williams made the point not only in terms of the economic arguments of enclosure, but also in terms of a new way of seeing the land (R. Williams, 1993). This has become one of the foundation myths of Middle England, and its stultifying impact on the architecture and environment of towns and villages of rural England is inescapable and limits the potential to envision holistic paradigms for the land outside our cities, including a world where people may choose not to work and where a political system is implemented to encourage this to take place on a global scale.

The global embrace of Middle Englishness is not just about the triumph of branding culture but may also be understood as the collective fear of headlong technological change and a retreat into scenarios where the individual can exercise some level of control, even if it means abandoning responsibility for the wider environment, which increasingly is the example of government as well as of individual attitudes. It suggests and demands that we require a recalibration of our attitude to work, production and leisure and a different way of seeing. Tati's example, though ambivalent, has a universality that transcends language through bodily gesture that helps us all to see the world in new ways and makes a claim for a world in which leisure could help us define how we make architecture and places in which to dwell.

Anglo-Exotic: Multicultural necessities and choice—In this book, I discuss the context of my architectural practice since the 1970s and the lived histories of the projects. I also discuss my personal experience and the experience of working as an architect during this extended period. The conversation on housing reflects my decision in the late 1980s to focus on residential design. However, it seems inescapable that all of an architect's work as a conscious being is an engagement with the act of dwelling and that this has been played out from an early age starting with childhood games and the necessity and delight of arranging one's personal space and things of course mostly within a larger order of arrangement within the family home and after in a home of one's own.

I think my decision to study architecture was taken at an early age. My father Pierre Avicenna d'Avoine was an architect in India. He was born in Bombay. His father Charles Lionel was a doctor – a French colonial born in Mauritius, who settled in Bombay in the late nineteenth century and married my grandmother Rose D'Cruz an Indian-Christian whose family name had been given by the Portuguese in the seventeenth century before Bombay had been given to the British by the Portuguese as part of Catherine of Braganza's dowry

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0.11 Brabourne Stadium, Mumbai, by GBK

when she married Charles II. My father's family history is not unusual – a fairly typical colonial story that I have yet to unpick in any detail, and so it retains a mystery and ambiguity that I enjoy for its unresolved open-endedness. It may have led to my embracing of the idea of hybridity and open-endedness in my own work and aspirations as an architect, but this is also the given condition for much of humanity at the beginning of the new millennium.

My father began his architectural education at the JJ School of Art in Bombay where Claude Batley was professor. My father later studied at the Bartlett in London before returning to Bombay to join Gregson Batley and King (GBK), a prominent architectural practice, as a junior partner. My father was a notable athlete and well connected in sporting circles in India. This led to his appointment as architect, in his 30s, for the design of the Brabourne Stadium home of the Cricket Club of India in Bombay and to later commissions for sports stadia throughout India, including the National Stadium in Delhi.

GBK was the quintessential colonial architectural practice with a typical workload comprising government buildings, banks and large commercial buildings as well as work for the Indian aristocracy. My father became the first Indian principal of any architectural office in India after independence when his British partners retired and returned to the UK. My father led the office into new areas of work in India and abroad in the 1950s. These included large pharmaceutical developments and other industrial projects reflecting the ambition and aspiration of post-independence India led by the social democratic government of Nehru and his Congress party. It was a world full of optimism and enterprise that ended for me when my father died suddenly at the age of 53 in 1960.

Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1978) discusses identity, considered ethnographically, as always being mixed, relational and inventive and the ethnographic idea as relativist and plural involving the serious fiction of culture. James Clifford discusses 'straining for a concept that can preserve culture's differentiating functions while conceiving of collective identity as a hybrid, often discontinuous, inventive process' (Clifford, 2002, 10). For me, it is impossible not to be hybrid, inauthentic, oscillating between separate worlds that reflect not only location but the temporal, not just the duality of the orient and the occident but in relation to much else. Today, these are terms that seem incredibly old fashioned, given the globalised nature of our culture and the way we live our daily lives where the 'familiar turns up at the ends of the earth' (Clifford, 2002, 14).

One responds to the idea that identity is inventive and susceptible to change, depending on circumstance and location. Global exchange provides surprising juxtapositions. My mother was Indian born but Irish, and she, my sister and I emigrated to London in 1962. We were part of a reverse diaspora of British colonial subjects still seeking to be connected with a homeland most had never seen before. In our case, we had spent holidays in England in the 1950s, but short visits in summertime couldn't prepare one for the experience

of settling permanently in London in the early 1960s. We lived first with my aunt in Bedford Park, West London, in a small terraced house before moving to a first-floor flat in neighbouring Acton. My mother bought the newest house she could afford – a 1920s three-bedroom semi-detached house in Acton. This was a very Indian desire and preference for all things new in contrast to the nostalgia for the past we experienced in Britain, an attitude that still persists and if anything has intensified. In India, the departing British left a void filled by the new consumer culture which exploded from a dominant postwar USA. In Bombay, everyone owned large American cars, our family had an Oldsmobile, and American pop culture was readily accepted and adapted to create strangely familiar hybrids – a process that we now realise was taking place across the world in other tropical cities such as Havana and Rio, even Dakar and Addis Ababa, where my father, just before he died, was negotiating to build the national stadium for Heile Selassie – but then they seemed to exist in self-contained little pockets unaware of the transcontinental spread of cultural ideas, influences and fashions. Architecturally, Bombay had responded to the influence of high and low modernism before the war, while the British still ruled India, and the city extended from its High Victorian core, using Art Deco stylings constructed in reinforced concrete. Some of these buildings still stand, including the Brabourne Staduim, the Ritz Hotel, the Glaxo headquarters and Cadbury building designed by my father.

The response to modernism in London after the war was grittier and focused on the urgent need to rehouse a significant part of the population displaced by extensive bomb damage and a desire by politicians and their advisers to use the opportunity to experiment with new construction methods – prefabrication, steel frames and reinforced concrete – and typologies including residential high- and medium-rise developments. As a child in a new city, it was necessary to adapt, to assimilate and be assimilated into the, for me, very strange culture of British suburban life. The semi-detached house was a bastardised tradition both formally and in the way that it was constructed, using facing brickwork as the thin outer skin of a cavity wall. The ubiquity of the semi is in part a triumph of mediocrity – an interesting idea watered down and reduced by market forces to an ersatz product pretending to offer choice, but cynically limited in its aspiration as towns and cities were extended to privilege the motor car and road networks. It also triumphed because of its essential flexibility in terms of land use and the way it accommodated the car in a driveway, thus freeing up the road. The denser urban fabric, the streets and terraces of the inner city, did not anticipate the dramatic expansion of motor transport and was mostly abandoned by the middle classes in the 1950s and 1960s to the working class and the poorest post-colonial newcomers who re-created communities where rents and property were affordable. What were salubrious middle-class enclaves transformed from

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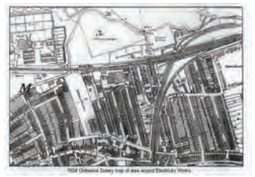

3

0.12

0.12 Development of the neighbourhood. | Source: Images courtesy of Digimap.

1. 1863
2. 1915
3. 1934

large owner-occupied terrace houses to much more densely populated multi-tenanted buildings in areas such as Notting Hill where my mother worked as a primary school teacher. At the same time, experimental social housing in the form of towers and low-rise blocks were being built for council tenants and gave rise to a new hybrid environment of estates intermingled with the existing fabric of Italianate Victorian streets and squares, some with large communal gardens for use by local residents – a model derived from earlier inner London residential developments such as the Bloomsbury Estate.

Monad: Nomad

But all invocations of an archaic, centred dwelling demand questioning. If the shape of modernity militates against all centres, should we not welcome this? Suppose I were to discover a place that deserved to be called not just a centre but the centre of my world, were to discover, say, the place where I truly belong, my true home: how could I bear to leave it? Were I to dwell in such a home, I would no longer know where to go; in an important sense there would no longer be a place to go, since that place I would already be occupying. The voyage of my life would have ended. So understood, the plenitude suggested by dwelling at the centre means death, and it only seems appropriate that the devil was thought to dwell in the earth's centre and God somewhere beyond the periphery; beyond the firmament, everywhere and nowhere . . . To be genuinely at home in this world, we have to affirm our essential homelessness, a homelessness illuminated by shifting ideals of genuine dwelling. (Harries, 1998)

Land has always been contested. Given human nature, it is hard to believe in an early Eden, when land was freely available in which to live, traverse and dwell, without fear of being challenged and displaced. Land ownership has become a complicated and ambiguous issue, such that the layman must resort to the legal profession in property negotiations and land transactions, no matter how small and seemingly simple.

I bought a house in London with Jacqueline Pitfield when I was 22, at a time when a year-out architect could contemplate such a possibility. It was October 1973, at the time of the first oil crisis when the OAPEC embargo, which lasted six months, resulted in the price of petrol quadrupling overnight. It meant a sudden dearth of cars on the streets of London, and for a time, it was easy to drive into the West End and park freely. There were signs in estate agency windows offering 100 per cent mortgages on houses. This was the spark that led to us buying an end-of-terrace house in Twickenham.

The house at 66 Hamilton Road was untypical of West London suburbia. The first impression of Twickenham in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century was one of wealth and prosperity, but this was not the case in all parts of the borough. In the area north of Twickenham Green, a large number of Victorian and Edwardian cottages were being built to accommodate the numbers of working-class people who

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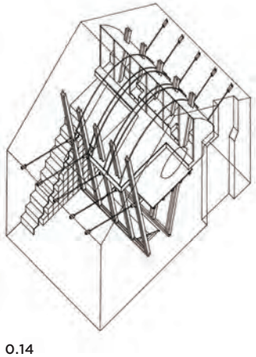


0.14

0.13 Section, 66 Hamilton Road, 1977

0.14 Axonometric, 66 Hamilton Road, 1977

were moving into the area to support the many small industrial works that were opening up. Hamilton Road and Warwick Road were culs-de-sac abutting an electricity station, laid out on part of a plot of arable land of 4 acres 3 roods 19 perches adjacent to the railway line. The houses were built in rows of six, with a narrow passage in between. When built, they consisted of a front room, a back room and a kitchen. There was also an outside toilet and coal shed. There were three bedrooms on the first floor, and each house had a small fenced-in garden at the rear. The front and back rooms, along with the main and middle bedrooms, all had small fireplaces. It was not unusual for two families to share a house, with the family upstairs using the fireplace for cooking.

66 Hamilton Road was at the end of the terrace. Like other houses in the row, it had a small backyard. However, the reason for buying it was that it also had a triangular side garden enclosed by broken-down fencing. Although the end-gable wall faced south and the side garden was a suntrap, there were no doors or windows opening onto it. It was always our ambition to open up the house to the garden and the sun. It was only when we started repairing the fence and a neighbour asked if the side garden was ours, mentioning that others like it in the neighbourhood belonged to the council and were rented, that we had to appoint a local solicitor to clarify the situation and find out if the side garden actually belonged to us. It turned out that our side garden was not ours legally, but had been enclosed for a sufficient period of time for us to be able to file an ownership claim. However, our claim had to go uncontested for seven years before the land legally belonged to us.

In the period we owned the house, we made extensive changes, including opening up the interior to the side garden, and were part of the gentrification of the area. This was a term first used by Ruth Glass, urban sociologist and founder of UCL's former Centre of Urban Studies (1958–80). She predicted in 1964 that 'London may quite soon be a city which illustrates the principle of the survival of the fittest – the financially fittest, who can still afford to work and live there. Not long ago the then housing minister advised those who cannot pay the price to move out' (Glass, 1964, in Melhuish, 2015). We were still living there when Right to Buy legislation was implemented as part of The Housing Act 1980 during Margaret Thatcher's first term as prime minister. Several houses in the street were bought by tenants from the housing association that owned them, and some were immediately sold on to developer landlords at a profit. We had bought our house for £5000 in 1973 and sold it for £33,000 in 1983. It has subsequently changed hands on several occasions and, now extended and improved, sold for £725,000 in 2015. In the meantime, the electricity station has also been converted to residential use.

It has been pointed out by Simon Jenkins that:

whatever the media's 'crisis' hysteria says, buying a house has seldom been so affordable. I bought my first studio flat in the

Seventies and it cost four times my starter salary. The 85 per cent mortgage cost 17 per cent, It consumed 40 per cent of my income and was crippling, The same job today also buys a studio flat at the same multiple. But the mortgage is 4 per cent, which consumes a mere 15 per cent of income. The Council of Mortgage Lenders' index has London's average mortgage interest in 1990 consuming 30 per cent of average income. That is 10 per cent today. Yes the deposit is bigger and payment may take longer, but no-one can say London property is less affordable to buy. The difference between my experience and the same studio today is its location, no longer in Camden but in points east and south – though still in Zone 1. The great London house price conversation has never been about money but about class. (Jenkins, 2016)

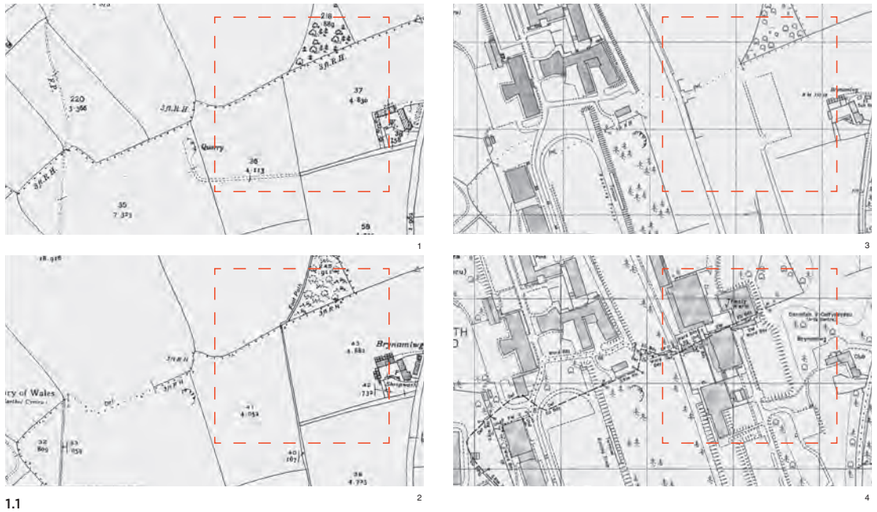
Jenkins also makes the point that 'London's truly residential rich want to live in town houses, not somewhere like a Moscow suburb' (Jenkins, 2016) – a pejorative comment, as not all Moscow suburbs are the same.

Many-sidedness—In designing one's home, one engages intimately with the way that places affect the senses with a view to creating spaces of comfort and well-being. It seems however that one must acknowledge the impossibility of designing such a building or environment and that a dwelling will always contain some sense of the unhomely, and this is desirable. The unhomely is also a condition of certain streets and sometimes whole neighbourhoods. This condition changes over time – a constant reminder that place is experienced through all the senses including the haptic – and an understanding that touch may also invoke the uncanny and a remembrance of things felt intuitively and not necessarily understood rationally. Place and materiality experienced through touch and bodily engagement with the world become important aspects of the way we think about the human condition in order to anticipate how we may live in the future.

The design of housing by definition means the design of places for other people to live in. It is an act of imaginative thinking and something done collectively. To accommodate the needs and desires of others requires empathy, and the architect can never be neutral and completely objective. The use of all one's faculties is necessary in the design process, given that our built environments affect us in almost every possible way and we must experience them at all levels. The brilliant discoveries across the fields of science, the humanities and the arts made at the beginning of the twentieth century may have changed the way we understand the world. As architects, how we think and act are inevitably driven by these discoveries. They have opened up our eyes and imaginations to latent possibilities for humane interaction and for design to be accommodating and open ended in its aims and goals. The Jain theory of 'many-sidedness' or 'multi-perspectivism' (Ane-kanta-vada) suggests that since the world is multifaceted, any single view point is limited. Jain epistemology rejects absolute or perfect knowledge. In my work I aim for open

endedness as a design approach (it's never just about the design) and also in recognition that the interpretation of context has limits beyond one's comprehension and scope. Not everything is measurable and can be provided for rationally. Peter Blundell Jones writing about Haring and Scharoun states that 'Surely (they and not Mies) were right, for if we cannot be totally rational and objective then we have to be subjective, but we can at least be relevantly subjective' (Blundell Jones, 1978).

2005 Seaside | Aberystwyth Arts Centre



1.1

1.1 Historical maps showing site development. | Source: Images courtesy of Digimap.
1:10,000

1. 1880
2. 1900
3. 1930
4.1960

0m 100m 500m

1.2

1.2 Interior with mezzanine

A limited competition was held to design Creative Industries Business Units at Aberystwyth Arts Centre. Aberystwyth University, Penglais campus, designed by Dale Owen of the Percy Thomas Partnership in 1970 is one of the most significant postwar buildings in Wales, planned like a Greek acropolis and commanding the high ground overlooking the sea to the west. The site is located in woodland upslope at the rear of the existing buildings adjacent to a circular extension completed in 2000 housing a cinema, bookshop and further exhibition space. The proposal aims to respond to the spirit of the original master plan and also to accommodate the more recent additions to create a new public ground that extends the scope for large outdoor events as well as maintaining and reinforcing informal routes through the site. Clare Melhuish carried out interviews with several potential occupants. The transcriptions informed the design process and led to the design of loose-fit double-height units with mezzanine platforms. The layout was capable of flexible occupation, including accommodation

Jonathan Vining is an architect and urban designer based in Cardiff. The interview focused on twentieth-century Welsh architectural heritage and in particular the Aberystwyth Arts Centre, which is a notable major twentieth-century Welsh building by Percy Thomas Partnership. The context is a competition held in 2005 by Aberystwyth University to design creative industries business units. There was a shortlist of six practices, including Pierre d'Avoine Architects. | Source: Image courtesy of Jonathan Vining.

by doctoral student couples as well as modest live/work environments. The proposal included a double-height event space and south-west-facing verandahs on two levels used for access and for spectating events held on the new public ground. The undercroft was intended for use by children that used the site as a short-cut between school and home.

Jonathan Vining

Interview at Aberystwyth Arts Centre, 20 August 2016—I was born in Cardiff in 1957, where I live and work now. Both of my grandfathers worked in collieries: my maternal grandfather looked after the horses, having started work in his teens at the coalface, and my other grandfather, who died before I was born, was a sawyer. The forebears of both of my grandfathers had come to South Wales to work in the mines in the late nineteenth century – from Devon and Somerset. My father was born into that background – actually on 29 February 1924 in a house later destroyed in the Aberfan disaster in 1966. He went to grammar school in Aberdare and won a scholarship to art college. He was obviously extremely gifted and went to the School of Art in Cardiff before and after war service in the Royal Navy, where he was taught by Ceri Richards.[1]

He became a lecturer at Cardiff College of Art in 1950 and founded the ceramics department there, which he ran for nearly 30 years. It had an international reputation by the 1970s. He retired due to ill health in the early 1980s. My background, therefore, was working class and rooted in art and design. I can remember that when we went on family holidays when I was young, we did go to beaches, but we also visited churches and art galleries. I remember people like Michael Cardew, the great potter, staying with us back in the 1960s. Alongside his work as a ceramics teacher, my father had a pottery when I was young and was making modernist vessels and exhibiting quite widely at that time, including here in Aberystwyth (although not in this building, which was constructed later).

We were asked, when we were in junior school, what we wanted to be when we grew up, and I said, even then, that I wanted to be an architect – although that early ambition faded when I was in comprehensive school. I didn't do very well in my A levels, and then I started work, ostensibly just for the summer but, as it turned out, for four years. That was 1975, when I was 18, and I worked basically as a print and tea boy to start with before moving on to the drawing board. The firm was called Wyn Thomas + Associates and had been set up by Wyn Thomas, a well-established, very well-respected practitioner in South Wales, joined by my brother, Paul. It was a town-planning practice originally, then it expanded into architecture and landscape architecture after a period of time and became Wyn Thomas + Partners a couple of years later. I went to college in the evenings, and then I did day release, doing an ONC and the first year of a HNC. Around 1978, we had a couple of young graduates who came to work for us straight from the Welsh School of Architecture, and they were the ones really who said that I had to go to university and that I couldn't carry on being a technician any longer. So, I ended up not finishing my HNC; I just did the first

1.3

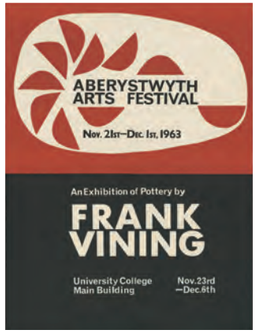
1.3 **Pots by Frank Vining.** | Source: Images courtesy of Gwyneth Vining.

year of it and instead went to the Welsh School of Architecture in Cardiff. Wyn Thomas wrote me a marvellous reference, and this helped get me into the School of Architecture alongside my ONC and HNC first-year results really, rather than my A levels. I also had a good portfolio of drawings, which included freehand sketches that I had done with my father's tuition, but obviously I had drawings from my working life up to that point as well. I doubt that I'd even get into the School these days with the A-level requirements as they are now . . .

The work I was doing in the office in those four years was extremely wide ranging. I remember the first drawing that I ever did was of a close-boarded timber fence. But I worked as a technician on architectural, town-planning and landscape projects. I remember one day (probably in 1979), I came into work on a Monday morning to find a note from Wyn saying, 'Drop everything you've done so far, I want you to work on this'. And it was actually to work with an architect and landscape architect called David Singleton to do the landscape drawings for the Ford engine plant that was being built near Bridgend. It was the largest landscape contract in Wales at the time, and I did all the drawings for that contract package. Terrific. And I made a large model of a proposed new mine at Margam when I was working there. Looking back, I did such an amazing range of things in those four years – far more than I see with year-out students and young graduates nowadays. The office was about 20 strong, I guess, and had a broad base, including town-planning, landscape and architectural projects, almost exclusively in Wales.

My mother, Gwyneth Vining, was born in Aberdare, and she has been a homemaker all of her life. She never worked full-time, outside of the home that is, except when she was young during the war when she worked in an ammunitions factory in Trefforest, which she hated. When times were tough in the early 1970s, after we had moved to a much larger Victorian house with outbuildings in North Cardiff, she did work part-time in the fruit and vegetable shop nearby, which she enjoyed. But she cared for her parents and my father's mother a lot. Her father died; I can't remember exactly when – perhaps in 1969 – when he was in his early 80s. I don't think he ever lived with us, but her mother came from Aberdare to live with us for a few years after my grandfather died. My father's mother also lived with us, and she attracted family to come to visit us rather than the other way around. There were lots of family who'd come to the house to visit her. We used to count the cups of tea at times, but it was a big house, and it could physically cope, in that sense. It was an extended family really.

My mother had one sister who died from TB when she was about 18. Her eldest brother also had TB and was hospitalised for a long time, and he never really worked again after that. When I was young, we used to visit my grandparents in Aberdare every Saturday. It seemed a lot further away in those days than now: it's about 25 miles, but it used to take (with the roads as they were back in the 1960s) the best part of an hour. Now you can get there in less than 30 minutes. According to my mother, Aberdare was a very nice town in the olden days. It was known as the 'queen of the valleys' and had a fantastic municipal



1.4

1.4 Aberystwyth Arts Festival poster (1963). | Source: Image courtesy of Jonathan Vining.

park with a lake, half a dozen Italian cafes and even opera performances in the 1930s and 1940s. People used to gather and walk around the park on a Sunday evening like it was a Spanish paseo; it was a very civilised and social place, I think.

There were regeneration projects in Aberdare in the 1970s before I started working. Interestingly, I found some slides the other day that I took in 1974 of a very nice piece of graphics on a wall in Aberdare designed by Vernon Barber, who was a lecturer at the Welsh School of Architecture at the time: tall, compact lettering in colours typical of the period – black, white, antelope and orange – saying 'Aberdare believes in', then an arrow, and 'Aberdare', all going around a curving brick wall. Really terrific, you know? The wall's still there, but it's been painted over now; but that was my first encounter with the idea of 'regeneration', I suppose.

When I went to the Welsh School of Architecture in 1979, the head of school was Dewi-Prys Thomas, and he was a great figurehead.[2] I went there with quite a lot of skills really, which other people didn't have initially. It was at a time when postmodernism was becoming the fashion and the School was starting to embrace that, which was disappointing to me at the time. I sort of embraced that ideology, I suppose, in the work that I was doing but with some remorse looking back because my interest really was in modernism. I remember an early project that we did in first year was a housing project, and I was very much then into the work of Aldington and Craig, as their Bledlow housing scheme had been published in the AR in 1978. My housing project very much derived from that sort of aesthetic but was criticised by my tutor at the time. I suppose my later work in college was a bit collagist and eclectic, if truth be known. But the first year was particularly interesting, I think, because there was a lecturer called Bob Fowles who was very much into the 1970s 'design methods' approach, J. Christopher Jones and all that. And so, I found that helpful and interesting as well, not just in terms of learning about the design process but also in trying to develop a design to meet the needs of the users.

I did my year out in London, and it was quite difficult to get a job in 1982 because the economy wasn't great. I worked for the first few months at a very nice little practice called Michael Brown Associates off the Portobello Road. Then, a job was advertised at Powell Moya and Partners, which I applied for. I started there in January 1983, and that was where I wanted to be: it was my dream job really. They were an ageing practice at that time, and very sadly they don't exist anymore. I was working mainly on the conversion of part of a hospital in High Wycombe that the practice had built in the 1960s. I also worked on a large housing scheme at Endell Street in Covent Garden, which was just being finished at the time, and I did all the ex-contract works drawings for that. During the seven months that I was there, I also worked on Maidstone Hospital, the appearance of which Philip Powell would characterise as 'Nippo-Kentish', which is quite amusing. I did all of the internal drainage drawings for this second phase, and that made me, apparently, the drainage expert for the whole office. Just before I left, they won the project for Hastings District General Hospital (which is now Conquest Hospital), and I was involved with that at its very early stage, preparing a drainage strategy for the whole thing, which is quite bizarre for a youngster. But when I arrived in January, I was sat next to Paul Newman, our great mutual friend through whom we met, and who tragically died in 1997 – and he went on to work on the Hastings hospital. He had a project programme that was 10 years long, and he could predict five years in advance that he'd be in a particular meeting on a particular day, and I thought 'now is the time to leave and go back to college' or become embroiled in 10 years working on one hospital project. I visited several notable earlier Powell and Moya buildings, including the great Cripps Building at St John's College, Cambridge, which has been very influential to me, and I'm pretty sure that by that time, I'd been to Oxford as well to the underground Christ Church Picture Gallery, which is an amazing building. I also went to see the School for Advanced Urban Studies building in Bristol, sadly now demolished, which was a terrific building.

I returned to do my final year (it's only one year at Cardiff) – a very intense year. My final design project was for an art gallery and office development in Cardiff on a site diagonally opposite the great civic centre. It was subsequently exhibited at the Royal Academy in the Summer Exhibition in 1985. Wayne Forster and I were in the same year at university.[3] There was an almost inseparable group of six of us who met within weeks of entering the School in 1979, and Wayne was one of those. We collaborated on some projects in college and have remained friends and practised together in one way or other ever since. We've done competitions together; we had a practice together; like you, we were in the 40 Under Forty exhibition in 1988; and we still do the odd thing together, even now.

After Part 2, I went to Bristol to work for Bruges Tozer and later was invited to come back to Cardiff, back to the Wyn Thomas practice, by Wyn himself. This was because the architect Bill Davies, who is now recognised as one of the most significant postwar Welsh architects, had left his practice in North Wales (the Bowen Dann Davies Partnership) and was going to join Wyn Thomas + Partners at Dewi-Prys Thomas's recommendation. Wyn asked me to come and work with him, and knowing his work well, it was an opportunity that I couldn't turn down. So, I had three or four years working alongside him while passive smoking his cheroots. We worked together mainly on a new faculty of engineering for Cardiff University and the Rhondda Heritage Park, but a number of other interesting things as well. It was like an apprenticeship really. But it was towards the end of that period, in the late 1980s, that Wayne and I decided to break out into practice together. Through a friend of ours from college, we were given a job on a plate to do a 50,000 ft^2 office building for a developer in Swansea, and that set us up. Wayne, though, never actually left his teaching life, so he wasn't engaged as fully as I was timewise. We did another two office buildings for that same developer, as well as a car showroom, a mosque and some well-crafted house extensions. So, that practice ran full-time, I suppose, for about five years until the recession hit in the early 1990s when we ran out of work.

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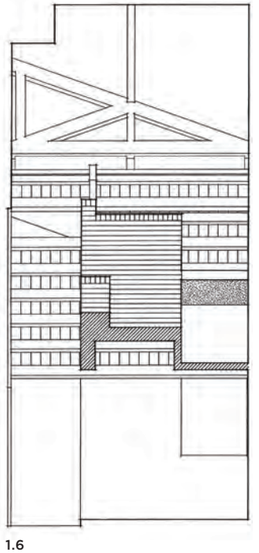


1.6

1.5 **Courtyard house designed by Jonathan Vining**

1.6 **Courtyard house planometric by Jonathan Vining**

1.7 **Gateway mega-graphics signalling social, economic and environmental regeneration intent, Aberdare (1974).** | Source: Image courtesy of Jonathan Vining.

1.7

But, in retrospect, while I wouldn't swap the experience, the whole thing was too early in my career for me. I thought I was ready for it, but I discovered that there were quite a lot of things that I didn't know – and they weren't necessarily to do with architecture per se, but rather with winning work and all that sort of side of practice. Work was terribly short in the early 1990s, in Cardiff particularly, but I managed to obtain some with Gordon Lewis, who had a pioneering urban design practice in Cardiff as part of the Whinney Mackay-Lewis group. I worked initially through my company and then full-time for him as an employee. That practice transformed into Gordon Lewis Associates in 1995, when it left the parent company, and I became a director of it. We broadened our work into architecture, as well as urban design, and in 2000, we merged with what by then was Wyn Thomas plc. So, it was like going back to where I first started . . .

The work at Gordon Lewis Associates was predominantly urban design and regeneration work. We were doing strategic planning for towns and master planning large development sites. The work was mainly for the former Welsh Development Agency. But there were architectural projects as well, the most significant of which was the Cancer Research Centre for Velindre Hospital in North Cardiff, which actually completed a trio of red-brickwork buildings that I designed in that area, including my own house. Just before we merged with Wyn Thomas, Gordon and I won a very big housing scheme for Westbury Homes.

You mentioned that Owen Hatherley called them, 'yuppiedromes'?

Yes, that was the Century Wharf project in Cardiff Bay, which went on for about 10 years, completing in 2009 – nearly a thousand flats

1.8

1.8 **Aberystwyth Arts Centre designed by Dale Owen of the Percy Thomas Partnership and 'La Scala' by artist Mark Pimlott in the piazza, 1970.** | Source: Image courtesy of RIBA Image Library.

along the River Taff. Not an entirely accurate review by Owen, that one, and I think they'll stand the test of time better than most of the developments of the same period down there.

Taking an overview, the practices that I worked in have been predominantly multidisciplinary. When I was there, the Wyn Thomas practice had town planning, landscape and architecture disciplines. When Gordon and I merged with them, that added an urban design strand and, in turn, when WynThomasGordonLewis sold out to WYG in 2005, we were joining a huge multidisciplinary practice. I've always worked in that sort of multidisciplinary environment really and enjoyed the spirit of collaboration. And I've had a great variety in my work. I resist being pigeonholed and try to make a specialism out of being a generalist.

The master's degree I did under Dr Michael Forsyth at the University of Bath from 2012 to 2014 came about again through a downturn in the economy. At WYG several years ago, we were invited to sign a contract variation that would allow the company to put us onto a four-day week, if circumstances dictated, rather than making people redundant with those remaining continuing to work full-time. I was leading a group of about 15 people then and was supportive of this approach. However, this variation was put in place with my group without me because I was told that I had plenty of work on. But I resisted because I didn't think that it was a very ethical thing to do. So, I offered to go on to a four-day week as well. Then, over a period of time, when the rest of the team went back to five-day working, I decided to remain on four days; I was in my mid-50s, I had no particular financial need to go back to five days and I thought this could be beneficial for me in terms of my overall working life, my architectural vocation. So, it was through that process really that I had the opportunity to do a master's – and I'd been hankering after doing something in the conservation field for some years. I met Peter Salter on the landing in the Welsh School of Architecture one lunchtime, and he'd recently completed the course at Bath.[4] I mentioned to him that I'd been considering doing the one at the AA, but that the teaching day there was a Friday and I couldn't imagine getting back to Cardiff from London on a Friday night, and that it was also very expensive. Peter said that the course at Bath was an excellent one. So, I went and found out about it, applied and did it, and I enjoyed it very much.

What was special about the course, particularly, was the way that it was organised as modules and the teaching days, which in my case, doing it over two years, was a full day each Wednesday. Almost all the lectures were delivered by high-level outside experts, and they all appeared to be introduced as 'the UK's leading expert on conservation law', 'the world's leading expert on historic paint' and so on. These were interspersed with visits to such interesting places as Woodchester Mansion, Croome and Stowe – not to mention the amazing resource that the city of Bath itself provided – and the opportunity to spend a week studying at the British School at Rome.

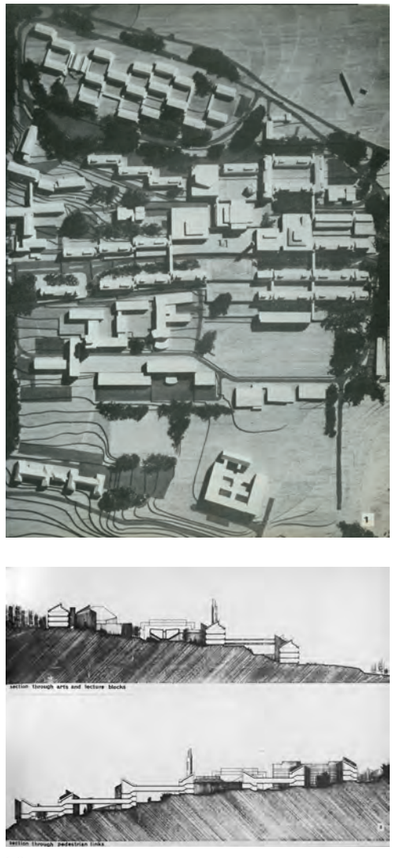
I wrote my dissertation on postwar architecture in Wales, and it was an investigation into whether the listing of the architecture of that period was deficient, particularly compared to England. I'd done some research

in the field back in the late 1990s for a book that Malcolm Parry and I were thinking of writing but which never came into fruition, and this had led to my interest and hypothesis.[5] In the dissertation, I looked at the legislative and policy context for listing in the countries of the British Isles, then at the statistics relating to listed buildings in England and in Wales, making comparisons in various ways, including by building type. Then, there were two case studies that looked at thematic research as a means of proposing buildings for listing – which is not something that Cadw has done.[6] The postwar buildings that it has listed have all been through its geographical resurvey that it completed in 2005, and through spot listing on an ad hoc basis since – not really satisfactory. So, the first case study used housing as the building type for this, and this described half a dozen themes in postwar housing design and the principal examples of these, very few of which have been picked up under Cadw's geographical survey. The second considered the use of an individual architect's oeuvre as a means of proposing buildings for listing, and I used the life's work of Bill Davies for that.

The outcome of all this was that it became clear to me that the listing of the period by Cadw was 'lackadaisical', as Patrick Hannay, the editor, described it in his intro to my essay in *Touchstone* (2016) – and there was a whole body of architectural works from the 1946–85 period in Wales that were unrecognised.[7] It was also clear that things were quite different in England where the strategic, research-led approach there had seen about 150 postwar domestic projects alone listed and, last year, a batch of commercial office buildings, and more recently I think it was about 40 pieces of postwar public art. They'll be moving on to postmodernism next!

Sir Percy Thomas, whose practice designed many of the buildings here on the Penglais campus, was a remarkable character and probably the greatest Welsh architect of the twentieth century. Although he was actually born in the North-East of England, his father was a sea captain from West Wales. In the late 1950s, he recognised that he needed to change the architectural approach of the practice, and his choice to lead this was Dale Owen. Dale was born in Merthyr Tydfil, went to Whitchurch Grammar School in Cardiff and then trained at the Welsh School of Architecture, which was part of the Cardiff Technical College in those days. He did war service in the Royal Artillery and then studied planning in London. In 1954, he went as a Smith-Mundt and Fulbright Scholar to MIT where, as you know, Gropius had been a dominant figure. He spent more than a year working for Gropius's practice before returning to the UK and working for Sir William Holford. And so he came back to Wales in 1958 with Bauhaus-derived principles embedded in him, to join what was then Sir Percy Thomas & Son, and address the need for buildings designed in the then fashionable International Style.

There had been a master plan for Aberystwyth University prepared by Percy Thomas in the mid-1930s, and some of the original buildings were done on the lower part of the site to this formal pattern but in contrasting styles. I think there was another layout done in the late 1950s, which was less



1.9

1.9 Sections and site model, Aberystwyth University Campus Penglais, Aberystwyth, 1935–6 from the National Monuments Record of Wales. | Source: © Percy Thomas Partnership.

formal, and after that the Physics building by Percy Thomas's practice was built. That was the one that was on a postage stamp in the 1970s of new university architecture. It's curtain-walled with a sort of late-Corbusian stonework element attached. In the mid-1960s, the master plan by Dale Owen was adopted, leading to what we see today being put into place: this idea of terraces along contours; landscape threaded in between courts; courts at various locations; the idea of an academic and social centre where we are sitting now with a library, Great Hall and Students' Union building. The bell tower, which can be seen from the whole of the campus, signals that this is the focus of the site and, of course, the great piazza has stunning views west out over Aberystwyth and Cardigan Bay. It's a remarkable thing in response to the setting, but obviously windswept when the weather is inclement.

Aberystwyth is very much a university town and not just a seaside town – in fact, I suppose the town is pretty much dominated by the university now, especially during term time. There's been a university here since the nineteenth century, and the Old College building on the seafront, which was started in the1860s, is mainly by J. P. Seddon and is an extraordinary mixture of Gothic styles. The master plan for the campus here on the hill at Penglais was intended to have flexibility built into it, in a sense, and I think it was pretty much laid out in terms of infrastructure around the 1970s when the Arts Centre was built. The campus has evolved over a period of time, and new buildings have been added. It's a pity that with a lot of master plans you see, it's often just a plan, with seemingly little thought given to the 3D aspects. But if you look at the Percy Thomas archive in the Royal Commission, you will see that the 1960s master plan was not just a plan, it was a physical model. It had sections through the site, and it was all seemingly very well integrated.[8] But as we look out of the building we're in now at the recent

building on the left – all right, it's got too many materials anyway – but in terms of the master plan for the site and any sort of reasonable analysis, it's far too high. It just blocks the view from where we're sitting now completely, which is pretty nonsensical really . . .

Having participated in the competition, I have come to understand there has been a lack of consideration or even a lack of interest in the original building. Somehow, it's not regarded in the same way as building heritage of an earlier period, and that may be something to do with materiality and form.

Well, I think that reflects a general feeling about the value of modern architecture in Wales, and it was one of the things that I thought about when I was writing my dissertation – the appreciation and recognition of postwar architecture in Wales as a heritage resource and the need not only for that part of our heritage to be properly listed, but also for that period to be promoted as having buildings of value just like any other.

The building that we're in at the moment, the Great Hall, and the other Dale Owen-led buildings of that time are a monumental set piece, and yes, I do think the 'grandeur' of the form and the materiality has much to do with that perception. I suppose it's still the 'shock of the new'.

There's something incredibly robust about the building that we're in. There is a lack of fuss, and I think that's something that doesn't appear to have been followed by the buildings that have been added to the master plan in more recent years. Can you offer a brief comment about the buildings that have been built towards the rear of the site, further up the slope, including the one that was there when the competition was held, and the building by the subsequent competition winner, Thomas Heatherwick?

You're talking about Patel Taylor's building and the extension to the rear of the Arts Centre?

That's right.

Well, the first one, the Theatre Film and TV Studies building has a certain resonance with the Great Hall in that it's set along the contours on a raised terrace and addresses the view to Cardigan Bay, and the principal elevation is composed in a not too dissimilar way. I guess that's the only one that really makes any attempt to coordinate with Dale's master plan.

The Arts Centre extension is a bit of a curate's egg really. On the one hand, the way the new facilities are integrated with the original ones is skilfully done, but externally it goes beyond trying to achieve a level of visual independence – which I assume was the aim – or contrasting with the existing, it just looks very alien to me in that context.

The Heatherwick series of pavilions are a curious addition, I think. There was a very interesting programme for those buildings in terms of integration with the creative industries and how businesses relate to the activities of the university itself. But they seem to me to be very much just about a gimmicky cladding material, which is not detailed exquisitely enough, and not much else really.

Notes

1. Ceri Richards (1903–71) was one of the most significant British painters of the twentieth century. The definitive monograph is Ceri Richards by Mel Gooding (2002).
2. Professor Dewi-Prys Thomas (1916–85) was one of the greatest figures in twentieth-century Welsh architecture. A charismatic and inspirational teacher and lecturer, he was head of the Welsh School of Architecture from 1960 to 1981. The Dewi-Prys Thomas Trust celebrates his life; see: http://www.dewi-prysthomas.org
3. Professor Wayne Forster (born in Newport in 1952) has been deputy head of the Welsh School of Architecture at Cardiff University since 2002. He is director of the Design and Practice Research Group that aims to encourage design-based research.
4. Peter Salter is Professor of Architectural Design at the Welsh School of Architecture, Cardiff University.
5. Malcolm Parry (born 1939) taught at the Welsh School of Architecture, Cardiff, from 1968 and was head of school from 1997 until his retirement in 2002.
6. Cadw is the Welsh Government's historic advisory service.
7. '*Touchstone* is the magazine for architecture in Wales, published by the Royal Society of Architects in Wales.
8. The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales is based in Aberystwyth and holds a unique collection of documents on the archaeological, built and maritime heritage of Wales.

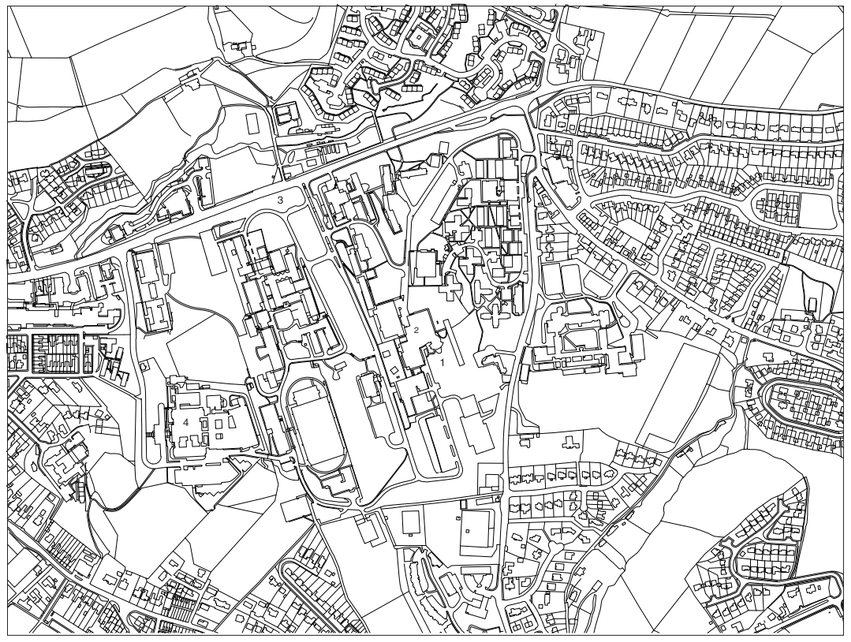
1.10

1.10 Aberystwyth coast. | Source: Courtesy of Google Earth.

1:12,500

1. Arts Centre
2. Irish Sea

0m 250m 500m



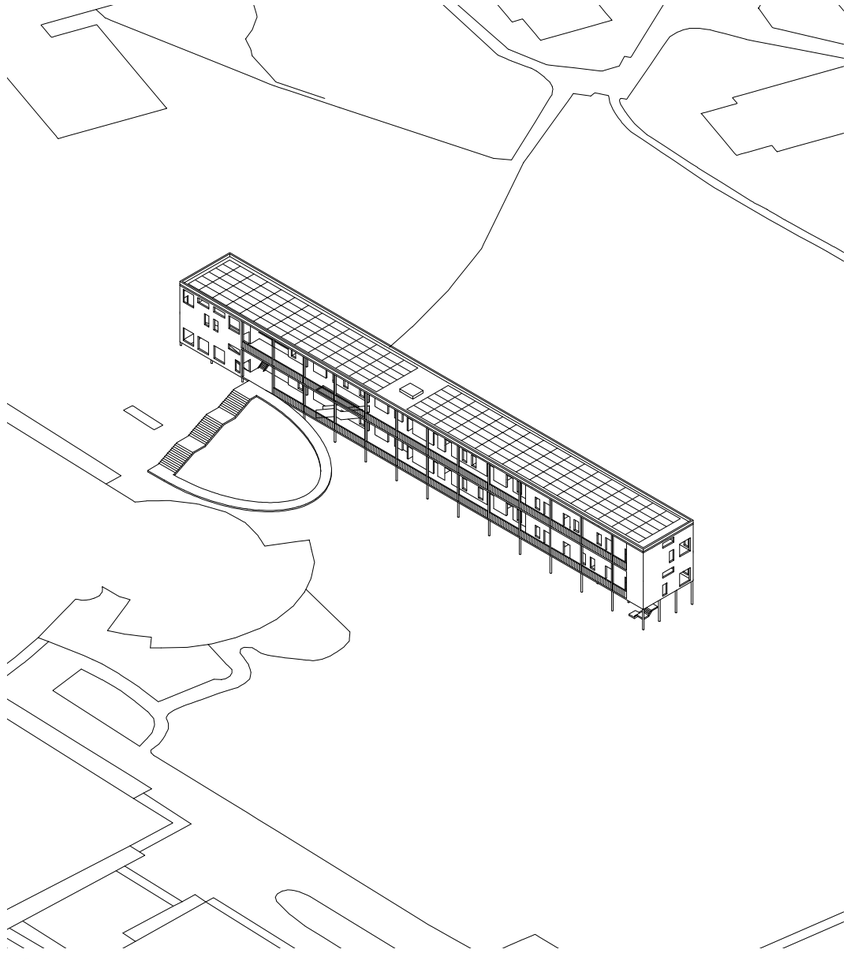
1.11

1.11 Location plan

1:30,000

1. Site
2. Aberystwyth Arts Centre
3. Aberystwyth University Penglais Campus
4. National Library of Wales

0m 300m 1500m

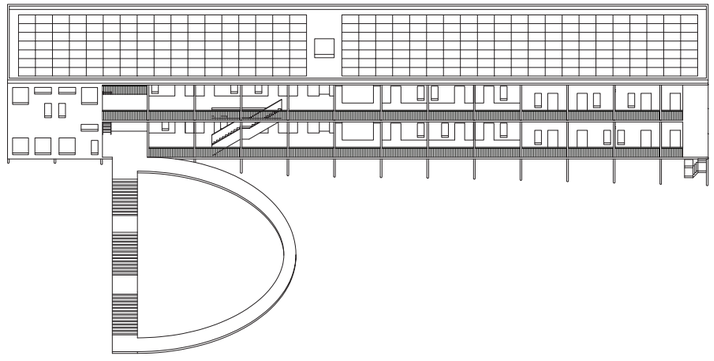


1.12

1.12 Isometric

1:500

0m 5m 25m

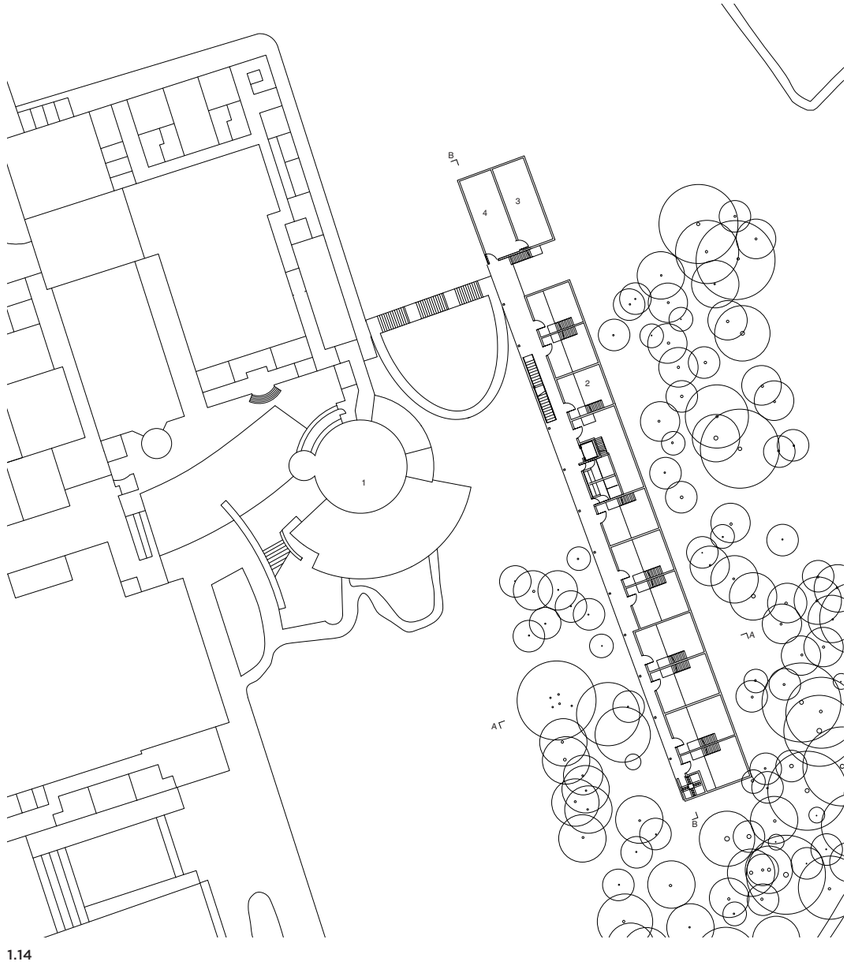


1.13

1.13 Planometric

1:500

0m 5m 25m



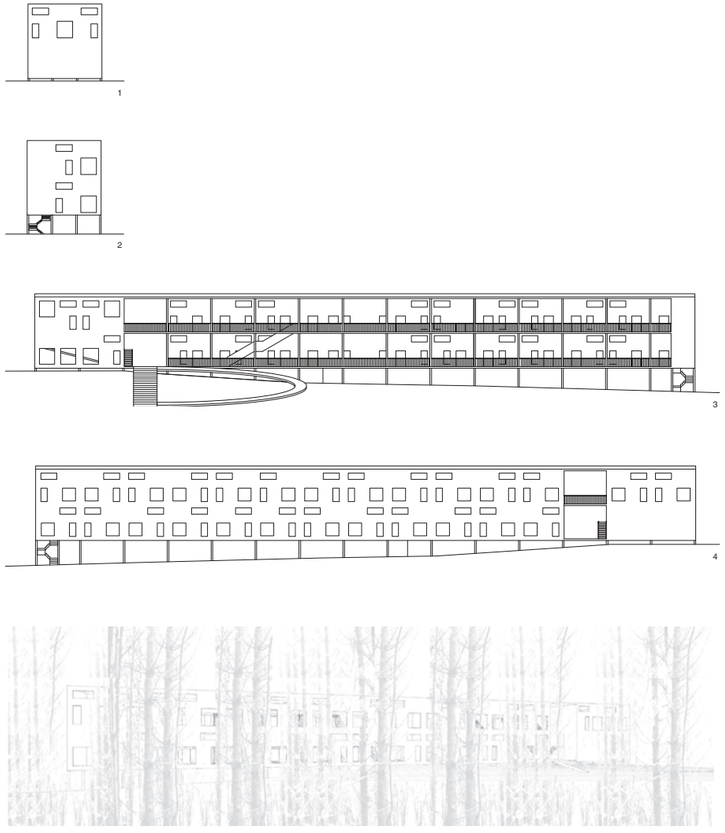
1.14

1.14 Site plan

1:500

1. Concert hall, theatre, gallery and cinema
2. Live/work spaces
3. Storage/technical support space
4. Reception/meeting room

0m 5m 25m

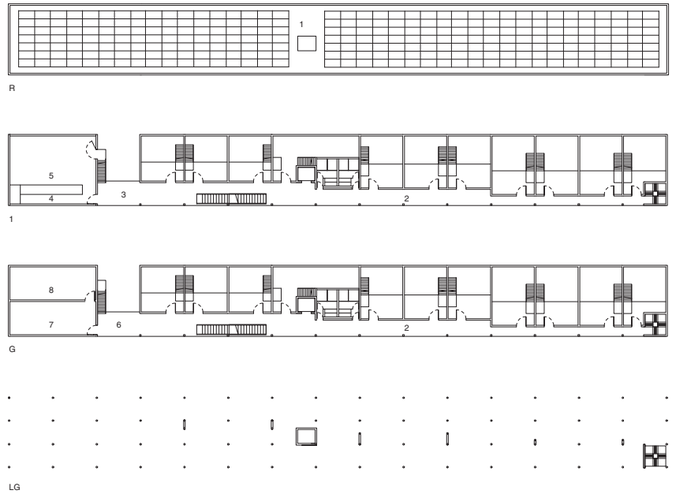


1.15

1.15 Elevations and perspective

1:500

1. North
2. South
3. West
4. East
5. View from the car park
   to the east

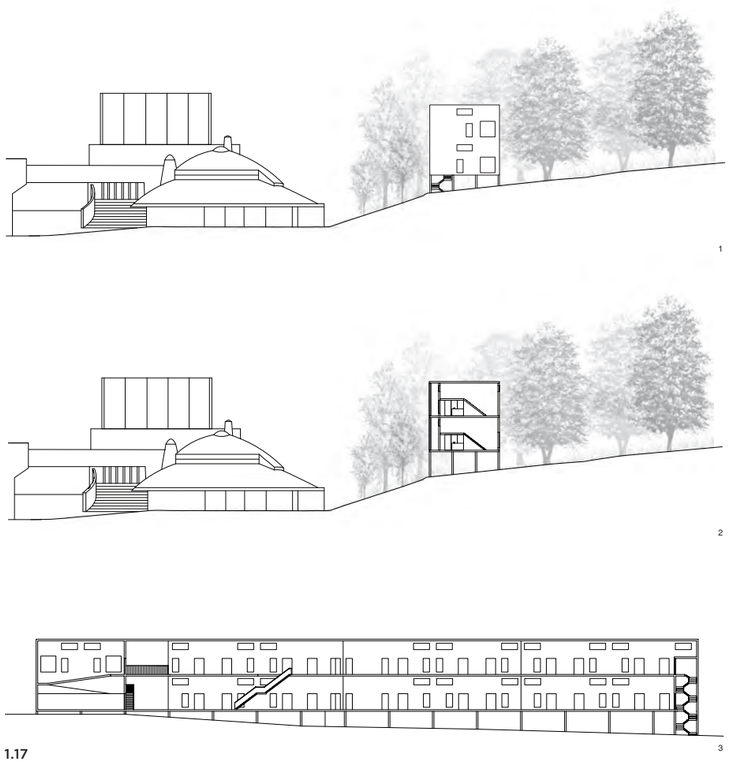


1.16

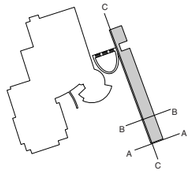
1.16 Plans

1:500

1. Photovoltaic grid
2. Loggia
3. Bridge
4. Ramp
5. Multi-purpose room
6. Entrance
7. Reception/meeting room
8. Storage/tech support



1.17



1.18

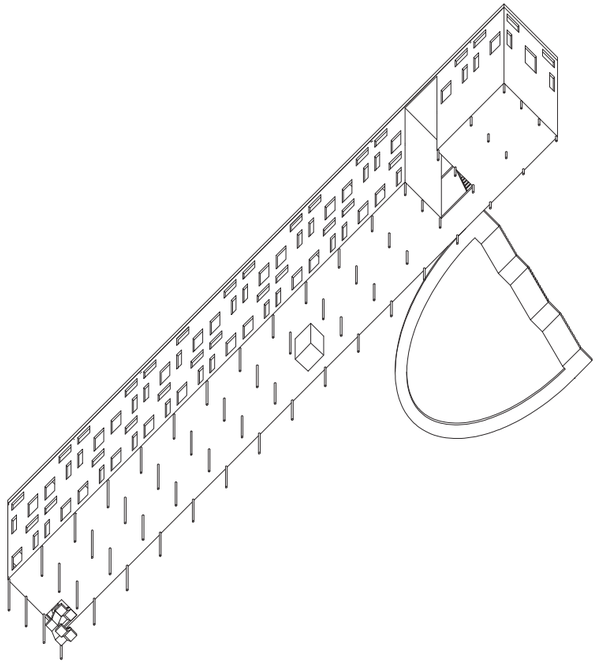
1.17 Elevation and sections

1:500

1. Side elevation AA
2. Cross-section BB
3. Long section CC

0m 5m 25m

1.18 Model interior with mezzanine

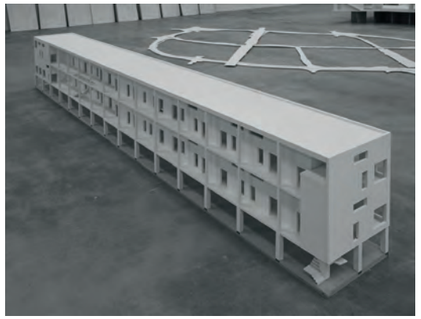


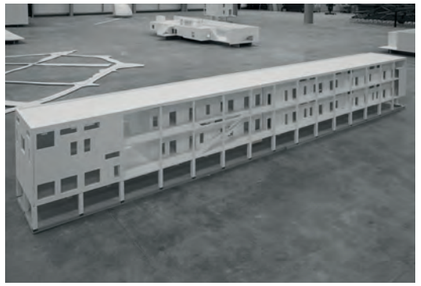
1.19

1.19 Worm's-eye axonometric

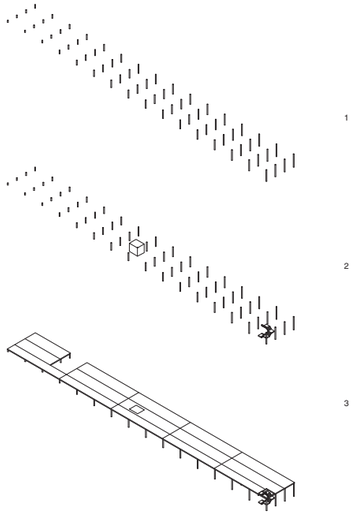
1:500

0m 5m 25m





1.20



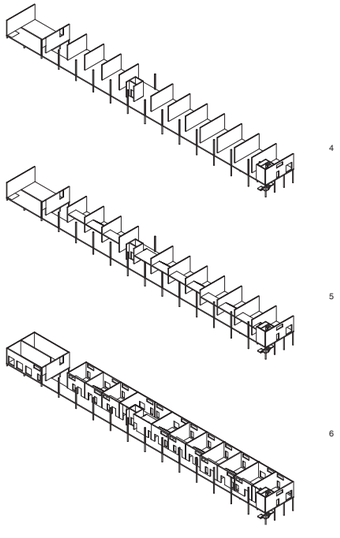
1.21

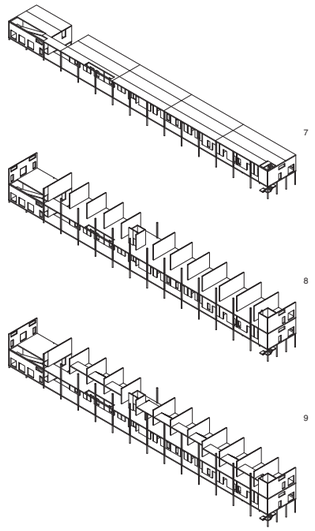
1.20 Model, painted MDF

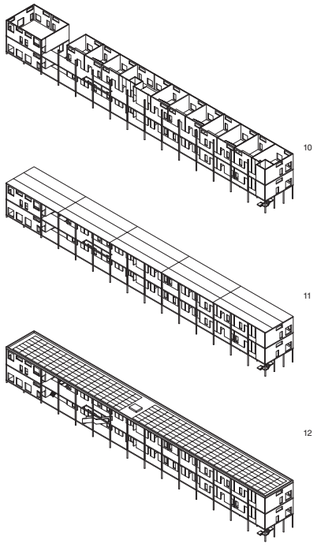
1.21 Atelier One construction sequence

1:1000

1. Steel pile sleeves extend to underside of ground floor
2. Solid timber lift/stair core
3. Solid timber floor



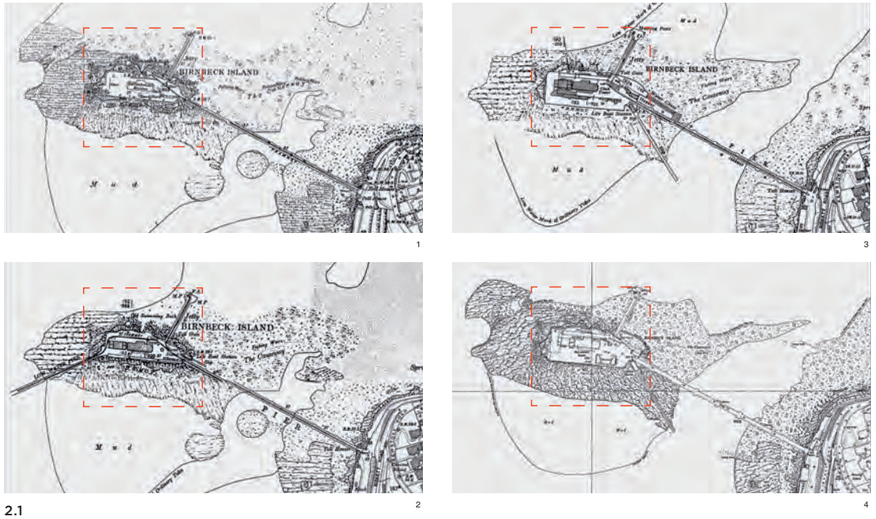




4. All external walls solid timber
5. Mezzanine floors solid timber
6. All external walls solid timber; all openings precut timber panels cut in factory prior to delivery

7. Solid timber roof
8. All internal and external walls solid timber
9. Mezzanine floors solid timber

10. All external walls solid timber and all openings precut timber panels, cut in factory prior to delivery
11. Solid timber roof
12. Parapet solid timber and lift overrun

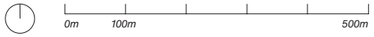


2.1

2.1 Historical maps showing site development. | Source: Images courtesy of Digimap.

1:10,000

1. 1880
2. 1900
3. 1930
4. 1950



2007

Seaside | Pleasure Holm at Birnbeck Island

2.2

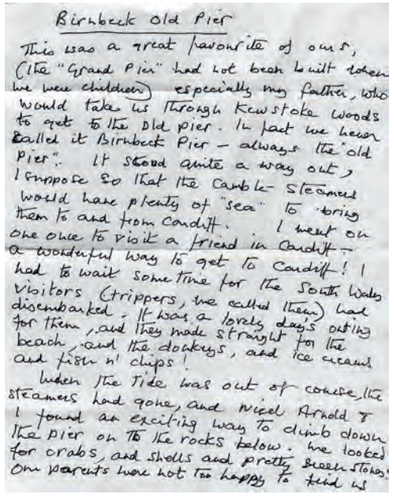
2.2 Pleasure Holm, exterior view

Birnbeck Pier in Weston-super-Mare is the only seaside pier in Britain that connects the coastal edge to an island. The pier is listed but has been derelict since the 1930s. It is located at the north side of the town, defined by a wooded headland, with Town Bay to the south and Sand Bay to the north.

The town had its heyday in the Edwardian era. Large comfortable houses built in stone cut from a quarry in the headland create a pleasant backdrop to the town, with its seaside promenade, town pier and beach where the tide goes out for miles. Weston may have seen better days: today the drive into the town is a jumble of roundabouts and industrial and retail outlets.

Urban Splash, a residential developer based in Manchester in association with the local council, held a competition in 2007 to revitalise Birnbeck Pier, its island destination and its immediate surroundings. The project was designed in collaboration with Jonathan Vining of WYG, Cardiff.

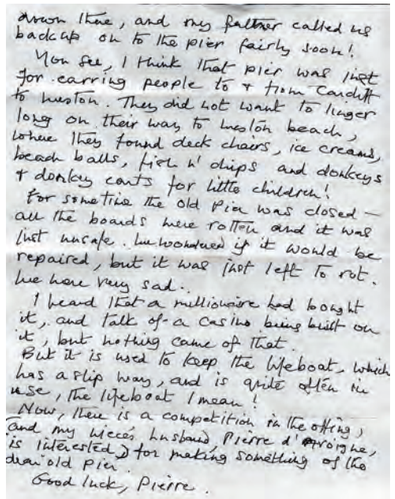
'Pleasure Holm' is a very big building that is designed to look like a small island – a 20-storey development of 120,000 m^2 (1.3 million ft^2) on Birnbeck Island, Weston-super-Mare. The external envelope of the building will be a man-made concrete shell, designed to look like a natural land formation and to function as a natural habitat for flora and fauna while containing habitable accommodation inside. The south and west sides in particular will be punctured with holes that read from the outside as apertures in a cliff face. These will let light and



Birnbeck Old Pier

This was a great favourite of ours, (the "Grand Pier" had not been built when we were children) especially my father, who would take us through Kewstoke Woods to get to the Old pier. In fact we never called it Birnbeck Pier – always the 'old Pier'. It stood quite a way out, I suppose so that the Cardiff steamers would have plenty of "sea" to bring them to and from Cardiff. I went on one once to visit a friend in Cardiff – a wonderful way to get to Cardiff! I had to wait some time for the South Wales visitors (trippers, we called them) had disembarked. It was a lovely day's outing for them, and they made straight for the beach, and the donkeys, and ice cream and fish n' chips!

When the Tide was out of course the steamers had gone, and Nigel Arnold & I found an exciting way to climb down the pier on to the rocks below. We looked for crabs, and shells and pretty stones. Our parents were not too happy to find us



drawn there, and my father called us back up on to the pier fairly soon!

You see, I think that pier was just for carrying people to & from Cardiff to Weston. They did not want to linger long on their way to Weston beach, where they found deck chairs, ice creams, beach balls, fish n' chips and donkeys & donkey carts for little children!

For some time the old Pier was closed – all the boards were rotten and it was just unsafe. We wondered if it would be repaired, but it was just left to rot. We were very sad.

I heard that a millionaire had bought it, and talk of a Casino being built on it, but nothing came of that.

But it is used to keep the lifeboat, which has a slip way, and is quite often in use, the lifeboat I mean!

Now, there is a competition in the offing, and my niece's husband, Pierre d'Avoine, is interested for making something of the dear old Pier.

Good luck, Pierre.

2.3

2.3 Pauline Milligan letter to Pierre d'Avoine, 2007

views into the spaces behind. Some of the openings will carry through to the other side to relieve some of the wind pressure that will develop.

The interior of the shell may be programmed for use in a variety of ways and could be designed to create any feel desired. It provides a range of accommodation befitting its seaside location and includes a casino, cinema, music hall, hotel and end-of-the-pier activities, as well as two hundred duplex apartments and a data centre – a contemporary social condenser.

Our proposal for Birnbeck Island was runner-up in the competition. The budget of £16 million was only disclosed at Stage 2. Pleasure Holm, the choice of 11 of the 12-person jury at Stage 1, would cost in excess of £200 million.

Man-made island data centres—Data centres do not need views, but they do need a great deal of power and cooling – a major concern of businesses that are generally very profitable but with concerns to be green. The proximity to water and wind turbines means that these energy-intensive elements can be provided in an economical and sustainable manner. Communication with the rest of the data world is by a fibre optic that is easily accommodated. Creating new man-made islands around the UK that are bird sanctuaries on the outside and wind powered data centres on the inside has huge potential that requires further research and development.

Jonathan Vining
Interview at Aberystwyth Arts Centre, 20 August 2016—Gordon Lewis, who

was heading up our part of the practice at the time, wanted to do a major design competition project to show the rest of the business at WYG what we could do. The Birnbeck Island competition came up, and Gordon was very keen to do it, particularly as it was in Weston-super-Mare where he was about to move. It seemed to me that it was something that we could have done well independently but that we stood a far greater chance of winning it if we had a 'proper' architect like you involved.

I don't know about that. For me it was partly to do with the fact that obviously we had a long-standing friendship and interests and that the Birnbeck Island competition seemed like a really strong vehicle on which we could collaborate.

Obviously, there were lots of reasons for doing it from the WYG point of view. We could bring a whole host of expertise to the table, and we also had some talented young graduates at the time who were prepared to work on it. From your point of view, Pierre, you could bring to the table something that frankly we didn't have.

I was a visiting professor to the Welsh School at the time. So, I did have a regular reason for coming to Cardiff, and you also came to London quite regularly, and still do. So, the idea of collaboration was interesting from that point of view. I recall you and I spent a long time brainstorming and conceptualising the project.

We seemed to spend a lot of time talking like this and not doing very much drawing. **But scribbling ideas and the design evolved. I think we brought Gordon in to look at it and just see whether he was comfortable with the initial ideas, and he seemed to be surprisingly positive, which gave us both heart to really move forward.**

Well, in all fairness, he'd actually gone (because neither of us could go) on the site visit day that had been organised as part of the competition (I think he was living near Weston-super-Mare by that time), and he went onto the island and took photographs and then reported back to a group meeting that we had the following day, which was good. But he could see that we were heading in an interesting direction, and something worthwhile was going to come from the process. So, yes, he was pretty positive.

We decided quite early on, I think, to invite Aran Chadwick at Atelier One and Bill Watts at Max Fordham's to join us. And I remember having a meeting with them in London at the WYG offices. Bill was an incredible stimulus for the project, and he took it on and added an incredible amount to it, including initiating the idea of including a data centre, which gave the building a wider typological resonance and all of that. Aran in his very direct way had no reservations about the crazy carapace we were proposing. He was just happy to take that on. It was also really helpful to work with a range of consultants at WYG, especially the landscape architects and your team of young architects and assistants.

You need people who are committed to putting their own time into something like that, as we both did. A lot of that work

Aran Chadwick, director, Atelier One. | Source: Image courtesy of Aran Chadwick.

was done out of hours. For a commercial plc organisation, there was a huge financial investment in the competition. I dread to think what it totalled up to. You would never be able to sell that to the business as a proposition really; if you said it was going to cost that much at the start, nobody would've taken it on board. So, it was played on the basis that a lot of it was done in people's own time, which largely it was.

What about your individual approach to collaboration? What took place in your collaboration with Wayne when you were in practice together?

Well, we know each other terribly well, and when we were in practice together, either one of us would lead on the design of a project. We decided that from the onset, usually based on who brought the project in, I suppose. So, one person would lead, and the other would not exactly assist, but would work in a complementary fashion in order to deliver the project. That's not to say that we wouldn't input into each other's work, but I think there's got to be a definitive lead on a project – someone to make the ultimate decision on the direction. And I think when you and I worked together on Birnbeck Island, I made the decision for myself that you were going to be in the lead and that I was going to act as producer, if you like, in a film-making sense. But just going back (by way of illustration) to Wayne and me, I've got a CV in front of me here. So, you, Wayne and I were all in the 40 Under Forty exhibition in 1988. I remember we might have shown three projects, one of which was a competition that Wayne and I did for Porthmadog Maritime Museum. I would say that, conceptually, was Wayne's design, although we both worked on it together and both drew it together . . . There was a little barrister's study that we did in practice together and, I mean, that was pretty much all mine with some drawing input from him. The office building I mentioned earlier, conceptually that was Wayne's, although I produced it, ran it on site. There were two little projects in the Vale of Glamorgan that I did, and he contributed to technically. It really was about complementary activities – and friendship – in that sense. So, it would be that one person would lead, and one person would act as critic and agitator to make things better, and offer solutions and support and criticism, new directions . . .

Aran Chadwick
Interview at Atelier One, Charlotte Mews, London, 9 February 2018—I grew up in South Manchester; I'm a northern boy. I'm from quite a big family. I was one of five kids (I'm the youngest). So, growing up was a bit hectic. My family (bar one) were all involved in construction or went into construction, and that sort of comes through from my dad's side. He was a civil engineer and got us all involved at a very young age. So, when I was about 12, I remember we had to underpin the garage because there were cracks in the wall. We were always digging things out and doing building work around the house. I mean, I've got three brothers, and I think my dad saw us as a resource.

It seems a natural thing for me to go into that world. I went to the local state school, and then after that, I went to the

University of Leeds. I did civil engineering, and I have to say that when I was doing it, they were one of the few schools that did architectural engineering, and I was very tempted to change because I realised quite early on that I was more interested in structures than I was in roads or marine or hydrology or that sort of thing. But I stuck with it because it was for three years, and at the time, I thought that I'd lose a year if I switched courses. So, I decided to stick with it and then do a master's degree in structures. It was very ambitious of me, but I then applied to go to the USA to do a master's degree. And I don't know how (because you had to do this weird entrance examination that was like a Mensa quiz at the time; I think it's called the GRE now), but I seem to remember that I did quite well in it. And I got a place at Berkeley on their programme that was called 'structural engineering materials and mechanics'. It sounds rather long-winded, but I got a place on that, and I went out to California in 1988 then came back to the UK after three semesters in the USA. In terms of my view on what I think was an amazing life experience, I have to say that landing alone in a completely different culture is tough, but it's quite a good thing to do. I did quite a lot of travelling and met a few people there and did loads of road trips around the USA. I remember you could do this thing at the time where you could deliver a car for someone. So, it was basically free. But you had four or five days, and I did two or three of those where I drove from San Francisco to Phoenix, and we were given four days. So, we went via Vegas. And it was a big old Lincoln – you know, one of those with a big leather bench seat.

I don't remember any rules about it other than you paid the petrol, which was incredibly cheap in the USA. And you were given a maximum period of time, which obviously we extended to the last hour because it was very cool driving around in this big old car. So, I had a really good time. But in terms of the influence on my view professionally, it was a big eye opener because they had some big hitters in Berkeley. It's an amazing school, and it's very well-funded. The research there, you could see they were doing some quite big things; they were doing earthquake testing on seven-storey scale buildings in the lab and stuff like that. It was very impressive, and some of the professors there were consulting all over the world. So, they weren't just teaching us, they were really at the top of their game. And that was a big inspiration – that these guys would sit around and have a chat with you, but you knew that actually they were quite important, the best in their field or up there anyway. That had a big impact on me.

When I finished in California, I came back, and I didn't have any money. So, I moved back home for about two years. I had a job in a practice as a graduate engineer in Manchester, and I struggled a little bit. I mean, I was fine doing small projects. My first project was an office building. I was doing a school extension in the North of England. So, really, it was okay, but I just felt that I wasn't really engaging in it properly and that I didn't know enough about design, architecture, to really get involved. So, I remember I went to the university, the architecture school, with the idea of doing an architecture course in the

evenings or part-time to learn a bit more. And the guy, the admissions guy, he was actually an engineer. He said, 'Well, what have you done?' And I explained, and he just looked at it and said, 'Really? Well, what are you doing here?' And he introduced me to the head of the school. So, I ended up going for a beer with him, and this was for having gone in to apply, and suddenly, I was having a beer with the head of school. He was called Joe Jessop, and he ran the Manchester Metropolitan School. And he said, 'You don't want to study. Why don't you come and teach?' So, I did two things at the time: I was really interested in computers, and it was very early days of 3D modelling; and I also got involved in research, which was really good for me. I'd worked with the diploma students on their final thesis projects as an engineer, and so, they'd be coming in with all these really whacky ideas, and some were really great, but they had no idea what to do with structures. And for me, it was brilliant because I wasn't just seeing what you see in practice, which is where a lot of it is distilled into things that you know are affordable or whatever, it was dealing with ideas and how I could involve structures in that aspiration. I did that for a couple of years, and it was a really, really valuable lesson to me. I think it really helped me to consolidate what I knew about engineering and, actually more importantly, how I could feed that into the design process and make a contribution.

I taught full-time for about 18 months and then did a competition. It was interesting; you never saw any competitions for engineers. You saw lots of architectural competitions but nothing for engineers or on a creative level. But the Institute of Structural Engineers did one with the International Association for Bridges and Structural Engineering: it was a design competition. So, I entered that, and I was joint winner. It was an international competition. I think they had quite a lot of entries. I got a prize, and they gave me quite a bit of money, and with it (to my now-wife's dissatisfaction because I'd been with her for about a year at this time), I spent all my prize money on a computer. I got the most powerful computer you could buy with the money at the time, which was brilliant. And it allowed me to do more with the 3D and modelling and analysis and that kind of stuff. So, from that, I thought, 'Well actually, I'm not an academic'. I knew that after being there, I'm really not. My pleasure in it all is getting involved in live projects. So, I started looking around for which companies were doing what, what engineers were involved in what kind of work. I remember going to a few exhibitions at the time. There were various books that had been published about the art of engineering. There seemed to be an interest in engineering as a slightly more creative discipline rather than just the nuts and bolts at the end of the process. The big stand-out for me was a small exhibition that Atelier One had done. Neil Thomas (who started Atelier One) had done Ron Arad's studio, and there were some nice images of that. It just stood out to me as really interesting work, and the other side of it was that there were quite a few projects with moving parts that Neil had done with Lorenzo Apicella and also Stufish where there were structures that opened and closed or things that fold that travelled around . . . mobile structures. It just grabbed my attention. So, I ended up contacting Neil and saying, 'I really like the work. I'm doing this at the moment'. I was thinking at the time that maybe I'd do some research for a bit at the university and thought that maybe I could link it into mobile structures. But I met with Neil, and we got on quite well, and I just started working with Atelier One. It was in 1992, and I was doing some part-time teaching, and I was part-time at Atelier One, but soon I got so drawn into the projects . . .

I was doing some quite interesting stuff on the computer. Everyone takes it for granted now, but it really was. No-one else was really doing any sort of 3D stuff, and it was actually quite time-consuming. It was the early releases of AutoCAD and the 3D side of it that hardly anyone ever used. Also, I had various analysis packages that I could model something in and import 3D models and then put layers on it and analyse it – that sort of stuff. So, I basically came to London for a couple of days a week to exchange what I'd been doing and to go through projects, and I'd worked from home or at the university just doing stuff. I think it was in 1996 that I became a director here.

As a Londoner studying in Birmingham, I was acutely aware of the trajectory of people coming to London from the Midlands and the North seeking fortune and fame, because London, even then, was an epicentre and vitalising the culture in the capital. And it happened in pop of course. I'm just reading a book called *England Is Mine* by Michael Bracewell (1998) about the impact of provincial culture on pop music, but especially northern culture contributing something really vital . . .

I think it was really important to me because of the people I knew, and in a way, I suppose it formed a slightly more creative view on the world. I mean, Manchester was a great city to grow up in. And you know, I think we were 17 when the Hacienda opened. Ben Kelly did the design, and it was New Order who put the money in. We'd be there as often as we could, and even when I was at university in Leeds, I'd come home every other weekend to go to the Hacienda because all my mates were going there.

Leeds, Manchester, Sheffield, Liverpool. You know, musically and for youth culture, it was absolutely brilliant. So, I was in no doubt about it. It was funny when I went to California, it all seemed very sedate. I got involved because I knew quite a few people in and around Manchester who were opening bars, and they'd ask me to design a staircase or do something cool in there, which I would do, but there were no companies in Manchester I could see that were doing the kind of work that I wanted to get involved in. I felt that I had to come to London to get involved in the diversity of work that I wanted to do.

I've never really talked to Neil about it, but I don't think it's deliberate. I just think it started with Neil. Neil's one of these

2.4

2.4 Piper rooftop house under construction, Hanson TIS factory, Trafford Park, Manchester

very enthusiastic people who likes to get involved in lots of things. He'll have a conversation and an idea will come up, and he'll pursue it. It keeps it a lot more interesting.

I met you in 2001 as the structural consultant to John Thompson of Hanson TIS as main contractor when we were doing the Piper rooftop houses for Crispin Kelly of Baylight. We viewed the rooftop of the existing 12-storey building as a brownfield site, and the whole project became about prefabrication, using modern methods of construction to speed up the building process and minimise the time on site.

We'd done lots of moving things, and through John Thompson, who'd just set up a factory making prefabricated buildings, one could do everything in a factory. We were familiar with it from some of the touring stuff, but why can't it be used as a permanent building? Why, when you're doing a building that tours around and it has to be on trucks, why can't you use the same methods? Because it worked pretty well on that: it's robust, it's good quality, it's not that wildly expensive. Why can't you do that on permanent buildings? And so that's what we were trying to do, and, with you, the best thing was that some of the projects that we'd looked at before were really basic. I was interested in the process, but architecturally or design wise, they were pretty crude. We'd done one for Burger King from foundations to burger. It took 32 hours, which became the world record then for putting up a building. It was interesting for us because it was all about the connections. It was all about how you make a building very quickly, and it has to line-up – you don't get a second chance. But I think you took the design further, so that even the proportions of the space – these sorts of boxes suddenly became really generous – became architecture not just a method of building.

For me, it was a first, and it was exciting to evolve the conversation when we got shortlisted for Swaythling Housing on which we collaborated using the same volumetric, modular construction system.

They were like 3D puzzles. That's one of the reasons that I've always enjoyed working with you because in terms of sequencing spaces three-dimensionally, I think you're brilliant at it. And I think because my background was always the 3D side, I don't know how, but I can see it quite quickly. I think some people have to build up a picture through plans or whatever, but I get that quite quickly.

I remember we talked about increasing the width of the modules, and you came up with the idea that you can put two halves together to make bigger spaces, so that the spaces became larger without the impediment of intervening structure. That was all really interesting, and it did really drive that project for us. I think one of the issues you had about that approach was that it involved transportation, which increased the cost of the modules and the project. You suggested the potential of setting up a factory on site to manufacture the modules, and when you've built enough, the factory could be converted to community or other use. I thought that was a really wonderful suggestion.

2.5

2.5 Pleasure Holm, Birnbeck Island, north-east from Sand Bay

It just makes perfect sense. And I'm surprised it's not done. I've had many conversations since. We're working on a project with Legal and General at the moment. They've got a site in Crowthorne, and I think they've got to build around two thousand houses. They've got a factory in Yorkshire where some are being built, but they're building most of them traditionally. It just seems that if you've got a project of that size, that many houses, that to put up a shed in the corner and – with it designed properly, as we discussed, and find a million uses for it afterwards for the community – delivering things in small bits, assembling it in the dry and then you take off all of the transport restrictions on roads because you're on the site, so you can do bigger units and, you know, you can do shift work if you need to.

It could be efficient in terms of speed; you can do things faster maybe and more beautifully. We explored that idea with the Piper Building rooftop houses. We travelled to Manchester to the Hanson TIS factory. I think we saw the project you did for White Cube at Hoxton where there was good quality control, as the fit out was done in the factory and, certainly, with Piper, if you didn't have a head for heights, it was great to visit the factory at Trafford Park and see the modules under construction at ground level.

We had stalls of about 300 mm high, but not quite the same view though.

But then what was also interesting, when we subsequently worked together on the Aberystwyth Arts Centre (a shortlisted competition for mixed-use live/work units there), you had developed an approach for the foundations using mini piles which was excellent for the very wooded sloping site, and then the big shift I thought was also cross-laminated timber (CLT).

We're still constantly looking at new products and different ways of building, and I think what we try to do is not force a particular answer. It's the project that steers you in a particular way, and you find something that's appropriate, and while we're enjoying the volumetric and we've done the Piper as a successful project with you, the site with its access and everything else just wasn't appropriate. And I seem to remember the spaces, the geometry of them didn't really work with volumetric restrictions and transport and whatever. So, we'd been looking at timber systems again and were interested in the sustainable aspects of that. And I was really impressed by CLT when I first started to look at it because it seemed to me that in the past, the way that timber's been used in the UK, it's just thrown together, it's not really engineered. Traditional builders have been using timber, and they know that if

they put it at 450 mm centres in the floor and 600 mm centres in the walls and use sheet materials and put nails in it, that it works. But they all end up looking the same because that's how the builders do them, whereas with CLT, it seemed that this was a pretty robust piece of structure, and you could do lots more interesting things with it because you could get a panel that was 12 m × 3 m. Well, those are effectively big beams, aren't they? So, I think we were quite excited by the opportunities. But then, the site as you say, if you're doing that, you're delivering something very quickly, then why not extend that thinking into the way it goes into the ground? So, I think we did develop a whole strategy, didn't we, of minimum intervention and going in with a simple grid of piles then simple timber panels that sat on those, and the installation would be days.

Well, it's become a very popular technology.

It's taken over. When we did that work in 2003, it was really new at that time.

We did the Birnbeck Island competition in collaboration with WYG, Cardiff, with Jonathan Vining who was the director, with Bill Watts of Max Fordham's and yourself. Birnbeck Island is the only seaside pier in Britain that connects to an existing rock outcrop. It's a listed structure, was derelict and hadn't been occupied since the Second World War. Urban Splash and the local authority got together to hold a competition for which we were shortlisted. Our take on it was to propose a very big building in the form of a small island which appeared as a detached part of the headland at Weston-super-Mare. It had an ambiguity; it looked like a natural form.

It looked like a big rock but with a huge amount of space within it.

The programme was quite varied . . .

Bill Watts proposed that it should include a data centre. I think I remember talking about it because to place a building on the site was such that, if you're only going to do three flats or something, it just wouldn't work. It was just so complicated getting stuff on to the island that you'd have to put in some proper infrastructure to do anything anyway. It's either that or maybe you could airlift or helicopter in a couple of houses, but the cost of that is not in the affordable housing area. To do anything of any scale, you'd have to pay for the access onto the island, and if you're going to do that, then you're going to want to maximise the amount that you do on it. I think the renders looked amazing; it just looked like an outcrop of rock. It wasn't like a rock with a tall building on it.

The disappointment at Stage 2 was George Ferguson (who was chair of the jury) saying, 'Oh, it's 1 million ft² of development and that's going to cost upward of two hundred million to build', and we all nodded and said, 'Yes', and then Urban Splash said, 'Well, our budget's only 18 million'. And you then said, 'Well, that would just about cover the cost of making the tunnel which you proposed for service access'.

Well, it just didn't make sense. Once you've got the development on there, you'd need some pretty robust access onto the island. The budget would be spent on sorting that out before they started building anything. So, I think the interpretation of the brief was to think, 'Yes, you need that infrastructure, so you need as much development on it as possible to make it work'. And then from that, I think we developed the simplest solution that I think we possibly could in terms of the approach to what materials we had and how it was built and everything. I seem to remember it was fairly straightforward.

I think that was your take on it. We had to restore the listed Victorian pier for pedestrian access, and you proposed a tunnel that went parallel to the pier and emerged on to a service deck. But then the superstructure was really ruthlessly simple – it was just a 3D grid.

Well, I quite liked the idea because you had this rock that was geometrically all over the place, but just to impose a simple grid on it was almost like a biscuit cutter landing from above. Then, you just trim the lengths of the columns to deal with the contours, but everything else is simple.

That was really very efficient. And then the last component of the project was the carapace and how to replicate the flora of the headland on it. You suggested that we have a coffered concrete structure, and the coffers could effectively become a series of giant flower pots – containers for soil. The landscape architects suggested that you could grow quite large trees in very shallow soil. The coffers were only 800 mm deep. The coffers were designed as inverted or everted to suit a particular situation, and you could occasionally punch through them to bring light in where you needed it.

It was another idea, some kind of system approach, but each element could do several things and that it worked on a number of levels. So, the shape of it, the coffering, you get the stiffness, materially; it's quite efficient but then with soil and structural protection from the wind loads and so on . . . I think, again, it's an incredible approach to try and systemise something but lose it once it's all put together, you wouldn't look at it and go, 'Well, that's just a repetitive tile', you'd kind of lose that in the way it's treated whether it's through the planting, and I think that's often the thing. We'd done Federation Square, Melbourne, before, which had an incredibly complicated facade. The design was a really complex folding facade of different materials. But the sketches we got originally were just unbuildable, and so we had to introduce, if you like, a repetitive element that you could easily describe to someone who had to build it. And with that one, we worked with mathematicians on a pinwheel triangle that was then repeated so it was a similar thing with the geometry, where you get the benefits of repetition.

Then, when you look at it at the end, you lose sight of that in the overall impression.

In a way, I suppose with the conversation during the competition process, including Bill's suggestion that we could build a whole series of data centres around the coast of Britain, was that there was an idea that this was a new type of building, mixed-use if you like, but underpinned by the data-centre element that provides security and heat. I suppose we never got the chance to really work through the idea in terms of the carapace and how that would be structured. The Berlin Philharmonie by Scharoun was engineered by Arup, and because it was pre-computer, they had to draw sections through the building every 300 mm to make sure it really all worked. Could you make a comment about the use of computation with regard to complex forms and whether that really does offer new ways of designing?

Well, it makes such a huge difference in terms of refinement. There are two things: one was the modelling of it, and now it's the manufacturing or the fabrication of it. Both sides of it are improving massively and influencing each other. It used to be that mathematically, it was so complex to work through with just hand calculators, you'd intuitively work something down to one solution so you only had to go through the number crunching once. So, a lot of it was from previous experience and guesswork and saying, 'Well, this makes sense, so this makes sense and then I get to this answer and then I'm going to work it through . . . That's it', whereas now you can try lots of different ideas and you can refine them. So, we set things running overnight to create 150 iterations or something and so we can do things now that optimise. We set the criteria. We did a roof recently that we wrote some scripts for, and it was for a grid-shell roof, free form, all glass and steel. We wrote loads of things like the size of the glass panel had to fit in a container. So, we set maximum dimensions. I didn't realise, but for glass wastage, if you have triangular panels, you pay for the rectangle that it's cut from. If you imagine all your panels are sharp parallelograms then the amount of wastage is enormous. So, we wrote into our script that we'll square them off as much as possible so there's no wastage. We optimised it for steel weights in terms of structural efficiency, and then this was a quadrilateral shape. So, you have to press the glass in, and there's a limit in terms of cold bending to get the warranties on glass. So, the form of it would be tweaked based on making sure that you could still get a contractor to warrant it. So, we wrote all of these very pragmatic considerations; nothing about beauty or about what it would look like, all very pragmatic criteria. And the programme goes through it, and you'll see that this one is '98 per cent of the panels are within the cold bending', or '100 per cent of the panels can be containerised', and so on. So, you set the criteria, and it's incredibly powerful. Also, when I was talking about the manufacturing, that one was for a steel roof, for example, but we didn't do any drawings; it was meaningless because you cut a section, you move it 10 mm and it's a different section because it

Urban Splash Competition Brief for Birnbeck Island

1. What's it all about?
This is the chance of a lifetime, to create an exciting development for a fantastic island.

The only island with a connecting pier in Britain (yes it's technically a bridge, but we like pier!), time to get scribbling!

We want to deliver an outstanding seaside development, which realises the potential of the site and reinforces the regeneration of Weston-super-Mare. We need your help to do this. We don't have any set ideas of what should be there, so let your imaginations run wild.

Our objective is to secure the best quality sustainable development, delivered to the highest architectural standards and to put this historic island back on the map.

A lot to ask? Not if you're the best. We want you to engage your creativity and submit your ideas.

Once you've submitted your masterpiece, entries will be assessed anonymously, so don't worry if you're a new practice that no-one's heard of, or if you're a multinational corporation, or if you have crazy hair. We won't know. The judging panel will choose up to six designs for further consideration (we will want to meet you at this point, but maybe you could use some gel or something).

It is our intention that the winning design will be built.

2. Where is this heavenly place you speak of?
Weston-super-Mare is in North Somerset, about 20 miles south of Brizzle (that's Bristol to anyone outside the South-West). The town is accessed from Junction 21 of the M5, Weston's railway station offers services to all main routes and it's only a two-and-a-half hour train ride to London village. Perfect.

3. What happened to our seaside towns?
Weston-super-Mare was one of the great seaside destinations. In the olden days, tourists from across the West Country, the Black Country and Wales flocked to the resort to enjoy its beautiful setting and attractions and, more importantly, its alcohol. Wales was dry on a Sunday back then, so packed paddlesteamers used to cross the channel to Weston so that our Welsh friends could quench their thirst.

Like so many British seaside resorts, changes in tourism and the growth of package holidays to 'Costa Cheapaspatatasfritas' have all had an impact.

(*continued*)

Although tourist numbers have fallen, the town still attracts visitors. Weston has retained its classic seaside character what with the donkeys on the beach and fish and chips on the seafront, providing solid building blocks for the future.

Birnbeck Island, pier and headland were acquired by Urban Splash in September 2006. We think the development of Birnbeck Island and headland is one of the key elements in the regeneration of not only the Birnbeck area, but Weston-super-Mare as a whole. We want to bring Weston into the twenty-first century, so we can visit and have something to do, so our kids can come here, and so we can come back once we're old and wrinkly, to tell whoever will listen how easy the kids of today have it.

4. So what's the site like?
Birnbeck is to the north of the town within walking distance of the centre. Designed by the great pier builder Eugenius Birch, Birnbeck Pier was completed in 1866 and at first only had a small pavilion and landing jetty. Once they realised they were on to a winner, additions were soon made, including a funfair and landing stage for the steamers from the Welsh coast. Birnbeck was the place to go, to be seen and to have fun.

Today, this poor neglected site is largely derelict, though the RNLI has a fully operational station on the island which has been there for more than 125 years. That's dedication for you.

There are still buildings on the island itself and unused buildings on the headland, all of which command great views across the Severn Estuary to Wales and up and down the Bristol Channel. Makes you want to unfold a deck chair, doesn't it?

Urban Splash is looking for inspiration. We want to transform Birnbeck into a beautiful and awe-inspiring destination. We want to deliver a fantastic development with public access, new attractions and facilities to draw more residents, workers and tourists back to Weston. We want Birnbeck to be the place to be again. We want your designs.

5. How you will win
You will win if you can:
• Surprise, inspire and enthuse us
• Do justice to this fantastic site
• Show us you can deliver world-class architecture
• Demonstrate your balance between creativity and pragmatism
• Convey your ideas clearly and simply
• Demonstrate that your vision is deliverable.

Bill Watts, senior partner, Max Fordham LLP

really was free form. So, with the contractors, it was all done with 3D models down to the point where all the nodes on it were taken from blocks of steel and milled so each one was milled from solid steel. Every node on it, of which there were about two thousand, was different.

Bill Watts
Interview at Max Fordham LLP, Camden Town, London, 29 January 2018
I wanted to preface the interview by saying that for me, this was a very important project. It was genuinely collaborative and led to an amazing piece of work. I had been involved as a visiting professor at the Welsh School of Architecture in Cardiff, and made a connection with the firm, WYG, where Jonathan Vining, an old friend of mine, was a director. They wanted me to act as a consultant on slightly left-field projects, and the Birnbeck Island competition came up. Jonathan and the WYG team produced the submission through designs, drawings and conversations that I initiated. I invited Aran Chadwick and you to join in, and we had several meetings in London, including with Jon, and the project started emerging from our discussions. My anxiety when I first proposed the potato, which is what I seem to remember you called it, was the idea that our proposal was a very big building masquerading as a very small island, and I was anxious for it not to become just a one-liner. Aran and you helped enrich the idea so that in the end, it was the most popular design with the jury and the public. However, it would be good to start by asking you a little about your background.

My background, well my heritage, if you like, is that my father was in the UN as a town planner. I only realised after he died and after I had read his book (*Outwards From Home: A Planner's Odyssey* by Kenneth Watts, 1997) that he was part of the group of experts that came out of the war thinking that experts could solve every problem. And he spent the rest of his working career from the 1940s onwards realising that that wasn't the case and that expertise needed to be tempered by humanity. That's a bit of background, which I found interesting. I was born in Indonesia where he was working at the time. I've not been back. We left because my dad got TB when I was three, and we came to live in the UK. He was unemployed for a while before getting a job at the BRE (or BRS as it was then). I had an idyllic early childhood preschool, going to places that my parents found as refuges: one was a farm in Wales and another one was a house in Beaulieu right on the river, which was just amazing. But, anyway, that settled down, normality came back. We moved to Hemel Hempstead, and then when he was settling into being at BRS, he got offered a job back at the UN in New York. So, we went to New York in 1964 when I was seven. I came to school at Bryanston in Dorset when I was 13. I've been in the UK ever since: at school then to university when Jacques Cousteau was the guy I wanted to be. I mean, marine biology was a very strong thing for me. I thought it looked adventurous, but also it had a humanitarian aspect to it: feeding the world – that I was

imbued with from having parents working for the UN. I studied zoology at university, but I didn't really know what to do after that. So, I did a postgraduate course in fish tracking in Stirling. I thought that behaviour was a very interesting subject. Dawkins was in full flight, and I found studying physiology and behaviour fascinating. Fish tracking was me trying to square the idea of fish being the way to feed the world – I wasn't so interested in seaweed. Academically, I was mid-table, shall we say, and certainly not able to go on to do a PhD. So, I was looking for a job when I finished.

Did you have to have mathematics or statistics for that?

Not much. There was a lot of computer programming to be done and analysis, but also some engineering because what I was doing (tagging fish with electronic tags) had to be screwed to the back of the fish, which was rather unpleasant, but I was involved in designing these things and also in manufacturing them because I was employed as a technician making these tags. There was a lot of physics involved in this. I really did enjoy that aspect of things. So, when all of that came to an end, I needed a job, and Max Fordham had an ad in current vacancies, as it was then, for people who like buildings: 'We're looking for scientists and engineers who like buildings'. I thought, 'I could do that'. So, I applied and got the job. I was interviewed by Hugh Norman who's here now, Richard Shennan and Paul Kirby. It was an eye-opener to me to come to an engineering firm where there are people being fairly casual about things. It was a lovely atmosphere, but I had no idea what was going on. When they were interviewing me, they were showing me things: pictures of buildings that they had done. One was of some fair-faced concrete blocks with a fire alarm call point in the middle of it, and they said, 'What do you think of that?' And I remember thinking that I had nothing to think about it, but the idea that you've got a fair-faced block on both sides with a call point and the torture that'd been gone through to thread the blocks over a conduit . . . well, that was completely missed by me. But I just loved it because, for me, it was about the physiology of buildings, and the parallels with biology were all there plain to see. As a biologist, you're studying an animal: how it behaves, how it relates to the environment – and it does it in all sorts of different and clever ways – and it's also physics and it's logic and things like that. And actually a building replicates a lot of the functions that happen within animals and within biology. And it's designed to house animals, so you need to know how an animal works and how it feels as well within that (animals or people/people or animals). So, I found the transition, intellectually, very easy to make into engineering and quite nice, in a way. What I had no background in is any of the formalities of the discipline that engineering people had: the reading, drawing skills and that rigour that you need. Coming from a rather free-thinking, pure science background, that was a bit trickier for me. So, I never really picked up the discipline of drawing very well, but it was okay, I got by on that. Then, working with Max, I think I was identified as somebody who was a bit of a freethinker,

and I was given all sorts of interesting bits and pieces to do. And I had a great time. I gained a lot of experience. I joined in 1980, when there were about 20 people and the philosophy at that point was 'one person, one building', which is kind of limiting in many ways and uncompromising. You needed to do everything and do it equally as well as everybody else and cover the whole waterfront, which I might say, I think that's just untenable these days.

How did that work? Was that an absolute – that you ploughed a lone furrow with your particular project?

Well, no. I mean, 'one person, one job', the philosophy of that didn't really work that well. I mean, of course, I was working with other people all the time, and you got shown the ropes, and you worked through things. There was always a structure that you worked through, and so it wasn't always just one person. Particularly as graduates; they were educated and brought through the system, and we did have bigger buildings that we took on. Norman was running something called Anugraha at the time, which is a big conference centre. And, of course, there was Alexandra Road as well, which I missed actually, but that was a very big building which took a lot of people. Anyway, so I was fortunate to do a smattering of everything: electrics, mechanical and electrical, acoustics, a bit of fire and all that sort of stuff – enough to know your way around all these things and to have a bit of a command of it all. I think that's what makes building services so amazing – there's just so much of it.

We met when I approached Max about the Birnbeck Island competition. It was obviously great for us to have you join in. Can you explain how projects get allocated in the office? I think mostly, until then, I'd been very lucky, and Max took an interest in what we were doing and would join in.

Maybe he gave it to me as a kindred spirit because he knows what I'm like. I can't remember the exact process . . .

I think when we first met, at WYG's London office, I may have tabled a section and plan at 1:200 scale. I think there was a broad conversation about the site, and then you opened it up saying, 'Well, have you thought about data centres?' Then it became a generic idea that it could have a typological aspect to it, that we could build lots of man-made islands off the coast. And I think you invited us to make a map of the British Isles with islands dotted all round.

Data centres were just coming along then, and I was learning about them and also about energy. There was something called the Renewable Energy Systems headquarters in Kings Langley which we did in 2000, I think, and it was an amazing brief to have zero carbon, which at the time was quite innovative. So, you were thinking about this site, what you could do with this site and whether you could make the site zero carbon. And they wanted to do biomass and wind and all that sort of stuff. It was a bit far-fetched, but I thought, 'Well, what happens if you do it for the whole of the UK?' And then you start

2.6

2.6 Coastal island data centres, British Isles

The dots indicate potential locations of data centres

looking at where the energy goes and how to use it, and I was going along the same path as David McKay actually in trying to work out where these things were going. He did it a lot more thoroughly than I did and wrote a book. But the thought processes, and indeed the conclusions, were similar actually. But one of the main users of energy, which was coming up fast, was data centres. And one of the main things they needed to be was secure and remote, and they used a lot of energy. And if the energy is coming from off-shore wind (which certainly is the case), then you want a node somewhere where the energy can come in from off-shore wind. You'd store it locally in batteries (all the same sort of technology as you'd want in a data centre), and then maybe that would be a hub for both data and electricity to come away into the heartland, into the hinterland. And that could be all the way around the UK. I mean, people are talking about putting data centres in Iceland. Oh, the other thing about data centres is that they need a lot of cooling because they generate a lot of heat, and so you think, 'Well, is there anything for that? Could you make use of that cooling? Well, maybe if you've got other buildings nearby'. But if you're in the middle of the sea, cooling is very easy because you can put it into water. So, the remoteness, the access to renewable energy, cooling seemed like a good thing for a data centre. If you then link it with other things that need heating such as residential or swimming pools or leisure, then that seemed like a good thing to do.

Yes. For us it was the amazing moment because it was complementary to the accommodation brief we had given ourselves, which included two hundred duplex apartments. There was a hotel and the kind of leisure activity associated with the seaside, including a music hall, a theatre, a cinema, bars, restaurants and a casino.

Like a seaside pier.

Birnbeck Pier is listed and is the only pier in Britain that is connected to an existing island. It had been derelict since the 1930s. The developer Urban Splash formed a partnership with the local authority to help redevelop it as part of an initiative to reinvigorate the town.

Suffering, like many other UK seaside towns a slow decline.

2.7

2.7 Proposed data centres. | Source: Images courtesy of Tim Hamlet, Richard Webb, Mark Ireland, Iain Miller, David Hagwood, Pat English, Classic Cottages and Jon Morley.

When I talked to Pauline, my wife Clare's aunt who lived in Weston-super-Mare most of her life, she reminisced about how she and Nigel, Clare's father, would play in the undercroft of the even-then derelict pier when they were children in the 1930s. This helped to inspire the human narrative of our proposal and enrich the cultural aspect of our programme. Also, the Urban Splash brief encouraged competitors to be playful, even fantastical. But suddenly, with the conversation you introduced about energy and how it is managed and deployed efficiently, it suddenly went from being a singular thing to having . . .

Lots of dimensions.

Were the ideas you introduced in common use then – data centres in remote locations in the sea and so on?

I'd never done a data centre before. We've done buildings that have data centres within them. We've been shocked at the amount of heat and energy they use compared to the rest of the building, and that gets you thinking. I was in the zone of thinking globally about energy and thinking, 'Well, it's a lot easier to shift data than it is energy. So, maybe you put the place where you process that data next to the energy and not vice versa'. Hence, you put it away from the centres of where people are. I mean, actually, for these trading systems that the city people use, those nanoseconds matter, so that they want their things in very close proximity. But for things like Netflix . . . I think they are building them in Iceland now where energy is cheaper. Just like where you put aluminium plants, you put data centres. So, I guess that was in the ether. I was thinking we should put these things in Iceland. I can remember thinking that's what we should do and that's what they are doing now actually, Amazon and all these kinds of organisations.

The other thing that I hadn't really thought about was the security issue. I went

to a talk once by an American: a bullet-headed guy who was talking about different security levels. He drew the comparison with a car having a flat tyre. Well, the first level is that you've got a flat tyre. So, you stop the car, take the wheel off, wait for someone to bring another one to put the other one on. Then, you go up, and he said, 'Well, you've actually got to keep running and change the wheel while you're in motion'. And then the last level is that you've got to be running on all four flat tyres while someone's shooting at you, and you've got to be on these lethal fours to protect your car – and that's what some of these people do. And some of the ads for these things are saying, 'This is 50 miles outside of Washington, DC, outside the blast zone of a 50 megaton nuclear weapon', and you think, 'This is hardcore stuff', and I guess you wouldn't be too upset if Netflix went down in a nuclear war, but there are some people who are worrying about that sort of thing.

But in the 10 years that have elapsed, is security still an issue for data centres?

Security certainly is. I guess nothing has changed. I mean, there's a push and pull between having it localised and not, but I don't know where that's going now. I think there's more processing happening on your phone now than centrally, but there's always going to be huge amounts of data stored centrally. And I think it's just going to carry on going. Logistics and the infrastructure is an issue for island data centres – landing is a major issue. Off-shore wind is now doing very well, and people don't want on-shore wind turbines, although that's a pretty cheap form of electricity, but off-shore wind, I think, is pretty acceptable. What isn't acceptable is where this gigawatt of power comes on land because that needs a substation, and I think the planning permission for that can be quite difficult – and stops a very large bit of infrastructure happening. I think that happened to the Thames Array: they couldn't get planning because where it hit land was difficult. So, as I say, it's non-trivial. You would've thought, 'Well, surely a bloody cable isn't as bad as a wind turbine?' But, actually, it's a physical thing. And if we had these outcrops that were doubled as the hub for simply just the electricity coming in, you will need a lot of infrastructure there, including connection to the grid. And you might as well put some fibre optics there as well.

So, it gathers together quite a lot of different kinds of components and then distributes them?

Yes, and then the residential aspect of it doesn't play well with the security of course.

What we called the black-box side of the building was essentially the data centre, with public spaces carved into it, which were only accessible from the public side, with no direct access to the data centre. There would have to be some design and negotiation to clarify that.

But, obviously, people are going to know where cables land from.

2.8

2.8 Pleasure Holm at Birnbeck Island, postcard

It's just quite interesting that there's still a lot of hardware involved in it, and I suppose the design was partly a comment on that.

That it was hard hardware. It needs to be hard, and that's got something quite interesting about it.

I was hoping that Aran would be here to link up the conversation about structure as well because he initiated the idea about the carapace being concrete. I know that doesn't chime well with notions of sustainable construction, but the idea that the coffered concrete shell could replicate the ecology of the headland was an important factor in the design. WYG's landscape architects determined the coffers could be a minimum soil depth of 800 mm to grow a large tree.

It's quite windy there. So, the weathering of the vegetation would be fantastic.

You proposed a huge wind turbine in the Bristol Channel. The design also included a subterranean tunnel that provided vehicular access to a lower deck, which at your suggestion became the location for many smaller turbines along the outer edge. We designed it as a horizontal slot, above which the building appeared to hover.

Any gap that you put in it is going to have quite a lot of force driving through it. So, if you put turbines there, you'd get a lot of energy from that. And also the Bristol Channel has one of the largest tidal ranges, and I'm sure we could've done something with that, although I'm not sure that we did.

We didn't because at the time there was the ambition to build a navigable barrage in the Severn downstream from the site.

What's interesting is that I would never have thought about doing this. And that's why we need your initiative to do, to think about it. It would just never have crossed my mind. So, you do need that spark both ways. And that's why it worked so well and why I love it so much because I can't pretend. For me, to do this sort of thing on my own, it just wouldn't work.

Collaboration is important. Some of the people I work with are quite young, but they often come up with ideas that really drive the project on.

They say throwaway things and make you think, 'Well, hang on a minute'.

I would like to conclude our discussion by asking if you could say something about your Sahara Forest project.

Well, it has a similar ambition to Birnbeck Island, if you like, to do something quite multifaceted that ticks off a number of issues. The motivation behind the Sahara Forest project is the fact that we need more food, we need more energy without CO_2 and we need water. And there is desert land available that has got a lot of energy falling on it which is not used. It might be degraded, but it works very well in terms of growing things. So, pulling all of that together, if we – rather than using fresh water, which might be in short supply or non-existent – bring in seawater (of which there's a lot) and you use solar power to desalinate the seawater, that gives you fresh water that you can grow crops in. Then, the most efficient way of growing crops is in a greenhouse, to give you optimal growing conditions, you've really got to cool the air (in the summer anyway) and you can use the brine from the desalination plant. That is, the water that comes out of the plants after you've taken the fresh water out is more salty than the seawater. If you run that over cardboard pads, you could draw air in so the hot, dry, desert air gets cooled and so your greenhouse is running nicely at the right temperature with a load of sun, really powering away and producing that stuff, and there's abundant solar power around to power all of this stuff. So, those are the main elements there of making those technologies: desalination, solar power, horticulture and greenhouses, and pulling that together into some sort of economic unit. We had a pilot in Qatar, which we built in a hurry. I mean, that was an incredible stress because we were halfway through the feasibility study when they said, 'Let's get on with it'. So, before we'd finished that, we were into detailed design and construction, and so we were always sort of catching up. So, from the time that we put in a proposal in December 2011, we had to finish it by October 2012, and it was hard to do. But we got it done, and it worked. It was on a petrochemical site, so not ideal for a farm where you're growing cucumbers, but it ran for a year, and then we dismantled it and moved it to Jordan to a more permanent site. It's twice the size of the one in Qatar, but it's still only 1500 m^2 of greenhouse, which is commercially tiny. But now we're looking at sizeable things in Tunisia of about four hectares to grow commercial quantities and pulling trucks out every day or so, and also in Australia.

I was very interested in the Sahara Forest project when you were talking about it in 2011 because of the invention required to make harsh unproductive natural habitats productive.

The idea of the Sahara First project came from three guys sitting in a pub here in Camden. What do we know about deserts? Absolutely nothing. And I'm aware that you need to come at these things with quite a bit of humility because I've done this often enough to know that hubris is bad. And in Jordan, we were looking at something called the Eurava Valley. We talked to a number of ecologists and people who knew the valley very well, and they said, in no uncertain terms, that this is a unique ecosystem and that the barrenness and the harshness of the climate mean that there are species that you get nowhere else. And so, the worst thing that you can do is make it green. So, this whole thing about greening the desert, well you've got to be careful. And you've just got to come at things with a bit of humility, but also that if you keep saying no, the issues like climate change are going to swamp you. You will always get people who are defending their patch, and the trick is to try and find out which is the best patch. I mean, any development is going to change things, and it's a question of understanding what's for the best really.

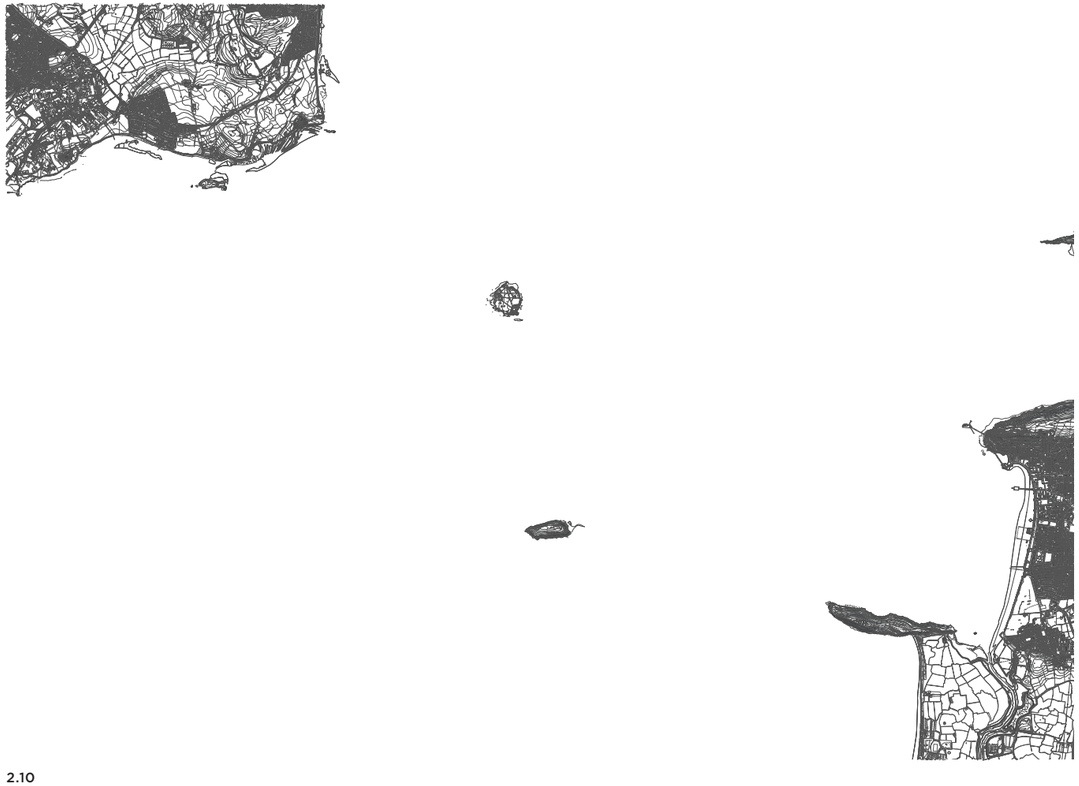
2.9

2.9 Birnbeck Island. | Source: Image courtesy of Google Earth.

1:40,000

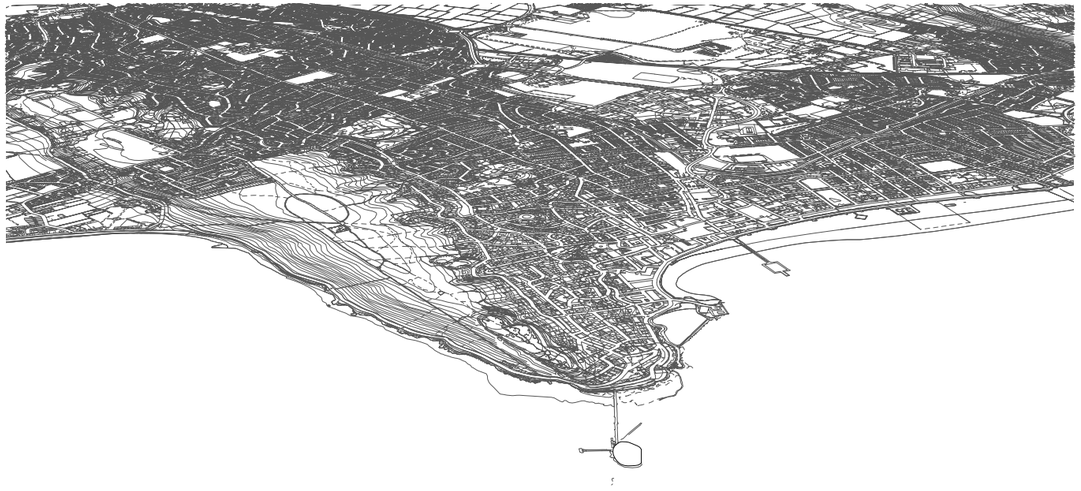
1. Birnbeck Island and Pier
2. Headland
3. Old Town Quarry
4. Weston-super-Mare
5. Grand Pier
6. Seven Estuary

0m 400m 2km



2.10

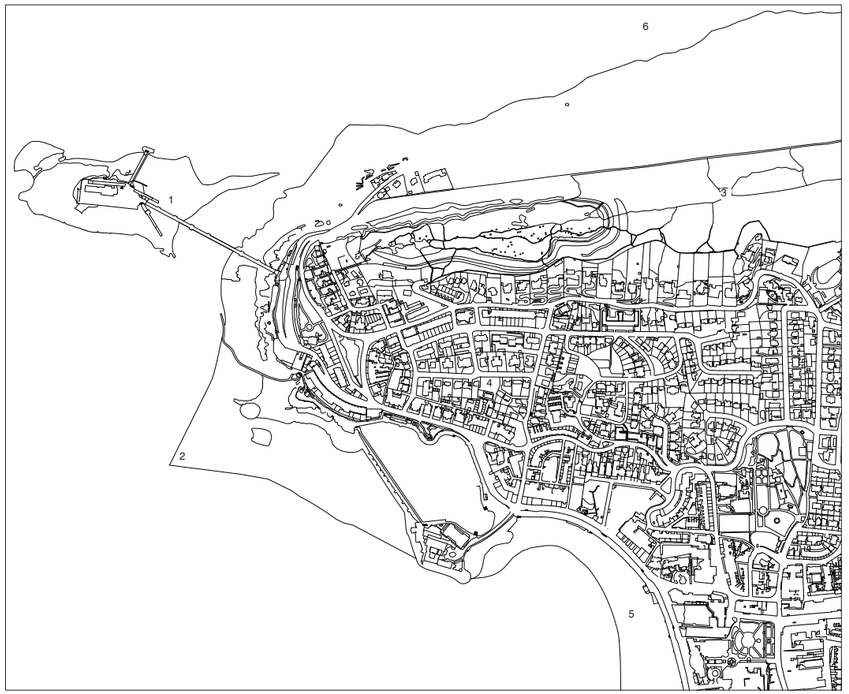
2.10 Location plan
1:100,000



2.11

2.11 Bird's-eye view towards mainland

2.12



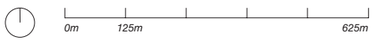
2.13

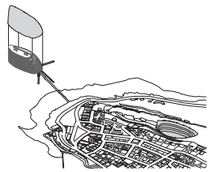
2.12 Diagramatic section through Birnbeck Island and the Old Town Quarry

2.13 Location plan

1:12,500

1. Birnbeck Island and Pier
2. Headland
3. Old Town Quarry
4. Western Town
5. Town Beach
6. Sand Bay





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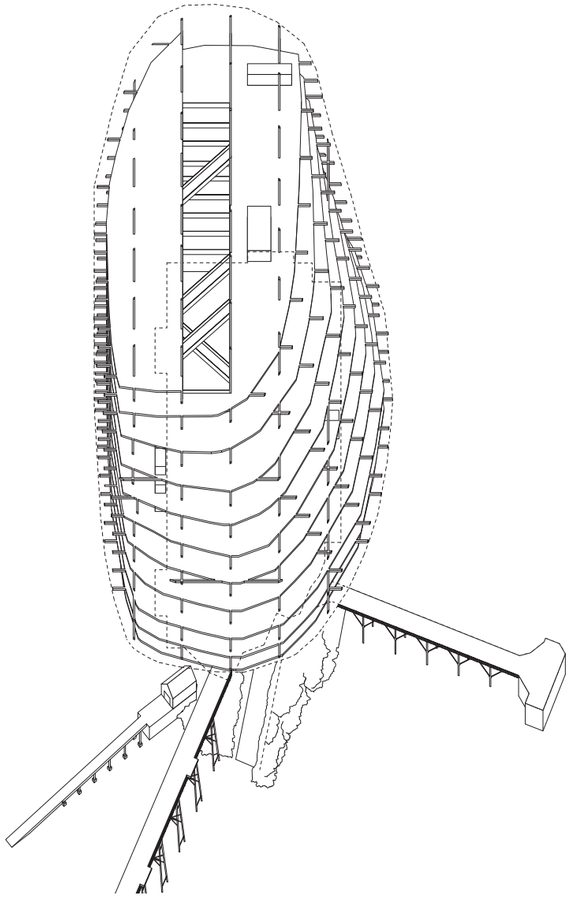
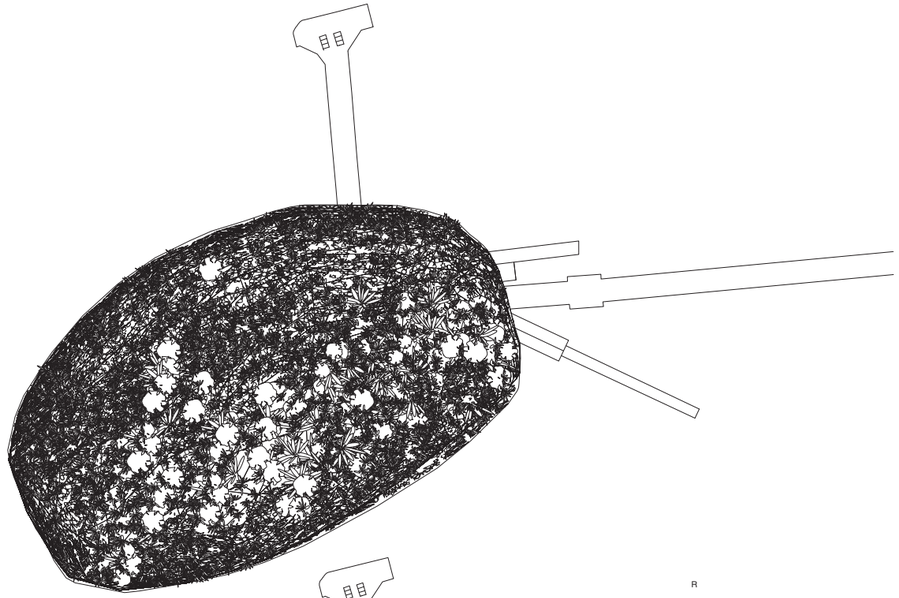


2.15

2.14 Pleasure Holm axonometric

2.15 Pleasure Holm planometric

1:2000



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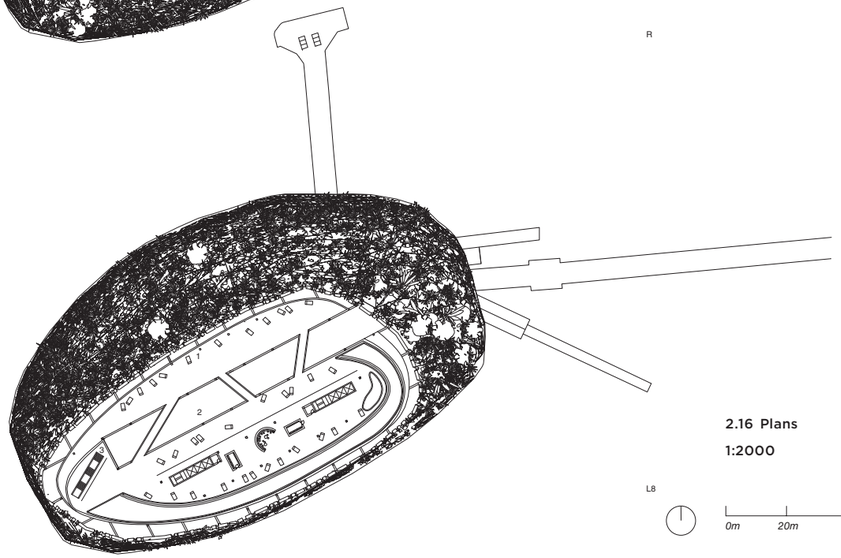
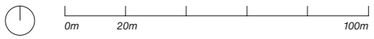
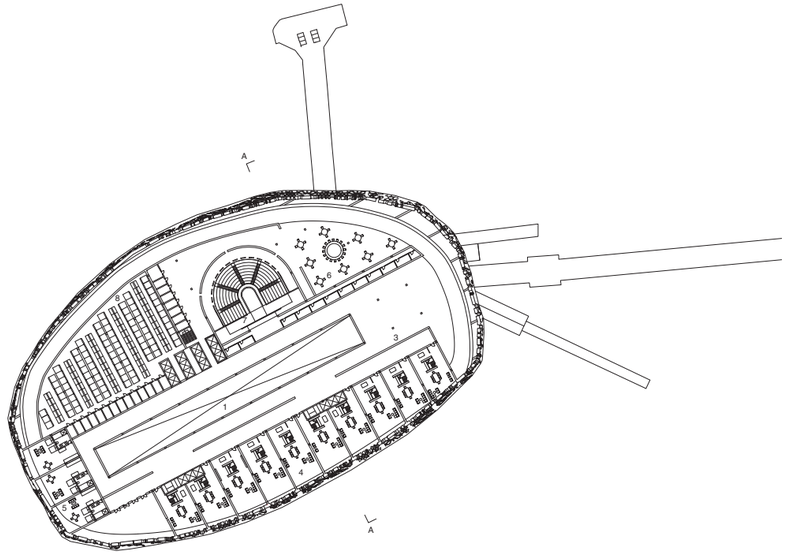


L8

2.16 Plans

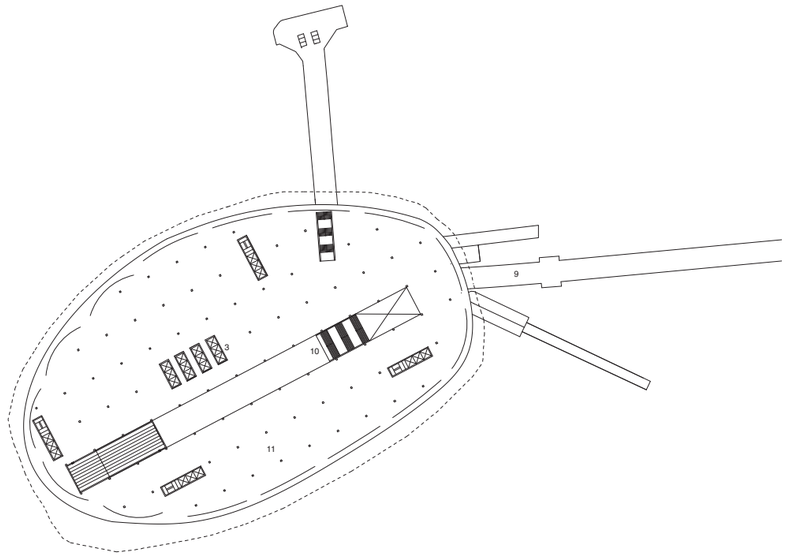
1:2000





L1

1. Atrium
2. Pleasure garden
3. Circulation
4. Duplex flats
5. Hotel rooms
6. Restaurant
7. Theatre
8. Data centre
9. Birnbeck Pier
10. Pedestrian entrance
11. Horizon deck



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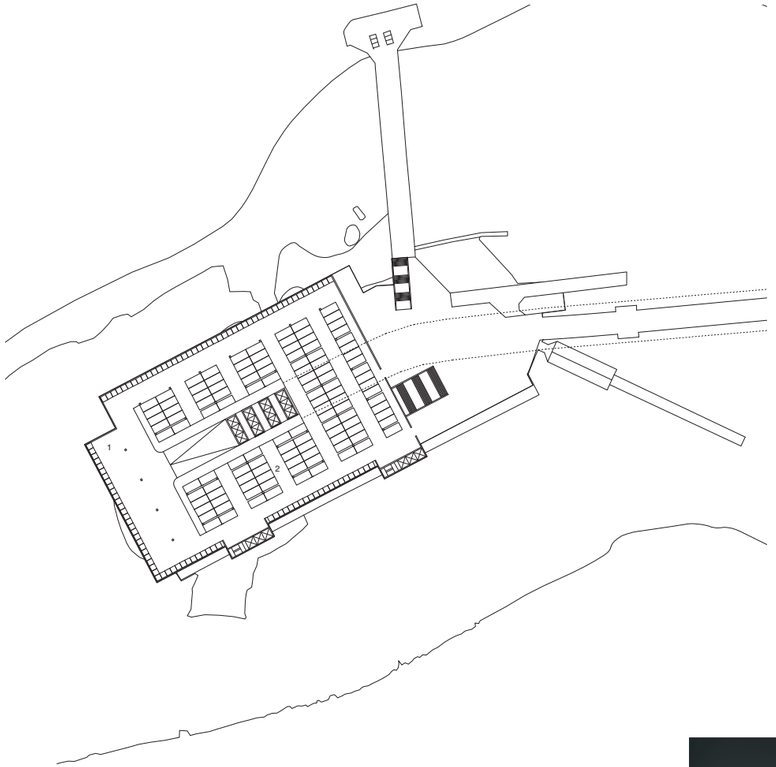


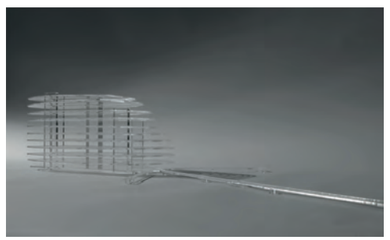
2.17

2.17 Lower ground floor plan

1:2000

1. Wind turbines
2. Car park

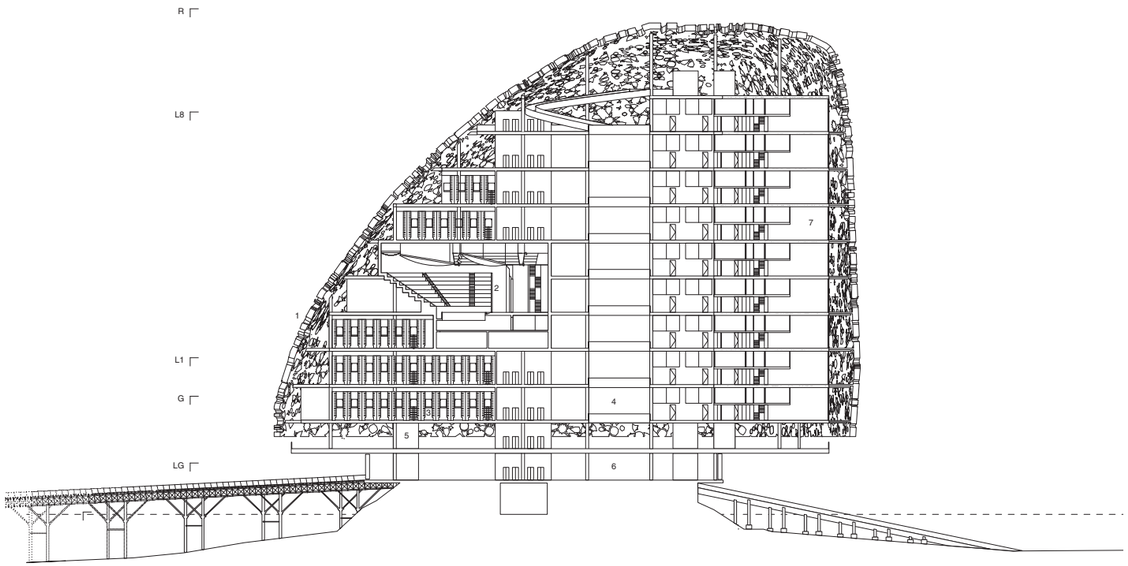
0m 20m 100m



2.18

2.18 Model without carapace, Perspex. |
Source: Image courtesy of David Grandorge.

1:500



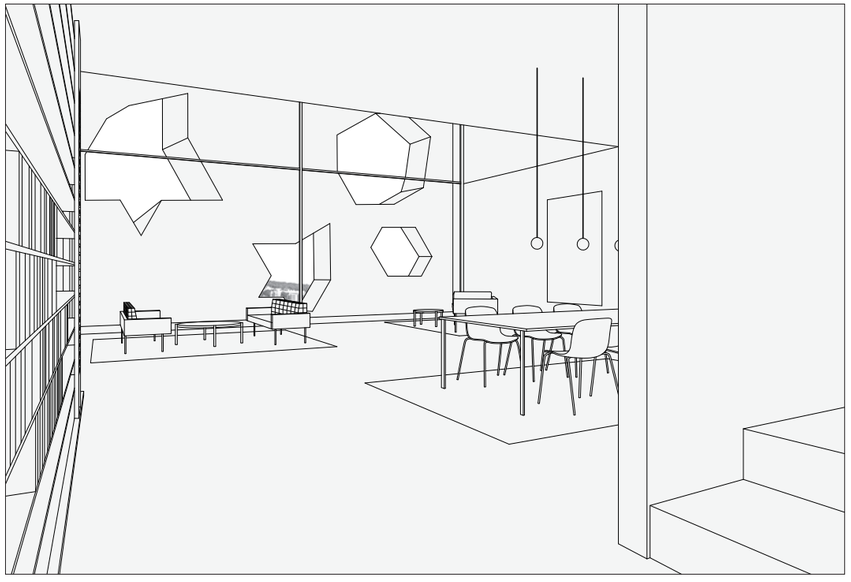
2.19

2.19 Cross-section

1:1000

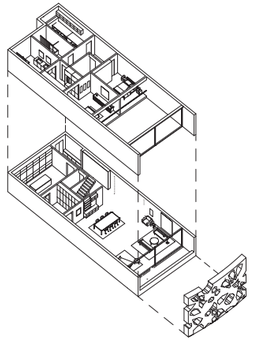
1. Carapace
2. Theatre
3. Data centre
4. Atrium
5. Horizon deck
6. Car park
7. Duplex flats

0m 10m 50m



2.20

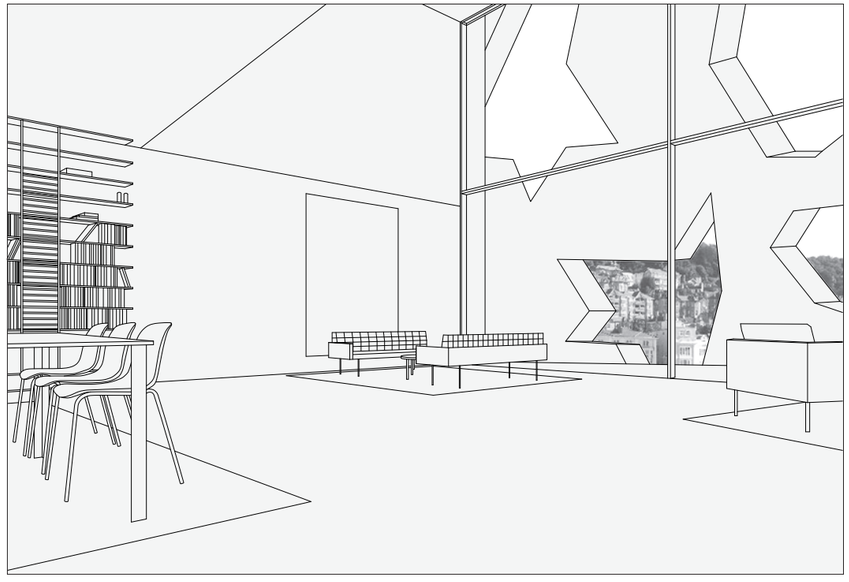
2.20 Duplex flat, interior view



2.21

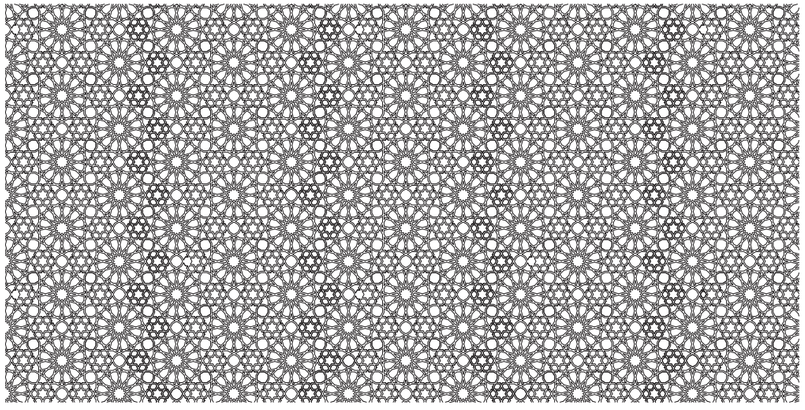
2.21 Duplex flat, exploded axonometric

1:1250



2.22

2.22 Duplex flat, double-height living room with balcony and view of town through carapace



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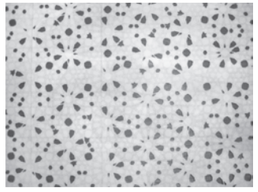

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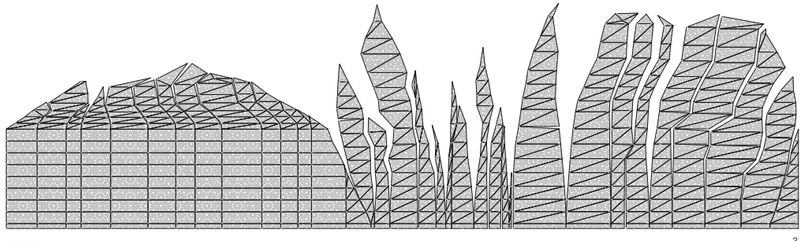

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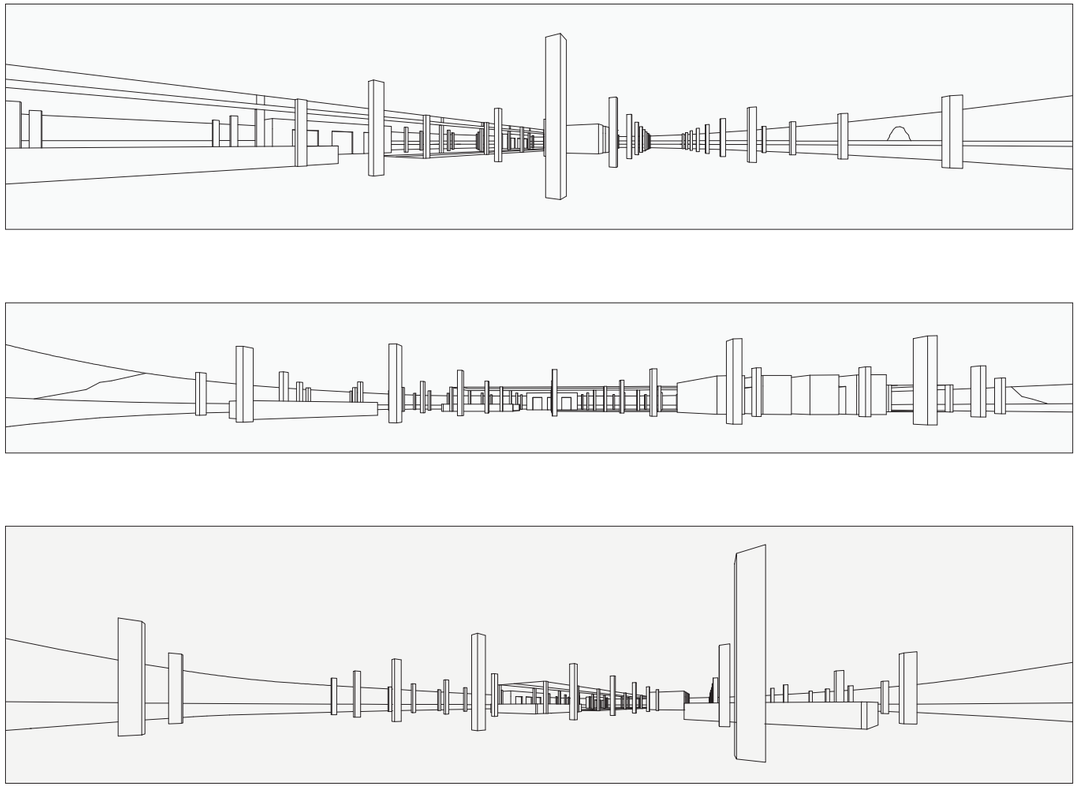
2.23

2.23 Islamic pattern adapted for carapace

1. Two-dimensional pattern
2. Unrolled pattern
3. Model, perforated white paper

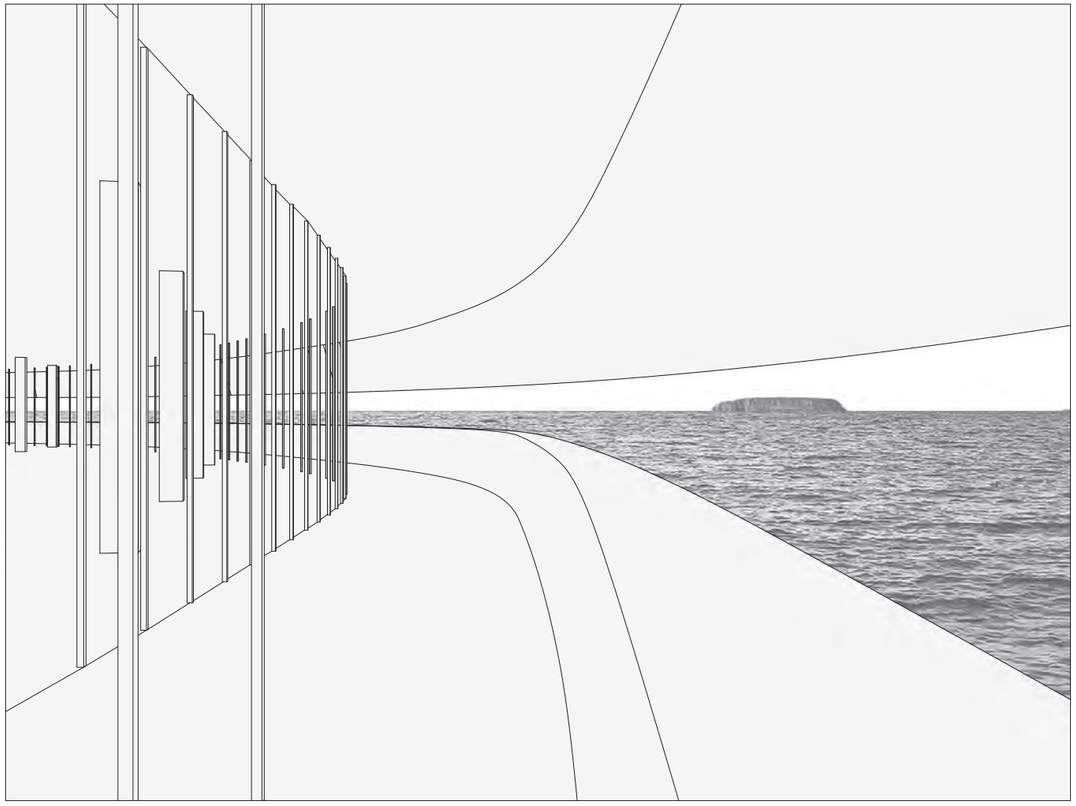
2.24

2.24 Pleasure Holm, view from Town Beach



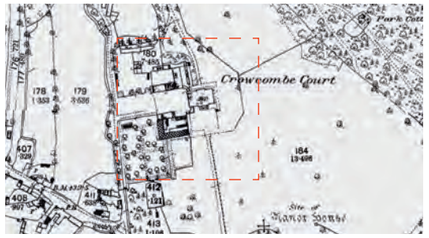
2.25

2.25 Horizon deck, perspective views



2.26

2.26 Horizon deck perimeter promenade, views of Flat Holm and Steep Holm



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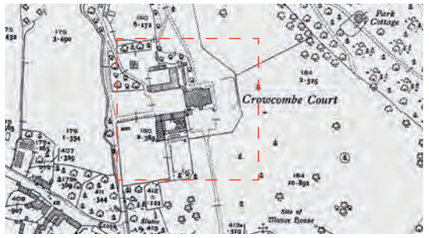

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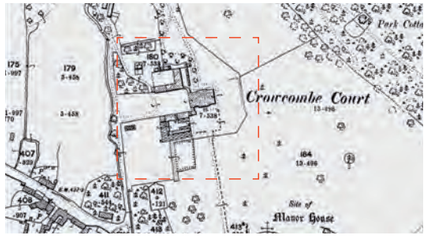


2

4

3.1

3.1 Historical maps showing site development. | Source: Images courtesy of Digimap.

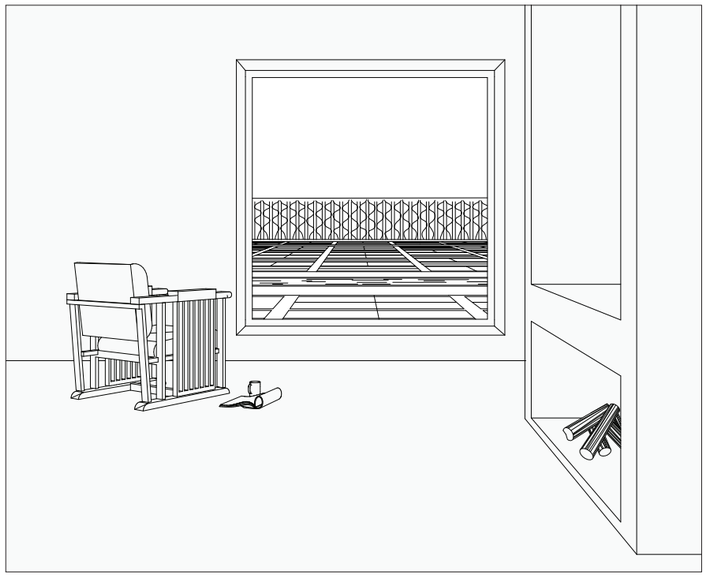
1:10,000

1. 1880
2. 1900
3. 1930
4. 1970

0m 100m 500m

2008

Seaside | Crowcombe Court



3.2

3.2 View from living room overlooking walled garden with chair designed by Julian Powell-Tuck

Crowcombe Court is an eighteenth-century English baroque mansion which stands in its park on the edge of Crowcombe Village just inland between the sea and the Quantock Hills. The house was designed for Thomas Carew by Thomas Parker and completed by Nathaniel Ireson between 1724 and 1739. It was described by Pevsner as 'The finest house of its date in Somerset south of the Bath area' (Pevsner, 1958). The house was owned by the Carew

3.3

3.3 **Crowcombe Court aerial view.** | Source: Image courtesy of Google Earth.

family until the 1950s when the estate was dismantled and sold off in separate parcels. The Carews built themselves a smaller house nearby. The building was subdivided into several separate dwellings, and the main house converted into an old people's home. Our clients, an architectural historian and a silversmith, rescued the house in the early 2000s and lived there during its restoration while letting the principal rooms out for weddings. Our brief was to build a new house for the client in the ruined kitchen garden, as well as two more houses, one on the beech lawn and the other a Drum House on the dog kennel site. The clients intended that the walled garden could be used as allotments by the local community for use as part of the more public-spirited revitalisation of the house and grounds.

Kim Auston, historic landscape consultant. | Source: Image courtesy of Kim Auston.

Kim Auston

Interview at Hampton Court, 25 August 2016—I was born in South London in 1955 just on the edge of London. Technically, it was a village but one that Londoners call a village and that isn't really anymore. I went to school at Dulwich College, South London. Then, I went to university where I read Geography at the same time and in the same cohort as Theresa May, our current Prime Minister. When I left university, I really did not know what I wanted to do. Strangely enough, at school, we had a careers master, whom none of us had a lot of time for, and I was asked to fill in a questionnaire, as was everybody else. It came back that my ideal job would be a landscape gardener, but as somebody who was a relatively high achiever at school, the idea of being a landscape gardener was a bit like somebody saying, 'You're going to be a dustman' as far as I was concerned. At the suggestion of a friend, I applied for and ended up getting a job in advertising. Not the executive-suited side, I actually was on what was then – I don't know if it's changed now – called the creative side, and I worked as a copywriter. My skill was deemed to be words, and I worked with a chap who was an art director, a graduate of an art college, but actually the roles changed constantly: sometimes my partner wrote the words, sometimes it was me who laid out how I thought things should be on the printed page or storyboard for a commercial or whatever. Anyway, I enjoyed that for 10 years and was relatively successful at it, won a few awards, got well paid, but I began to feel that it wasn't . . . There is this cliched comment about advertising that, 'today's ad is tomorrow's fish and chip paper', and I wanted to do something with my life that had more permanence. And so, I had accumulated sufficient money to be able to take myself out of paid employment to university, this time at Manchester to read landscape architecture as a master's, which I did, and then did my Part IVs and qualified, and very quickly, I began to gravitate towards historic landscapes.

I was 34 or something like that. I figured I had to do it pretty damn quickly or it was going to be too late. So, I just took the plunge. So yes, I trained in my 30s, and I entered the workplace at a time when there was a mini-recession (not as bad as

3.4

3.4 **Pressure for development. The trees on the ridge are in a registered landscape (Saltram, Devon).** | Source: Image courtesy of Kim Auston.

the mega-recession in 2008). However, I was lucky enough to get a position as a landscape architect, although not yet specialising in historic landscapes. But as soon as a job came up with recognised practice in that field, I applied at quite a low level and immediately felt that I'd found myself in some way, and I've worked in that field ever since, most recently with Historic England. I always wanted to work for either Historic England or the National Trust at some point in my career, just for the experience, but I've ended up working with Historic England for 17 nearly 18 years so . . .

I had always felt a connection with designed landscapes. As a child living on the edge of London, we would quite often hop onto – I don't know if they even exist now – a Greenline bus, and we'd pitch up at places like Knole House on the outskirts of Sevenoaks and spend the day there. So, you'd have a country house in the background while you had a picnic in the deer park. Being the 1960s of course, it was cheese-and-pickle sandwiches not goat's cheese and Mediterranean vegetables. So, I think that connected with me. My brother, by contrast, was, and still is, much more practical. He was into motorbikes and cars and that sort of thing. So, at the weekend, when we decided that we were going out somewhere, we had to alternate. If it was the weekend that my brother had the right to choose, we ended up at somewhere like Brands Hatch watching motor racing which bored me rigid. If it was my weekend to choose, then we'd pitch up at a big country house with a big park and garden. So, I think it was the whole thing rather than specifically the landscape that appealed. I mean, I appreciated the grounds, but I think would've just been disappointed going to that kind of destination (if I can call it that) if there hadn't been a ruined castle or a mansion forming the backdrop. Also it was more than just a backdrop because one would want to go into the mansion and experience it.

I don't know whether these things are genetic, but many years later when I was specialising in historic designed landscapes, I was at the Royal Horticultural Society and found a book called the *Dictionary of British and Irish Botanists and Horticulturalists* by Ray Desmond and Christine Elwood (1977). Because my surname is spelt in a slightly unusual way, I thought, 'I wonder if there are any Austons in there'. Lo and behold, there were about three or four generations of market gardeners from Essex in date order from about 1730, one of whom I recognised as my great, great grandfather. In other words, my ancestors had been working with plants, which was a bit of a surprise.

My first degree at Oxford was in geography, so that certainly maintained some connection with landscape. Funnily enough, I specialised in historical geography – that was where my focus was. But it wasn't just a random decision to go into landscape architecture. When I was still in advertising and working in London, I remember thinking, 'I want to do something else. But what would that something else be?' I don't know how I became aware of landscape architecture, but I certainly

wasn't aware of it as a discipline at school; architecture obviously, but I'd never heard of landscape architecture. But somehow, as I became older, I had become aware of it, and I contacted various practices in London and spent a couple of days observing what people were doing – not doing anything myself, just sitting next to someone at a drawing board (pre-CAD) and thinking, 'Actually, I'd quite like to do this' and then reading up about it. I took a subscription to *Landscape Design* magazine. I also started going to seminars in Central London at the Architectural Association and the Bartlett. I remember attending lectures about 'Capability' Brown and Humphry Repton and on London parks. And it all began to make me think, 'Well, this looks really interesting'.

After studying at Manchester, I worked freelance for the devolved landscape section of the Milton Keynes Development Corporation, and I believe the practice was called Landscape Town and Country. It was that classic local authority thing where they had a lot of money unspent and they were being wound up; it must have coincided with the time of the Thatcher government. I was required to visit sites for which a master plan had already been drawn up showing where the houses were going to be built, and I had to design the advance planting. Now, whether doing it that way round meant that when the bulldozers came in to prepare the site, all that planting disappeared, I don't know because I'm afraid to say I've never been back to look. But yes, I started with that firm, and then I got a job working for Ashford Borough Council in Kent. Basically, we were in a recession, and I knew that I needed to get a CV together, and as my home was in Northamptonshire, I had to live in a bedsit. But I thought, 'I can't just sort of wait for work to come to me. I've got to get a CV together; I've got to get the project experience'. So, I worked on a range of stuff at the Council for a few years, and then a job came up in a private practice, specialising in historic landscapes.

There was no construction work on the Channel Tunnel site at the time that I was at Ashford. I've been through on Eurostar since, and I barely recognise the place because there has been such intensive development. I'm not really a strategic person. I recognise that there is a need for the bigger picture, but I much prefer engaging with a particular place and a particular group of people and making things happen. I know what I do has a wider context, but I think I find the wider context actually a bit daunting, and I know that other people love it. I mean, I have done some master planning, but it's not something that I'm particularly drawn to.

I have always worked in the South-West for Historic England, and also have an office in Birmingham. The Birmingham office covers the rural counties, including Warwickshire, Herefordshire, Shropshire and Staffordshire. But there are some striking cities as well. But my heart, I guess, is in the South-West where I've lived and worked for more than 25 years.

I would say overwhelmingly that my work is in rural areas. And that's a consequence not so much of the patch, although I would say the South-West is

significantly more rural than the West Midlands, it's because there has been a lot of money coming into historic parks, not urban parks but parklands, from Natural England through stewardship, a lot of it basically European money. And that has kept me very busy because what we've been trying to do is to direct that money to try and get the greatest benefit to designed landscapes. And the other funding stream which is overwhelmingly urban in focus is the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). When I first joined Historic England (when it was still English Heritage), the architects, the landscape architects and surveyors at English Heritage were used by the HLF as monitors or mentors for schemes. So, HLF would perhaps grant an open space, let's say in Devonport which scores quite highly on certain signifiers of deprivation. They would then ask us to monitor that project. In other words, it wasn't that we had a direct project-management role, but we were a sounding board, if you like. Particularly for design details and initially, we also had some role in cost control, though as the HLF got more sophisticated, it brought in people usually with a quantity-surveying background to handle that side of things. After a period of time, the HLF decided not to use Historic England as mentors/monitors. So, that work stopped, and that took me away from a lot of my more urban work. These days, the way that I connect to urban work is mainly through the planning system; it's when somebody wants to build a visitor centre in a city park or improve the sports facilities. That's the sort of thing that typically might engage me. But overwhelmingly, my work is rural in focus.

We met when I was invited to be the architect for the Westonbirt Equestrian Centre. I soon understood that the story of Westonbirt is extraordinary: the stretch of time from the whole initiation of the landscape and the estate there. I suppose it's slightly dislocated now and fragmented into several parts. Is that something that is very much the norm – that many of these large estates for various reasons tend to suffer fragmentation? What is your view of that? Could you talk a little bit about what the implications of that are?

Well, it is a huge problem, and before I talk about that specific example, you can imagine the deep concern the heritage sector has about fragmentation expressed in the system of Inheritance Taxation Exemption, which is where you have, let's say, an established historic estate, and they have an important collection of furniture designed for that house, along with paintings and chattels. Also associated with the house you might have formal gardens of some sort and a landscape park. And sometimes the whole thing has been created over a very short period. In short, it's a coherent historic and cultural entity. Now, under Inheritance Tax and using the terminology of an 'event', which is, in other words, a death, the Estate can be liable for a very large sum of money in death duties or Inheritance Tax. To avoid or at least defray that tax, which can usually only be met by

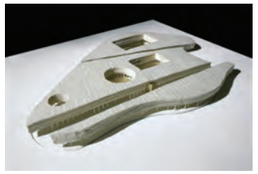
3.5

3.5 Crowcombe Court from walled garden

selling off parts of that historic entity ('fragmentation'), the Estate can defray paying the Inheritance Tax that it is supposed to pay the government provided it keeps the entity together and continues to maintain it to an adequate standard. Inheritance Tax Exemption demonstrates how we fear fragmentation of the very best and the most important historic entities. In short, it's a way of trying to stop that fragmentation from happening. You see the same thing with our Heritage at Risk Register for parks and gardens, where fragmentation, as expressed through multiple ownership, is one of the main indicators of high risk because it makes it almost impossible to achieve holistic management of a designed landscape.

There is a mind-set now that the countryside can't be developed. Yet, the number of people living in the countryside and earning their livelihoods there has considerably reduced – a process that has been going on for at least two hundred years. Thus, the interesting thing at Westonbirt, at Rough Grounds, was the invitation by you to make the equestrian centre bigger and more contemporary in its design, which was a surprise to me. The support and the ambition to do that was really a good moment. Similarly at Crowcombe, the house was also part of a large estate. In the postwar period, it had been dismantled. The great eighteenth-century mansion had been converted into an old people's home, and the two wings had been subdivided. I think there were at least nine different leases; people residing there, people running businesses and so on. My clients were Richard, a silversmith, and Pat who came from an advertising background. She had given that up to study at Oxford under Howard Colvin. Her field was early eighteenth-century architecture, which is mainly why they ended up buying Crowcombe Court. They weren't the landed gentry but made a living by renting out the house and grounds for wedding parties and other events. But they were reaching retirement age, and having spent 20 years of their life restoring the property, they had 'run out of steam'. But they loved the setting, they loved the site. There was a beautiful walled garden which was overgrown and ruined. The invitation was to design houses on three different sites on the land they owned, including a house for Pat and Richard in the walled garden. It would be interesting to talk about the sentiment and attachment to where you live and, although circumstances change (maybe to do with age or budget or whatever), the ambition to still stay there or somewhere near . . . Could you talk about that in the context of the work you do?

Yes, funnily enough the situation of one generation passing the estate onto another generation or the current generation taking more of a back seat but wanting to stay connected isn't all that unusual. I was only peripherally involved with another walled garden on an estate in Dorset, where the owners of the big house were looking to make way for the next generation. They were looking



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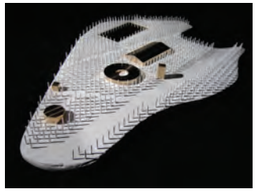


3.7

3.6 Westonbirt Equestrian Centre, Rough Grounds site model with tree canopy

3.7 Site model without tree canopy

to relocate to, and substantially alter, a modest cottage in the walled garden. The term 'dower house' was used to describe the proposal. And this term, dower house, is one that gets used again and again, and you wonder if it's being used to dress up development in a historic landscape to make it more acceptable. But the fundamental thing is (you alluded to this when you were talking about Westonbirt) that you were surprised that a new layer could be added. Contrary to public perception, the number of times that I get a letter or an e-mail that says 'Historic England wants to find a particular period, let's say 1780, and everything has to conform to that' is absolutely rubbish. Our role is about managing change not stopping it. So, what we're looking at, always with new development, is how it works with everything else that's there already and how it affects the significance of the place. There isn't, I think, from our perspective an 'in principle' objection to new dwellings in these country estates. You're more likely to run into issues with the local authority with it being viewed, contrary to policy, as 'unsustainable development in the countryside'.

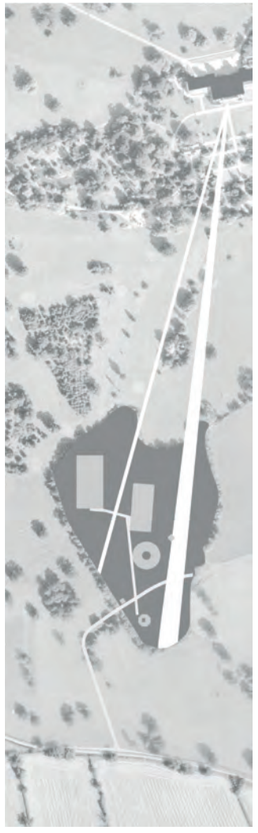
Returning to Crowcombe, I was particularly drawn to some of your proposals by their very contemporary nature. As it happens, I think there can be a place for pastiche, but it's a very limited place, and generally one is looking to see if the principle is appropriate and, after that, if a contemporary expression of that principle is acceptable; using today's materials and technologies but with a clear reference to what has gone before. And that could be in a choice of materials; it could be in the rhythm of the building, picking up on the rhythm of the bays on the historic building nearby or certain forms – a pedimented form or a cube form, whatever: something that actually shows a reference to what's gone before. I think that's what we're looking at . . . although only a few of my colleagues are trained architects. Funnily enough, the architects tend to be conservation-accredited architects who don't generally assess new build. But I think they have a good eye, which may have just come about through architectural training together with the experience of recognising when a new proposal is quite exciting and innovative and complementary. And I do think that you recognise that practices by and large, when you see the title blocks in the bottom of the drawing, there are times when you think, 'Okay . . . I wonder what they've come up with', and you're feeling slightly trepidatious, and other times when you see who the drawing is by, you actually open it up with some degree of let's not say excitement but anticipation. And I know we have to treat everything that comes across our desk within the framework provided by policy and guidance. Professional judgement should be there, but it has to be within a context. I think no matter what part of the historic environment we work in, most of my colleagues are pretty interested in contemporary architecture, and you find some of the greatest apologists for Brutalism – which happens to be a pet hate of mine – among some of my colleagues. They're far more engaged with it than I would say the general public is and certainly than the Prince of Wales! Did I answer your question?

There seems to be a disaffection for building in the countryside. I mentioned earlier the migration from the country to the city that took place during the period of the Industrial Revolution, and now there is a feeling that the countryside is somewhere that shouldn't change. We have an agricultural policy that ties us to the European Union about issues of set-aside land being deliberately kept unproductive. Yet, it is unavailable for people to dwell in and there just for our visual pleasure; you enjoy it, you pass through it, but you can't dwell in it. There is a certain kind of privilege about who can be there and who can't be there, and I'm interested to think about how much land use, the availability of land and the way that land is controlled comes into this because we've come through the period where we had an agenda about localism which somehow was intending to devolve central planning responsibility to the community, and that hasn't worked particularly well because there's never been a way of making that work.

I think localism was a bit of a political sound bite, wasn't it?

One had to take it seriously for a few years. But it's interesting that you mention that. I'm just wondering about the relationship then between the community, the planning authority and Historic England – just how you think your role would be in that context?

Well, are you thinking in the context of, say, a proposal to build a significant number of houses close to an existing village but on a greenfield site? Because land-use policy is determined by the local authority. We are, in so much of what we do, advisers and wouldn't directly get involved except as a consultee (and I'm not sure I'm actually answering your question) in relation to the significance of any historic assets affected by the proposal. I can think of a case in Cornwall. There is a National Trust property on the edge of Penzance called Trengwainton, and within it is a designed viewing terrace. You walk out of the house, across the grounds, and you come to this terrace which is parallel to the contour, and from that terrace, you look out towards Mount's Bay with St Michael's Mount. Penzance and Newlyn are completely concealed except for the edge of a housing estate in the corner of the view. We were consulted about a proposal which would've potentially put housing right across that view, and in that particular case, we were doing precisely the job that I think you'd potentially find frustrating, which is saying, 'Hang on, in terms of the designed landscape, this view is one of the key significances of this place'. It was a conscious decision by a previous owner to build a viewing terrace, and what is wonderful about it is that although you're so close to Penzance, you have a pastoral scene in the foreground, and beyond it, you have the sea, and apart from a very slight intrusion of housing in one corner, that visual idyll has been retained. So, we said, 'From our perspective we don't have a problem with development within the wider site, but what we don't want is for you to build within this view corridor'. We felt that for



3.8

3.8 Westonbirt Equestrian Centre, landscape plan

the tens of thousands of people who go to Trengwainton and pay their money to enjoy the gardens and sit on the benches enjoying the view, this would detrimentally affect their experience and have a detrimental effect on one of the significances of the place – one of the things that makes Trengwainton special. What I find frustrating in a more general context of housing development is the great sameness you find in domestic architecture. There's a similarity of styles and typologies all the way from beyond Edinburgh to Penzance. You could be dropped into a cluster of new housing and be asked to say where you are, and you wouldn't have a clue. Sometimes, there's a token gesture of cladding, you know, a gable end or frontage to the street with a local stone, but it's sort of window dressing.

There has been a history of that in this country from the Georgian period, I suppose, and obviously there's good and bad Georgian – it's not all good, but effectively it's certainly at a higher level than interwar 1920s to 1930s suburbia, where semi-detached houses became the ubiquitous model and were built throughout the British Isles. As you said, you can drive to Newcastle or Liverpool and not know . . .

I've actually said that to colleagues, and the colleagues surprisingly didn't come back at me using a stylistic argument which, like you, I was proposing which was 'Why is there no local distinctiveness within all those semi-detached?' What they said was, 'But you have to remember the context, it was just after the First World War and this model produced a new level of comfort and, in a way, a luxury for the average person and it was seen as aspirational. Everybody wanted a semi-detached house because it was so much better than the grim terraces that they'd lived in before'. But you're right; the ubiquity of the 1930s semi diminishes localism more than the contemporary response of having cladding in the local stone which is at least a nod to localism.

I agree with you. The models put forward by the volume house builders have a sense of homogeneity about them. You made the point that it is something to do with the appearance, not about land use or issues of sustainability or national policy. It occurs to me that in terms of the soft landscape, someone like 'Capability' Brown [the interview was taking place at Hampton Court where Kim Auston was visiting an exhibition about 'Capability' Brown's right-hand man, John Spyers] was quite traumatic with his rearranging the landscape for a particular kind of visual effect. He was obviously aware that he was having to plant not for his own generation but for subsequent generations to appreciate the landscape in its maturity. And then there was an issue of management and how that might end.

Yes, and subsequent generations sometimes failing to understand what he was aiming to achieve, yes.

Does one range between a kind of elitism and trying to work in the context of a

public realm for the common good? How does one make contributions from your position to a housing estate on the edge of town or in the country? Do you get involved in that kind of project?

Only in a very 'once removed' way. I mean, to be honest, our role would be about protecting the views of the countryside from a designed landscape or enhancing them. I hate the reactive role that we have in many cases where you're faced effectively with a fait accompli. And you're saying, 'Well, actually, that's going to have quite a big impact, can you consider some degree of soft landscaping?' So, you'd be looking at some kind of ground modelling, mitigation planting and that sort of thing. But it feels the wrong way round somehow. You're faced with a proposal which you've not been involved in to any great degree, and then you're thinking, 'This has an impact, how do we mitigate it?' So, it's a reactive process rather than a proactive process often. But I mean, the sort of 'tools', if you like, that we would be looking at to mitigate any adverse impacts of development are the same things that I'm sure you're aware of yourself. So, if a proposed residential development is going to be visible in an important historic view, rather than have the streets facing the view, you flip them around so you've actually just got gable ends so the mass becomes much more porous. You would obviously consider the landscape scheme and perhaps encourage the designer to respond to existing features. I mean, we have approved landscape schemes where the clumps in the main park have been replicated in a housing development on the edge of the park. So, rather than a solid barrier to try and screen the housing, we've actually said, 'Well no, we're accepting the development will happen, but could you continue this form of planting to punctuate the development and break down its mass'.

May we discuss in a more general sense the role that you would have in the process of making a development and using Westonbirt Equestrian Centre and Crowcombe Court as two examples where there is a fragmentation of the Estate.

When you talk about 'influence', I'm saying that for big housing developments, it's very limited, but for specific developments, like yours in Westonbirt, you can actually provide a framework within which people who are creative and innovative can hopefully express their creativity. Because that's what you want; you don't want just another building. You want something that sings, even if it sings quietly.

At Rough Grounds, Westonbirt and to an extent at Crowcombe Court, there was a sort of reticence. The equestrian centre at Rough Grounds was buried in a woodland plantation.

But it was a lovely shape.

That was a gift to us as designers. But I know before I had got involved the client had several discussions with the local authority about the siting of the equestrian centre, and that was seen as the most likely way of getting planning permission. Similarly, at Crowcombe Court, we placed the building in a linear form adjacent to and just subordinate to the high wall of the walled garden so that it somehow nestled. It wasn't intended to emulate the old house in any kind of detail. We used a similar red brick.

But it was a very crisp, clean design.

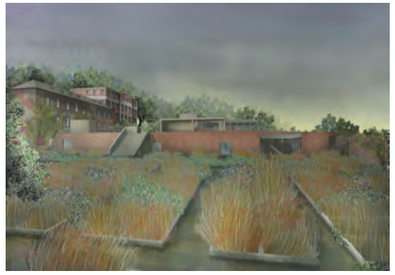
Would you say that even at Historic England, it depends on who 'comes to the table'? You've said that some of your colleagues are interested in Brutalism which is not your thing. What is your attitude towards personal taste when providing advice?

We do have guidance. Lots and lots and lots of guidance which is quite understandably supposed to give Historic England staff and their customers a consistent approach across the country because you don't want somebody in Yorkshire saying, 'Well, I was talking to this chap in my London club, and he got permission for his house, and I was trying to do exactly the same and was told "no"'. So, I mean, every case is judged on its merits, but judgement does come into it, and hopefully it's a professional judgement.

But it's also a question of taste. You can't avoid personal taste.

No, you can't, but you do have to . . . I mean, I have worked with colleagues who are complete and absolute Regency buffs and don't like High Victorian. But you have to set aside your own personal taste. You do find yourself dealing with styles of design that you aren't actually all that fond of yourself, but you recognise, nevertheless, that it's important and it has stylistic attributes that make it different from that other thing over there. I do think that if – and this is stating the obvious – somebody has charm, the architect, the planner, the consultant or whoever is charming, then it's a lot easier to work with them, but in the end, you do have to come down to what's on a drawing or a CD or whatever. Unfortunately, there are people who are not particularly easy to deal with who are actually good at what they do.

3.9



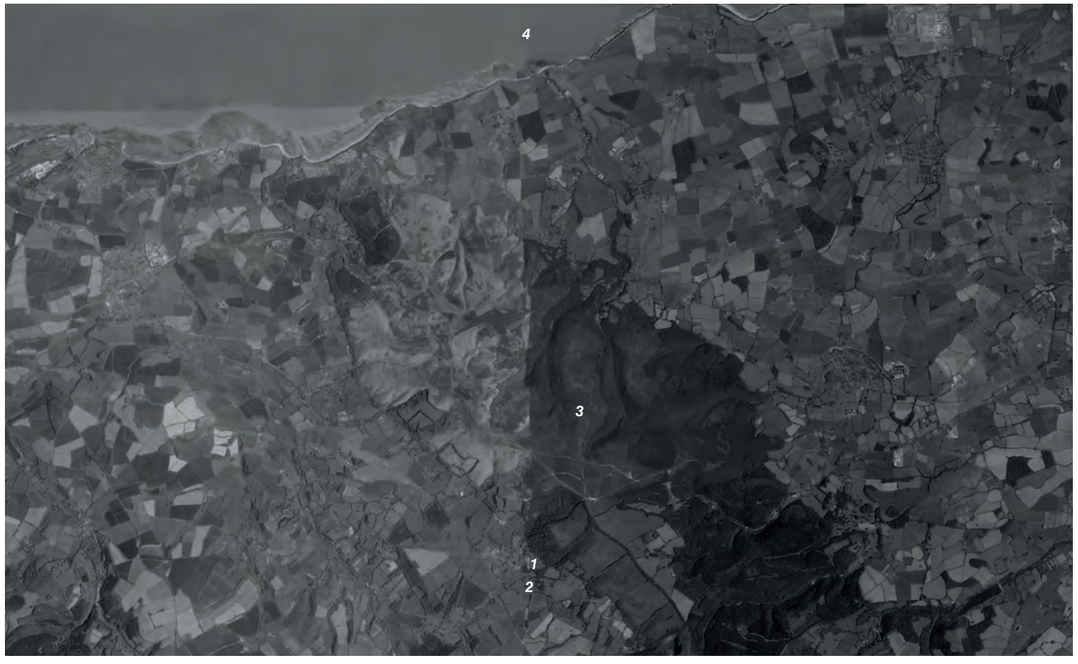
3.10

3.9 Existing view of Crowcombe Court from walled garden

3.10 New walled garden house with Crowcombe Court in background. | Source: Drawing by Bodo Neuss.

Are there dialogues at Historic England that are international?

There are the cross-border international and global European networks like ICOMOS. But I would say that at my level, we mostly deal face to face with architects or planners or conservation officers. There are study tours and that sort of thing, but I wouldn't say that we generally bring an international perspective to our work. There's a sort of background awareness, I suppose. But of course, our legislation is different, the planning system is different. This was really brought home to me recently when I was lecturing to a group of international students about designed landscapes and listed buildings, and I got to the end, and a Chinese student held up a hand and said, 'Excuse me, what is a listed building?' And you just think, 'Okay, they can't have got anything out of my talk' because the idea of protected landscapes, protected buildings, is a bit alien actually.

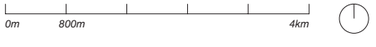


3.11

3.11 Crowcombe Court and environs. | Source: Image courtesy of Google Earth.

1:80,000

1. Site
2. Crowcombe village
3. Quantock Hills
4. Bristol Channel



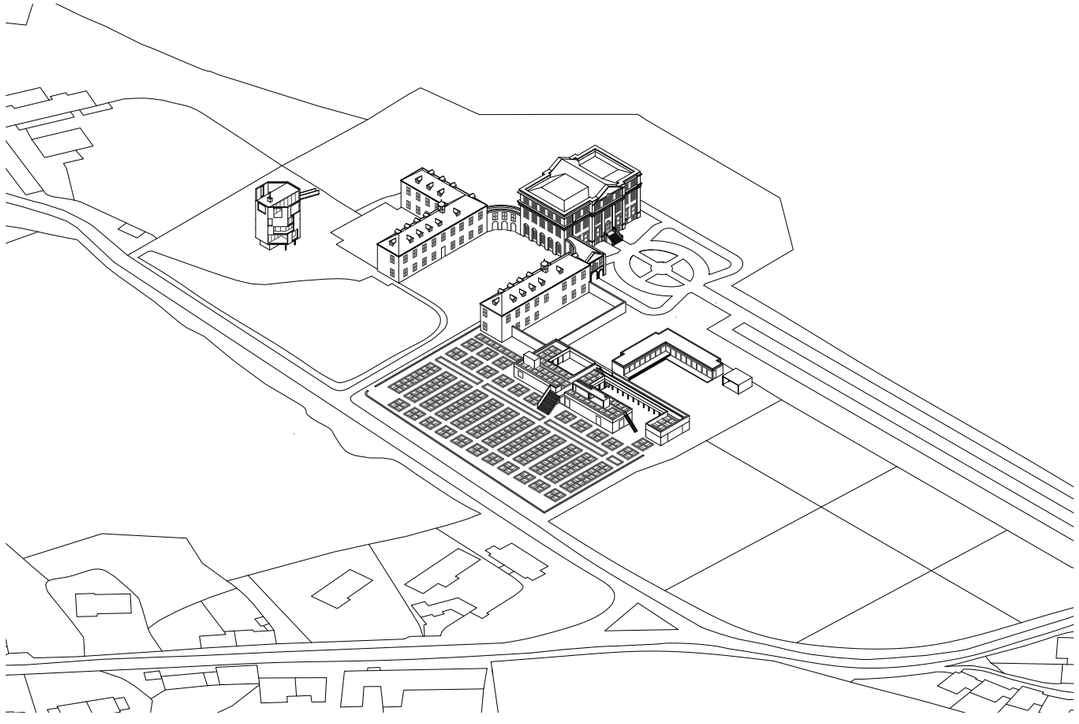
3.12

3.12 Location plan

1:10,000

1. Site
2. Church of the Holy Ghost

0m 100m 500m

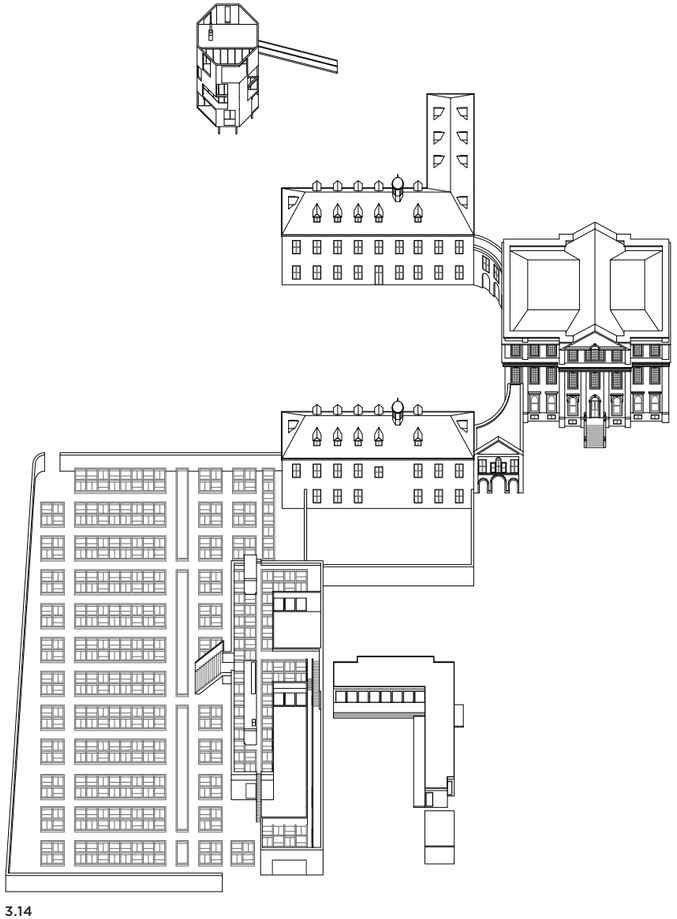


3.13

3.13 Isometric

1:1000

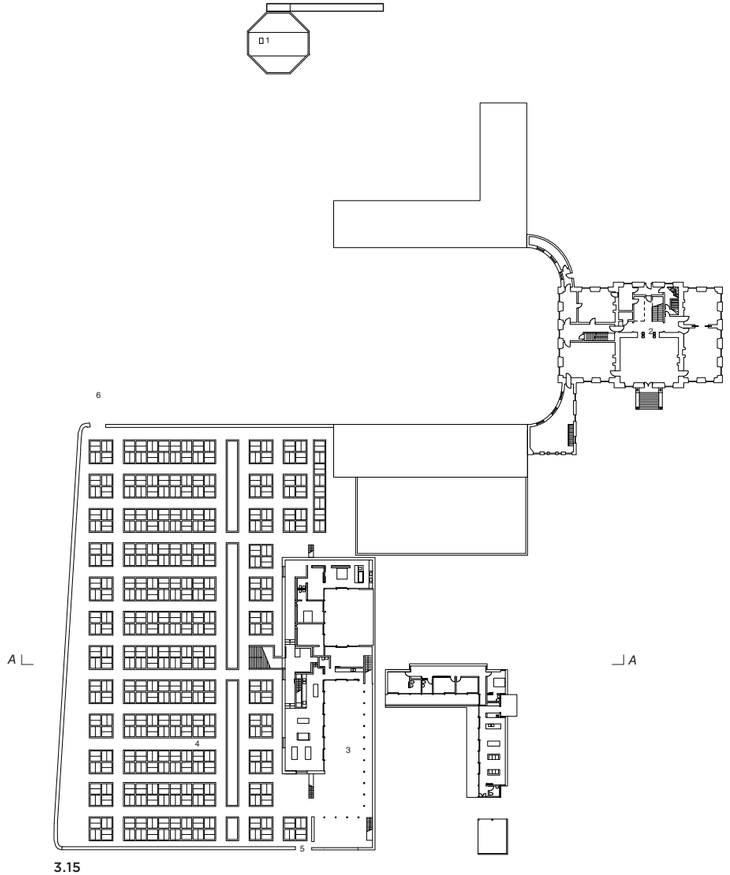
0m 10m 50m



3.14

3.14 Planometric

1:1000

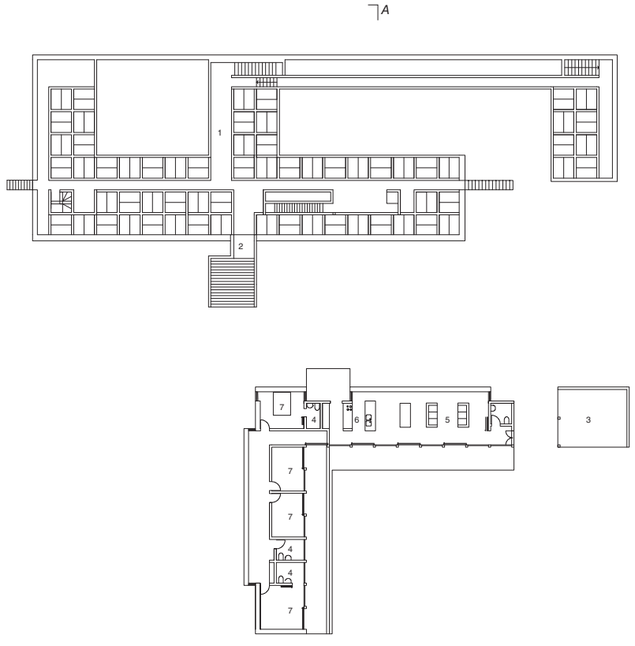


3.15

3.15 Plan

1:1000

1. Drum House
2. Existing mansion
3. Internal courtyard
4. Garden
5. Entrance

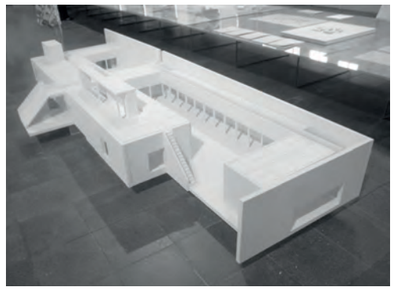


3.16

3.16 Plans

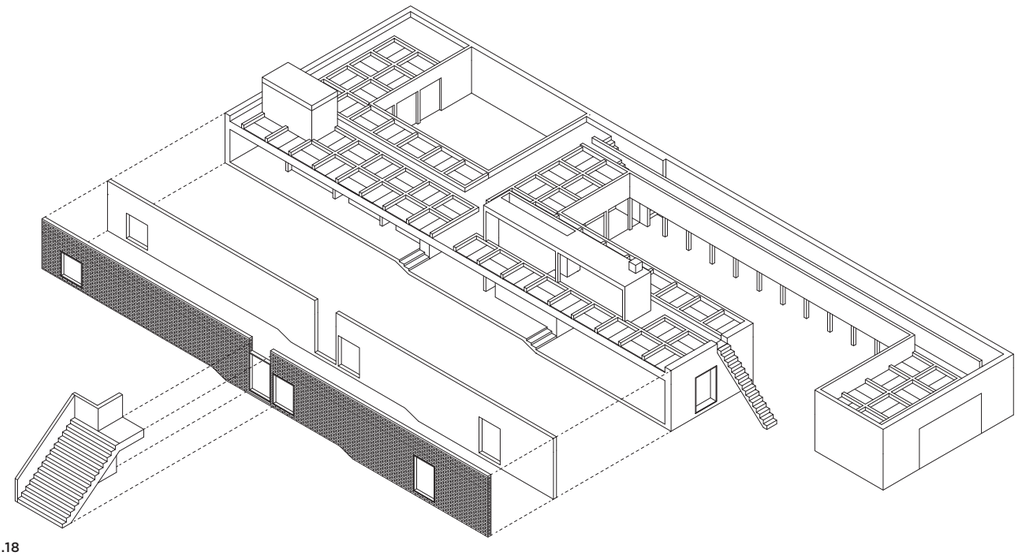
1:500

R Walled Garden House, roof plan
1. Roof garden
   G1 Beech Lawn House, ground floor
   G2 Walled Garden House, ground floor
2. Entrance
3. Garage
4. Bathroom
5. Living room
6. Kitchen
7. Bedroom
8. Internal courtyard



3.17

3.17 Land Architecture People model, painted MDF (opposite)

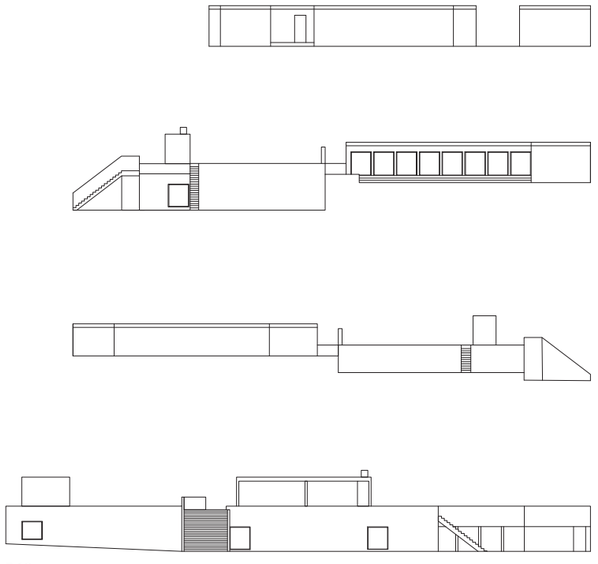


3.18

3.18 Exploded isometric, showing brick frontispiece applied to concrete construction

1:500

0m 10m 50m



3.19

3.20

3.19 Elevations
1:500

0m 10m 50m

3.20 Sections
1:500

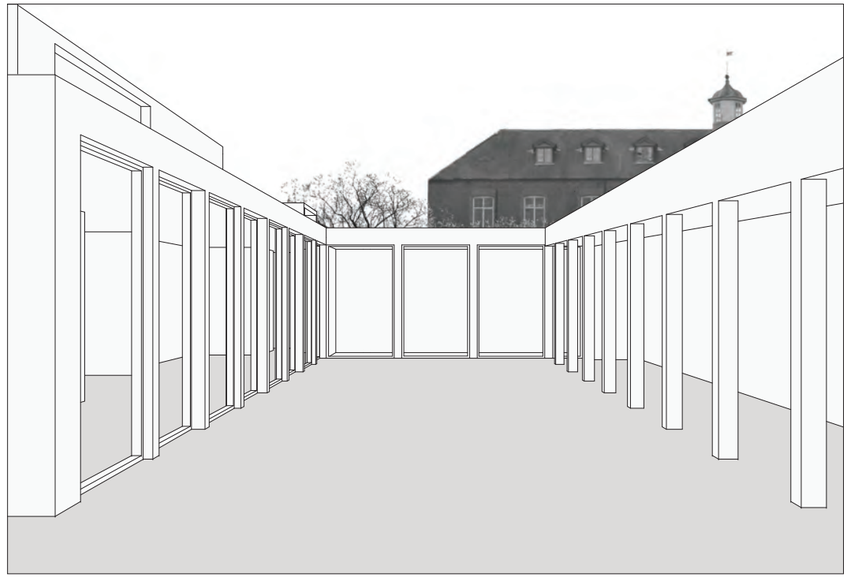
0m 5m 25m

3.21

3.22

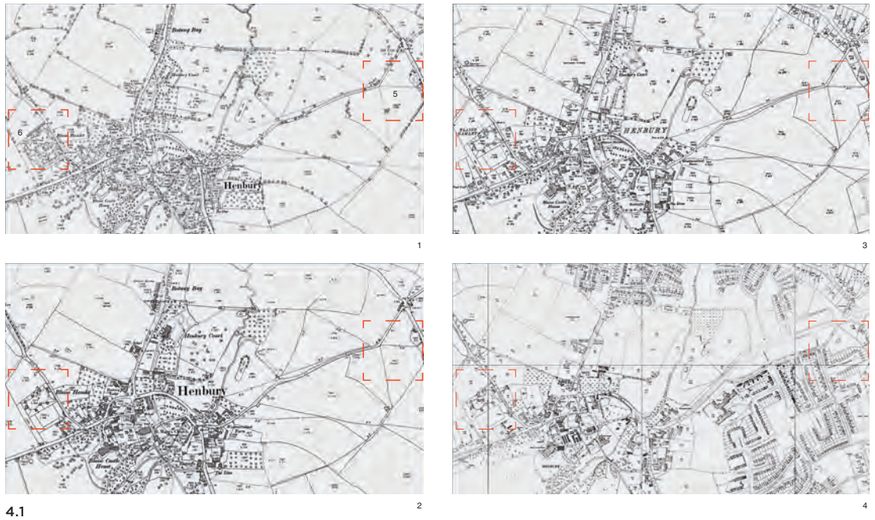
3.21 Long gallery from living room

3.22 View of lower courtyard from living room



3.23

3.23 View of lower courtyard



4.1

4.1 **Historical maps showing site development.** | Source: Images courtesy of Digimap.

1:20,000

1. 1880
2. 1900
3. 1930
4. 1950
5. Bengough's House site
6. Blaise Hamlet

0m 200m 1km

2008 Seaside | Bengough's House

Bengough's House is located at the corner of Crow Lane and Passage Road/Brentry Hill in Henbury, North-West Bristol, on a suburban site with an approximate area of 0.41 hectares. The existing building was designed as a 40-bedroom dual-registered care home and was completed in 1996. The care home operation ended in January 2008. The trustees of Bristol Charities and its Chief Executive, David Jones, considered the future of Bengough's House in the context of the changing nature of services and accommodation for older people. The result was a brief to provide almshouses in accordance with the original intent of Alderman Henry Bengough (whose charity can be traced back two hundred years to when he donated monies to the Corporation of Bristol for the erection of an almshouse for poor aged people), albeit almshouses fit for the aspirations of older people in the twenty-first century. Bristol Charities was committed to providing 'very sheltered' or 'extra-care' housing as a means of providing homes for life and offering the choice of different levels of care and support as and when required. The charity wished to provide a development where all occupiers had their own front door, with the apartments designed to best practice providing fully wheelchair-accessible environments. The development of such a scheme at the Bengough's House site would also have had the advantage of complementing the adjacent John Foster's Almshouse development, which was completed in February 2009.

The tower option proposed a 15-storey block with a compact plan form in which individual flats would be grouped around a central circulation/social space, intended as a microcosm of the traditional almshouse courtyard. One unit from the basic plan form would be omitted at each level to provide communal balconies, admit light to the circulation/social space and create an abstract pattern of voids in the tower. There would be a complex of colonnaded covered walkways and a building housing the communal accommodation in the south corner.

The cloister option proposed that almshouse flats would be wrapped around a central space to form a courtyard on level 3, with a void on the levels above, affording views overlooking the courtyard. The orientation of the units would present a wide frontage to both the internal public circulation spaces and the external communal courtyard space.

This approach optimised the daylight entering the units, while providing

a private, enclosed communal space. A buffer zone would wrap around the building with a planted green facade encasing the scheme. This development would provide a positive frontage to the two main roads and at the same time satisfactorily enclose a landscaped courtyard as a contemporary interpretation of the traditional almshouse cloister.

This building would be six storeys high, with the communal space housed on the lower two levels, fronting Crow Lane and the local shopping district. This location of the communal space was intended to help create a gradual change in hierarchy from public to private space as one moved from the front to the back of the site.

Jonathan Vining

Interview at Pierre d'Avoine Architects, Durham Yard, London, 22 June 2018—I first met David Jones towards the end of 2006, I think. He was the chief executive of Bristol Charities, and we seemed to get on well. A chartered surveyor-friend of mine, who was acting for David at the time, had recommended me as an architect, and he was aware that we were already working in Bristol on two other projects, so we knew some of the planning officers. He was interested in a site in Monmouth – William Jones's Almshouses – which I think had been founded about four hundred years ago by the merchant who set up Haberdashers' school in Monmouth. The almshouses had been rebuilt a couple of times since then, the latest being in the 1960s. David wanted to redevelop them. He didn't think that they were up to today's standards and wanted to redevelop them for almshouse flats for older people to live in, but so that they could retain their independence for as long as possible – through the design of the flats and through support being provided as far as possible within their own homes. I did a concept design for about 60 flats with some private development to help subsidise the cost of the almshouse development. It was in the form of a perimeter block around a courtyard, and we took it as far as a pre-app, with the planners having done some archaeological and ecological assessments as well, I think. It was received quite well, but the project didn't proceed any further at that time – although I think that the site has been redeveloped since.

Then, I should think in the summer of the following year, 2007, I became involved in Bengough's House, which is in Henbury – on the way out of Bristol going north to the M5. It was a nursing home that had been built in the mid-1990s, designed by Feilden Clegg in brick with lots of timber. It had won a couple of design awards, but Bristol Charities didn't think that it operated well as a residential care home for various reasons – and, in fact, they closed it the following January, I think. So, Bristol Charities wanted to either convert the existing building or redevelop it completely into 50 or 60 almshouse flats, fully wheelchair accessible, obviously. It was a similar programme to the Monmouth site: there were to be communal spaces, facilities for staff and carers, catering kitchen, laundry, hairdressing, chiropody and so on. Initially, we were commissioned to do a feasibility study to look at whether the existing building could be converted satisfactorily, which it turned out not to be,

really. David and I went to see the planning officer. I think he wanted to help facilitate what David was trying to do, but was concerned about the scale of adaptation that would have been needed to such a recent building – additional floors and so on. He thought the Feilden Clegg building had some merit, but was not dead against the idea of redeveloping it either, but warned that a high-quality design would be needed for any replacement building, and one that respected its prominent location.

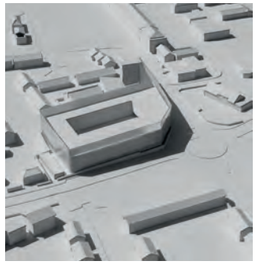
So, we went on to look at options for redeveloping the site. This was now about the end of 2007, maybe the beginning of 2008. So, it was at the same time that we were working on the Birnbeck competition together. It seemed like a good idea to involve you in the Bengough's House project as well, not only because of the sensitive nature of the project, but also to continue the collaboration we had started on Birnbeck and to start to build up a critical mass of work together – and at that time, it looked like it was going to turn into a real project, and a pretty significant one at that, and one that was actually likely to get built.

We gave a lot of thought to the options. I think, in the end, there were four that we presented to the planning officer at the next meeting, which would have been in February 2008, probably. We made a working model of the site and quite a large part of its context, then modelled each of the options and used photographs of the physical models alongside the plans that we had made of the design options. I thought that worked pretty well as a way of communicating the ideas. I think you and I were pretty convinced that the two options that offered the greatest potential were the cloister option, with the almshouse flats wrapped around a central green courtyard, and the tower option, which was a 15-storey block with communal balconies at each level. I don't remember getting a formal response from that meeting with the planners, but we were certainly referred to the Bristol Urban Design Forum, and we presented to them sometime in May, I think. They were not fully convinced, really, by any of the options, but they were supportive of our architectural ambitions for the site.

I remember that following the presentation to the Forum, we did some further work together developing the design of the cloister option, which was the one that David preferred, and had a couple of further meetings with him. I also looked at another site in Henbury where there was the potential for a land swap with Bristol City Council. But the project seemed to peter out over time, and in the end, Bristol Charities just sold Bengough's House. Ironically, it's operating again now as a residential care home . . .

David was pretty entrepreneurial, and at the same time as all this was going on, he was also trying to promote his ideas in other parts of the country. There were two or three other sites that I looked at for him in 2008 for conversion/redevelopment opportunities with a similar sort of programme. One was a listed building in Greenwich, part conversion, part new build; the other was in Walworth in London. Both were owned by the Drapers' company, but I don't think either of those went any further either.

David Jones, chief executive, Bristol Charities. | Source: Image courtesy of David Jones.



4.2

4.2 Courtyard option, working model

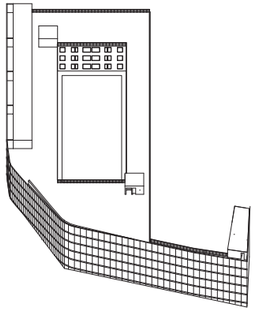
David Jones

Interview by Clare Melhuish for Land Architecture People exhibition—The site was acquired 17 years ago. Basically, the trustees were advised to build a care home. So, they built one to a high specification for a 40-bedroom care home. I firmly believe that older people deserve and expect to have independent living as long as they can – their own front door, their own flat. The cost of care homes is such that you can provide care in people's homes at a much cheaper rate. Some older people can't live in their own homes for whatever reason. So, the next best step is to design flats that can actually provide them with the wherewithal to support their needs as they become frailer. They live and die in that flat; there's no need to have the trauma of being shifted off to a care home.

I've been trying to look at a design that I think is appropriate to meet the needs of older people, borrowing and pinching from other people's specifications but adding to it myself. That's what the Bengough's scheme is all about – replacing what I thought was an outdated, outmoded form of provision. Certainly, in the UK, we're way behind the continent.

Bristol Charities has a range of almshouse charities, the oldest dating back to 1395. Here, we are, five hundred years later, building a brand new almshouse that meets the needs of older people in Bristol. I'm trying to do that elsewhere in the country. Difficult because of all the issues we've mentioned – planning issues, land issues, people resisting change. One of the things in my grand plan, when we do build the replacement for Bengough's, is to link in older people living in the vicinity. So, as well as the 60 flats, we can link electronically to hundreds of older people who will be socially isolated and link in to the surgery, the library, activities. They can do it via television sets, so there's a way of trying to ensure there's a lifeline there. There's a very high preponderance of older people there; it's a postwar council estate. The area now is particularly troublesome because of antisocial and criminal behaviour.

There's a particular shopping street in Bristol which is notorious for disorder and unpleasantness, and I actually believe that's partly architectural. The reason the young people congregate there is because architecturally the place is a fairly barren spot, and the whole feel is one of decay and being left out and forgotten about, and probably over decades, it's not been a ward which has seen much support and tension. Basically, there are two 1960s tower blocks, then there's an area of what they would call parkland, except it's just grass, open space, with a stream running through it which is full of shopping trolleys. It's not overlooked, so it's a place where kids will congregate and do antisocial things, and most people wouldn't go there unless it was really daylight, you might walk your dog and that's it. So, the idea was to shave off some of the space for our development, and then money from that would enhance the remaining parkland to make it like real parkland with some activities. The idea was that the two tower blocks were supposed to be elderly preferred accommodation. But Bristol City Council couldn't make a decision – that's the culture. So, they're just not able to support the initiatives coming through.



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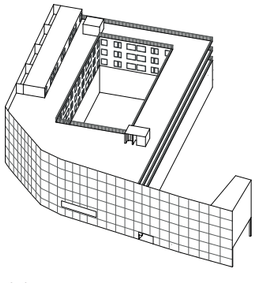


4.4

4.3 Courtyard option, planometric

4.4 Courtyard option, isometric

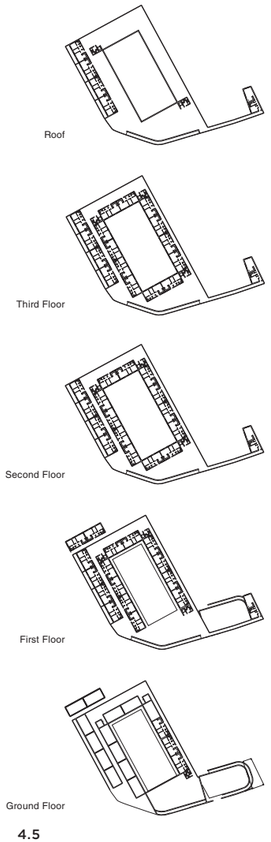
The Bengough's site was originally an old garage and farmland in the middle of a council estate. We closed the care home in January 2008, and the plan was that we were going to do a site swap with the city council. They would take it on for a dementia home, and I'd get a site and cash. But the city council reneged on the deal. So, I'm about to put it on the open market, and at the same time, I've commissioned a site search. I've instructed surveyors' agents to find me a site which will provide me with 60 two-bedroom flats.

Finding land is quite tricky. So, I'm saying go 10 miles beyond the city centre. We're helped at present because of the state of the market, and the value of the land for care homes is probably reduced by 50 per cent. So, it's a good time. There are five key things. First, it has to be relatively level because most of my people will have some mobility problems, and people who've got motorised scooters whom you don't want to be on the side of a hill. Second, it needs to be close to shops. Third, bus routes are quite important. Fourth is the general area – there are some sink [rough] estates that might be okay in terms of design but not to live there. And so fifth, because I'm building almshouses for older people in need (we don't say poor), one has to be aware that building in a very expensive part of Bristol would look like a strange use of charitable assets.

I'm very keen on providing communal space not only for the residents, but also for the community to use, so that other old people come in – that's good for the residents. But I don't want to build an older people's ghetto. I want to make sure that it's accessible and not just by other older people but, if I structure it right perhaps, younger people – try and break down some of those generational problems. Particularly in the area I mentioned, in Henbury where Bengough's is, you have a situation where many of the older people are frightened of younger people. The young people feel demonised, and the old people feel marginalised. So, trying to get them together and talk is tricky.

Sixty two-bedroom flats is my ideal development. There's land available, but whether it's in the right place, time will tell. The site we've just completed, John Foster's new almshouse, I project managed that. I brought it in on time and on budget. If I hadn't been involved, I'm not sure that either of those would have been met. I believe in the traditional form of contract, and the client has the responsibility to ensure that what they get at the end of the day is what they want. With design-and-build, you sign the contract, and 12 months, 18 months later, you get something that might be like what you wanted, or it might not be. The trustees are lucky to have someone like me who's slightly obsessive about the whole thing and gets involved – it's very unpleasant because building contracts are made for problems. I'm the client from hell!

The way you achieve what you want is by being clear about what your aspirations are, and relying on the architect knowing all the answers. If you go to an architect who's got a track record in a particular type of development, the danger is they're just going to demonstrate what they did in the past and impose it on you. If you go



4.5

4.5 Courtyard option, plans

to one who hasn't got a track record, the chances are they're starting from a minus position, and it can be frustrating. I remember saying, 'You do realise this is for older people?' It's tricky; either way, you've got problems.

People have been moving to John Foster's now since May. I got the residents together to meet with them all, see what the problems were, and really – this is part of my arrogance, I suppose – I thought, this is a scheme that I know will work. There's a lady there, she's 92, she looks 20 years younger, full of life, not depressed, off medication. There's a lady, probably in her 60s, in a wheelchair, and she said, 'I don't know who designed the specification, they should get an award'. That was quite nice. Everyone was full of praise. One said that it's like being in a hotel. So, the user satisfaction is quite high.

We might go out to competition [for an architect], or maybe we know somebody, perhaps from a smaller project, so we'd give them a chance. The key thing is having an architect who actually has the vision, the excitement to want to work with you and who will not take professional offence if I say, 'That's rubbish'. People are highly qualified. There's an architect and there's some guy like me – they're not going to like it. So, I suppose mutual respect is the key thing, and that they understand that it's something I believe in passionately, that I believe there is a need for what we're doing. It's trying to make people understand that old people have rights. I'm happy to take the decisions and the responsibility. If I get it right, marvellous; if I get it wrong, they'll have my head on a platter tomorrow. That's the downside of not being liked – people won't give you a second chance, they'll just be after your blood.

If a firm of architects saw designing for old people as just being another building project, perhaps with some slight nuances, I think it's a big mistake. There is a range of issues, not just concrete specification – there are also issues about community, about the difference in people. The role of the architect is to do what I tell them really! That's what they hate. Materials, colours, that's where I am the architect's worse nightmare. I suppose what I'm looking for is an architect who listens really and respects what the client wants. What I want them to do is to bring me options. If someone's got ideas, great.

Bengough's been empty since April. We looked at conversion, but it was a no-hoper; it didn't give us enough units. Also, the shape and layout would have been a compromise. But even though we met with the planners, and they weren't against the idea of demolition, it was quite clear that there would have been a public outcry. Because when we closed Bengough's, it was a very successful care home, and I took a lot of flack. So, rather than knock it down, it will be sold. I wanted an architect who wasn't based here in Bristol because it's a small city and people know what's going on. I wanted some distance. So, that's why I went to WYG's office in Cardiff – a firm of architects I trust. I can sit down with them and look at the options. It was a question of starting afresh, being away from here. The relatives of people who lived in Bengough's

4.6

4.7

4.8

4.6 Blaise Hamlet by John Nash, Almshouses at Blaise Castle, Henbury, c.1811, Cottage Ornee houses in picturesque setting

4.7 Circular House, Blaise Hamlet

4.8 Site plan, Blaise Hamlet

weren't very happy. So, public relations was always an issue. Also, I knew WYG had some knowledge of the area, Henbury.

I kept an open mind until I met Pierre. Obviously, Jonathan had told me about his background, and so far as I was concerned, it was great. It added value to what Jonathan could do. I'm always looking to try and move out of professional ruts, and the way I saw it was that Pierre would bring new ideas and a fresh approach to things. So, I was happy to see what came out of the mix really. We had some very forthright meetings in Cardiff! They were fairly robust exchanges, and no-one seemed to take any offence at it.

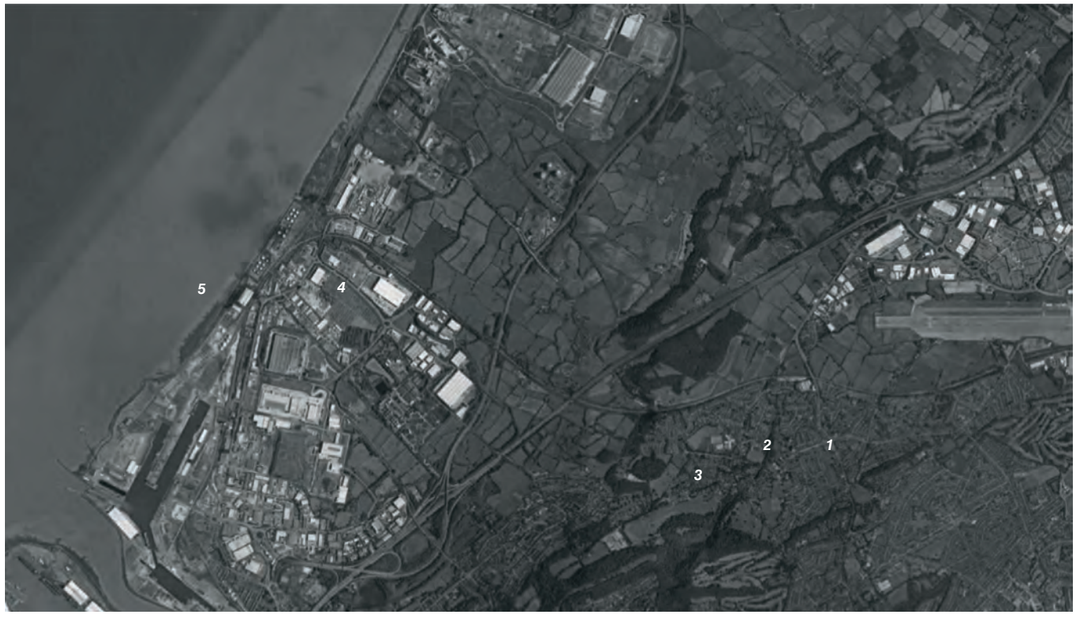
We talked about multistorey options, the needs of older people. The site was slightly constrained because of the surrounding two-storey council housing. So, height was an issue, and parking was an issue. But also, it's in a very high-profile location. It's one of the ways into the north of the city, and therefore – Bristol being architecturally challenged as it is – there was a thought of building something spectacular there if possible. Architecturally, Bristol is not brilliant. I'm not sure why. People driving into the north of the city are faced with this postwar council estate, drab, dreary. So, it would have been a way forward. I'm a firm believer that the more you play around with a building to make it architecturally pleasing, it's good not just for everyone around but also for the residents as well. It shows a worth. I think in that location, the only way we would have got away with the sort of building we needed would be if it had been a landmark because if we had tried to build a less than landmark building, multistorey, I think we would have got hammered.

As long as you've got a standard specification built within a super design, then everyone is a winner – not just the residents, not just us, not just the architect, but also the local community. And on that particular site, it would have perhaps been good for the rest of the city, the rest of the area. It would have helped, I think, to give some sort of statement about where we're going. Certainly, almshouses as a form of accommodation need all the help they can get because often the people get associated with the building – some 'olde worlde' building – which is totally inappropriate. In Berkshire, I'm daring to say that a seventeenth-century almshouse building, built in 1642, is not appropriate for older people in 2009, and I'm being vilified. You've got millions of pounds tied up in a listed building. If you could release it, you could build three times as many units for older people – proper accommodation.

I produce a product which is open to all races. I'm not aiming to design anything for any particular group. In one of my almshouses, I've got Chinese residents, but that's as it is. It's very easy to fall into a trap where you make it almost exclusive. There's a duty when you actually come to recruit people for the almshouses, to reflect the mix if you can. But if people don't apply, then that's the issue. It's certainly a factor which I think about, but to date, I don't think there's much I could have done, though that might change.

I'm not the most inclusive of people. I don't work in groups. I've always managed

organisations for the last 30 years. That's my strength and some would say my weakness. I deliver projects, wherever I've gone, on time and to budget. I get things done. I don't make friends doing that. The problem I've found is that inclusivity is great, but it's a marvellous way not to do anything. So, I do meet with my users on a regular basis, and I'm happy to do that, and the things they tell me, I feed in. I've got a fair feel for what puts people off. You can sit down and say, 'What would you like?' But I'm just not sure . . . There's a theory, isn't there? You're doing it to be seen to be doing it.



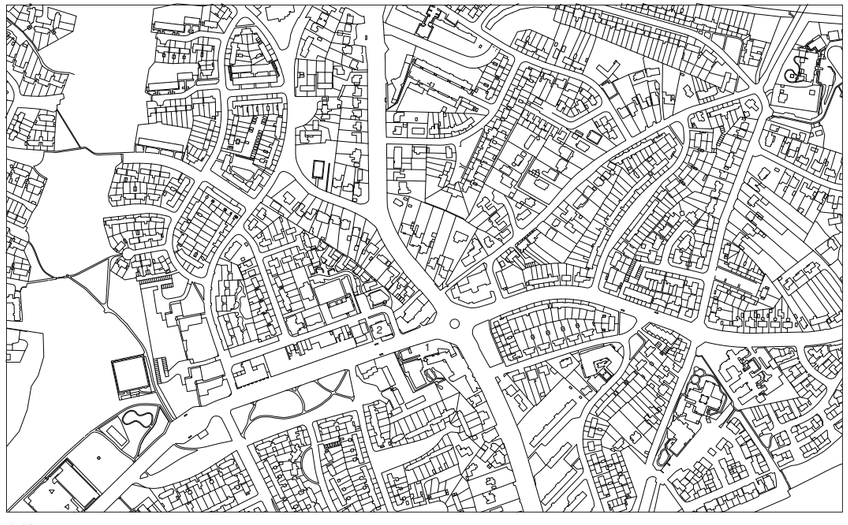
4.9

4.9 Bengough's House and environs

1:50,000

1. Site, Bengough's House
2. Henbury
3. Blaise Hamlet
4. Avonmouth
5. Bristol Channel

0m 500m 2.5km

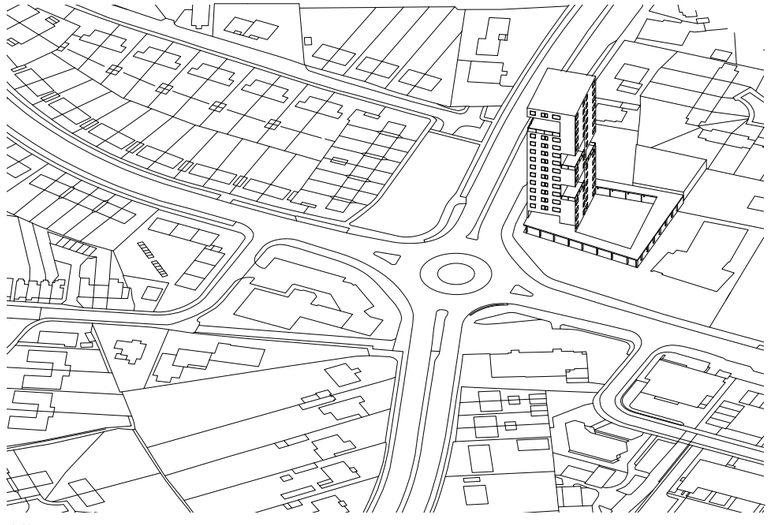


4.10

4.10 Location plan

1:8000

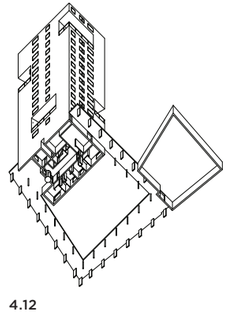
1. Bengough's House site
2. Henbury library



4.11

4.11 Isometric

1:1000

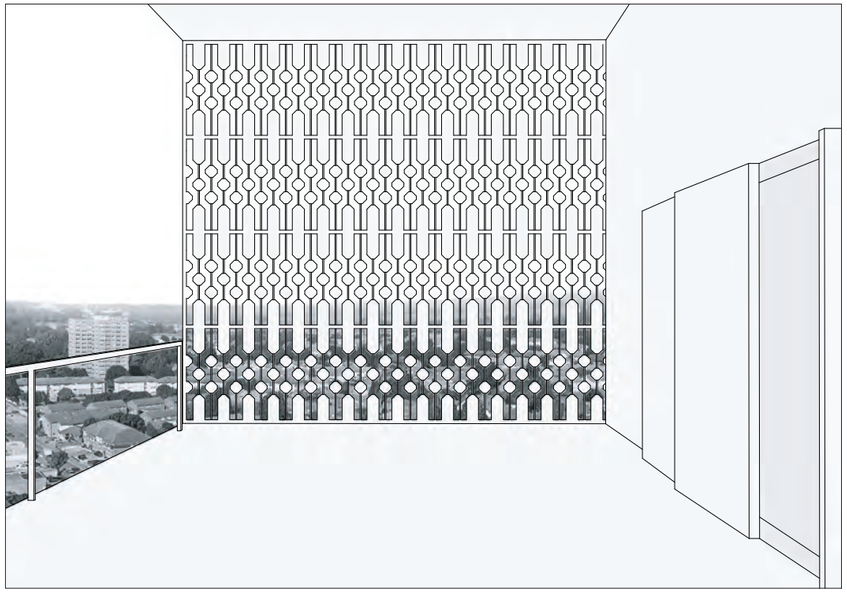


4.12

4.12 Worm's-eye axonometric

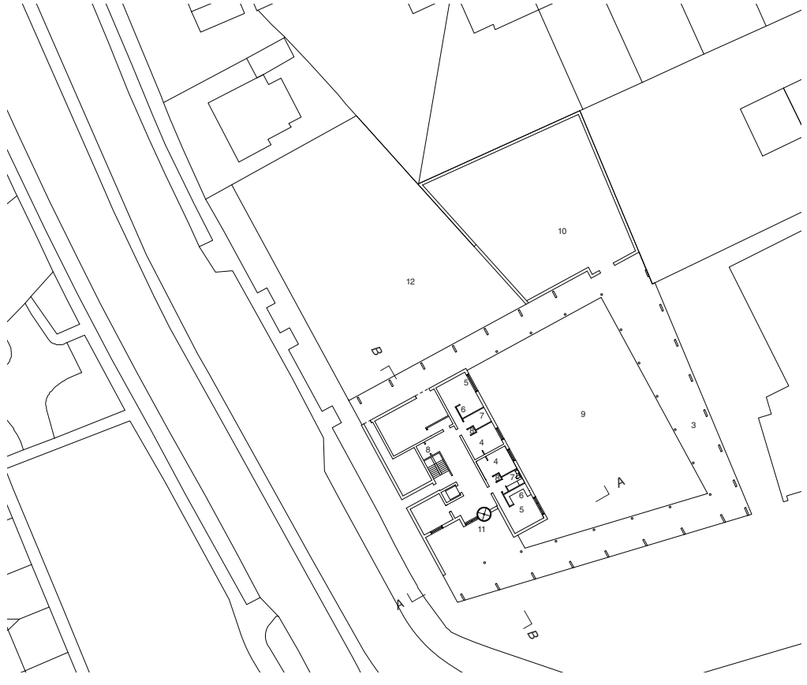
4.13

4.13 View of Avonmouth and Bristol Channel from communal terrace



4.14

4.14 Communal double-height terrace view



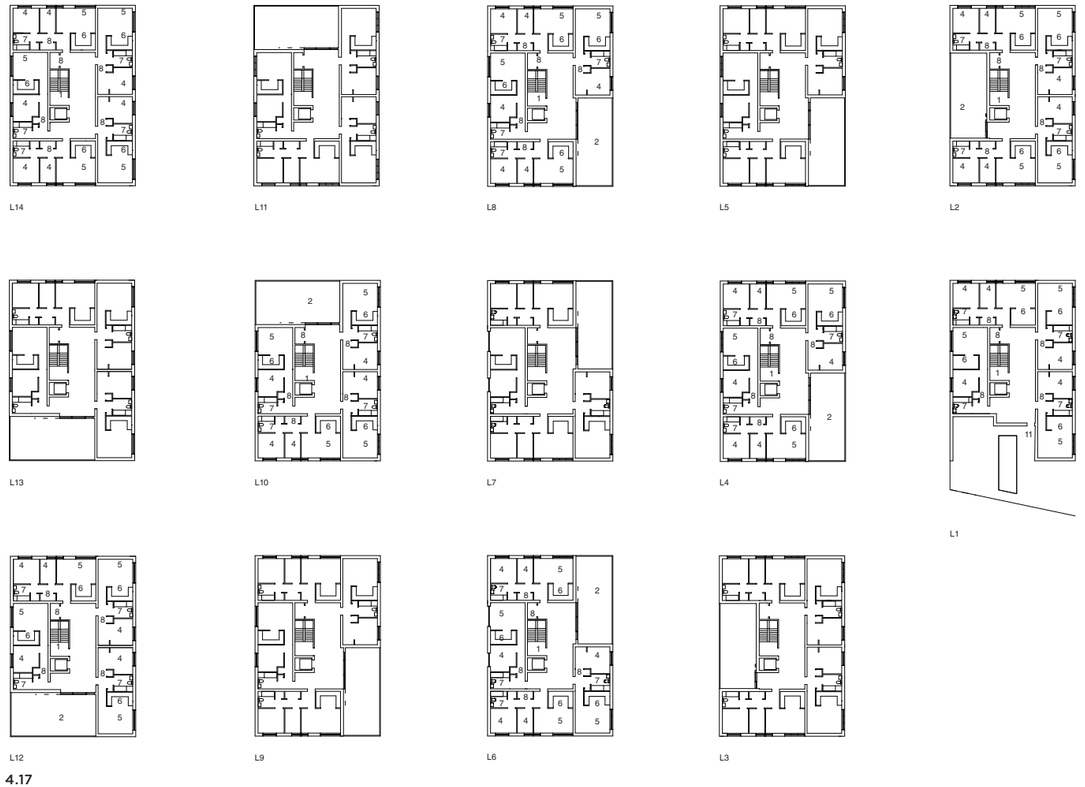
4.15

4.16

4.15 Ground floor plan

1:1000

4.16 Tower option,
working model

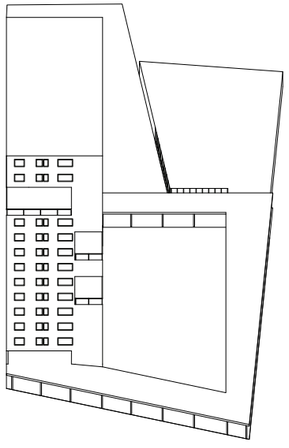


4.17

4.17 Plans

1:1000

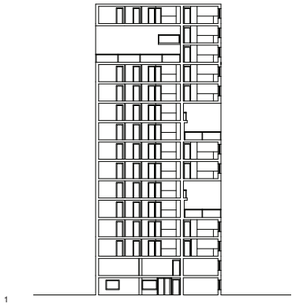
1. Circulation
2. Terrace
3. Balcony
4. Bedroom
5. Living room
6. Kitchen
7. Bathroom
8. Storage
9. Interior courtyard
10. Multi-purpose hall
11. Main entrance
12. Parking



4.18

4.18 Planometric

1:1250



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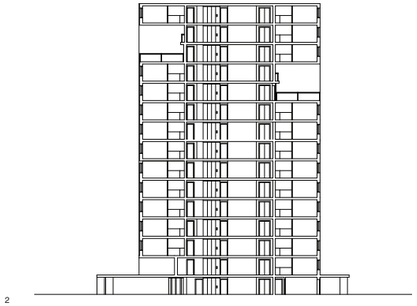


2

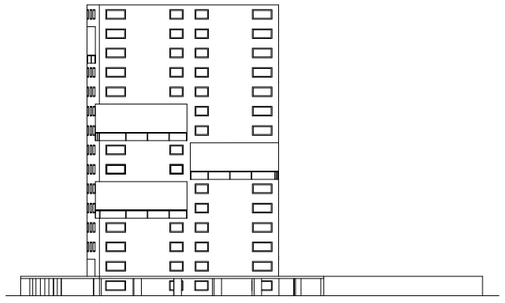
4.19

4.19 Sections

1:1000

1. Section AA
2. Section BB

1



3

2

4

4.20

4.20 Elevations

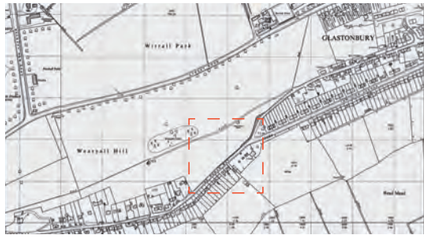
1:1000

1. South
2. North
3. East
4. West

1

3

2



4

5.1

5.1 Historical maps showing site development. | Source: Images courtesy of Digimap.

1:10,000

1. 1880
2. 1900
3. 1930
4. 1960

0m 100m 500m

2006

Middle England | Glastonbury Houses

5.2

5.2 View towards Glastonbury Tor

A line of six houses is proposed on Wearyall Hill in the grounds of a house built in the 1960s. Access is from The Roman Way, which forms a suburban edge south-west of the town centre overlooking the Somerset Levels towards neighbouring Street. The south-facing site is steeply sloping and wooded, making it undesirable to local developers. Wearyall Hill is one of three landmarks, together with Glastonbury Abbey and Glastonbury Tor, which has made the town highly significant across a long stretch of English history. The area has been badly extended, with a demoralisingly ugly industrial estate just

Nick Oliver, auctioneer and land agent, director of Cooper and Tanner. | Source: Image courtesy of Nick Oliver.

to the north of Wearyall Hill and a maze of surrounding suburban streets. The high street is mostly given over to New Age shops and provides access to the Abbey grounds where the ruins of the great church are still a compelling focal point. The Tor is some distance from the town. The ground rises slowly to the base of the Tor, and a spiral path ascends steeply to St Michaels Tower from which Wearyall Hill may be viewed – a long, low swelling counterpoint to the Tor. The marshy landscape of the Levels is still liable to flooding and is a reminder of its recent prehistoric past when the land was inundated by the sea and its inhabitants lived in villages built on stilts in its watery edges.

Nick Oliver

Interview at Cooper and Tanner, Glastonbury, 3 February 2017—I live in Castle Cary, but I've practised in the Glastonbury office for 30 years. I also worked in Shrewsbury, but 95 per cent of my working life has been based in Glastonbury. I work mainly within a 10-mile radius of Glastonbury, including Street, Wells, Shepton Mallet and Midsomer Norton and so forth. Originally, I came here as a land agent principally to advise farmers, but my work has widened. So, I'm more of a general practice chartered surveyor now, advising farmers and also advising general property owners. I'm heavily involved in selling sites and also seeking planning permission via optional promotion agreements with developers.

I was born in Taunton. I am from Somerset, and I have lived pretty much all of my life in Somerset. I went to school in Taunton and Bath and then to college at Cirencester for three years and qualified two years after. The course involved learning about advising farmers and landowners. It also included estate management, forestry, evaluations, farming advice in terms of husbandry issues and crop rotations and taxation. There wasn't much about commercial development; that has just evolved whilst I've been in practice and through experience and understanding of how that part of the industry works.

I wanted to be an auctioneer originally. Livestock auctionary, that's all I wanted to do, And I sold livestock for 25 years at our markets at Glastonbury and at our new market in Frome, a livestock market. Then, I just stepped aside because we had some younger people who wanted to sell, and I'd done enough selling in my lifetime. I didn't really need to do any more. So, I stopped being an auctioneer about 10 years ago. But I still do property auctions, which we hold once a month throughout the year. So, the only auctioneering that I do on a regular basis now is property. No, there was no family tradition of this whatsoever. I was just drawn to be a livestock auctioneer and work in markets. That's all I really wanted to be. But I needed to be a chartered surveyor because I've got to work three other days of the week (not just be an auctioneer). So, that's what I chose, and part of the qualification of becoming a chartered surveyor was to study taxation.

Cooper and Tanner have been in Glastonbury for more than 100 years, principally as a firm of agricultural auctioneers until about the early 1970s, and

5.3

5.3 View from Wearyall Hill to Glastonbury Tor (top) View from Glastonbury Tor to Wearyall Hill (bottom)

then we started becoming involved in estate agency. The property we sell ranges from a small flat up to maybe a £3 million property; that would be our raison d'etre in terms of what we sell. We then also sell land for the benefit of planning permission. We also sell land, agricultural land, farms and commercial property as well. We're slightly unique here because we are a fairly general practice office, whereas my other offices either specialise in selling houses or specialise in selling farms or in just doing professional work and doing commercial. This office has been a general practice office ever since I've been here. We've always done a bit of everything. And that's probably why we're able to survive in this market. I think that if we were just here residentially (I'm not saying we aren't successful) or we were to specialise in one particular field, then I think that we probably wouldn't be able to employ the number of staff that we have here at the moment.

When I started working with Cooper and Tanner I came to live in the area. I moved just into the town in the early 1990s and stayed there until about three years ago and, for various reasons, moved to Castle Cary.

In terms of your experience over the time that you've been in general practice, what are the kinds of opportunities that exist? How have you responded to the vagaries or changing nature of land availability and the way that policy is framed to deal with that?

Well, land availability in this area is slightly constrained by a couple of factors really. First, in Glastonbury, it's constrained by the flood plain because we're hampered to the west by a large flood plain so development is limited. That isn't universally the case with towns in the area, but it is a consideration because of just where we are in the middle of Somerset. There is another consideration which has a strong bearing, and that is the historical interest and character of certain settlements. So, in Glastonbury, we have Glastonbury Tor and the Abbey, and that in itself causes constraints as to where land can be built upon because planners and conservation bodies don't want to see the Tor or the setting of the Tor compromised. Similarly, in Wells, you've got the cathedral and all the ancillary that goes there. So, Wells itself has constraints in terms of where developments can take place without imposing themselves upon Wells Cathedral. Towns such as Shepton Mallet don't have any real historical significance by virtue of what they are, and therefore the constraints are not quite so great.

If you take Street, for instance, there's a site there which is being developed. It was designed in part by the Clarks family; they were heavily involved in that. It is very much a contemporary development; it's got apartments, and the whole style is not very traditional. It is slightly unique in this area in terms of how it's been designed. In the main, there is still a desire for traditional construction and design of houses. Smaller schemes? Probably. I think planners at the end of the day are more flexible, but when you get to larger schemes and you're dealing with larger developers (national developers), clearly when you've got that

individual type, style, that unique contemporary dwelling costs more to build, and that's fine when you've got someone who isn't driven by maximising the value of their land. But when somebody says, 'You can build whatever you like, all I want to do is get the most out of my land', that probably to a point drives the design of a house.

The Clarks, I think, at the end of the day, but I think they were not driven by money because they don't have to be driven; they wanted something that they felt was appropriate, beneficial and contemporary that would go with Street. Therefore, they weren't looking to maximise the value of the site. If it had been with a private individual, that scheme would never have been built because there would've been too much compromise on the land value. I also think they wanted something that they thought could work, and largely I think it has worked. The scheme was done in the last five years. I don't know if they employed an architect. I wasn't involved personally.

What about the 'lie of the land'? You've talked about the levels and the different kinds of countryside landscape that we have here in Somerset. Does that have an effect on how land is procured or made available?

I think the visual impact, especially in the fact that we've got a number of internationally (I think you could probably use that word) known towns and cities. Glastonbury Tor, for instance (there's Glastonbury Abbey and Wells Cathedral), does have a big influence, and certainly that would be a major consideration within any discussion in the local planning authority as to how new development is going to impact upon existing buildings and the character of certain settlements and whether they will compromise that setting. And if they will compromise it, then it is extremely unlikely (along with a whole load of other factors) that they will even consider pursuing support for such an application.

You said you cover a 10-mile radius from your Glastonbury office. Does that encompass Bath?

No, we have a bit in Bath. My Wells office and my Frome office would pick that up. So, we would have influence, but then when you get to Bath, that's going even more extreme in terms of the control of development because Bath is just (more so than Wells – Wells is on a rather parochial scale) so internationally well-known and full of so many listed houses, the whole city is a cultural city. Development is just a major, major issue there. So, I would've thought that in the town of Bath, they would try to push housing outside so that it doesn't compromise too much. And again, it'll be all about visual impact as to where they can put houses that are not going to blight the approach to the city.

In terms of regional development, you've got Bridgewater, you've got Taunton, you've got Yeovil, and there is massive development taking place in Weston-super-Mare, there is massive development taking place in Taunton. It's literally edging more to the east in areas that you would never have thought, primarily because

it's on a junction to the M5. The same with Weston-super-Mare of course, and Bridgewater's being driven by Hinkley Point. So, the thrust of new development, new housing for this county is likely (if not 50, I would imagine 60 per cent) is going to be within those four particular centres, and you've just got to drive around there, and it's quite astounding just how much development is taking place there and will continue to do so.

That's where you're seeing the thrust of the development. Central Somerset will get housing, but not to the level where we're talking thousands: ten thousand, fifteen thousand, twenty thousand new homes. We're talking at the moment about five hundred, eight hundred, maybe a thousand – those sorts of numbers over the next 10 years. Even Frome (which is an up-and-coming town) is not going to have those kinds of numbers because the problem is that when you've got those numbers, you've got to get to where they're all going to go. If you've got to travel through mid-central Somerset all the way to the M5 junction to commute, then that's an awful lot of traffic on the road.

In Castle Cary, we're moving more towards Yeovil where there's a major amount of development taking place, and Wincanton where there is also going to be a considerable amount of development. Castle Cary, for whatever reason, has now got planning consent for five hundred new homes, which is a significant amount for a relatively small town. That has come about in part because South Somerset has not got its five-year housing supply, and therefore developers were able to challenge it. They've gone to appeal, and they've just got two appeals for another two hundred houses.

Five hundred houses to a town like Castle Cary is probably too much. It's a huge amount – huge. But unfortunately, Castle Cary has got good road links. It's got good access to the railway station. So, I think that when an inspector is considering such appeals, it's all about transport communication. And if towns don't have good facilities and good communications, then it's going to be much, much harder for those towns and villages to get any real significant amount of housing. It will just be a holding operation. The thrust is that it's all about sustainability. That is where everything is driven. We want people not to travel, we want people to be able to walk to the shops and to work rather than getting in a car and having to drive to get the paper and the milk . . . Some villages that don't have a shop, don't have a pub, don't have a school will get nothing. Those villages that have got those criteria will get some element of housing, but it'll be the overriding 'we do not want to proliferate the need to travel'.

You briefly touched on the significance of Glastonbury: the Tor, the Abbey and coming to the property on 24 The Roman Way. I was directed to that site in 2006 by an agent called Paul Knight. Our brief to him was that we wanted a site on a south-facing slope which a developer would not be interested in because it's on a slope and harder to build on. When we visited the property on The Roman Way, we realised it was on Wearyall

Hill, which for me, as an architect with a strong interest in history and the area (I've been coming here on and off since the late 1960s), is a remarkable historic landscape. The environs of a town like Glastonbury, which is not a big town, consists of an ensemble of highly significant architectural and landscape elements. How does one resist the pressure to encroach on that?

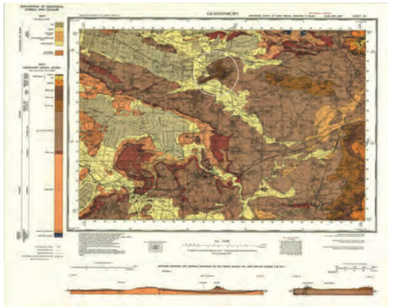
I think that the problem with Glastonbury will be that it's going to run out of building land. If it hasn't already, it's pretty close to doing so because of the reasons that we touched on before: one is the flooding risk and one is Glastonbury Tor. And I would think that at some stage, the planners are going to have to accept either that Glastonbury's not going to expand (it is where it is, and we can't do it) or that there needs to be some compromise, and that compromise is likely to be around Glastonbury Tor. But I think we're talking maybe about 15 or 20 years away before that's ever likely to come up on the agenda. The existing plan lasts until 2029, and they probably will feel that there is enough housing within Glastonbury currently with what's being built out and with what has consent and that it's likely that anything else can be provided for by Street or potentially in Wells.

Have you seen significant changes in land value for residential land?

I have. I think what has changed is that planning consents will impose quite a lot of conditions (okay, partly in design), but there will be contributions (whether that is for open space, whether that is for habitat protection or what have you) which ultimately reflects on land values because all is a cost involved with that. So, I think that land values are probably not at the level that they may have been at the peak of the market. It hasn't picked up again because I think there are so many other constraints, and of course we are with some authorities looking at the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which is coming in. It isn't here at the moment, but it will come in, and that will have a significant effect. If you've got a CIL that's about £10,000 per house and you've got two hundred, then that's £2 million, isn't it? And that's all got to come off the land price, off the bottom line. You can't get away from that fact. So, at the moment, those in Clark are covered by a Section 106 agreement, but it's still likely that the CIL will probably be at a higher level, and by any stretch of the imagination, that will impact quite significantly on land values.

Can you talk about the difference between agricultural, rural land (the land outside the settlement) and the way that the settlement is controlled in terms of how it might expand?

I think that where developers look at sites and planners ultimately will be about the visual impact which we've touched upon: how the site fits with the existing development. Does it compromise any significant listed building or heritage sites? Will it have relatively good access to roads of communication? And will it have good access



5.4

5.4 Glastonbury geological map

to the centre of the town so that people can walk to the centre of the town? So, those will be the priorities in terms of identifying land principally. How does it fit within the existing development limits? Is it just going to be like a bolt-on that sticks out like a sore thumb, or is it actually going to merge in and fit quite nicely like a hand-in-glove situation? So, that's how they would look at it. Of course, they then have to consider the needs of the town. Does this town need to be expanded? Can this town take expansion? That's the other criteria. It's no good saying, 'Well, we're going to give a town 100 houses' when it's only got one primary school. That means that they've either got to build a new primary school, and where is everybody going to go when their children have finished primary school? They've all got to get cars, and then they've all got to drive. So, there are these other factors that they need to consider.

There has to be a benefit. The existing town has got to be of a size whereby it can absorb what is being offered. There'll be a lot of people there who say that Castle Cary cannot really absorb five hundred houses, which is an awful lot. but that's what's been given. It is in five or six parcels, but they're all on Station Road, which is the main road going into Castle Cary. So, they're all going to be pretty much all in one big area. They will probably all go to different developers. My role is more often than not to either identify sites, or a client who has been approached by a developer will come, and they will ask us to take an option promotion agreement out to bring forward planning, and they will ask me to act for them to negotiate the initial agreements. Once that agreement's been done (if that agreement's exercised following the land getting planning consent), then they'll often ask me to act on their behalf in the negotiation of that site to the developer.

It doesn't really impact upon me personally. I just provide the best advice that I possibly can to clients. Clearly, if I felt that there was a development that I felt pretty uncomfortable about (let's just say someone was trying to promote a site for three hundred houses at the base of the Tor), then I think I would have a hard job acting for that client by virtue of the fact that I wouldn't agree with what is happening. But if I see that what has been put forward is sensible and that it fits within the needs of the town and that there isn't anything detrimental (whether that's landscaping or otherwise), then I don't have a problem in acting for that person in whatever capacity.

I think that any business, whether we are in sleepy old Glastonbury in the middle of Somerset or whether we're in London or wherever, personal contacts are important, and you will build up a relationship with

accountants and with solicitors and with other advisers and with the Council.

It builds up through a reputation, through client contact and then with developing a relationship that people want to use you, and you want to use them because you offer a good service. And we have acted for Somerset County Council (as have other agents in the county), and we're acting for them on the site of two properties next month in auction, and that's an ongoing relationship that we've had with the Council (as other agents have), probably for the last 25 years, I suspect, because we're able to offer and provide a service that they find very efficient and well organised, and the same with even the District Council. We've actually done work on their behalf in a third-party situation again because obviously they consider that we're appropriate to use.

You said earlier 'sleepy old Somerset', and it seems a relatively local practice, but does your expertise involve you in things across the country or internationally?

No, I haven't done anything internationally. I have done work in Cheshire. I have some clients who have property in Cheshire. I've got clients in Dorset, in Wiltshire. I've got clients in Bristol. So, my client base is probably about a 50- to 70-mile radius, and that will be about it . . . I've got one client in Gloucester. So, yes, that's about as far as it would stretch.

Has the EU referendum had an effect?

I think there was an element of uncertainty after the referendum and right throughout where people didn't quite know what was going to happen, and the world was supposedly meant to cave in (as it was predicted to do), but as time moved on and there was a realisation that actually the world isn't going to end and things aren't going to be as bad as predicted, there has been a fairly rapid (because it would have to be rapid) return to what we were trading like before the referendum. So, things have picked up, and having talked to quite a lot of people who I know in business in this area, they're all exceptionally busy. So, there was a slight hiatus, if you like, but that's gone. There was a bit of a shock, but now the shock's gone, everything has moved on. It seems to be the case that we were told that 'this is going to happen', but then it didn't happen.

5.5

5.5 Site and environs. |
Source: Image courtesy of Google Earth.

1:20,000

1. The Roman Way site
2. Wearyall Hill
3. Glastonbury Abbey
4. Glastonbury Tor

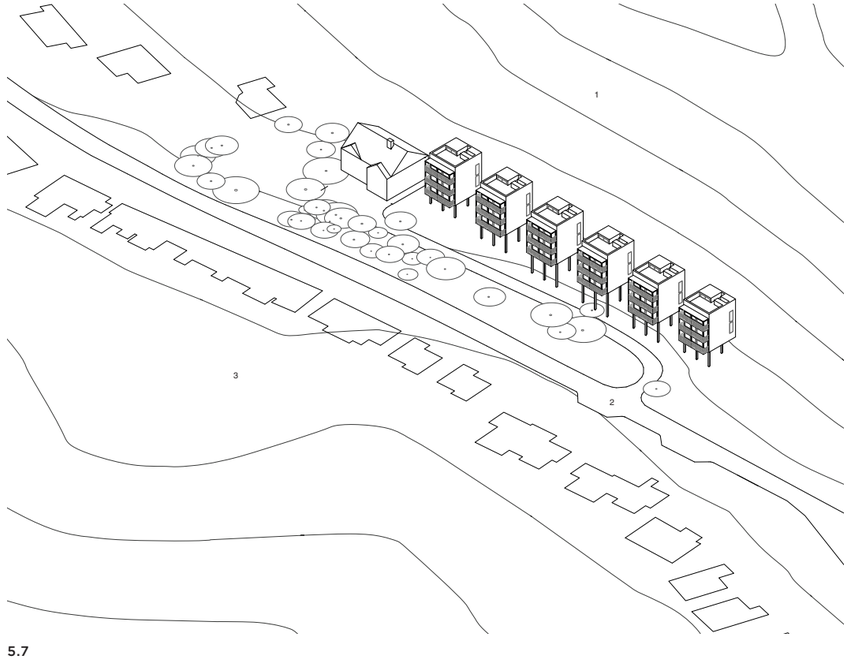
5.6

5.6 Location plan

1:20,000

1. The Roman Way site
2. Wearyall Hill
3. Glastonbury Abbey
4. Glastonbury Tor

0m 200m 1km



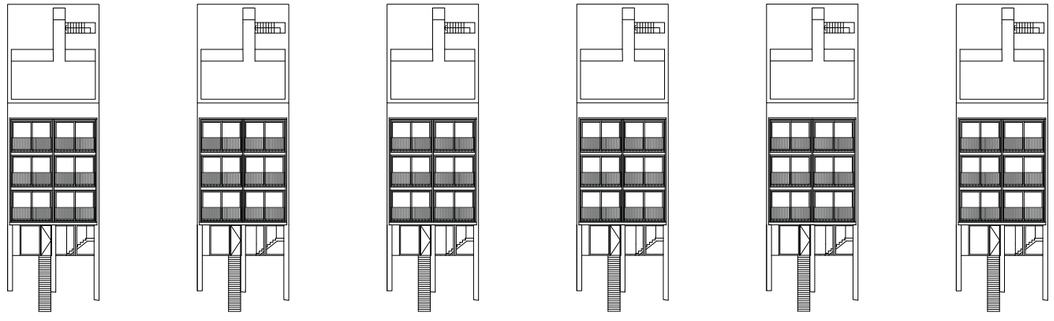
5.7

5.7 Isometric

1:1500

1. Wearyall Hill
2. The Roman Way
3. Somerset Levels

0m 15m 75m



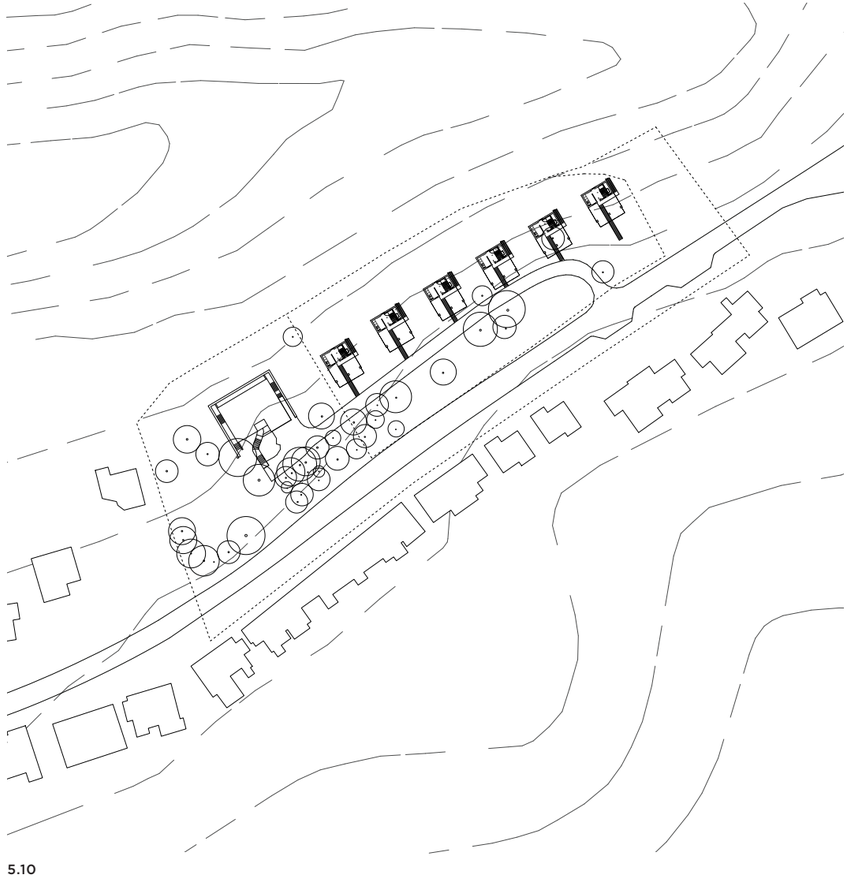
5.8

5.9

5.8 Planometric
1:500

5.9 View from top of Wearyall Hill

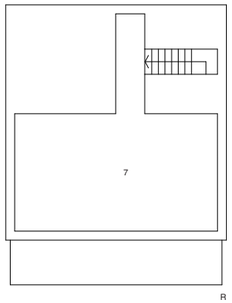
0m 5m 25m

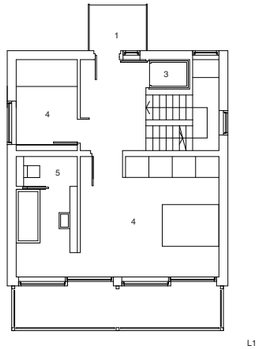


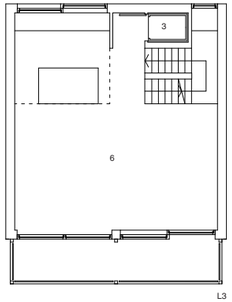
5.10

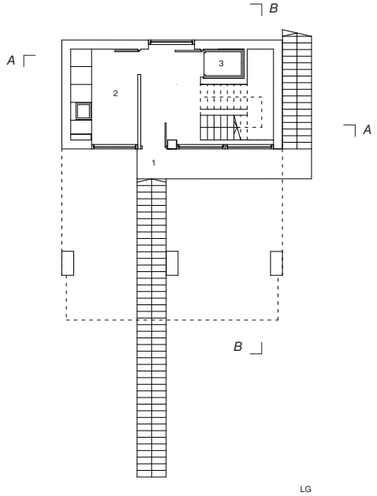
5.10 Site plan
1:1500

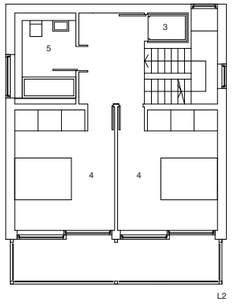
0m 15m 75m









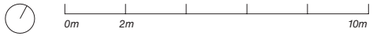


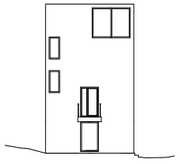
5.11

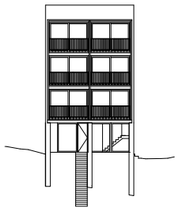
5.11 Plans

1:200

1. Entrance
2. Utility
3. Lift
4. Bedroom
5. Bathroom
6. Kitchen/dining/living room
7. Roof garden







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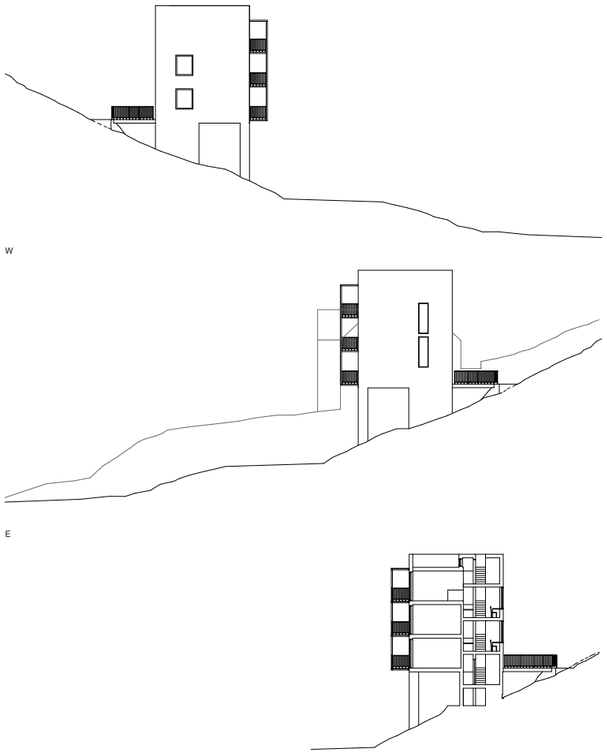
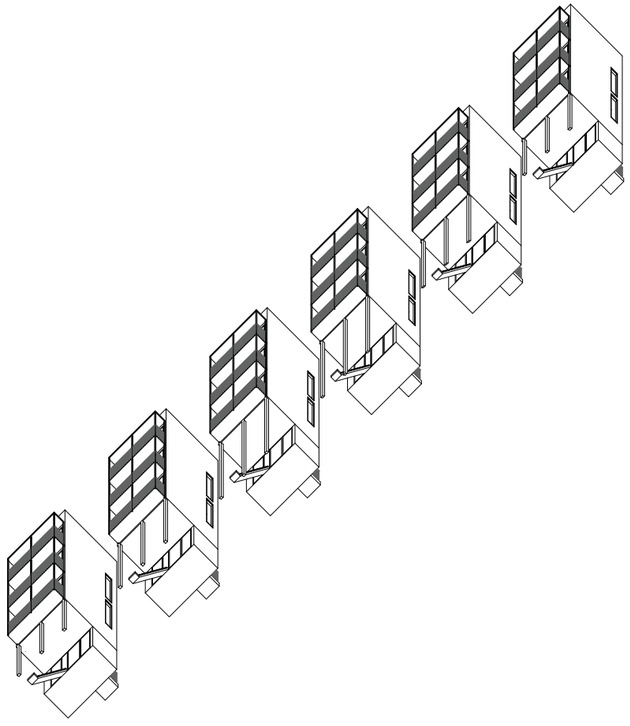


5.12 Elevations and sections

1:500



5.13

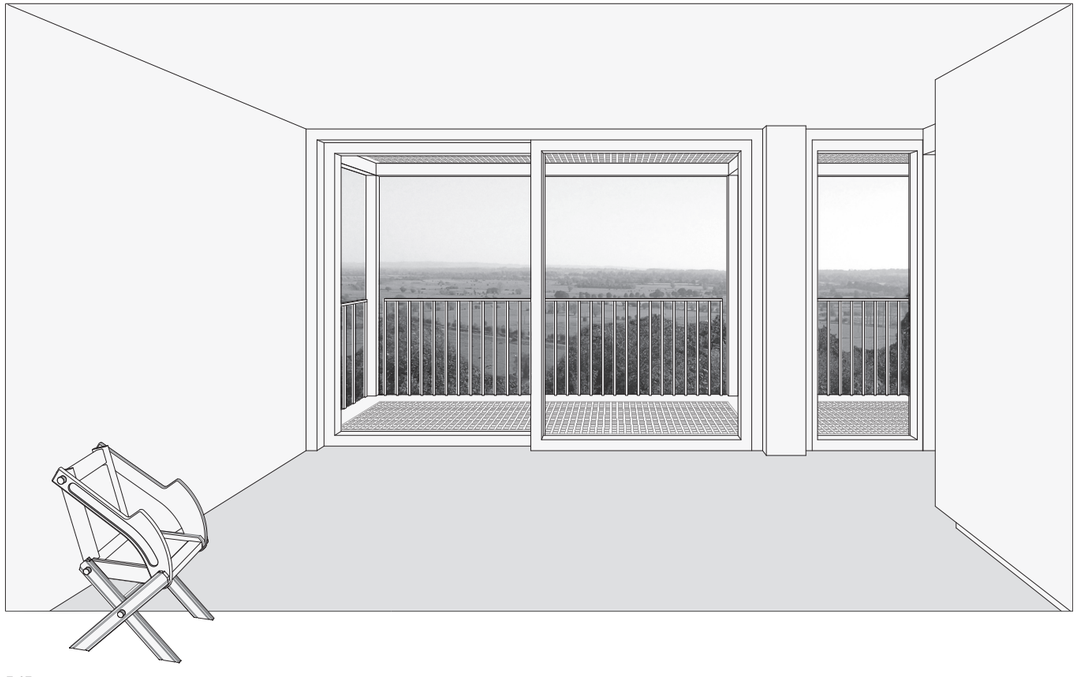
5.13 Worm's-eye axonometric
1:750

0m 15m 30m

5.14

5.14 South elevation
1:1000

0m 10m 50m



5.15

5.15 Bedroom and balcony, with Glastonbury chair, looking south to Somerset Levels

5.16

5.17

5.16 Section through Glastonbury Tor with elevation of houses on Wearyall Hill

1:18,000

5.17 View of Glastonbury from Wearyall Hill by Wenceslaus Hollar (1607–77)

1

2

3

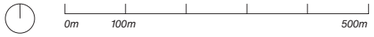
4

6.1

6.1 Historical maps showing site development. | Source: Image courtesy of Digimap.

1:10,000

1. 1860
2. 1900
3. 1930
4. 1950



2015

Middle England | A Counterproposal for Belper

Aslihan Carapapoulle (above) and Pereen d'Avoine (below). | Source: Images courtesy of the subjects.


Land banks

Tesco hoarding land and buildings on an area big enough for 15,000 homes

TESCO

Tesco's undeveloped land

6.2

6.2 Headline from *The Guardian*, 17 June 2014. | Source: Photograph by APEX.

Meadows Edge Studio took place at Number 28, Belper, over the weekend of 18–19 January 2014 on the invitation of George Jones and Pippa Mansel, Mansel Architects, Belper, following an introduction by Adrian Farmer, local historian, writer and heritage co-ordinator at Derbyshire County Council. The Studio included Kingston Unit 4 students taught by Pereen d'Avoine and myself as part of programme titled 'Ideal City: Mill Town' which focussed on the Derwent Valley World Heritage Site. Meadows Edge Studio occurred at a timely moment. Tesco had recently lost the battle to build a large supermarket on Belper Meadows Edge. The process to try and obtain planning permission extended over a decade and had galvanised the local community in resistance. Subsequently, there was considerable concern the site would be sold off piecemeal without an overarching strategy for its development as an extension of Belper town centre for the benefit of its inhabitants and the wider Derwent Valley World Heritage Site. The site is extensive, covering some 32.5 hectares (80 acres) from Belper East Mill in the north to Belper Rugby Club to the south. It is located on the western edge of the town centre, bounded by the River Derwent to the west and Bridge Street to the east. It consists of

6.3

6.3 Kingston studio exhibition poster, 2014

a mixture of shops, offices, the town library and some housing. The area west of Bridge Street has been moribund, partly owing to indecision over Tesco's plans for the site in their ownership, but also because it contains light industrial and other businesses which have struggled during the recent economic crisis. Further, Bridge Street forms part of the A6 – a major road artery which runs north from Derby through Belper and to some extent cuts off the site from the rest of the town. The site including the River Derwent water meadow represents both opportunity and constraint on development. The river itself is a neglected resource, and its potential impact on redevelopment is an important issue. Meadows Edge Studio was an opportunity for students to consider how to stitch new development into the fabric of the existing town and the surrounding landscape. Proposals were reviewed by a range of protagonists, including Pauline Latham, MP for Mid Derbyshire, Stephen Heathcote, local architect and planner, Ian Jackson, former chairman of Transition Belper, Adrian Farmer, architects George Jones and Pippa Mansel, members of Belper Urban Forum and Barry Joyce, Vice Chair ICOMOS UK World Heritage Committee and author of The Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) criteria for the UK. The Derwent Valley World Heritage Site was designated in 2001 because it was here that the Industrial Revolution was born in the eighteenth century with the invention of the spinning mill by Richard Arkwright at Cromford using the Derwent River for water power. Pierre d'Avoine and Pereen d'Avoine and their student Aslihan Caroupapoulle were subsequently invited by Belper Urban Forum to expand on student research and make proposals for the wider site, including Belper town centre.

'Collaborative Practice'[1]

Once upon a time, Zhuang Zhou dreamed he was a butterfly . . . flitting about happily enjoying himself. He did not know that he was Zhou. Suddenly he awoke, and was palpably Zhou. He did not know whether he was Zhou, who had dreamed of being a butterfly or a butterfly dreaming that he was Zhou. (Zhuangzi and Ziporyn, 2009)

I have been teaching an MArch design studio at Kingston School of Architecture and have evolved a collaborative research-based practice that is knowledge rather than form based. The main focus for teaching is reflected in the course's current context within an art and design–based faculty. The curriculum builds on the fundamental creative processes of observation and making, and its ethos could be summarised as thinking through making.

I have previously taught in the diploma school at Bath University School of Architecture with Patrick Hodgkinson (1992–5) where the pedagogical approach involved considering the spaces between buildings as well as the design of the buildings themselves, and social engagement using ethnographic methods and spatial mapping.

Teaching Diploma 8 at the AA School in the late 1990s, these methods were further

developed, particularly in a programme set in the Bombay mill area where, as a result of distress migration, more than 25 per cent of the population occupied the pavements and the interstitial cracks and crevices of the city: the notion of an insurgent citizenship that through sheer numbers in desperate circumstances created a tipping point – an active scenario where the state authorities were overwhelmed into tacit acceptance. Such models from the developing world are viewed with circumspection by Western-educated students when posited for global application and consumption.

The cosmopolitan context particularly of London but also other major cities in Europe and the USA, which draws in architectural students from across the world, has an homogenising effect as well as liberating opportunity for debate across cultures and societies where differences as well as similarities may be explored and evolve through the student project. Increasingly, it becomes difficult to offer canonic critiques, as conformity of response cannot be expected, desired or achieved.

There is evidence that students are once more increasingly interested in collaborative forms of practice and design methods that engage with socially motivated outcomes.

At Kingston, where I have taught MArch design Studio 4 with Pereen d'Avoine, Colette Sheddick and Alec Scragg, there have been initiatives set by Daniel Rosbottom (ex-head of School and currently professor of Architecture of the Interior at TU Delft) which engage the whole school community. In the period I have taught at Kingston, we have focused on World Heritage Sites over three consecutive academic years: 2012–5. This provided scope and time to develop research tools and methods to interrogate issues of post-industrial decline across the scale of territory, urban settlement and the domestic in the context of redundant landscape, infrastructure and building fabric in the Derwent Valley World Heritage Site in Derbyshire in the English Midlands. Investigations have focussed on conditions which pertain to local context but aiming to inform a wider, even international application. The longer engagement with site and locale has enabled deeper-rooted speculations which draw on relationships established with local people across the political and social spectrum to embed projects in a simultaneity of subversion and engagement with issues, requiring time for students to process and find an individual and collective voice. Formal invention is part of a wider inquiry which embraces landscape, cultivation and new modes of dwelling.

We have referenced David Harvey's book *Spaces of Hope* (2008) in which he distinguishes between utopias of spatial form and utopias of time. The former have been central to modernist architectural thought and practice, and their political outcomes have tended to homogenising and totalising closure. Cosmopolitan neoliberalism exemplifies the way utopias of time are chimerical constructs in which the 'trickle down' effect is forever one of promise without fulfilment, engendering a politics of frustration in an environment of disenfranchisement and dislocation. We have aimed for a radical emancipatory utopianism in our programmes in order to

encourage students to engage with a repoliticised understanding of the potential role of the architect, as well as an appreciation of architecture's limits.

Our programme in 2015–6 addressed the Thames in London between the Palace of Westminster and Putney Bridge where the Putney Debates took place in the seventeenth century and which resulted in the execution of Charles I. This revolutionary act led ultimately to the supremacy of Parliament and the restricted role of British sovereigns as constitutional monarchs with limited executive authority – a model for democratic states challenged if not superceded by twenty-first-century global corporatism. It opens up a demanding conversation about the radical transformation of a city which in many ways is the epicentre of the neo-liberal project – the riverside a demonstration of privatised landscapes of exclusivity. Students evolved their own critique in which ambiguity is much in evidence. Projects that resulted have been acts of optimism, heroism as well as attempted conciliation, drawing on the work of feminist artists Roni Horn and Helen Chadwick, and Gordon Matta-Clark's Fake Estates in which the interstitial provides an inspiration to find means of occupying and extending the city and leading to the creation of new common grounds. We engaged in conversation with Professor Pat Brown and students in the Landscape Masters studio to further our mutual understanding of the wider environmental discourse sometimes missing in the architectural project.

Writing about Matta-Clark's practice, the artist Dan Graham emphasises Matta-Clark's process of revisiting illegible spaces in order to renew phenomenal accessibility and to replace social legibility. The impulse of revisitation challenges the modern social ideology of progress that discards the old and moves quickly onto the new. In order to expose what Graham names as 'the containment of the environment according to capitalist interests', Graham understands Matta-Clark's practice as 'an attack on the cycle of production and consumption at the experience of the remembered history of the city' (Graham, 2010).

Barry Joyce
Interview via Skype, 11 and 17 May 2018—My background is in the field of art and design. That was my ambition as a young man, as a schoolboy, but I got encouraged to follow an architectural training. My father died when I was 10. I had an architect uncle who was very much a father figure, and also my school encouraged me to think about architectural training, and that's what I did. And I was very, very fortunate in getting that training, which I found enormously enjoyable and interesting, and, of course, the first year of my architectural training course was actually pure Bauhaus. A man called John Starling was my tutor, and he took us through the first-year Bauhaus course, and that was a brilliant education. But as time went on, I realised that my passion really was for environmental matters – a little wider than just individual focus on the design of one building. I was very interested in a 'sense of place' in particular and how places are made, how they are made better and observing how that can be made very much worse. So, it was spaces between

6.4

6.5

6.4 Barry Joyce with Princess Margaret in Wirksworth

6.5 Barry Joyce and town councillor and chair of town regeneration project

buildings as well as buildings and communities that started to engage me. And in 1969, I went with four other fellow students (architectural students) to the USA, and we did a six-week tour of the States and saw the results of a laissez-faire approach to non-planning. I went to the USA as an architectural student, and I came back a planning student.

My architect uncle had a very lovely Arts and Crafts house in Gidea Park in Essex. The Park was an architectural competition at the time of the First World War (in fact it was interrupted by the First World War). It was a garden suburb made possible by the railway coming out from Liverpool Street to Gidea Park. It was a rather remarkable housing estate made up almost entirely of individually designed houses and housing designed by quite significant architects like Baillie Scott and Clough Williams-Ellis. So, that in itself was rather a good architectural education – just having that as one's childhood background.

My school was a rather unusual one in that it was a Church of England school. It had a very eccentric headmaster, and by some curious quirk of fate, I became head boy. I think I was the most unlikely head boy you could ever imagine (I didn't play any sport) and was focused really on art and literature. It all seemed to work out quite well and gave me a great sense of self-confidence early on, which compensated for some serious lack of confidence in the trauma of my father dying and having to move from a private school to a rather rough and rumbustious state school.

I went straight from school to study at what was the South-West Essex Technical College, which then became the North-East London Polytechnic, and now I think it's the University of North London. It changes its name so regularly, I never know how to say where I was.

It's called the Cass School of Architecture now.

Oh, is it? Ha!

Yes. So, it's had another transformation (in terms of name at least).

There were very good people there: John Starling who took the first year and then Ron . . . Ron . . . oh dear . . .

Ron Herron?

Ron Herron! Yes, sorry! Old-man memory failure . . . Ron Herron! I went to the Museum of Modern Art in New York last year and found a Ron Herron Archigram artwork on the walls there. I thought, 'Crikey, I've now reached the stage where I'm part of a museum generation'. Actually, I think there's a very good exhibition on at the University of East Anglia's Sainsbury Centre at the moment called 'Superstructures: The New Architecture 1960–90'. I don't suppose you've seen it, have you? It's a wonderful, wonderful exhibition, but I wrote to the curator saying 'I was astonished that there was no Archigram content', and she wrote back saying, 'Well, she'd tried but failed'. It was a rather big omission, I think. Anyway, where are we? Yes, and I think I told you a little bit about the crazy episode on

6.6

6.7

6.6 Cover of the Nomination document produced for the Department of Culture Media and Sport for submission to UNESCO. Barry Joyce led the academic/ town planning team which put together the nomination. (It was submitted in 2000.)

6.7 Strutt Mills, Belper, map. | Source: Image courtesy of Barry Joyce.

Hampstead Heath when Keith Albarn (Damon Albarn's father), who was teaching art at Walthamstow Art School at the time, and I teamed up to put on a gypsy festival on Hampstead Heath using pneumatic tubes stacked one on another as a blow-up fence.

Well, we'd better not ramble on too much otherwise you'll have to edit it all before we get going . . . Where did we get to? Oh yes, the World Heritage Site . . . Well, to cut out a whole load of my time, after I realised that what I wanted to do was in the field of planning, my first job was with Norfolk County Council as an assistant to the chief architect in the planning department. While there, I came to understand what could be done in the field of conservation, which very much tuned in with my interest in a sense of place, place making and place shaping, and the protection of great beauty in Britain in terms of what we've inherited. And so eventually, after working there for about six years, I realised I needed to be trained up in the field of conservation, and I did a postgraduate degree at Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh in conservation – and that was very valuable training as well. So, I came straight from that to a job with Derbyshire County Council – a county I didn't know and which is a very wonderful county. I came to enjoy my work there hugely. I arrived in Derbyshire in 1977, and it coincided with an initiative taken by Simon Sainsbury, who had his own family charitable trust called the Monument Trust. Simon wanted to use the Monument Trust money more inventively, and approached the Civic Trust to see if they would be interested in taking up his idea of an experiment to take a market town, which had historic character, and use conservation as an agent for economic and social regeneration. Now, that sounds absolutely commonplace and common sense now, but in 1977, that was quite inventive thinking, and I'm very, very fortunate to take a role in that initiative working with the Civic Trust and consultant architect, Gordon Michell, who was a wonderful and clever man who I learnt so much from.

He was awarded the OBE for his work doing that. And I, in turn, was awarded the MBE for carrying it on. But the work of that project was a huge success and received a Europa Nostra Gold Medal for achievement, and we also eventually won the Royal Town Planning Institute annual award for planning achievement. So, it was well recognised. Prince Charles, in a speech to the Institute of Directors, quoted it as being 'brilliantly imaginative', and suddenly the whole of Fleet Street descended on our little town, Wirksworth, which is just outside the Derwent Valley. It was a complete circus because no-one had ever heard of this little town, and then, suddenly, the entire world wanted to know something about it. So, that was a huge, huge job. I was seconded for half of my time for nearly 10 years to do that. I went back and was then appointed team leader of the conservation team in Derbyshire County. That was my next major project, which was pulling together a team of archaeologists, urban designers, historic building conservationists, conservation officers, ecologists and environmental education teachers. And that was a hugely enjoyable task – forming these experts into a multidisciplinary team that worked together on a framework for a landscape

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6.10

6.8 North Mill (rear), built in 1804, the world's first iron-framed building. | Source: Image courtesy of Aslihan Carapapoulle.

6.9 East Mill, built 1912, from the River Garden

6.10 Aerial photograph of site. | Source: Image courtesy of Google Earth.

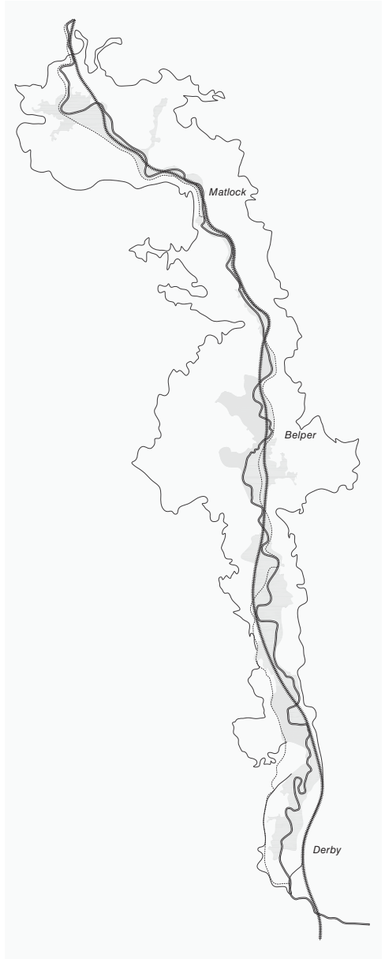
character assessment of Derbyshire. This worked wonderfully well. The landscape character assessment took the national landscape character assessment and broke it down into smaller units – a huge amount of work but immensely valuable in terms of guiding the protection and enhancement of the county and also how new development should be accommodated within that wonderful landscape.

And then my final major project was implementing the ambition that had been held for around 35 years to make the Derwent Valley Mills a World Heritage Site. So, pulling together the document, putting together a coherent argument to take to UNESCO of why the Derwent Valley Mills merited addition to the World Heritage List. Many World Heritage Sites are self-evidently of universal importance, but the Derwent Valley Mills were not at all obvious as being of world significance. In fact, the most important mill – the 1771 mill created by Sir Richard Arkwright, which is now acknowledged as the first successful factory in the world – was only listed Grade II at that time. And so, it was a pretty substantial job to put together the academic and environmental arguments for why the Derwent Valley Mills were of world significance. We did it because we needed substantial investment to conserve these mills, which had got into a bad state on a whole. The Cromford Mill had become a paint factory in the 1920s and so there was massive contamination to be dealt with, and a very careful archaeological unpicking of what was there. But there are also the mills at Lea, Matlock Bath, Belper, Milford and Derby. So, it's a 15-mile-long linear site – a string of pearls along the Derwent Valley because the mills were powered by the River Derwent and its tributaries. We move on to Belper, which was really, arguably, the first mill town in the world, developed by Jedediah Strutt and his son, William Strutt, who carried on the work of his father to innovate. He was a brilliant engineer and developed, in collaboration with Charles Bage, a system of fireproof building construction. His North Mill of 1805 is almost exactly contemporary with Bage's Flax Mill in Shrewsbury, which is currently undergoing a multi-million-pound restoration.

Belper is arguably the world's first factory town, built by a dynasty of philanthropic industrialists. Their work was very innovative and of a high standard. The houses they built for their workers survive remarkably intact. Strutt's provision of housing carried on into the early nineteenth century. In addition, Strutt provided chapels and schools, and later generations went on to provide swimming baths, public parks and a complete set of urban facilities and amenities.

Could you comment on the housing types provided and the model farms?

Yes, well, the first housing is the simple linear system of terraced housing. Although in themselves very interesting, particularly interesting are the early nineteenth-century cluster houses, which were blocks of four that could be described as back-to-backs. But they didn't suffer from the problems of classic industrial back-to-backs because those back-to-backs, in Manchester and Birmingham and places,



6.11

6.11 Derwent Valley World Heritage site map. The site in the Lower Derwent Valley is 15 miles long and runs north from Derby to Matlock.

were linear, and so you got no through-ventilation – but in blocks of four, that problem did not occur. And so, if you can imagine a block of four, split into four and then extend the divisions, you also get semi-detached pigsties, which is a rather nice feature, and privies. So, this model of housing was employed by the industrialists in the Derwent Valley, not just at Belper but also at Darley Abbey and, as a model, was exported to continental Europe and the East Coast of the USA. We think (although we don't have absolute proof) that it's a model probably devised by William Strutt, but he had a very good building surveyor who probably implemented it . . .

Of equal interest are the model farms that the Strutt Family developed on the fringes of the town. William Strutt employed his fireproof construction techniques. He also used methods of processing materials. So, you get very innovative systems of processing the actual products of the farm through the barns, but also then bringing in the manure from the farmyards to process that back into the fields. And so it's quite an interesting series of very finely designed model farms around the west and north and south fringes of Belper town. We're facing a particular challenge now. Although I've retired (I retired in 2012), I still have a role in helping to manage the World Heritage Site in an advisory capacity.

Can you talk about your role in setting up the Derwent Valley World Heritage Site and your wider role with UNESCO?

When we had the task of getting the Derwent Valley Mills added to the World

Heritage List, I discovered the archaic world of UNESCO and its adviser, ICOMOS (which stands for International Council on Monuments and Sites) – a parallel universe really where they have their own vocabulary. Initially, I was rather critical of ICOMOS because they seemed to be a self-elected elite. Well, I'm slightly embarrassed to say that I'm now part of that self-elected elite because I'm now vice chairman of the ICOMOS UK World Heritage Committee. But the advantage of being a self-elected elite is that you're pretty fireproof! So, I've discovered that ICOMOS can say things that no-one else dares say because they will be punished either by the government or by a funding cut. And seeing as we have only one member of staff and a dog, we have no funding threats in the sense that we've already lost all of our funding – English Heritage cut the budget they gave us by 100 per cent. I think it was cut soon after the 2008 economic crash, but they did it, I believe, largely to punish us for objecting to the Stonehenge proposals for roads through the Stonehenge World Heritage Site, which was objected to only by ICOMOS UK and the National Trust under the brave chairmanship of CEO Fiona Reynolds, who was rapidly replaced. Her successors have not been so brave, and so they've keeled over. ICOMOS UK remains the only major objector, very clearly damning the idea of putting a dual carriageway through the Stonehenge World Heritage Site. Anyway, I mention it simply to explain how ICOMOS UK is able to say what other bodies dare not because the government can be quite tough in causing damage to outfits that don't toe the line.

So, yes, I have the role now as vice chairman on the World Heritage Committee of ICOMOS UK, which is a very interesting role. We have very limited ability to influence things, but we try our very best. I represent ICOMOS UK on the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage steering group now. Mainly, we have a particular concern at Belper at the moment with the future of the William Strutt 1804 North Mill and the much-later 1912 English Sewing Cotton Company Mill (in Accrington red brickwork) next to it because both buildings are owned by an off-shore company that is not carrying out urgently needed repairs. And so discussions are being held with Amber Valley Borough Council and Historic England with a view to the possibility of the serving of a full repairs notice followed up by a compulsory purchase order. Another hat I wear is that of vice chairman of the Derbyshire Historic Buildings Trust, which has picked up the baton and is running with it, and has set up a shadow board to actually progress such an idea if it could be made to work.

Could you talk briefly about the idea of 'outstanding universal value' and also, in particular, the buffer zone at the Derwent Valley?

Yes, this is very important. A fundamental attribute of the outstanding universal value of the Derwent Valley Mills is the fact that this was a pioneer of industrialisation in the 1770s and onwards (well, and before that, the 1720s with the silk mill in Derby but then really picked up Arkwright in the 1770s). An absolutely essential characteristic of this site is that it is a pioneer example of

industrialisation because the industry went over from water power to steam power. It then moved further north to Manchester, primarily resulting in the Derwent Valley Mills industrial sites remaining in the agricultural landscape they sat in, in the eighteenth century. So, it's a wonderful example of arrested industrialisation. UNESCO inscription statements emphasise the importance of this. So, in terms of managing it as a World Heritage Site, it's critical that we retain its rural agricultural setting.

Now, this is quite a challenge today because of development pressures – housing development pressures in particular. We are facing two. We have fought a number of planning appeals and have succeeded, but we're facing two more looming up at the moment in Belper where developers want to build in the buffer zone. Now, let me explain what a buffer zone is . . . UNESCO recommends that World Heritage Sites are given a defined setting zone. It's not the only consideration in terms of protective setting, but it is intended to protect the immediate setting of a World Heritage Site. In our case, we have defined quite large buffer zones for reasons I've given. At Milford, it's skyline to skyline. But by the time you get to Belper, the valley flattens out to some extent, and so the buffer zone is more extensive. It seems to be a difficult concept for the elected members of the local planning authority to grasp (well, that's putting a charitable spin on it). So, we're getting rather inconsistent decisions from the Amber Valley Borough Council in terms of planning permissions. So, we do perhaps need to do a little more training in terms of explaining the idea of, first of all, what a site of universal value is, what these values are and what the attributes are that represent one.

Could you talk about Belper in particular and the initiative along the Meadows Edge and the combination of people who are involved there – people like Adrian Farmer, Pippa Mansel and George Jones and Ian Thompson of Transition Belper? Also, the Belper Urban Forum and how that consciousness-raising initiative has evolved over the years because when we got involved with our Kingston students, it was incredibly uplifting to see that taking place and to participate in a very modest way . . .

Yes, that's very important. Well, curiously, what started off as a fantastically damaging threat turned out to be somewhat rather beneficial. Nothing pulls people together better than a great threat, and in the case of Belper, the great threat came from Tesco who wanted to build an 80,000 ft^2 supermarket on the western side of the town, on the river, right next to the river meadows. This would have been enormously damaging to the town. The town had benefitted terrifically from a townscape heritage initiative grant scheme run by the Lottery, English Heritage and the local authorities. That grant scheme had particularly put a lot of investment into the small businesses that ran retail outlets and small offices in the town centre. That investment would've been completely undone if the Tesco's idea had come to pass because 80,000 ft^2 would've been the biggest Tesco ever developed, and it would've sold every possible thing, competing with all the town's

shops. So, that was a 10-year battle to fight Tesco, but the community came together in a wonderful way to effectively build up a massive objection. Historic England played a very valuable role in helping to challenge Tesco in the expert fields. Tesco was required to submit its design proposals to the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), whose comment was 'it is insulting to bring this before us, it's such a bad proposal'. So, there were a few critical people helping to facilitate this community constructive opposition. Absolutely central to it (as you've already said) were Adrian Farmer, the member of the World Heritage Site team at the county council. I appointed him actually; he had been the editor of the *Belper News*. He was initially appointed as the communications officer for the World Heritage Site, but his abilities became very apparent early on, and he was then employed as the World Heritage Site coordinator. He has done a brilliant job, and I'm delighted to say that's recently been recognised by the awarding of the British Empire Medal to him for the wonderful work he's done. Within the town community, there were some wonderful and well-informed and clever people who were experts in the field of design and environmental considerations. So, you've got Mansel Architects, George Jones and Pippa Mansel, who have played a remarkable role in helping to guide laypeople through the labyrinthine arguments of the planning process. Also, you mentioned Ian, who has developed a business of sustainable energy based on a lot of that. So, this is a wonderfully constructive community that has worked together to make the most of

6.12 Belper. | Source: Image courtesy of Google Earth.

1:40,000

1. Belper town centre
2. Belper Meadow
3. The River Derwent

6.12

Belper Vision

Menu of Possibilities

A Counterproposal for Belper evolved out of student research and community consultation. The Menu of Possibilities initiated a series of design proposals for the town and the meadow which could be implemented in phases.

The need for a comprehensive strategy for Belper in order to enhance the Derwent Valley World Heritage Site. This can be done by integrating the best of the existing and providing the best of the new.

1. Linking town centre to Meadows Edge:
   - A new public realm from Market Place to west of the River Derwent
   - Privileging the local – calming through traffic on Bridge Street/A6, enabling the existing town centre to connect to the sites to the west of Bridge Street
   - Removing the roundabout
   - New retail, commercial, residential and leisure development opportunities
   - Removing Poundland to restore the railway bridges vista
   - Transport interchange and car parking relocated
   - Petrol station relocated further south on west side of Bridge Street.

2. An alternative to the Tesco proposal:
   - Terraces of three- and four-storey town houses forming streets and squares
   - Not just residential but terraces of mixed-use development including:
   - Flats over shops and offices as well as live/work
   - Light industrial – provide new garage workshops (currently on Derwent Street)
   - Stitching the torn fabric of the site east of Bridge Street with a variety of roads and pathways
   - The new roads are not a bypass to Bridge Street
   - Car parking on streets – no new large car parks.

3. East Mill and environs:
   - A hotel and leisure complex in East Mill
   - Restoring the mill streams
   - Cortaulds relocated and the site used as a major public square flanked with residential and other development in two terraces.

4. Landscaping Belper Meadows:
   - A promenade to Meadows Edge – promenade above/arbours below, the latter linked to shops, restaurants and residential terraces fronting Belper Meadows

6.13

6.13 Action plan for Belper

(*continued*)

(*continued*)

   - (Reference: the Royal Crescent, Bath)
   - (Reference: Matlock Bath, Derbyshire, without the through traffic)
   - A public park for Belper, extending from the Railway Bridge in the north to Babbington Hospital in the south
   - Sports pitches integrated into the landscape garden
   - A site for public events – Belper music festival.

5. Belper West
   - Extension across the Derwent River:

Phase 1
   - Four new bridges
   - Flower nurseries/market gardening
   - Four new focal points:
   - Sports club building
   - Swimming baths building and outdoor pool
   - Youth club building
   - Civic building.

Phase 2
   - A new community – housing, retail, commercial, leisure, agriculture
   - An Urban Code
   - Using the best locally sourced materials for buildings and hard landscaping
   - A new ground for Belper town centre which links existing and new.

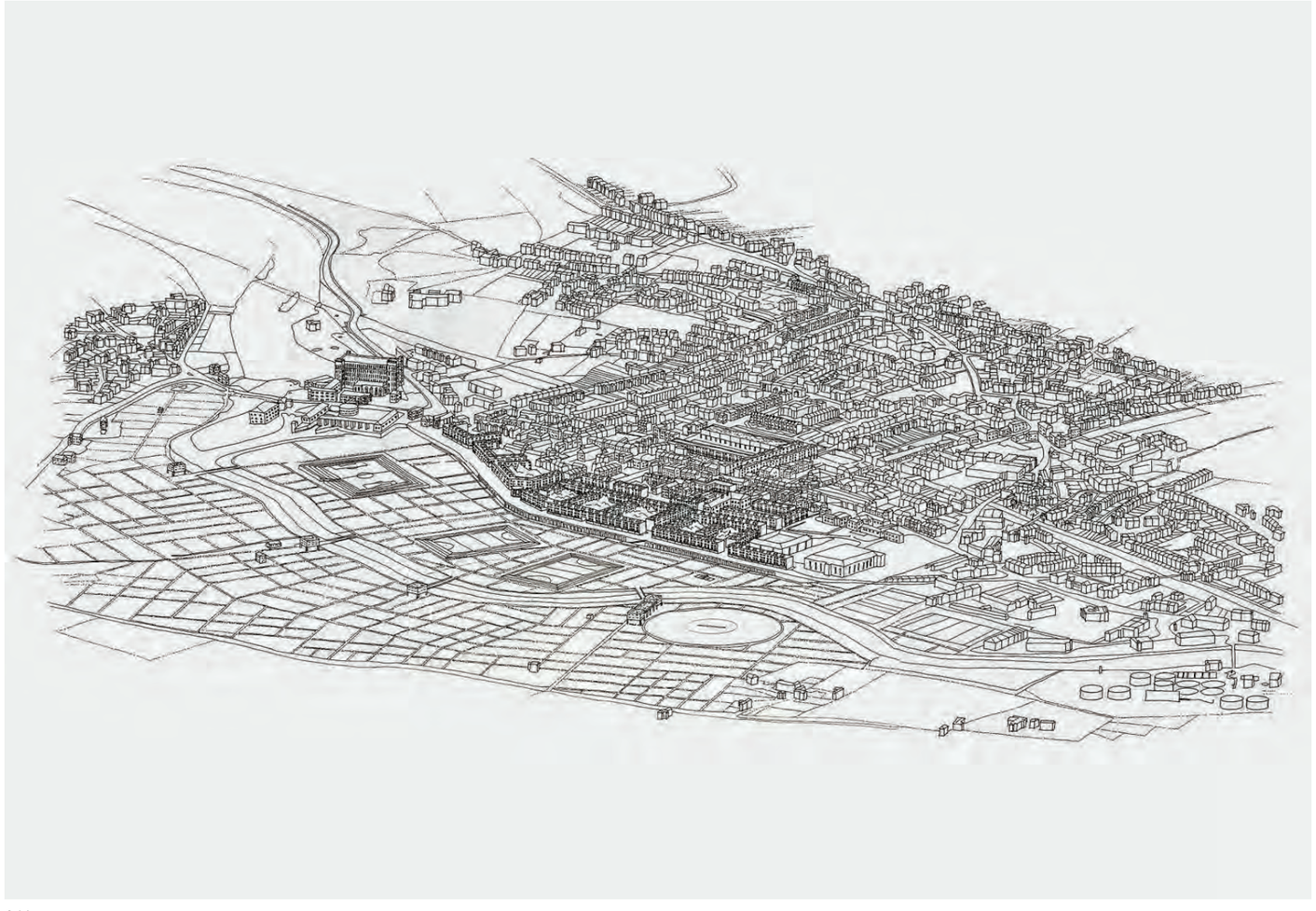
what Belper has to offer. It went through a terrific trauma in the 1990s and 2000s, as it were, when the textile industry finally collapsed totally in Belper. It was really a textile town right up to then, but then the last remaining factories caved in, then the mills caved in. So, Belper has had to find a new role, and as a heritage town, it's really risen to that challenge extraordinarily well.

What would you define as its new role?

I hesitate to say 'tourism' because I don't think it's as simple as that, nor do I think it's as desirable as that. Tourism can be damaging as well as beneficial. I think, essentially, it's batting itself as a quality place, that's how I'd describe it – a place where the quality of life is high and, as a result, it's a good place to locate yourself, not just to live but also to work.

Note

1. 'Collaborative Practice' is a short essay first published in *Domus 1003*, June 2016. The essay discusses Pierre d'Avoine's pedagogy, in particular the MArch studio he taught with Pereen d'Avoine at Kingston School of Architecture 2012–15, during which time the studio focussed on the Derwent Valley World Heritage Site, Derbyshire.



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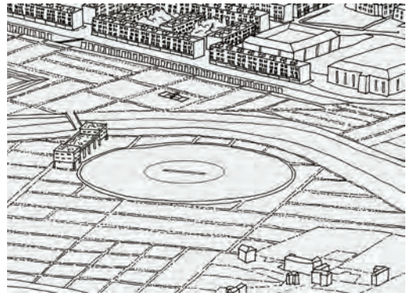
6.14 Aerial view by Aslihan Carapapoulle

6.15

6.15 Belper Counterproposal plan

1:5000

1. Meadows Edge
2. North Mill
3. Tesco site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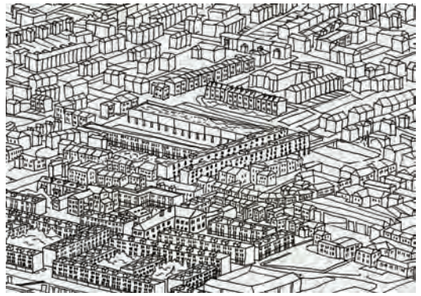
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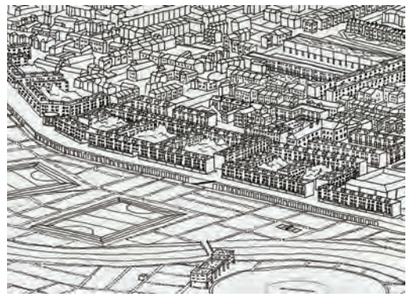
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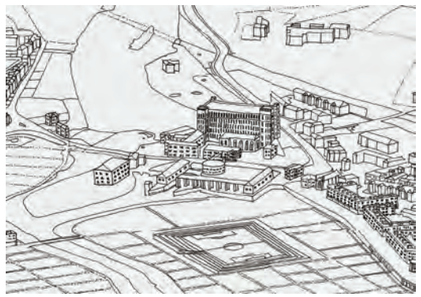
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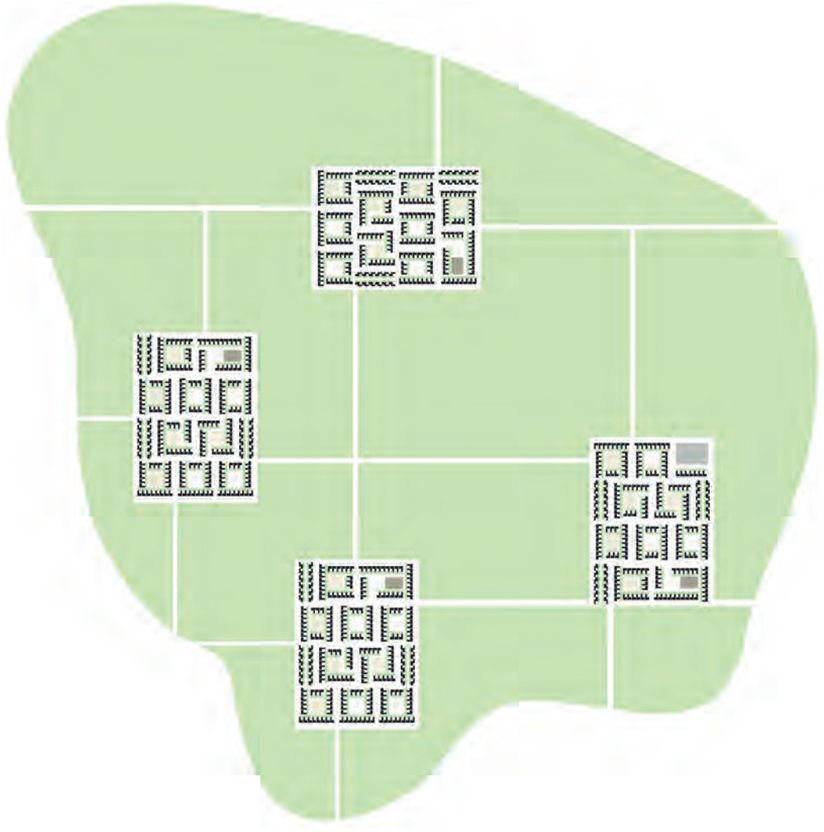
6.16

6.16 Aerial view close-up

1. Cricket pitch on west bank of Derwent River
2. Meadows Edge promenade, a formal boundary to the west, overlooking Derwent Park
3. Galleria, market and old people's housing in town centre
4. East Mill, with sports pitches integrated into new linear Derwent Park

2002 Middle England | Swaythling Housing



7.1

7.1 Swaythling settlements integrated into productive parkland

1:16,000

0m 160m 800m

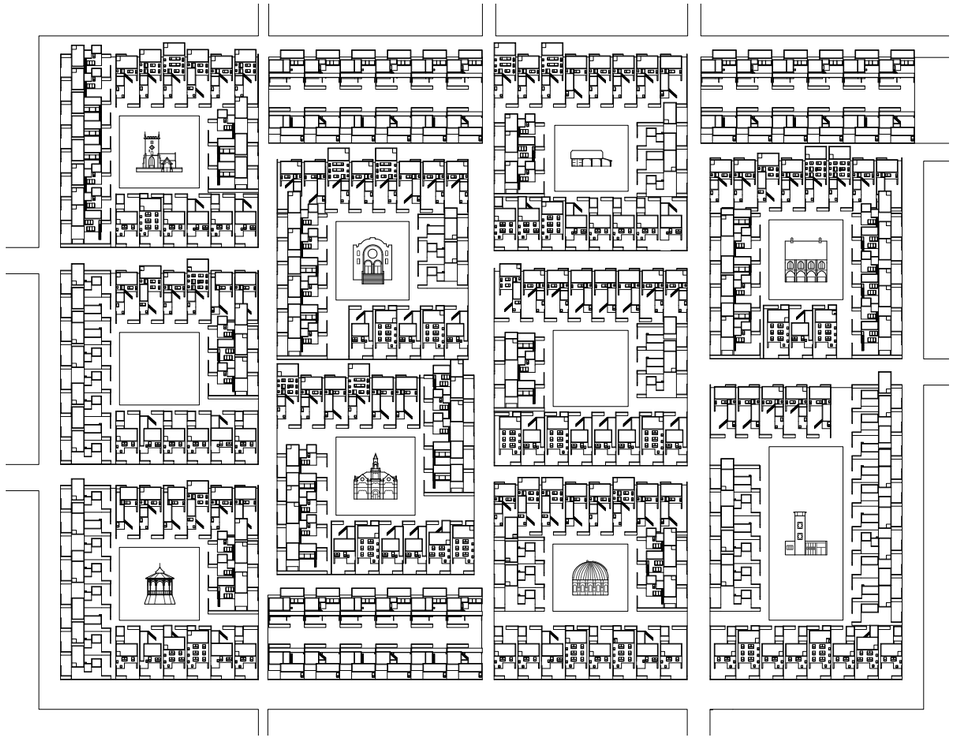
7.2

7.2 Site plan

1:4000

0m 40m 200m

The Swaythling Housing Society, based in Hampshire near the port of Southampton, held a competition to design house types to be developed in terraces. A site was not identified. However, the general locale was suggested as suburban and semi-rural downland north of the city. The south coast forms a loose necklace of seaside resort towns from Brighton in the east to Bournemouth to the west, with the more densely developed naval and commercial ports of Portsmouth and Southampton situated in between. Southampton is the centre of a conurbation of towns and villages bounded by the M27/M3 motorway. The motorway infrastructure built in the late 1960s/early 1970s superceded



7.3

7.3 Planometric showing public buildings in the squares

1:3000

0m 30m 150m

the A3 to London and provides a major connection to the capital and the rest of England. It leapfrogged the hinterland to Southampton, leaving behind a patchwork of mixed development and farmland that lacks visual coherence and order. In the period between 1970 and 1990, Hampshire County architect Colin Stansfield-Smith and his team designed and built a wonderful series of progressive schools, including one at Eastleigh, one of the larger towns in the conurbation. Our shortlisted proposal includes nine dwelling types, including single houses and small blocks of flats arranged in a rectilinear pattern of streets and squares. There is potential to construct public buildings within the open spaces as necessary. Each settlement is located within a park landscape, providing a biomass crop for a district heating scheme. The volumetric modular approach consists of steel-framed modules assembled in a factory located on site within the parkland to provide work opportunities for people living in the local area. All dwellings have the potential for customisation, within an urban code applied to the buildings and public realm.

Alex Ely, principal of MAE Architects and chair Swaythling Housing Competition. | Source: Photograph by Katie Hyams. Image courtesy of Alex Ely.

Alex Ely

Interview at Pierre d'Avoine Architects, Durham Yard, London, 1 September 2016—I'm one of five children. I grew up in a village in Hampshire, and moved to London when I was studying architecture. One of my strongest childhood memories is of my parents being self-sufficient in food production. When my dad wasn't working to earn a living, he was working in the garden to grow enough food for a large family. They seemed, in my mind, to produce enough crops to sustain us. I mean, I'm sure they went to the shops like everybody else, but it's an Arcadian memory I have. Now, looking back professionally, you realise how unusual that form of existence is because low-density development with a large house in a big plot isn't really how we can design professionally today. The cost of land is too high, we need to build denser to be more sustainable, make better use of land, get access to local services and amenities. We'll come back to this sort of conversation, I'm sure, because it's touching more on the professional perspective, but as a child, it seemed wonderful because we had a large garden, trees that we could climb, areas to build dens, and it would build up a sense of adventure, and we'd take risks and learn about the countryside.

I presume that the food that your father and family cultivated was seasonal?

Yes, exactly. Of course, you can still get them today, but we ate gooseberries, mulberries and redcurrants, and things that aren't necessarily conspicuous in the supermarkets today, as well as the usual staples. It was an interesting mix of things that they grew.

And did you store vegetables for winter consumption?

It's funny, isn't it, that today we buy our vegetables from the supermarket or local market, and they'll last a week, but I do

7.4

7.5

7.4 'Slim House', winner of Concept House 1999. Ground floor plan of five houses.

7.5 'Slim House' sectional model

remember that we used to store apples over winter. We put them in racks, put newspaper down to keep them dry and keep them separate so that they wouldn't rot, and then you could make a crumble next season.

It sounds idyllic, but then it also sounds quite prescient in terms of the way that we now think about consumption. We are critical of the quality of imported food, as it can be bland and tasteless. I don't know if I'm being nostalgic, but I think there's something in that.

I think I probably am being as well, but now I'm such a city dweller – and I have been for the last 30 years – that you wonder whether you took that lifestyle for granted or whether you could even still have that lifestyle today. I guess I have a different perspective now. At the time, I missed that cultural engagement that we enjoy in cities – that social contact. There was a sense of community in the village, but you weren't exposed to broader culture in the way that we enjoy in city living. But at the same time, moving into a city, you have to accept those compromises of imported goods and a remoteness from the means of production.

What were your interests at school? Did you have an early interest in architecture?

I think it was latent. We would visit numerous country and stately houses in school holidays, which I would diligently draw in perspective. I was always busy with self-generated art projects. So, creativity was part of my upbringing. But I didn't hone in on architecture as a profession until choosing a university subject.

What did your parents do for a living?

My father was a successful lawyer, and my mother started her career as a fashion designer, had her own business and subsequently taught fashion at Southampton School of Art, and then once she had five kids, that rather took over her life. I did my degree at the University of Nottingham. It was a well-rounded course that exposes you effectively to the new language that you're learning with an insight into technical demands, to history and theory, but perhaps lacking critical engagement. I enjoyed Nottingham, and it was a solid foundation for architecture. We worked collectively in a studio. So, there was a lot of sharing of ideas and discussion between the students burning the midnight oil and sleeping under the drawing board (pre-computers)! This was at the start of 1990. Then I went to work in Hong Kong for Foster and Partners on the Chek Lap Kok Airport, which was a really stimulating experience and incredibly hard work. It was long hours but hugely rewarding. Then, I decided to come back and study at the Royal College of Art (RCA) to get a different education and to move to London.

I taught at the RCA in your first year, although we didn't have much contact I recall. Dinah Casson was running the school, and it was in transition.

7.6

7.7

7.6 Inflatable facade to 'Slim House' prototype, Ideal Home Show, 1999. | Source: Image courtesy of David Grandorge.

7.7 DIY back to 'Slim House' prototype. | Source: Image courtesy of David Grandorge.

In my first year, there was a strong culture of collaboration with other disciplines. Effectively, we went out, and we found our own projects. We forged our own connections. So, I collaborated with photography students, with product designers, ceramicists and print makers, and that was really appealing. Nigel Coates joined as a professor in my second year. He took over running the school and introduced a unit system with more focus on strong briefs and projects; the architecture school turned in on itself a bit. But that's not meant to be critical; it just meant that we focused on our discipline. Nigel was very good at promoting an interest in the relationship between architecture and the city, which perhaps opened up our world view beyond the crafting of buildings.

So, an interest in urbanism and the design of cities. I remember Branson Coates had an exhibition called Ecstacity in 1992. It was quite fantastic.

It's something I always remember about Nigel's time as a professor.

Did you travel much in that time to other places as part of the course?

The RCA has affiliations and partnership studios in different parts of the world. I went to Lisbon where the RCA had a studio, and I used it as an opportunity to explore the work of Álvaro Siza, who I was fascinated by, and spent my time travelling through Portugal, looking, studying, drawing and sketching his work.

Did you go to the Malagueira housing complex in Évora, just south-east of Lisbon?

Yes, but I mainly looked at his public buildings: schools, libraries, museums. I suppose that housing – to come back to the subject of the book – wasn't such a big obsession or interest as a student. It wasn't something that was part of education then in the way that we see now at the Cass and at other schools. Housing seems to be back on the agenda as a subject to study. It wasn't really when I was studying, and in fact, I would probably say that it wasn't until working with you, Pierre, that ideas around housing became much more appealing and stimulated my interest.

What did you do when you left the RCA?

I drifted between getting some professional experience to get my Part 3, doing private projects and teaching at Greenwich University School of Architecture. And of course, I worked with you on the Slim House.

So, there's the Nigel Coates connection again because the Ideal Home Show had revitalised the House for the Future Competition.

That's right, and the Oyster House was the first Concept House in 1998.

We entered the second competition because Naomi Laviolle, a French architect who was working with us, suggested

that we do it, and I think we just did it slightly off the cuff.

It was a lot of fun. I can't remember who we were up against . . .

There were a lot of entries.

We don't do many open design competitions now as a practice because they are hugely resource intensive, and the odds are very long, but I very much enjoyed doing the Slim House – Concept House – entry.

The main reason we entered is that it had a very good jury. Cedric Price was a juror, as well as Fred Manson, who was director of regeneration at Southwark at the time, and Tim Macfarlane. I think that was the stimulus for us.

I think what I enjoyed about that project and working with you was your clear drive to have a very strong idea that underpinned the project, with the form of the building being generated by that idea – by stretching a house over the full plot of a standard Georgian terrace and then extending it vertically in order to add flexibility and to add extra space. But then, you also taught me that architects have to accept that there's a moment where inhabitation takes over and that the people who live in our buildings will interpret our designs in their own way. So, we had this lovely idea of the Queen Anne front and the Mary-Anne back – a formal facade that was about the collective and a contribution to the city and a slightly chaotic DIY back that could have dovecotes and hydroponics and garden sheds attached to it.

The following year, the Ideal Home Show ran the competition again, and through pub conversations with a couple of friends of mine, Katy Ghahremani and Michael Kohn, we decided to enter and won it. Our thinking then was that rather than just designing a house, we would design a concept for a housing company, and it's something that has stayed with me subsequently in practice – an idea that architects have a duty beyond the life of a building. We were interested in an idea that house builders could potentially fulfil a role beyond just building a house and moving on – that they could offer a lifetime service, upgrading, extending, downsizing, improving the performance of your home over its lifetime. So, we developed a concept called the Hangar House Company, won the competition and built a show home at the Ideal Home Show. It was more like an exhibition stand rather than a house.

What interested us to enter the competition was the invitation to reinterpret the traditional English terrace house. It interested us as Londoners because that was our bread and butter. We were immersed in that genre. The year before the focus was the suburban villa. Was there a particular theme when you won?

Ours was focused on flexibility and adaptability.

Could it exist in an urban context?

It could, although it wasn't the starting point. We did demonstrate how it could

7.8

7.9

7.8 'Hangar House' winner Concept House 2000. | Source: Image courtesy of Katy Ghahremani, Michael Kohn and Alex Ely.

7.9 'My House', MAE Architects

form clusters or larger urban blocks, but essentially it was a detached house.

It's interesting that your approach included procurement and construction, and then also the monitoring of it over a period of time during occupation. It suggests there was a potential for real interaction between the user and the team that designed and built it.

I think that as a profession, generally, we're not very good at post-occupancy evaluation. We're not very good at getting feedback and really getting a sense of how our buildings are used, how people enjoy or don't enjoy living in the homes that we design – what they like, what they don't like. I think there's huge scope for us all to improve the quality of our work by having a better feedback loop. One of my current projects, informed by both Slim House and Hangar House, is called My House. It's a proposal for custom-build housing. There's a drive, in part from the government, to promote custom-build and self-build. Custom-build is less hands-on, do-it-yourself; it's more about catalogue homes built by manufacturers with developers or landowners putting forward sites, adding services and selling plots to customers who then choose a manufacturer offering customisable homes. So, My House is very much in that vein. We're looking to offer houses direct to the customer or via enabling developers.

Can we discuss how you set up in practice and also worked for CABE?

Well, the practice came first. I set up Mæ very young – I was 29 – but fee-earning work was slim, and I felt that there was a need to have a different perspective on our profession. CABE was just being set up, and it looked like a really interesting organisation to be part of. So, I applied and was taken on, continuing practice at weekends. CABE was very energetic. It was idealistic, eager to make change and influence the government and convince clients, developers, local authorities, the public sector that design added value. There was a lot of support for CABE; I think its demise is sad.

My role was to develop CABE's housing agenda, focusing on policy, research and advocacy. I'd help the government develop policies to drive up design quality, speak at conferences and promote and champion good design, and I'd undertake, commission and manage research to build up an evidence base of why design adds value. And by value, I don't just mean economic value but cultural value and social value and around issues such as health and well-being. Interestingly again, jumping forward, we're now doing a lot of specialist housing, especially for the care of older people where that insight has proved enormously useful.

You were a juror for the Swaythling Housing competition that my practice was shortlisted for. At that point, you were at CABE and still practising as Mæ. Could you speak about your role as juror?

One of the programmes that CABE was probably not that well known for was its enabling programme. Enablers were a panel of practising architects and professionals from all different disciplines that CABE could call on to help advise clients. So, in my

role, I would go out and build relationships with the Housing Corporation, or English Partnerships and other agencies, and then through them get housing associations or local authorities to sign up to having CABE's enabling support. Sometimes, I'd provide the enabling support myself. So, when Swaythling Housing Society came forward and said they'd be really interested in working with CABE on a competition, I helped them develop the brief and sat on the jury.

The competition brief asked for house types without providing a site or location. However, there is a suburb of Southampton called Swaythling. It's in the suburban/semi-rural hinterland contained by the M27 motorway. When we did the competition, that was the kind of area we situated ourselves in.

Swaythling Housing Society had sites in mind. Effectively, they were looking for a prototype to deploy on different sites. This is both a dilemma and an interest for me in housing. On the one hand. architects can act as urban designers and as master planners, contributing to place making, designing pieces of the city where houses are embedded as part of the continuity of the urban realm. Yet, at the same time, housing as a mass production process can also be considered in isolation. Architects design prototypes. For instance, Jean Prouvé's Maison Métropole is a classic, prefabricated, industrially produced house. The Swaythling Housing competition was very much focused on developing a prototype that through its flexibility and adaptability could respond to the different sites that might come forward.

We worked with Aran Chadwick and Atelier One, and Guy Nevill of Max Fordham on the competition. Just before this, we had worked with Aran on the rooftop houses at the Piper Building using volumetric modular construction, which Aran introduced us to as state of the art at the time. For the competition, we proposed an urban rather than suburban layout of streets and squares. Some of the squares would accommodate public buildings, one of which would be built at the start of the project to manufacture the houses and which could be converted afterward to community or other public use. Our ambition for the urban environment wasn't just housing. It included a public realm and public buildings creating the infrastructure for communal life. Our team visited Eastleigh in a minibus. We spent the day roaming the town centre and driving around its environs. That was our bit of research, which sounds rather perfunctory. The nature of competitions involves something of a stab in the dark because there is never enough time to conduct serious research. Walters & Cohen won the competition. Do you know what happened afterwards?

No, to be honest, I lost touch with the project. You've hit on a broader concern about competitions, and perhaps at CABE we could've done more to provide ongoing support to

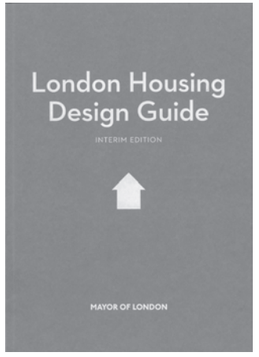
Swaythling. I wonder how the competition processes compare with other countries. We do seem to have a legacy of competitions that don't get realised, and given the level of investment that practices make in generating those ideas, it's a pity that so many fall by the wayside. I think that as as a culture, a profession and an industry, we need a competition system that goes beyond the initial design pitch and, if necessary, works with the client to help them deliver. Given that competitions by their very nature are asking clients to take a risk to some extent, they probably need a greater degree of help afterwards to keep that vision alive.

I completely agree. The UK Europan competitions in the early 2000s – I was a juror on one – were notorious, as none of the winning schemes was built. This problem occurred in other European countries. However, there were some countries with serious ambitions to encourage young practices to build.

I think it's a chequered history. One of the other competitions that I ran at CABE was the Anglo-French initiative where we invited local authorities and housing associations to identify a site in London and two sites in Paris, and invited architects to partner with a counterpart in the other country. One I ran was Bourbon Lane, White City, West London, for Octavia Housing. We selected the design by Cartwright Pickard with B+C Architectes, and it was realised – and it's a wonderful scheme. There were, at the time, a lot of projects, not necessarily competitions, but procurement initiatives that CABE supported through its enabling programme that led to very successful outcomes.

Another important topic that I wanted to talk about is housing space standards in which you have established an expertise.

When I was made head of sustainable communities at CABE, my principal focus was policy, which included working with John Prescott's government department on its sustainable communities plan. It made me aware of how architects can contribute to the legislation that influences architecture, and that is something that I brought back to practice. After I left CABE and returned to Mæ full-time, I was very keen that, as a practice, we work beyond pure architecture. So, I continued to chase opportunities to tender for public policy work, and we were appointed by the Mayor of London to write the new London Housing Design Guide. It was a synthetic exercise: part of our job was to consolidate the plethora of standards that were being used at the time – from Lifetime Homes, the Homes and Communities Agency's standards, the BRE standards, Secured by Design, Building for Life, those sorts of things – pull them into one place and edit out all of the duplication because I think architects and planners felt a bit overwhelmed by the sheer volume of standards, and part of the task in London was to bring it into a more concise document. Although there are still a lot of requirements in the document, I think that was a notable achievement to simplify and consolidate. The main focus



7.10

7.10 London Housing Design Guide, interim edition. | Source: Image courtesy of Mayor of London.

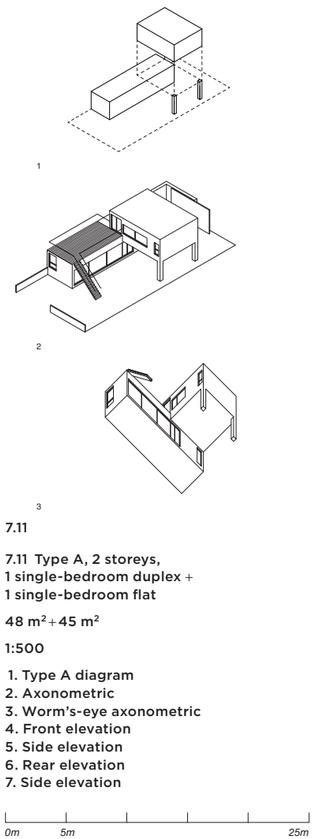
was developing space standards. So, we did empirical research, drawing on the Parker Morris principle of developing space standards around designed occupancy, which allowed us to create a robust methodology for coming up with the metrics we did. So, we came up with a matrix that set space standards based on the number of intended occupants. Now, of course, buying a home, you can over- or under-occupy relative to its intended occupancy, but as a robust basis to appraise schemes through planning, it seemed like the right way to go. This was at a time when there was evidence that housing in the UK, and specifically in London, was woefully inadequate and that houses generally and apartments were being built far smaller than in other European countries. We had, and still have, some of the smallest space standards in Europe, and the quality of homes generally seemed to be very poor – and the Mayor wanted to do something about that. As a policy document, it had to go out to consultation. There was a very rigorous and formal process of consultation, and there was quite strong opposition, but like any policy, once it's adopted and once the legislative body has decided that it's to be implemented, we all adjusted and suddenly house builders and developers factored it into their appraisals, reappraised their land offers and developed different design approaches that could nonetheless protect their margins. The feedback that I've had is that it's been very well received. To some extent, the design guide, and specifically the space standards, can be seen to be quite limiting and are based upon general needs. So, they might not deal with specialist housing, student housing or even housing for older people, but as a sort of a benchmark, as a minimum safety net, they seem to work well.

May I conclude by asking about land value?

It's one of the trickiest conundrums because ultimately I think land values have a bigger impact on affordability and the price of housing than the cost of production, and we talked earlier about modern methods of construction and prefabrication. Almost every housing minister sets up another initiative to promote prefabrication and modern methods with a view that it's suddenly going to solve our affordability crisis, but actually that's not really the problem. You might save a few thousand, but land value in London and the South-East is such a high proportion of the overall development costs, it's pushing housing beyond the affordability of most.

I think there are scenarios where the land might be cheap, but with the government prioritising brownfield development, the abnormal costs are higher. You've also got to pay for Section 106 contributions and infrastructure. So, in some areas, the cost of actually building the homes will exceed any values that can be recovered, and that's why housing production slows down in those areas. I think the thing that doesn't get addressed enough in the bigger conversation about housing supply and demand is economic growth: stimulating economic growth, driving up wages in

order to improve access to housing. A lot of the reports you read from the government about housing supply and demand are always about trying to increase production and lower costs. They're not necessarily about trying to balance out our overheated economy in the South-East versus the shortage of work opportunities elsewhere. It's a big topic for further discussion.



7.11

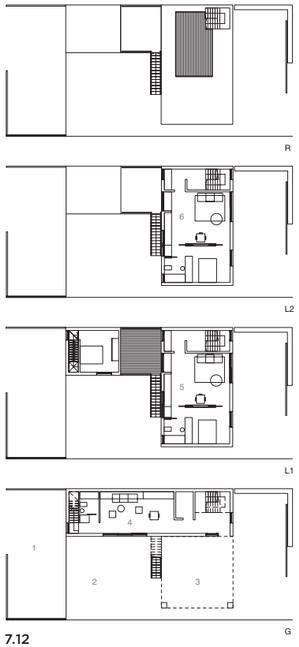
7.11 Type A, 2 storeys, 1 single-bedroom duplex + 1 single-bedroom flat

48 m² + 45 m²

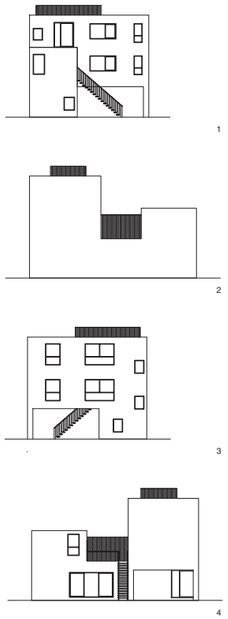
1:500

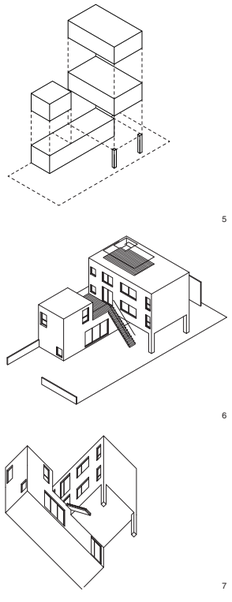
1. Type A diagram
2. Axonometric
3. Worm's-eye axonometric
4. Front elevation
5. Side elevation
6. Rear elevation
7. Side elevation

1. Garden
2. Entrance courtyard
3. Undercroft/parking
4. One-bedroom duplex
5. One-bedroom flat



7.12





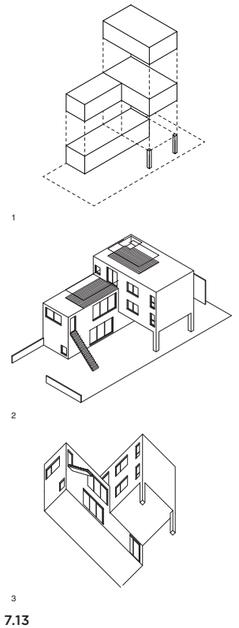
1. Garden
2. Entrance courtyard
3. Undercroft/parking
4. One-bedroom duplex
5. One-bedroom flat
6. One-bedroom flat

7.12 Type B, 3 storeys, 1 single-bedroom duplex + 2 single-bedroom flats

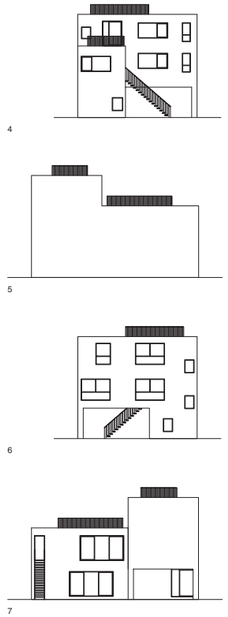
48 m² + 45 m² + 45 m²

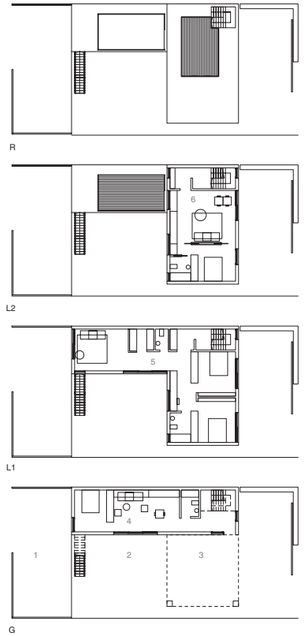
1:500

1. Front elevation
2. Side elevation
3. Rear elevation
4. Side elevation
5. Type B diagram
6. Axonometric
7. Worm's eye axonometric



7.13





7.13 Type C, 3 storeys, 2 single-bedroom flats + 1 two-bedroom flat

37 m² + 45 m² + 74 m²

1:500

1. Type C diagram
2. Axonometric
3. Worm's-eye axonometric
4. Front elevation
5. Side elevation
6. Rear elevation
7. Side elevation

1. Garden
2. Courtyard
3. Undercroft
4. One-bedroom flat
5. Two-bedroom flat
6. One-bedroom flat

7.14

7.14 Type D, 4 storeys, 1 single-bedroom duplex + 2 two-bedroom duplex

48 m² + 69 m² + 73 m²

1:500

1. Front elevation
2. Side elevation
3. Rear elevation
4. Side elevation
5.Type D diagram
6. Axonometric
7. Worm's-eye axonometric

1. Garden
2. Courtyard
3. Undercroft/parking
4. One-bedroom duplex
5. Two-bedroom duplex
6. Two-bedroom duplex

0m 5m 25m

7.15

7.15 Type E, 4 storeys, 1 single-bedroom duplex, three single-bedroom flats

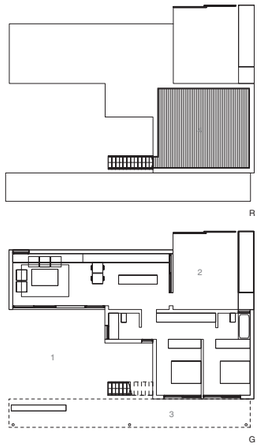
48 m² + 45 m² + 45 m² + 45 m²

1:500

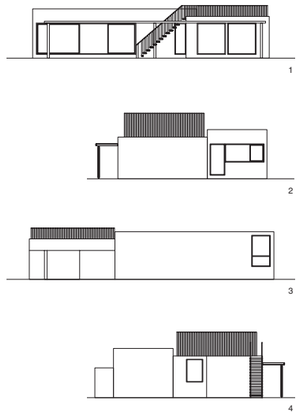
1. Type E diagram
2. Axonometric
3. Worm's-eye axonometric
4. Front elevation
5. Side elevation
6. Rear elevation
7. Side elevation

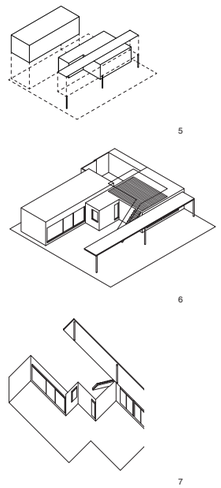
1. Garden
2. Courtyard
3. Undercroft/parking
4. One-bedroom duplex
5. One-bedroom flat
6. One-bedroom flat
7. One-bedroom flat

0m 5m 25m



7.16





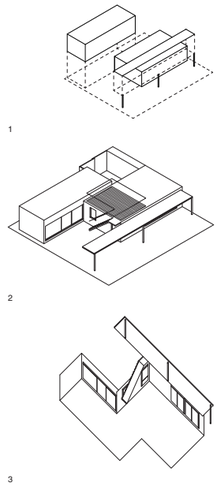
1. Front elevation
2. Side elevation
3. Rear elevation
4. Side elevation

7.16 Type F, 1 storey, two-bedroom house

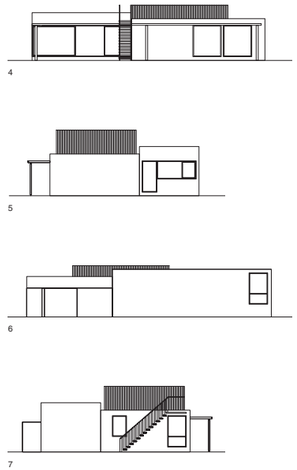
80 m²

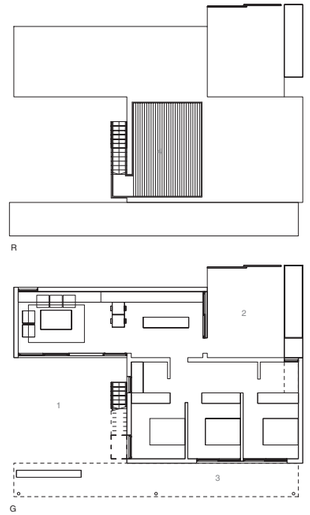
1:500

1. Garden
2. Entrance courtyard
3. Undercroft
4. Roof garden
5. Type F diagram
6. Axonometric
7. Worm's-eye axonometric



7.17





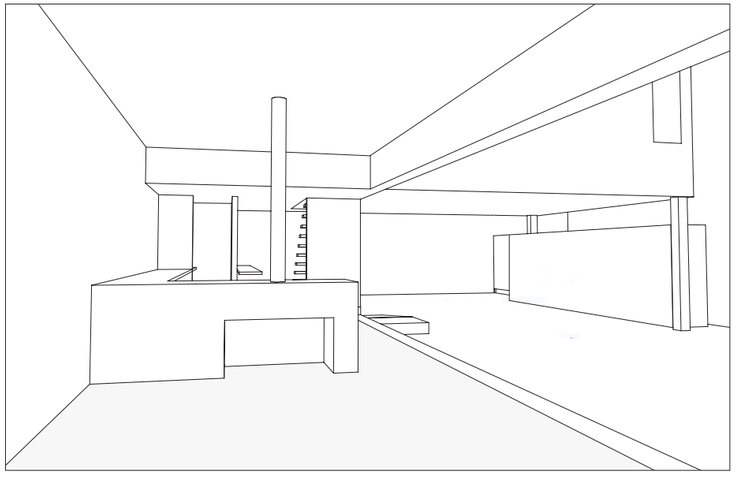
1. Garden
2. Entrance courtyard
3. Undercroft
4. Roof garden

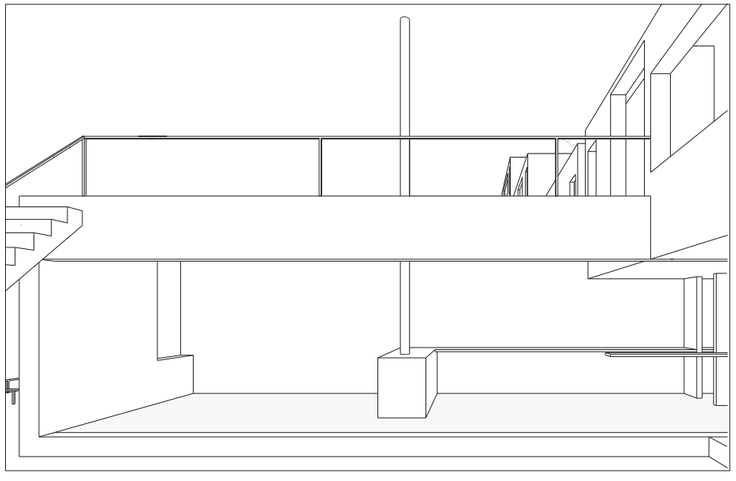
7.17 Type G, 1 storey, three-bedroom house

93 m²

1:500

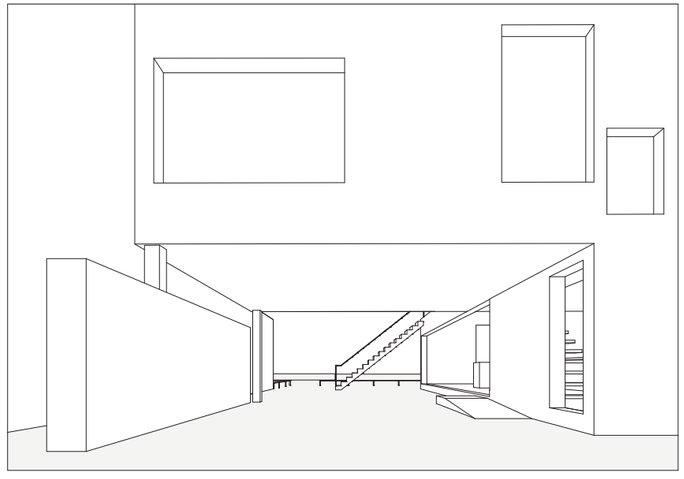
1. Type G diagram
2. Axonometric
3. Worm's-eye axonometric
4. Rear elevation
5. Side elevation
6. Front elevation
7. Side elevation





7.18

7.18 Type C living room views



7.19

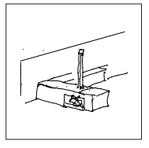
7.19 View towards public square through undercroft

7.20 Customisable features

1. Shed
2. Wind turbine
3. Fireplace
4. Allotment
5. Photovoltaic panels
6. Hedge

1

2



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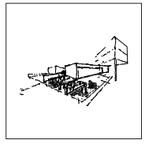

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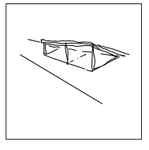

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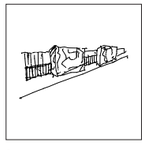

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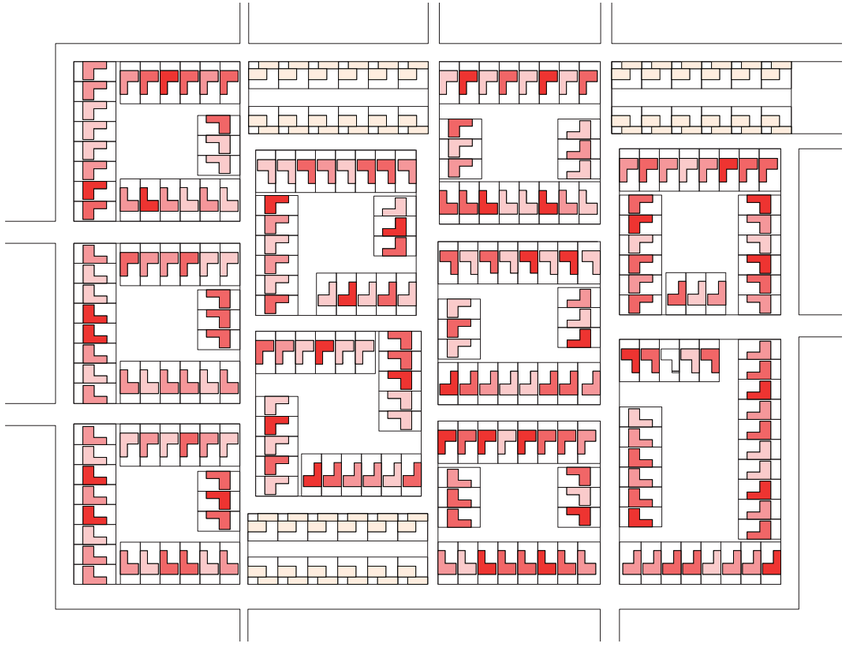
7.20



7.21

7.21 Site layout with house types mixed to provide an informal urban setting (see (3) opposite)

Type A, 2 storeys, 1 single bedroom duplex + 1 single bedroom flat, 48 sqm + 45 sqm

Type B, 3 storeys, 1 single bedroom duplex + 2 single bedroom flats, 48 sqm + 45 sqm + 45 sqm
Type C, 3 storeys, 2 single bedroom flats + 1no. 2 bedroom flats, 37 sqm + 45 sqm + 74 sqm

Type D, 4 storeys, 1 single bedroom duplex + 2no. 2 bedroom duplex 48 sqm + 69 sqm + 73 sqm
Type E 4 storeys, 1 single bedroom duplex, 3 single bedroom flats, 48 sqm + 45 sqm + 45 sqm + 45 sqm

Type F, 1 storey, 2 bedroom house, 80 sqm
Type G, 1 storey, 3 bedroom, 93 sqm

Type H, 1 storey, 2 bedroom house, 78 sqm
Type I, 1 storey, 3 bedroom house, 78 sqm

1

2

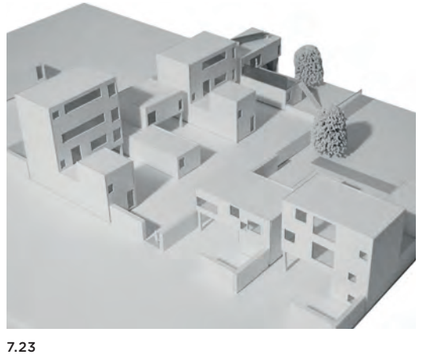
7.22

3

7.22 Exterior views

1. Modest scale
2. Grander scale
3. Mixed scale

7.23 Model showing mixed scale



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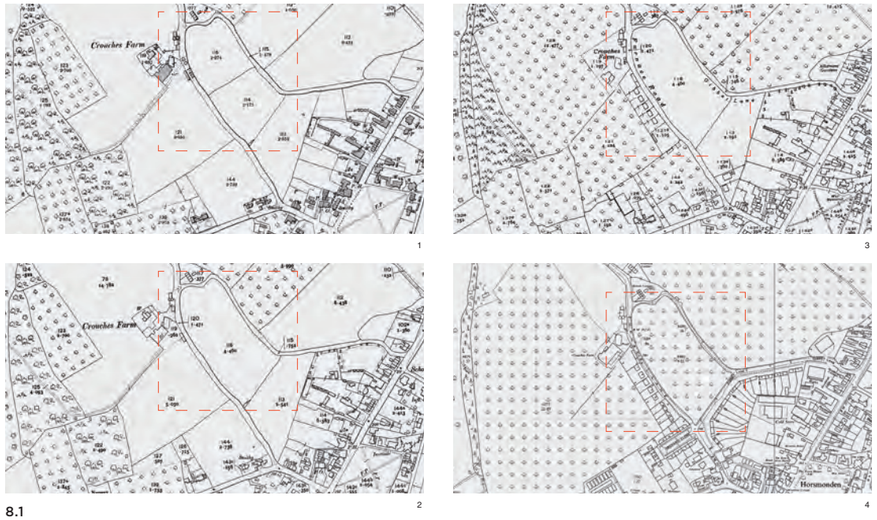


8.1

8.1 **Historical maps showing site development.** | Image courtesy of Digimap.

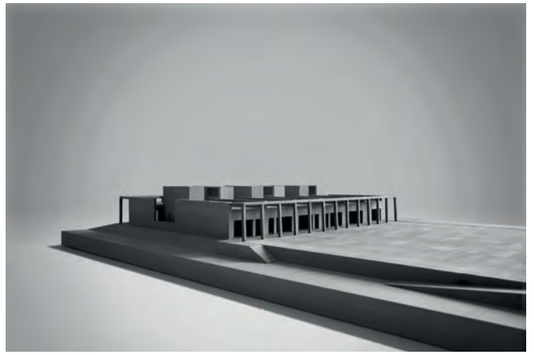
1:10,000

1. 1890
2. 1900
3. 1930
4. 1960

0m 100m 500m

2011

Middle England | Sixty Houses for Crouches Field



8.2

8.2 Pearwood model at 1:100 scale showing Cottage Terrace of six houses facing into communal gardens

Crouches Field is a five-acre 'village exception site' attached to the north side of Horsmonden, a village in the Kentish Weald about 12 miles east of Tunbridge Wells. Horsmonden was once a small industrial enclave focussed on iron smelting and the manufacture of guns. The memory of this now-vanished activity exists in the names given to local routes and landmarks, including Furnace Lane, the road which flanks Crouches Field and runs down to Furnace Pond, and The Gun public house on the village green. Horsmonden is now a quiet mainly residential community which hosts a school summer fair. The undulating landscape is typical of the High Weald and given over to small-scale mixed farming increasingly interspersed with new and converted residential development, favoured by commuters owing to its proximity to London – the train from Paddock Wood to Victoria takes less than an hour. Crouches Field used to be part of Crouches Farm, and is now a fallow isolated site which the current owner, who was born and grew up in the village, would like to develop with houses.

Crouches Field provides a new neighbourhood for Horsmonden, with great views across the valley to Castle Hill and

John Wickham, owner of Crouches Field. | Source: Image courtesy of John Wickham.

the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and communal gardens equivalent in area to the village green. The 2.5-m-high hedge surrounding Crouches Field will be retained. It is an important feature and has been carefully nurtured over the years by the Wickham family. It has been planted more like a hedgerow and is host to a variety of wildlife. The site is landscaped on five levels. Each level steps 1.5 m down the site and includes two cottage terraces comprising six houses facing each other across a formal garden or allotment. Recreational facilities, including a tennis court and pavilion, are situated at the lower end of the site. The whole development comprising 60 houses was intended to be a community land trust initiative capable of being implemented in five phases with the involvement of the Parish Council and the local community. Design research included a proposal to 'convert' two phases of the development into a community care home. A further initiative included the design of pitched-roof houses, including houses for private ownership and affordable back-to-back houses. Circumstances have led to the site being sold to a local housing association with offices next to Tunbridge Wells planning department.

John Wickham

Interview at The Brasserie, Brompton Cross, London, 24 August 2016—I was born in 1948 in the neighbourhood of Crouches Farm in the next village, Brenchley. My family have been farmers there for some generations. My father was Raymond Wickham who was rather a well-known farmer in his own right. He built up a large holding of 17 smaller farms in the region before the Second World War, during the war and after the war, and he was a major player in promoting Kent fruit growing there of new varieties, control of diseases and so on. He spent a lot of time with the National Farmers Union, for the good of the industry, and he was considered quite a pioneer in many ways and a man to look up to. He was very well respected, and of course, when I went around with him, I could feel this. So, there's a certain history there of retaining that tradition and the reputation of the Wickham family in the neighbourhood of Kent and Sussex. My brother Robin, who's older than me by six years, basically took on the role of running the farms some 25 years ago, and he has basically maintained that style. It is something inbred in us. We are a family that's been around that part of the world; we care about that part of the world – we very much care about it. We are a link to it for many reasons, many years. My grandfather was actually a brewer and had his own brewery and a lot of hop fields down in Yalding, Kent, which is on the River Medway. My father grew up there, got into farming and was bought a farm when he was 21 – that's how wealthy they were in those days. We've maintained this. So, when we carry on to this project that we're talking about, it is important to us to make sure, as a family, that it is in the right vein – it works. We would like it to be something that we can be proud of – some kind of legacy (that's a horrible word), but something that we've left behind that we would be proud of and people would say, 'Well, those people, they did well out of the land. They left something

behind. They may've made some money out of it, but it was a good project, well thought through. They weren't out for it just for the big bucks, they were out for it because they cared', and that's the fundamental reason to the way that I've looked at this whole project and from talking to you right from the beginning. That's how I thought about it – that it was a place of interest and of charm, where I would actually be happy to live as well. I mean, that was probably the base of it – somewhere that if I was older and I wanted to downsize, I could live there, and that was a benchmark. So, we go into this whole project with that background in mind. We don't want to sully the Wickham name by a fast buck and putting up some rubbish that could make us some money but has left a bad taste in people's mouth, in the air and forever. Because once we've long gone, this will still be there, and I'd like to think that some people would think, 'Hmm, they did okay there, they did okay. They did it for the right reasons'.

When I was growing up, Tunbridge Wells was my local town, and it was, you know, in theory in those days, it was a little bit where people used to go and have their last days. It's a very pretty town, Regency town, spa town, Royal Tunbridge Wells town by appointment, and a very pleasant place to grow up. Subsequently, because of the burgeoning suburbs and people moving further out from London and finding it impossible to live in Central London, Tunbridge Wells itself has become one of the most sought after towns in the M25 region in the country – Sevenoaks, maybe one or two like St Albans – but Tunbridge Wells came out top of a list the other day. It's understandable why: it's prime architecture, it's Regency architecture (and there's a lot of Nash architecture), it is a spa, it has the Pantiles, which are very famous, with probably the first walking street with no cars at all and it's maintained like that, they've spent money on it and renovated it to a fine level. So, it's really got some of its glory back, and you can see the wealth in the town. The schools are excellent in that area: Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells schools, you're really in the Judd school system. You've got Tonbridge School, you've got Judd, you've got the two grammar schools at Tunbridge Wells for girls, for boys in Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells – excellent, some of the best in the country. And so if you live in that area, you are well served by schools, by countryside, by history, by 45 minutes from Tunbridge Wells to Cannon Street in the city. I mean, in many ways, it ticks every box in the book. The link to Horsmonden is that it's about eight or nine miles away. There is a bus route that goes in, and the 97 bus route through to Horsmonden to Brenchley through to Matfield and then through to Tunbridge Wells is a well-known route that links it all, and so there's been a very close link between Horsmonden and all those villages in Tunbridge Wells. When we were picking fruit in the old days by hand – raspberries, blackcurrants and gooseberries, all of these sorts of things – we got most of our labour from Tunbridge Wells ladies, and we would send buses out and trucks out to pick them up in the morning and then drop them back at night. Tunbridge Wells was one of our main sources. So, there's a very strong link; it's

not all fancy commuters. There's a normal side to Tunbridge Wells – the other side with very good people who came to work for us for years, charming people. So, there's a lot of continuity in the community between Horsmonden and where we're talking about, Brenchley where I come from, the next village and Tunbridge Wells – so there is a link there.

Horsmonden itself is the High Weald. There are two Wealds in Kent. There's the Low Weald, which is the flat lands below, and this is the High Weald, which is much prettier because it's up on the hills. It's got slopes which, of course, are very good for growing fruit particularly. That's why it was called the Garden of England because a lot of it was south facing, and as we know, the climate in that part of the world is probably the best in the country, with the most amount of sunshine and right amount of rainfall, and it's the nearest you can get to a continental climate. That's why there are vineyards there now – grapes and a lot of soft fruit and hops. So, Horsmonden was, like, all these things were basically, when I grew up, a farming village. A few people used to go to town to London, but that was a different era when they would probably catch the 8:30 am train and be home by 6:00 pm, and, I mean, you know, it's not quite the same as today. They used to be very senior lawyers or company senior executives. It was a different lifestyle; it was a different time. But basically, it was a rural place, and sheep would be herded through Horsmonden and on to the green and all the way from here to there. I mean, this was way back. It's always been very famous because of the village green. The village green is one of the largest in the area, and they have a horse fair there every year, which is really quite famous. Stow-on-the-Wold in Gloucestershire has one and Horsmonden. I mean, it's a real mixed bag of people who turn up for the horse fairs, you can imagine, but it's a famous event, and it's been going back for many, many years. I mean, it's not a new thing. It's been going back for a long time.

There is a summer fair held every year. It's a big affair, and you can imagine the kind of people turning up to that – every kind of mix. But it gives a life, a spirit to the place, only uses the green and it's a big occasion. There is a community spirit there. They have a village hall, they have a British Legion, they have one or two shops. Shops come and go in villages, as we know, but they've maintained one or two there. I don't know if they've still got a butcher, but they used to have all of the basics in the village. What they do have is a really rather well-known pub called The Gun, where every day they spit-roasted a different haunch of animal: lamb, pork, beef and probably back round again. So, you'd go there, and that's only what you got – but it was excellently cooked on an open fire. I think it started probably in the 1960s, and it was very early for pubs to have very good food. It became really rather famous and a great attraction. So, I used to go there every time I had a first date. I would go to The Gun because it was the best place to go, with a great atmosphere. So, it's got a life to it. What's interesting is that Horsmonden church is way out of the village. I believe it's because of the Black Death. As a result, they often moved the whole village – it was the only way – and they left the church behind. But it's an extraordinary area, with a lot of parkland where the church is. Anyway, it's got a history to it. It's an old village, and of course it's changed from when I was a boy and nearly everybody used to live off a farm, or almost.

Just below Crouches Field is what was called the Furnace Pond, and it's an artificial reservoir, it is dammed. I mean, it was dammed way back to provide power for smelting. So, hence the lane is called Furnace Lane. I mean Kent was completely covered in forest and woodland. It was the most wooded part of the whole country, and they cut a lot of it down for the furnaces. A lot of the trees went to the Navy, I know that, up in Chatham and places like that where they were building ships along the Thames in Deptford. So, huge numbers of oak were cut down, and basically the landscape changed. As we know, Kent's motto is 'invicta', meaning 'unconquered', and it has a white horse as its emblem. It's a mixed county with north and south. There are some areas that are pretty down, and some areas that are pretty affluent. The only problem with Kent is that it's the gateway to the continent. It is a dead end; there is nowhere else to go. So, you don't pass through it unless you're going on holiday.

My mother comes from a very grand family in Sweden and was brought up in a large castle in South Sweden. It's that flat bit in the South, just across from Copenhagen: the farmland, the richest part. There's a big square house, 38 bedrooms, and that was my home from home. I spent every summer there with the family, and later, I worked there. I worked on the farms there, and I used to drive the combines. It was a wonderful childhood. My father met my mother at Sissinghurst or maybe it was the East Malling Research Station. My mother was over learning some horticulture. My parents got married in January 1939 in Sweden and then came across in January. I mean, can you imagine the North Sea, coming across and landing in England and then the war's declared? She couldn't go home for six years – no contact at all. She was 25. So, her accent was quite strong. I mean, a Swedish accent, but then it sounded quite Germanic. So, she was well protected by my father, obviously, but still, not easy – the Battle of Britain going on over the top and Hurricanes landing in the greenhouse, and pilots coming down on the farm. I mean, extraordinary stuff, right above your head because it all happened over the countryside. She always spoke with a slight accent, a very charming accent. She was very good looking. She had a kind of Ingrid Bergman air about her – that kind of look – and she was much loved by everybody. And everybody used to come to Gatehouse, which was the farmhouse where we lived (quite a big house with seven bedrooms). Everybody would congregate there because my mother was welcoming, and that was where everybody ended up. So, my brother, sisters and I grew up in a house full of people – young people – so it was great. I used to go to other houses, and the mother or father didn't allow anybody in there, and the place was like a morgue. And they used to love coming to us because my mother would say, 'Ah! Welcome!' and give them a great big hug and a kiss, which none of them even got at home. And she was the favourite aunt in Sweden too, and they still talk about her now. There

were five children. All my Swedish cousins were sent over to England one by one, and sometimes in twos, for the summer for four or five weeks to learn English – in the 1960s when England was really taking off. So, they arrived, and they couldn't believe it because there was a whole movement going on: parties every night, a farm with lots of people, my mother welcoming and a house full of people – they just couldn't believe it. And they still today remember that as their best summer holiday ever. And then we used to love having them too. That's how we got to know them so well because we'd take them round, and it was really, really great. So, the Swedish connection is very strong for us.

I was introduced to you by Sophie and Bill, your nephew, and Bill is a woodsman and a hedge layer and looks after Crouches Field.

The history of the field is that it was part of a larger farm called Crouches Farm, which was part of my father's sort of – I wouldn't say empire – but one of the quite a few farms that he had. It was my mother's favourite, I think, because she realised it was the best soil. And he invested a lot of money into replanting a lot of fruit, especially apples and hops originally, but we ended up with fruit. As you know, it's a big investment. You've got to plant these apple trees, and you've got to nurture them, and they don't really produce for three or four years and, then, slowly. And it's a long-term investment, but once they're in fruition, they keep going. So, they spent a lot of time and money on that, and this field was always across the way and separate. Why it was part of it, I don't know; it just came with it obviously. It used to have a very fine post house, which caught fire, probably back in the late 1960s or early 1970s. There's a gate as you go in and just to the right, there, almost on the road. It would've made a wonderful farmhouse. It was really fine with the kilns and the whole thing. But that burnt down, and they built a really large pack-house there that was the main storage for all of the farms and the packing. They used to grade and pack and send them off to the supermarkets and so on. So, it was very sophisticated packing there and cold storage: chill storage, not cold, not frozen. But this field was always sitting there across the way, and it was 'that nuisance' because it wasn't by the farm – you always had to cross the way to it – but they kept it. When they sold the farm because, like all farming, it goes up and down with good times and bad times, they decided to sell it (maybe they had a good offer), but they kept that field. My parents kept that field because they saw that it had potential. They didn't realise about village envelopes in those days, but they just knew that it was bolted onto the side of the village with housing round parts of it. It was something that was worth nothing in the scale of it, and so to keep it was easy. Because my brother (this is personal here) got most of the farms, my mother wanted to make sure that I, as the second son, got something. So, she ensured that I was the main beneficiary of this piece of land (to the tune of 60-something per cent), and the rest of the family have the remaining 40. So, that was her way of looking after me, which was very kind of her. So, she made sure that happened, and it's all legally documented. So,

8.3

8.3 Kent cottage terrace typology

hence my particular interest in it because I have the most interest, the most to gain from it. And the rest of the family are very supportive, but they're letting me run with it because it's my project. I've met you, and I'm running with it, and they're very much supporting me in the background. It's a piece of land that's been empty now for many years; it's been fallow – about 20 years, I can't remember . . . I would've thought so. I think there was a time when there were apple trees in there, and they grubbed them all out, and then they just cleaned it and just left it. As you say, Bill my nephew – my eldest sister Mary-Anne's boy – he is a woodsman. He's very good at hedge laying. He understands the countryside and, basically we've put him in charge of maintaining it to make sure that it doesn't go to rack and ruin, that the hedges are kept to a certain level and the grass is cut. Of course, we don't really know what's in that field because no-one's ever really walked it particularly. The only people who walk it are the local people with dogs, occasionally, and we don't know what's in there. So, we have to discover that. We have to have an eco-survey, and I think Jim is now talking to William about that for him to get involved, which I think would be very useful because he does understand these things, and he knows the local people. My brother Robin can help too if he needs any local influence or help because my brother Robin used to be chairman. But he's now back on the parish council in Brenchley, the next village, separate, but it's all part of the same neighbourhood. They all know each other so any way we can help . . . But it does need looking into because no-one's really looked at the land for years. It's just been sitting there.

My brother Robin's farm is in Brenchley. It's two miles, so it's all separate parishes, but they are next-door neighbours. I don't even think there's a particular rivalry. Brenchley will think it's rather smarter than Horsmonden. Horsmonden will say it's more down to earth. But, you know, they'll all fight their corner of course. Horsmonden might be slightly bigger, I suppose, maybe in numbers of houses.

My parents sold Crouches Farm in the 1970s. I mean, it's a shame. I don't know why because they had a lot invested in there. Somebody must've come along and made them a good offer. My father was a pragmatic businessman, and if it was a good offer and it was better to get out, then it was better than staying on sentiment. Crouches Farm is still farmed as a fruit farm. It's carried on. Robin, my brother, would tell you much more about the ownership and who's who. My brother is six years older than me, so he's 74. He's had some prostate problems, which he is now absolutely clear of, some hip problems – you know usual things – but he decided some years ago, 'Why should I be struggling with this? There's a young guy who wants to buy my farm off me, he's got lots of energy and will make a bigger unit and I'll share in the profits'. So, he does all the work, and Robin gets a kind of rental income and keeps the land. He gets an income. So, he's slightly aggregated the role to this younger guy, which suits him fine.

I grew up very much with farming in my blood. So I was, in many ways, considered by my mother to be a more natural, a keener farmer or landsman than my

brother. I was out there in the fields all day long messing about. Those were the days when at 8:00 am, I would say goodbye and come back at 6:00 pm at the age of eight or nine because I was looked after around and everybody knew me. I mean, we used to have five hundred people working on the farmlands, and they all knew who I was (there was a lot of picking). So, I mean, it was a wonderful childhood; you couldn't make it up. In the evenings, the lorries would come to pick up the fruit, and it was a hubbub of activity going on, and people and wonderful women looking after you and giving you lunch, which is what I grew up with. And it was as wonderful a childhood as you can imagine because the whole summer, I was just always out. But I went to agricultural college thinking 'Probably there's room in here, there's quite a big farm'. I went to the Royal Agricultural College in Cirencester thinking I was going to carry on with tradition, but I soon realised, by doing the sums and doing the figures, that a father who was never going to retire and an older brother and then a young son is too much. And I realised that, and I could always be the junior partner if I had nothing else to do, but I realised that I was going to have to look elsewhere.

When we first engaged in conversation to make a development at Crouches Field, the country was in the early throes of the government's 'localism' agenda, and we thought we were going to fit in quite well with this because we had an idea that you might give the site to the parish, the local people.

You're absolutely right. The history of this field is that it's been for planning twice. Once in the 1970s in the boom days of Barber in 1973 where the world went crazy – and you will remember, and I remember, the secondary banking and the whole thing – and a local house builder bought an option on the land, got planning permission, then went bust (as they all did) and the whole thing just fell away . . . Then in the 1980s, a friend of mine called Johnny Woodford was doing assisted housing with Meridian Homes, and we got really close to planning. In fact, the inspector at the Department of Environment, I think it was, said 'I agree', and the minister in charge, a Mr Woodley, wrote at the top, 'I don't agree and no'. So, he overrode him for whatever reasons. I think it was politics because there was another project down the road that got built, but we never know these things. So, it got there twice. So, it always has this kind of hope attached. And I left it dormant for a bit – I wasn't pushing it – and I have a friend, Ian Standen who is a local estate agent/land agent, who kept his eyes and ears open . . . He's one of these people who go round keeping their eyes and ears open for pockets of land. So, he was on the case, but nothing really. And you come along and say, 'Well, here's a concept', and put me in touch with Crispin Kelly and Jim Green of Baylight, and their thinking was that this is a whole new way of doing it. Why don't you, rather than just taking out the money up front, why don't you make it a project and basically give them the land to build 60 houses and you're left with 12 houses and that is your payment?

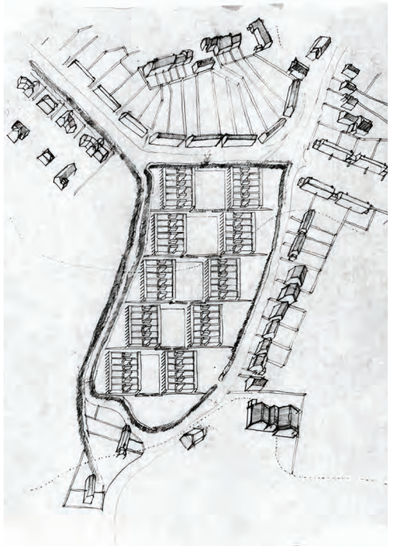
I've become quite realistic in life and realised that having talked to people, and not being a property man, the days of packing them in, getting 100 per cent maximum out of a piece of land and walking away with the profits, are long gone. And if you wanted to go down that route, you'd never get anywhere. So, we had this idea, and I went along with it – not because I was naïve, only because I felt that anything that breaks the mould from the traditional way of just going head on in ('give me the permission and I'll build some houses'), anything that could change that dialogue, I liked. And if it meant that we would take a lesser amount, so be it. Better to have it done and done well and in keeping with the philosophy associated with the beginning of this interview, rather than just taking the largest bucks and make a mess of it. And basically, in our life, in my brother's and sisters' lives, it's a complete bonus in life. If it happens, it is very nice, it's not going to change our lives 100 per cent, but if it will make it more settled. So, we're not in it for the huge money. We'd like it done well. And I thought that the idea of bequeathing the land to the village, well, I felt pretty good about it, to be honest – taking something out of it, but basically saying, 'Here you go'. Then, we soon realised that nobody wants to take responsibility for these things. They like the idea, but who's going to run this thing? So, that's always the problem, and you need management companies to run it, and the rest of it. So, you're back to almost square 1. If the idea doesn't work out that way, then so be it, but I thought it was an interesting route, and I think it's something that can be developed elsewhere. Even if it's not this time, I think the time will come when it could be a very good way to get things moving.

Could you say a little from a personal point of view about the houses that you think are needed in the area and maybe Horsmonden and Crouches Field in particular? You've said in the past that there are alternatives now to the big executive house type that maybe they're not necessarily what planners want. What do you know about local needs and how you respond to that?

Well, what I know about local needs is as much as you and Jim have actually told me about them, but I've taken it all on board – that, and it is common sense. Part of the housing problem is the fact that it's easy. There's what we call the bed stoppers – people living in four- or five-bedroom houses by themselves, which is ridiculous – which could be upgraded to a decent family to help them move up a slot if they had somewhere to go. They would use that excuse 'I would happily move out if I had somewhere to go', but what we're trying to do here (and I know we're running out of time) is try to create that space where those people have somewhere that's actually comfortable to go to, somewhere that I could go to, that you, Pierre, could go to in 10 years' time or whatever it is, if necessary. That's probably the basis; somewhere that we could actually say, 'Yes, we could live there'. And it doesn't have to be grand, I mean, with two bedrooms (you probably

8.4

8.4 Crouches Field and environs



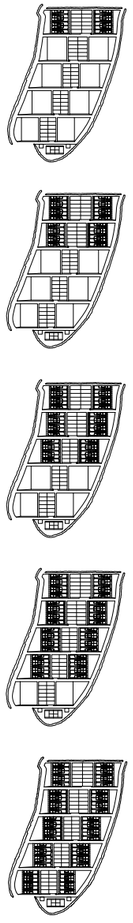
8.5

8.5 Axonometric by Ryan McStay

need two often, only because if you're slightly infirm you need somewhere for somebody to stay). One bedroom is limiting, there's no extra space for people to stay over to help or to care. So, two bedrooms, a simple living room – and I like this idea of walking out of the door to this communal space where it's green, there's no road there, and it's one great big open space. It's something like a village green from a few hundred years ago where you walk out and you know everybody, good or bad. I mean, privacy can be a problem, but better to live in a community with some people around . . . A lot of my friends, and this is diverse, would say, 'I'd rather retire to the country where I have a small house on the edge of a village', and I think, 'What would you want to do that for?' It might be very nice for a few months in the summer, but most of the time it's dark, wet, cold and muddy, and nobody does anything. You're going to be sitting down there, and you won't see anybody. Much better to be in among your community, whether it's a smaller community like that where there's lights and life, or in a town or a city. Personally, I'm very happy to spend time in London because I like the lights, the air, the magic, the sort of energy. Although I'm a country boy – in theory, I should be living in the country. So, this is a microcosm of city life in a small place where life is about rather than sitting in isolation in the dark, dank, cold because it does get so in the country. It gets dark and dank, and it's a long winter, and there's nothing going on, and people, their souls, die in the winter. And this is a way to maintain their life.

In relation to the places that you lived in in Hong Kong and even Athens where, although you were living in an apartment, there may've been communal facilities – a swimming pool or sports facilities or a gym attached – do you think something like that could work at Horsmonden or Crouches Field?

I don't think a swimming pool, but a leisure facility perhaps. I don't see a full gym there – that would never get used – but a few cycling machines. Something like that to keep them turning over, but a place where they can have classes. You know, I think that's very important. Because it brings people together from outside too,



8.6

8.6 Plans showing the phasing of the site, by Ryan McStay

it brings the community in; a mixed community. In a perfect world, young families as well as older people downsizing. Not to have an average age of 74, but an average age of 47. But then, of course, young children don't want to be around too many old people either. So, there's a fine balance there. Maybe it has to be segregated a bit . . . So, they're all in there, but I don't know . . . It has to be thought through. Psychologists will tell you the best format for that, but I like the idea. What old people don't want are screaming kids outside their doors all night and day either. So, it's a fine balance, but they want to see some children around because it's life. That's for the experts to work out in terms of how that should be, but I think it's an excellent idea. Wouldn't you? Wouldn't you like to have some life about you rather than a load of old people? I see these old people's homes, and they're quite well appointed these days, but how can anything be of any inspiration when we're all just sitting there? There's death in the air as opposed to life in the air.

Jim Green, development manager Baylight plc

Interview at Baylight plc, Queensway, London, 24 August 2016—I was born in 1957 in Bromley, Kent, South-East London. My mother and father both came from that area – my mother came from Mottingham, my father came from Sidcup – and they'd already had my elder sister who is eight years older and my brother who is five years older. Before moving back to Orpington from Exeter, my dad had a job as a registrar in the hospital in Exeter. They'd gone down there for his career. They were renting, and then he got this job with the Medical Research Council which he then had for the rest of his life and moved back to 'home', as it were, a new house in Orpington, which was very much then a developing suburb, not as you would think of Orpington now. It was out in the country. And I went to nursery school/primary school there and grammar school (St Olave's Grammar School), which had moved out to Orpington the year that I started grammar school from Tooley Street (a brand new school). An interest in the social certainly runs through the family. My brother and sister are exactly the same. I'm sure it's genetic but also in the way that we were brought up. My mother was a nurse, and my father worked in the Medical Research Council.

When my wife and I first married, we lived at New Ash Green in Kent for four years from 1982 to 1986. New Ash Green certainly had an influence on me. I can't say that I realised it at the time, and I didn't go to New Ash Green with any notions of saving the world or making it better. My sister and brother-in-law Richard were New Ash Green pioneers and moved there in the 1970s when it was first built. For me, it was really an exciting place. It felt like home because it was still in Kent. You could commute into London from Long Fields station. You had quite a big house because the housing was very cheap compared with London or anywhere nearer. So, we had a four-bedroom house as newly weds for £32,000 in 1982. It's only latterly when I looked at the development of it (which I knew nothing of when I moved there) that I realised that it is kind of quite special in that respect. With some of the housing,

the experiment was quite mixed. It was Eric Lyons who conceived it. Whether he really conceived it from a community point of view, I'm not too sure. Was Eric Lyons an architect? I think he was certainly community minded. Talking about making money out of building houses, I think he wanted to build better, and I think he was moulding New Ash Green. He'd built a previous scheme in Blackheath which my sister worked next to when she was at the DHSS in Blackheath, and she had friends who lived in that scheme. So, as ever, there are always these connections because the Span house that her friends had in Blackheath was very similar to the Span houses that were first built in New Ash Green, and so she'd been in that house, and indeed I had before, and it was a very interesting house. When we lived in a place called Knights Croft, which was an original Span house and very unusual to look at, it actually looked like a big wedge of cheese – not at all traditional. Inside, it was bare brick. It had a mezzanine floor, which was never really seen anywhere else before. It had odd things like electric heating in the ceiling, which was probably thought to be a great idea at the time but wasn't. It was just a box really, very flexible with movable walls. I think that they were actually very cheaply built, but I don't think they were necessarily built that way for extra profit. A lot of money went into landscape. The communities were called neighbourhoods – still are – and each was set up as a company in its own right. Knights Croft had its own residential association, and there were lots of covenants attached to the houses. Some of the covenants were a bit ridiculous, like about hanging out your washing on certain days, noise and colour. I think residents actually did respect the covenants, by and large. The thing that changed was that Span went bust. And the majority of New Ash Green as you see it today was built by a variety of other national house builders, in particular Bovis, who didn't have the same aspirations, but they did keep to the plan. I suppose if you go to New Ash Green, you can see the difference between the neighbourhoods. The later ones are much more dense, the houses are less interesting, they're smaller.

I don't think I've ever been very driven by money. It might be easy for me to say that because I come from not a very wealthy but a well-off middle-class background, university degree, always had a job, never had an issue with money. But, at the same time, I've had no real ambition to make loads of money. I'm not driven that way; I'm much more driven by people and the quality of things that you do and particularly helping people really. If I was going to make my mark, I wouldn't see it as a long career in surveying doing rent reviews, buying and selling buildings, development appraisals – all of which has always been interesting, but it hasn't really satisfied that desire to make things better. And it's probably why I've been at Baylight for 20 years because I really enjoy that element of Baylight, which you know is about making things better.

I met Crispin through a mutual friend, Andy Hogg. I was at Reading University with Andy, and Crispin was at school with Andy. Crispin needed help, and Andy thought the two of us would get on well

8.7

8.7 Community care home proposal phases 1 and 2, demonstrating adaptability and versatility of the design approach

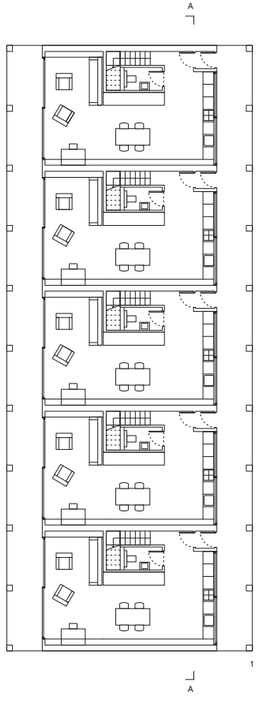
with each other, and so I joined Baylight on a part-time basis and did the course the other half of the week. So, I ended up doing my master's and working for Crispin at the same time. There've been periods in the early first 10 years, say, when I was probably spending most of my time working for Crispin. In the latter certainly seven or eight years, I've had several other jobs while I've been working here, all really generated one way or another through Baylight and often helping Baylight in a sense.

When I finished my master's, or rather finished the examined course, I had to finish my dissertation, and I just happened to go to the RIBA conference on climate change. It must've been in 1999. I'd never heard the word 'sustainability' before. I didn't know anything about climate change or energy efficiency, and I immediately understood there was a link between sustainability and value. I thought I could prove in my dissertation that building green would equal better value. However, I couldn't prove it, and I was rather disappointed because the evidence suggested that green buildings were costing much, much more than they should to build. The commercial sector wouldn't build them because it didn't really see why it should. So, they were all in the public sector, and as usual, the public-sector control of cost on the schemes was awful, and they were just spending twice, three times as much as they meant to on building a wonderful green building. Because of my dissertation, I was invited by the RICS in 2001 on to the board of their new environment faculty because I was one of few people they knew who'd actually written a dissertation on the subject. And I guess I'd probably spent the last 15 years trying to prove my dissertation. I've always known the answer to it, which is that the problem is the timeline. If you see things in the short term (and this is all related to value), you're never going to get it, and that's a classic developer's perspective. And why shouldn't it be – because most developers are not there to lose money, they're there to make money. They're not going to live in the buildings that they develop or shop or work in them. They'll just put them up, and hopefully they'll take all of the risk out by pre-letting or pre-selling them. They move along from one scheme to another. Their perspective is very short term. The only time it becomes long term is if they're perhaps doing it for a client who has a longer-term perspective. Because, at the moment, despite what people like to

say – and I know there are examples where you could show this – generally the cost of building green and, indeed, the cost of building well, is higher. So, most developers won't do it unless there's a higher return from higher prices. The market won't do that unless they perceive that these better, greener buildings are worth more. I think that's very slowly changed over the years. It has, but the evidence isn't very much there, even now, 15 years later.

I suppose I've known Crispin for pretty much the same length of time that you have, and he approached me, in the aftermath of publishing *Housey Housey* in 2005, about wanting to make exemplary suburban developments. And you know, that's why I introduced John Wickham to Crispin with regard to his land at Crouches Field as a potential site for residential development. I understand Crispin and you have set up Groundplan to make sustainable developments, culturally and socially as well as environmentally.

I'm not sure because we've actually never really talked about it. Crispin's driver was about improved community. I'm sure there's an aspect of that. But after all, you know, to actually build that way and prove your point, I think you have to be building larger numbers of houses, and we haven't done that as yet. We've only built 10–15 at a time; large numbers of flats in London. So, really the aspect so far, which I think is where Crispin mainly sits, is on quality of design, and he's built a lot of very interesting houses. There's no doubt about it. Not everybody likes them, I think, particularly to look at, but I think the people who buy them like them. One would assume so. Pusey would be a good example where the people who lived there seem to love them. Even with their faults, perhaps, but I think that the people who live around them are very reluctant to accept that this style and appearance of house is something that belongs in a village like Pusey. But that's something you're going to find everywhere you go, and I think, historically, you can probably say the same for anything. Perhaps when they started to put on the Queen Anne brick fronts on Elizabethan timber houses, I'm sure there were people at the time who in shock horror said, 'What are you doing? What is that ugly thing?' So, there's room for everybody out there. And if there wasn't, we would never be able to build the houses in Pusey or in anywhere else, or sell them to anybody. So, we've proved that much. In terms of community . . . Maybe we've created a little community in Pusey and a little community in Aldershot, although that's very new, and mini-New Ash Greens. And in Aldershot, in particular, has a lot of landscaping and so on, and it probably is the closest that we've done so far to the sort of New Ash Green ethic, if you like. For me, the social side is much stronger. Where Crispin and I inter-join on this is the value mechanics. We both believe this perhaps to different degrees. I think he can afford maybe less to think this because he tends to own the property, and therefore it has a direct financial effect on him, and he wants to build schemes that are profitable. It's crazy to build schemes with a loss made.



8.8 Cottage Terrace, pitched-roof proposal, three-bedroom family houses for sale

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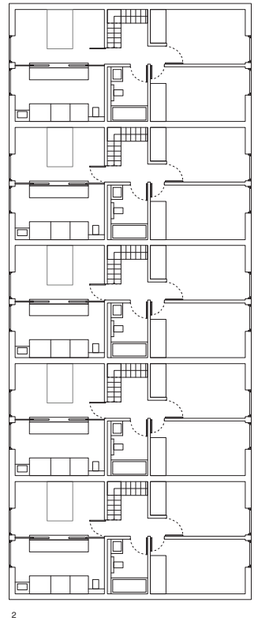
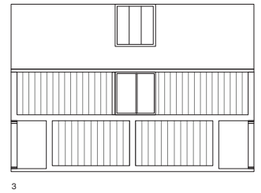
1. Ground floor plan
2. First floor plan
3. Side elevation
4. View from living room of communal garden and Cottage Terrace opposite
5. Front elevation
6. Section AA

You can be altruistic and have loads of money and choose to make a loss-making scheme if you wish. I'm not sure it's a very good advertisement to the world at large, even if it's a beautiful scheme. My view is more, and this probably sounds political, but I don't think it is. I've always wondered which side of the political divide I sit on, and I can tell you that I pretty much always voted Conservative or Green in latter years, but I think I'm very allied to the Labour way of thinking. I just have my doubts about whether that kind of world works financially. So, I guess I'm in the middle, but our view was always that we wanted to build better, and we wanted to spend more money on things. Why couldn't we do that, even within a profitable appraisal? Well, the reason more often than not is that if you're competing in a market for sites or buildings, you can't really afford to take that view because you'll never buy anything. You'll always be outbid by somebody else. If their cost base is lower than yours in their appraisal, then they can afford to pay the owner more for the land, and so you can't really do that. And it's one of the reasons that many of our schemes haven't been on the open market; we find schemes through connections with people, associations, joint venturing and what have you – we have to – because we can't really compete on the open market because our cost base is higher. Our aspirations to spend are higher. Allied to that is, I think, the more important point that (particularly at Horsmonden, which is only one example of the model that we were trying to take forward) was originally inspired by localism and community land trusts and so on, which all sits very happily with my social side. But with my valuer's hat on, I was looking at this equation that I've just been discussing (about cost and value) and saying, 'Well those parameters are fairly well set in every appraisal. Everyone is using pretty much the same methodology'. If you're trying to find more money in your appraisal in order to spend more of it on quality in every way – quality of the building, more land, better landscaping – then the whole thing is just a nicer, better place to live. So, you're spending money on the things that perhaps volume house builders wouldn't necessarily choose to because they wouldn't see the value coming back. They wouldn't want to spend a lot of money on landscaping unless they could sell their houses for 10–15 per cent more. And that's why they have a problem with green issues: they don't see the return in the price today. Those houses may be worth more in the future because they've got solar panels and ground source heating, and the volume house builders will accept that, but they'll say, 'Yes, great, fantastic, but that's in the future when we don't own those houses anymore. When it does happen, we'll start building more of that sort of thing but because the market will demand it'.

They're happy to see it tested by others. Then, they'll come into it when it's become a thing of normality. As with what I said earlier about green buildings in the late 1990s, it's not a particularly good place to be a pioneer financially. It's great, it's fun [laughs], and there's a lot of self-satisfaction in it, but it's dangerous because, first of all, you're playing with things that you yourself don't know exactly how they work

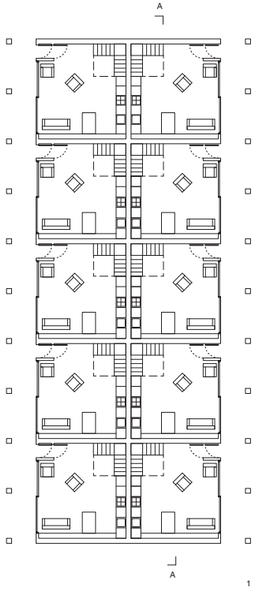




8.8

out and also you haven't got the support of the broader market because that's risk. And that's interesting because Crispin is not a risk taker. He never has been. That's why he's had a successful business for so many years. He's not the sort of developer who's happy to have a string of off-the-shelf companies that can just go bust, and the bank takes the loss. That's a reputational issue. Some developers don't care about that, and fair enough. It's up to everybody to assess the risk accordingly. We've only just started to broach Horsmonden and how this links together. Let's focus on Horsmonden and the village . . .

There are two things there. First of all, the value element. Horsmonden isn't the only place where we've tried this, and it is very difficult to achieve. I firmly believe that the price of land is way too high because 30 years ago the portion of land value to the overall scheme used to be about 20–25 per cent. Now, it's often 40 per cent. Land value has gone up and up. Why should someone who owns an acre of agricultural land in the countryside on the edge of the village which has a value of £100,000 – it might actually be £10,000, but let's say it's £100,000; for amenity land, people will pay that money. I've seen £150,000 paid for an acre of land in West Sussex. So, it's possible. But let's say you've got an acre or, in John [Wickham]'s case in Horsmonden, five acres maximum £500,000 worth of land. The moment that you obtain residential planning permission for that, it will go up to the best part of £1 million an acre So, a 10 times increase in value. So, you move from £500,000 to £5 million because you own the land, but mainly because of that planning permission, and that planning permission is given to you by the community. So, our question is how much of that enhanced value should remain with the landowner? And we think it's perfectly reasonable for the landowner to enjoy the fact that he's in the lucky position of owning that land – and perhaps



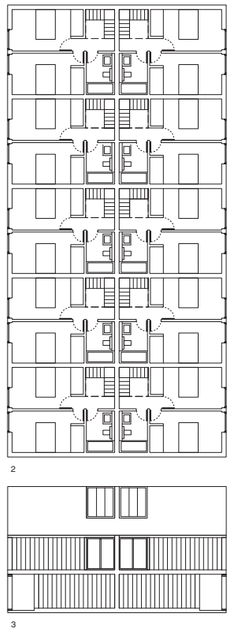
8.9 Cottage Terrace, pitched-roof back-to-back proposal, two-bedroom affordable houses

1:400

1. Ground floor plan
2. First floor plan
3. Side elevation
4. Front elevation
5. Section AA

has also had the foresight to think about what he can do with it, to put it forward, to promote it and so on, and perhaps win content in the community because he's come up with the best scheme. He's come up with quality; he's come up with something that the community really wants instead of it being a scheme that was forced on the community through a rejected planning application and an appeal and so on, which is not to say that scheme's a bad scheme, and so on, but that's not what I believe in. My view is that if the community doesn't want it, then we shouldn't be doing it. Now, I realise there are problems with Nimbyism. It may be that we would simply never build enough houses in this country for people to live in if we went too far in that direction because the reality is that for most people (who have moved into a new house themselves on the edge of a village), the last thing they want is to see another new house built next door to them. So, that's the thinking behind it.

The second part of it is much more recent, and this is the housing-with-care element. On John's part, I suppose my responsibility is to make John as much money as possible, but I do believe that where John has said the family wants to leave a legacy to the village and although they don't live in the village any longer, they were there a long, long time, and they'd like to see a development there that the village really does want – that really does add something to the village and that is something special, that John is engaging with me and Crispin in that respect. But the result of that will inevitably be that he will receive less money for his land because we're turning the development appraisal on its head. As we talked to the planning officer at Tunbridge Wells the other day, and instead of working it upwards and saying 'Here's our costs kept to a minimum, 20 per cent profit, this is what's left for the land out of the sales', we're actually pushing the costs up much higher to integrate the care element into it. I'd love to do it in a way where the costs would stay the same, but I don't think that's realistic. And I don't think, in very basic terms, you're going to get the quality whether it's ordinary housing or housing-with-care. Now, I have a particular interest in the housing-with-care element because of my own personal experiences over the last few years: losing my parents, losing Julie's mother, seeing Julie's mother go in and out of various different care homes, seeing my own mother and father stay in their own home but where my father had a live-in carer. And you know that was a really deeply personal, intense period for us, never mind in property development. And it made me really think. Given that I'm nearly 60 myself in January, I thought, 'There has to be something better in terms of the way care can be delivered'. And it seems to me that if you put the ordinary, physical elements of care to one side for a minute (so bathing people, giving them their medication, perhaps some exercise, the things that carers do), there's something much more to it than that which goes all the way back to the start of our conversation about nuclear families and communities. And the thing that really struck me most of all about Julie's mother, in particular, and going into a care home (and this is why so many people say, 'I don't want to go into a



8.9

care home') is that complete loss of connection. Their family and hopefully some of their friends will visit them in their room in a care home, or in a retirement village come to that, but they're isolated. They're not in their community anymore, and that's what this scheme is all about.

I was going to ask you about that. The earlier ambition was to make a mixed development – homes for young people, homes for older people – and I'm just wondering about the focus of a care home aspect which still allows for a mixed development. Does Crouches Field become a kind of model or is it a one-off? Or are there aspects of it that can be applied elsewhere or is that to do with the development, its numbers or its location?

I think it's a mix of all those things, to be honest. We like to think in terms of it being a model. In reality, I wonder whether you can pick something up and take it somewhere else. I mean the kind of drivers that are behind this – the need for elderly villagers to downsize to more suitable accommodation and stay in touch with their village – that's really common everywhere you go. So, I think it certainly should be a model from that perspective. The care element is really tricky, and we're still struggling with how to deliver that, but we're quite determined to see it through. I think it may be way less complicated than I had originally thought. I actually think it's really ordinary and that it doesn't need a fancy care building. I think maybe a day-care centre of some sort may well be a big asset there, but I think it's to do with quality of life and connections and avoiding isolation and pleasure in life – it's not really about care in the conventional sense because care is already there. There are certainly aspects of care that I've felt we could make a big improvement with, but I'm having to

listen to other people,which is what the whole consultation process is about. Well, I hope so. Too many consultations are about ticking boxes and saying, 'We've done that', as opposed to actually changing your mind when you hear what real people have got to say.

Yes, it has a much greater chance of both financial and community viability the more ordinary it is, and that's why, in our conversations with the planning officer, we're still in two minds about all this business about whether we should have [Use Classes] C2 or C3. The moment we start talking about care with a planner, they start talking about C2. And it could be a bit of millstone around your neck if you're not careful because you have planning conditions attached that make it a 'care only' environment, whereas I think it's a better living environment that we're looking at. And actually, in our original plan, I think I was mistaken; it was only just about elderly people, it wasn't mixed with younger people originally.

I think it was.

Are you sure? I'd like to think so . . .

Well, that was my take on it. When you decided that it should be pepper-potted.

Pepper-potting as in affordable housing.

I also took it that pepper-potting was a way of referring to a mixed demographic between young and old and that there were people from young families who wanted to stay in the village but can't afford to, or children coming to an age where they were starting families and getting married.

Our thinking has . . . I wouldn't say 'changed' so much . . . but I think it's matured and developed a bit. Originally, we were very tied to the village vision and the older persons' questions, and that was a particular thing that we were still hanging our hat on which is 'here are the statistics, here are the numbers, they're not our numbers, they're the village's numbers. They want somewhere where elderly villagers can live and stay in the village in some kind of accommodation'. That wasn't about young people at all. And the care element wasn't in the village vision; it was in the previous plan.

I think we talked about it when we first started this conversation in 2011 . . .

Maybe we did. It really came home to me when I was talking to people like the over 60s club in our local consultations, and the elderly people themselves were saying, 'I don't want to live in a scheme that is all old people'. It has financial complications because, let's be frank about it, by and large, although we can't generalise too much, elderly people have more equity in their houses. They can afford to pay more for this higher-cost scheme that we're delivering to them. If you inject a third of the people as young buyers who have no money then that's a problem because you've then got to be able to build and sell a third of those houses at a lower level.

In an early appraisal, there was an idea that if the parish council took over the management of it with Baylight's advice, they would keep some to rent at a particular rate.

This is a slightly different strand of thinking, but it was the original strand. And they would sell some of the property to afford to be able to do that, as well as giving John two houses per stage.

This was allied to our thoughts about community land trusts, and so on, but I think very quickly we've realised . . . I wouldn't say we've given up, but the reality of getting anybody locally to take responsibility is really, really different. Not impossible, but from what I've seen, the only examples where it's actually happened in this country have been quite small – small, very strong, focused, self-interest groups. Maybe we saw it in the village down near Poundbury; that was 10 houses and so on. So, it can be done, but that was done by the community themselves. Here, we're always trying to persuade the community, and that's not going to work, not on 60 units certainly. The idea of giving John houses rather than money, some people might've said, 'Well, who cares? What does it matter?' As an owner with an investment perspective, he might actually prefer to receive houses rather than money. Obviously, from an appraisal point of view, it helps the development because you're not having to pay the landowner cash upfront.

It's just the idea that one's almost had an ideal to start with, and then it's affected by the pragmatics of the locality and the particular.

I think in the back of my mind, there was also a little bit of me that thought, 'I'd quite like John to own some of these houses'. If we're talking about legacy and so on, then isn't that a little bit more proof positive that he really means what he says? Of course, you couldn't restrict him so that he and the family couldn't sell the houses and take their money, but it just shows another level of commitment. That is still a possibility but for a different reason perhaps: he could still be paid his share in houses. That would be great from a development perspective because it would de-risk the scheme, and we'd borrow less money, but I wouldn't like to think we'd do it for that reason. Although we haven't looked at the tax or that side of things, it might be very beneficial to the landowner to do it that way. I'm not sure. To take houses instead of cash and to have bricks and mortar in a place that you know and love with a rental income, with an appreciating capital value . . . it could be quite attractive, couldn't it? Perhaps it wouldn't have all of the stamp-duty costs and all the rest of it. I don't know. Perhaps it could be saved somehow . . .

I think the final thing that is particularly pertinent to Crouches Field (but all such schemes) is to just look at how long we've been doing this now – it's at least four or five years. How much progress have we made? I think we're in a much better place than we were before: we've actually learnt a lot along the way, and because we've been willing to listen, we've changed the way things are being done. I'd like to think that if this was a model, we could accelerate it in the future and elsewhere – because we've learnt lessons – but at the same time,

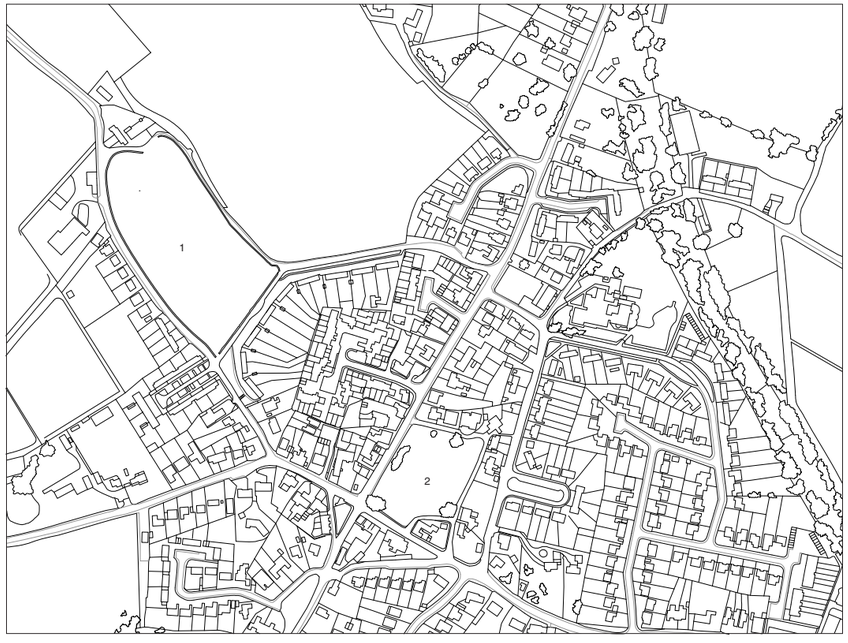
you can't. You can't just shove that model in some other community and say, 'Well, it worked for Horsmonden, it must work for you too'. But if the village looked at it and said, 'Well, actually, it does. We've been to Horsmonden', that's what I'd really like to see. I'd like to see it built, people living in it and enjoying it, but that's going to take another five years. So, it can take 10 years, but schemes of this nature often do. You've got to have that – and perhaps this is another take on the sustainability argument – but you have to take a long-term view. If you sat here today and said, 'I won't see the fruits of my labour for 10 years', how many people would do it unless they're really committed? But, obviously, they've got other things going on at the same time because you've got to earn a living. But it's very important to do these things, I think, because after all, what is making money? It's nothing is it really?

8.10

8.10 Horsmonden. |
Source: Image courtesy of Google Earth.

1:25,000

1. Site
2. Horsmonden



8.11

8.11 Location plan

1:10,000

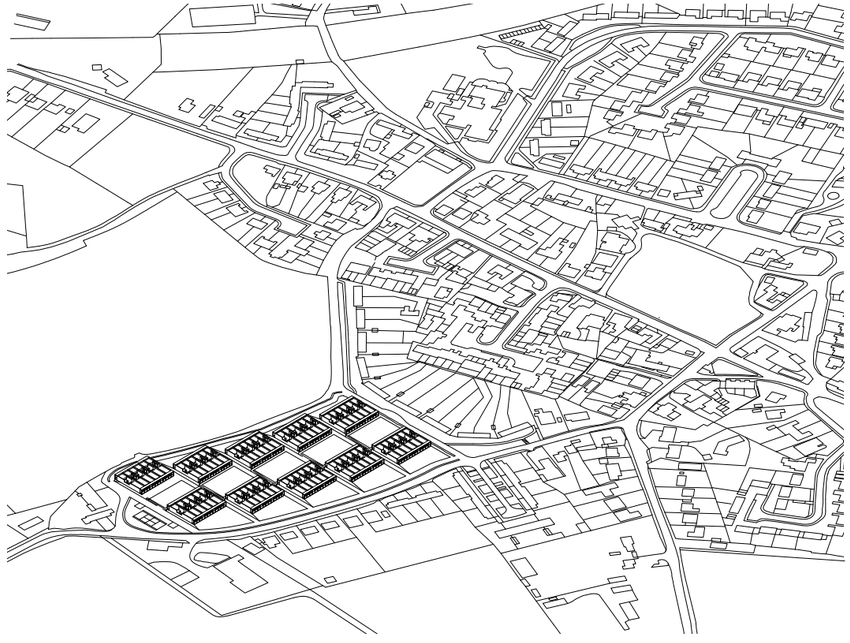
1. Site
2. Horsmonden Green

0m 100m 500m

8.12

8.12 Village model with Crouches Field in foreground

1:5000

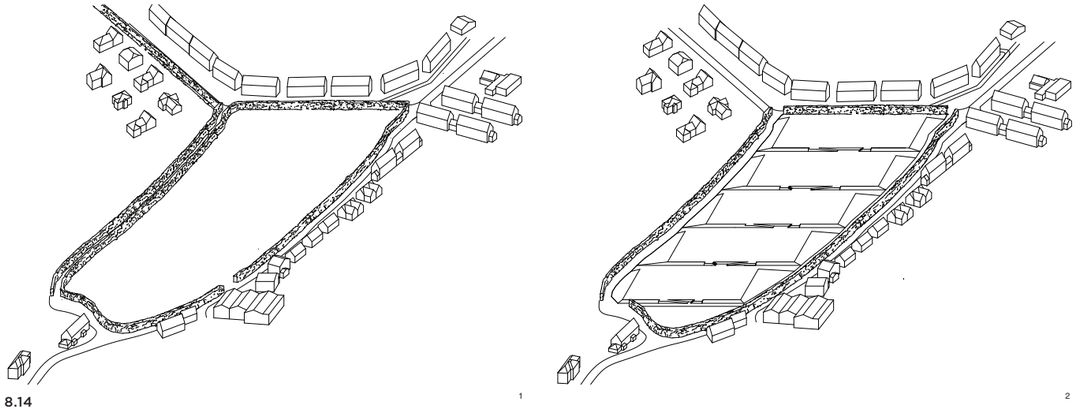


8.13

8.13 Isometric

1:5000

0m 50m 250m



8.14

1 2 3 4

8.14 Site landscaping strategy

1. Existing site surrounded by tall hedge slopes 7.4 m from village into valley
2. Site landscaped into five levels with perimeter road
3. Soft landscaping and parking added
4. 60 houses: 2 Cottage Terraces – 12 houses on each level

0m 50m 250m

8.15

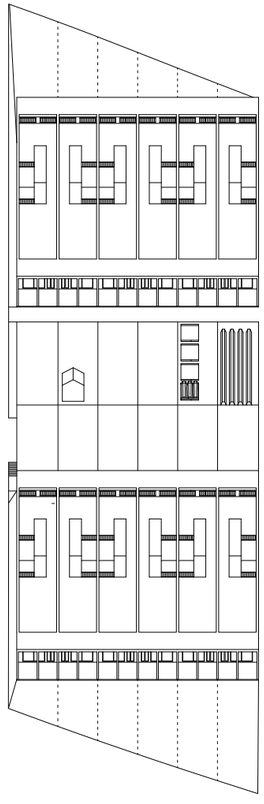
8.15 Site plan

1:5000

1. Main entrance
2. Housing units
3. Pedestrian
4. Parking
5. Allotments or garden
6. Existing hedge
7. Tennis court

8.16

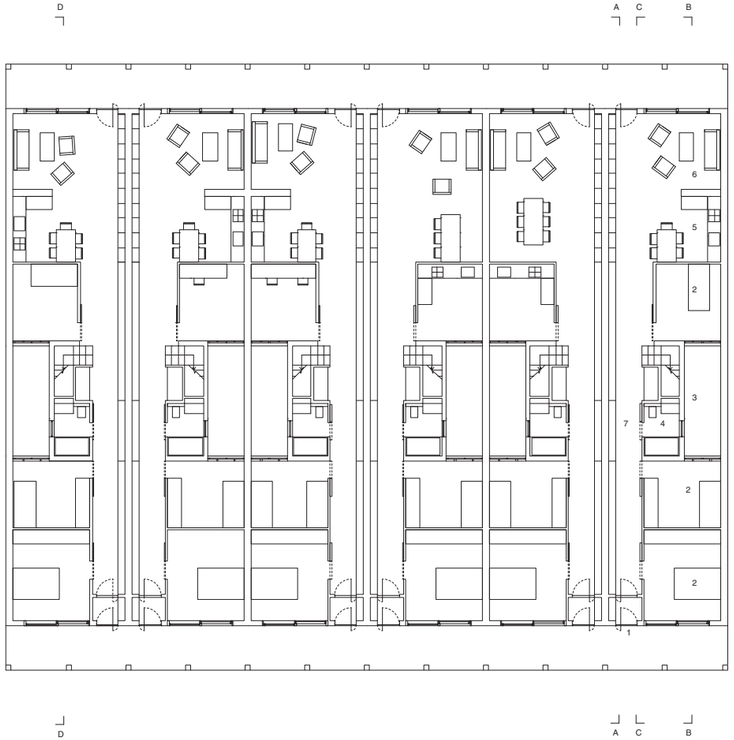
8.16 Model of 12 houses, pearwood



8.17

8.17 Planometric

1:750



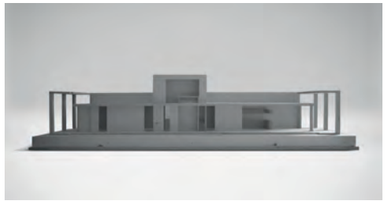
8.18

8.18 Ground floor plan

1:250

1. Main entrance
2. Bedroom
3. Courtyard
4. Bathroom
5. Kitchen/dining
6. Living room
7. Long gallery

1



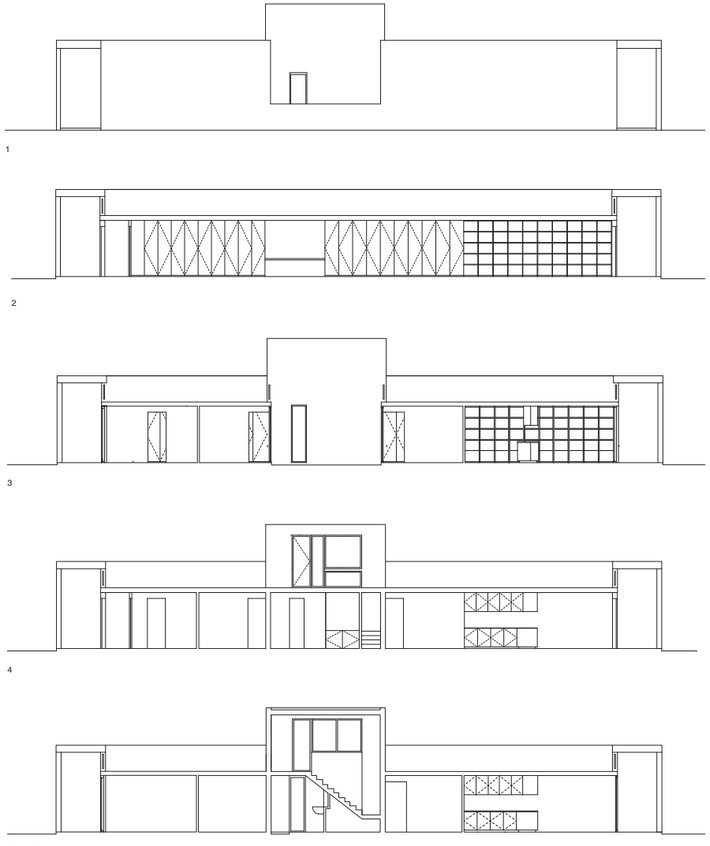
2

8.19

8.19 House model, plywood

1:10

1. Side elevation
2. Side view of interior with wall removed



1

2

3

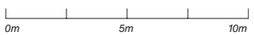
4

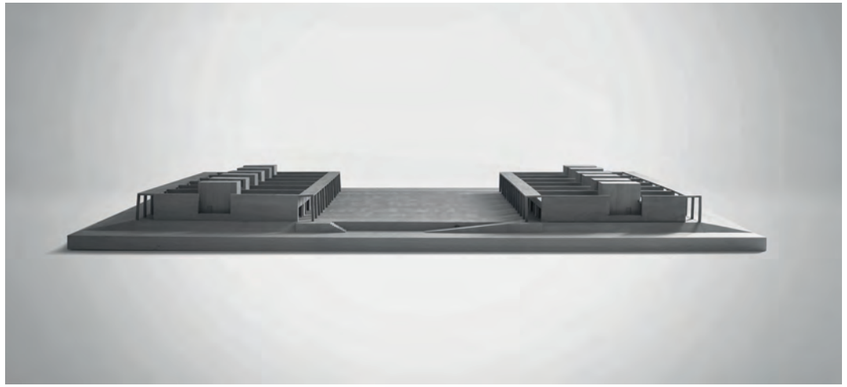
8.20

8.20 Elevations and sections

1:250

1. Side elevation
2. Section AA
3. Section BB
4. Section CC
5. Section DD





8.21

8.22

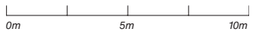
8.21 Model, two Cottage Terraces and communal garden, with staircase and ramp to lower level, pearwood

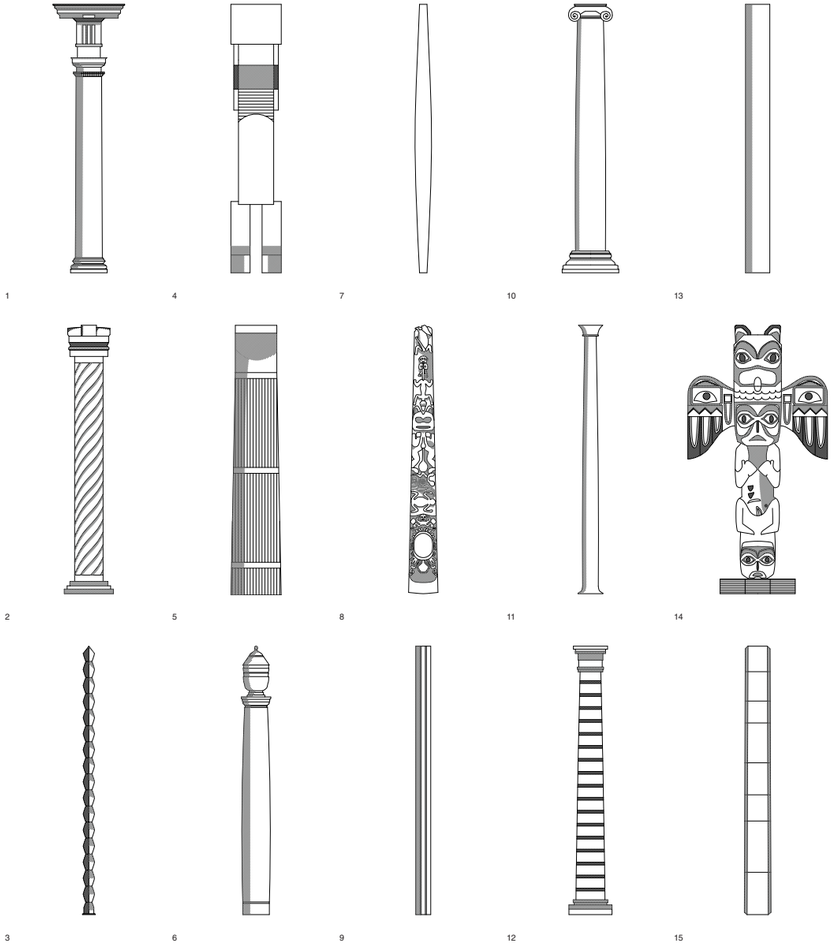
1:100

8.22 Cottage Terrace of six houses

1:250

1. Elevation
2. Long section



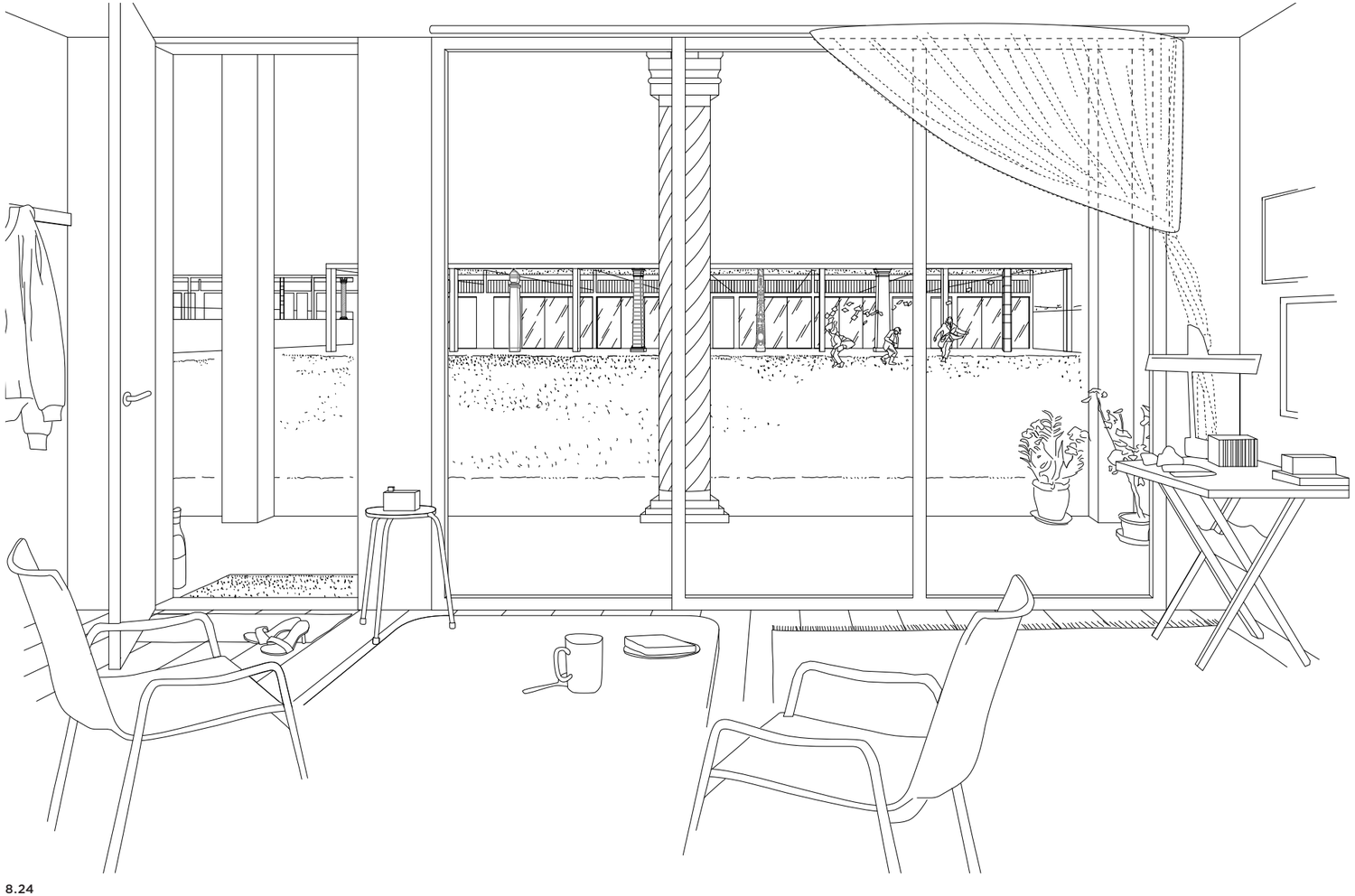


8.23

8.23 Column options

Columns between houses are square. Central columns may be customised to provide personal choice and variety. The columns shown here indicate a range of options.

1. Sir William Chambers (1759)
2. Carlo Scarpa, Anna Catrin Schultz, Edition Axel Menges, Stuttgart/London (2014), p. 77
3. Endless column by Brancusi (1938)
4. Caryatid by Brancusi (1938)
5. Santa Maria in Cosmedin, Rome
6. Gio Ponti: La Casa all'italiana, Fulvio Irace, Electra, Milano (1988), pp. 64–5
7. Apartment Building Along a Party Wall in Basel, by Herzog de Meuron (1987–8)
8. 'Hole in the Ice' totem pole from Kitwancool (c. 1850)
9. Mies van der Rohe
10. Palazzo Valmarana in Vicenza by Andrea Palladio (1565)
11. The ballroom of Seaton Deleval Hall, Northumberland, by John Vanburgh (1718–28)
12. The entrance of Seaton Deleval Hall, Northumberland, by John Vanburgh (1718–28)
13. Villa Savoye by Le Corbusier (1928–31)
14. Totem pole of the Tingit Tribe
15. Woodland Crematorium by Sigurd Lewerentz and Eriak Gunnar Asplund (1915–40)



8.24

8.24 View from living room of communal gardens with Cottage Terrace in background, by Andrew Power and Amy Glover

1

3

2

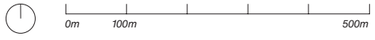
4

9.1

9.1 Historical maps showing site development. |
Source: Image courtesy of Digimap.

1:10,000

1. 1880
2. 1900
3. 1925
4. 1940



2007

Middle England | Patterns for Letchworth: From Garden City to Patchwork City

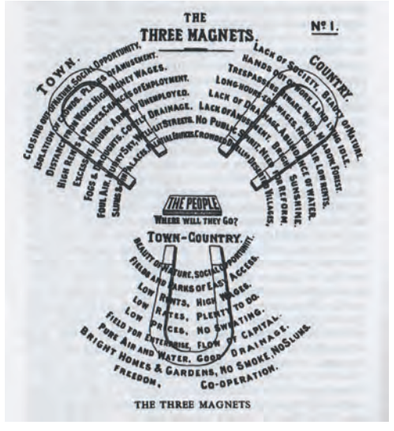
9.2

9.2 Location plan

1:75,000

1. Letchworth Garden City
2. North Common
3. Jacks Hill
4. Broadway Gardens

Patterns for Letchworth is a response to a competition organised in 2007 for new house types to complement and extend Letchworth, the first garden city initiated by Ebenezer Howard in 1903. Letchworth was planned by Raymond Unwin on farmland in Hertfordshire just north of London. It was bought by First Garden City Limited, the company set up by Howard, and was, according to Sir Frederick Osborn, conceived as the forerunner of 'progressive experimentation in new forms of social enterprise' (Ward, 1990, 20). Although Letchworth was an immediate success with its first residents, Howard found that his pioneering model failed to inspire others. So, he developed a second garden city



9.3

9.4

at nearby Welwyn. Howard's corollary to the garden city was the strategic dispersal of the inner-city population of London to facilitate its redevelopment at lower densities. This ambition was taken over by the state in the 1946 New Towns Act, and several sites around London were designated for development by the government in the face of intense local opposition from local authorities, landowners and residents.

Patterns for Letchworth proposes new residential development on the edge of the city, laid out as garden squares bounded by plots for individual buildings. For guidance, four options for free-standing pitched-roof houses and flats have been designed with potential for customisation by inhabitants. Building plots are defined by linear party structures 2.4 m high. These are compulsory elements in the layout of each garden square and have been conceived as multivalent trellis-clad frames acting as host to garden shed, bin store, bicycle shelter, meter cupboard as well as sheltered walkway and arbour. In this way, the character and order of the garden squares will be established, even if individual plots are developed independently. The aim is to offer choice in terms of design as well as procurement method.

The Wolfson Economic Prize 2014 asked the question 'How would you deliver a new Garden City which is visionary, economically viable and popular?' Pierre d'Avoine, Ian Abley and Alec Scragg together with Nabeel Hamdi and Clare Melhuish submitted a proposal for a Patchwork City. The first would be located at Marston Vale, Bedfordshire, near Letchworth, which included the village of Aspley Guise, home of Lord Wolfson initiator of the Wolfson Economic Prize. The proposal critiqued Howard's Garden City, which was intended to be a self-sufficient entity, by proposing an opportunistic participatory patchwork development which would be stitched into the fabric of the existing countryside in a responsive manner at

9.3 The Three Magnets, Ebenezer Howard, 1898

9.4 Garden City and Rural Belt, Ebenezer Howard, 1898

a variety of scales in response to prevailing cultural, economic and political conditions. Thomas Sieverts, in *Cities Without Cities: Between Place and World, Space and Time, Town and Country* (2003), has explored the increasingly diffused characteristics of the postwar built environment which has replaced the traditional idea of a compact city separated from its rural setting.

The following is the introduction: non-technical summary to our Wolfson Economics Prize 2014 submission:

Aspley Guise Patchwork City Association

Vision—Our vision of Aspley Guise Patchwork City is for a permissive, participatory and popular place in which to live, work and play for all its inhabitants and visitors.

Aspley Guise Patchwork City provides 75 m^2 houses costing £90,000 including the land. It is an active association – an inclusive place to live and not a speculative investment.

Aspley Guise Patchwork City is a place where Simon Wolfson would love to live, but you don't have to be a lord to afford to live there.

Ebenezer Howard's concept of the garden city was governed by 'four fundamental principles – limitation of numbers and area, growth by colonisation, variety and sufficiency of economic opportunities and social advantages and control of the land in the public interest' (Mumford, 1963).

Aspley Guise Patchwork City respects the ambitions of Howard's original vision. However, instead of the self-sufficient economic entity he envisaged, we propose a new settlement with its own identity set within the existing regional economy formed by the employment triangle of Milton Keynes, Bedford and Luton/Dunstable. It will also be part of the Oxford–Cambridge Arc thinkbelt that includes Cranfield University and thus within a high demand location where there is a good market for employment.

Aspley Guise Patchwork City will be a large settlement of forty thousand households to support its own civic functions, and unites several existing villages without needing to compulsorily purchase their land.

It will provide a customer base for the currently underused western section of the East–West Rail Project linking Milton Keynes and Bedford and uses the existing infrastructure of the M1 and A-road network and the local airfield to its fullest.

Aspley Guise Patchwork City is not bounded by a permanent green belt, which was Howard's identifying symbol and which in practice has been almost impossible to maintain, but will be laid out as an opportunist patchwork settlement which works with the natural features of the existing landscape with higher density development on the hilly woodland and lower density in the valley. It will regenerate the industrial brownfield lands of Stewartby, incorporate the pasture and arable land of Marston Vale, use the lake system as public space and in developing existing woodland make the designation of the 'community forest' a reality. It will thus be a landscape of cultivation as well as amenity affording its inhabitants and

visitors a vision combining the best aspects of the city and country life.

Governance—The existing 1946 New Towns Act provides the legislation necessary to form the Aspley Guise Garden City Creation Company (The Company) as a development corporation. The Company has the express aim of establishing the Aspley Guise Patchwork City Association (The Association) as the legacy Local Authority over a projected 20-year period. The Company is authorised with planning powers, and transfers those to The Association.

'The aim of The Association is to rebuild commitment to wider society and re-engage the householders as citizens' (Hamdi, 2009, 108). 'The Company is the democratic guarantor, regulating without interference, drawing out lessons through participatory programmes, transferring knowledge and know-how working towards mutualisation – that of common ownership where public services and community enterprise are governed and run by its members' (Hamdi, 2009, 109). 'Two recurring themes, partnership and mutualisation, are at the heart of governance and underpin much of the thinking on participation' (Hamdi, 2009, 109).

The Association would encourage participation of farmers who want to continue to maintain their farms and landscape. The Association would also encourage participation of existing businesses, like Amazon, and new businesses to help develop The Association as a community of forty thousand households.

The Association would aim to suppress planning gain. However, the householders would collectively have the right to liquidate The Association.

The freedom to liquidate The Association is necessary in order to keep it a free association.

Economic Viability—To ensure economic viability planning gain would be suppressed, first during the development and second in the period of leasehold.

Land would be paid for at 4× agricultural value, thus farmers will not be paid for the 'hope value' of development.

Construction cost will be £1100/m^2 to current building regulations based upon a pattern book approach.

The budget of £90,000 per household will be raised privately in the open mortgage market. This could either be done individually or through The Company.

The agility of The Company to buy 1350 hectares in a patchwork is paramount to avoid the inevitable refusal of some farmers to forego their 'hope value'.

Aspley Guise Patchwork City will thus be an association of households in the wider labour market unlike Stewartby, which was a company model village.

Existing and new businesses will be expected to bring their own capital.

The Legacy Company would raise council tax and access to funds through central government and the EU.

Popularity—The houses in Aspley Guise Patchwork City are not investments but are homes to be lived in and the aim is to keep them affordable. Thus affordability will be no more than three times household income.

A permissive design approach based on a pattern book is proposed (Melhuish and d'Avoine, 2005, 13).

Choice and individual expression will be encouraged within a code of permitted development. There will be variety of architectural character and housing typologies within the garden city. The aim is to provide informed choice in reaction to limited models offered by volume house builders.

There will be a relaxed approach to density. Communal open space will be provided together with allotments for cultivation, and public access to managed farmland including the community forest. The M1 motorway will be culverted thus reconnecting the historic landscape between Marston Vale and Woburn.

Ian Abley (above) and Alec Scragg (below). | Source: Images courtesy of Simon Punter and Alec Scragg, respectively.

Ian Abley and Alec Scragg Interview at Durham Yard, London, 31 August 2016—Alec is an urban designer, and Ian trained as an architect. We collaborated on the Wolfson Economic Prize 2014 where we proposed the Patchwork City as an alternative for a new garden city.

IA: The profession of being an architect has a legally protected title based on current practice. Without annual registration to the Architects Registration Board, I may not call myself an architect, even though I'm professionally qualified as one. I trained in Newcastle upon Tyne in the 1980s, and obtained my professional practice Part 3 in 1998. The attraction of Newcastle was that it was three hundred miles away from home in South London – not because I hated home, but just because I needed to grow up and leave home. Newcastle was a great place to learn and live in. However, I had mistakenly thought that the practice of architecture was practical. I found it difficult to get through the course as a designer of 'building concepts' with scant information about how you actually constructed them. After qualifying, I quickly ended up as technical support. So, I think I'm probably more accurately a technician than an architect, though of course that is quite a different profession. The other thing that kept me going in Newcastle was a really interesting planning school. In particular, there was a fantastic course, then called 'Housing for Developing Countries', run by Charles Cockburn. I spent much time in that rather than my own architecture course. Most of the people on the course were mature engineers, planners and architects who'd come to Britain hoping to learn how to develop their own countries. On meeting Charles, many discovered they had to rely on themselves rather than on anything a planning course was going to teach them. His course got you out of a first-world mind-set. I enjoyed the exposure to third-world realities of shortage and difficulty, while the school of architecture was trying to teach me how to design shiny, expensive buildings but without too much concern for the bothersome problem of construction. Charles introduced me to the ideas of John Turner and Colin Ward, among others.

I wanted to get away somewhere fresh, and Newcastle is a fantastic place in the

wonderful North-East of England. It wasn't because I didn't like my parents, but you are 18, and you have to grow up. There were grants; we got paid to go to university . . . There were crappy houses to live in that cost you little money. I got a full grant; I'm that old. It was never luxurious. But you weren't expected to take out a loan, and it separated going to university from your parents' income.

I'm from the suburbs: 26 Browning Avenue, Sutton. I looked it up on Google Earth the other day. My brother and I, like countless others in suburbia, were brought up with a long garden and fences and neighbours whom you might play with out of school, and a dad who's constantly building stuff in his shed. My dad was a City and Guilds–trained cabinet maker, but couldn't make that pay by the 1960s compared to drawing furniture as a draughtsman. He increased his salary by leaving the workbench and joining the civil service. Dad worked for the Property Services Agency (PSA) and then later for the Crown Suppliers. Where local authorities had their own architectural departments, the PSA looked after the government's stock of properties. By the 1980s, the PSA bureaucracy was criticised by politicians and other government departments, with allegations of corruption involving civil servants in charge of tendering for contractors. The PSA was broken up so that various functions could be sold off to begin to create the private property services market we have today. There were lots of early retirement deals, which my dad had to take. But he missed working with colleagues. I was brought up with him building things. Always furniture . . . a fishing boat in the garage . . . extensions off the back of the house . . . or fixing up his mum's two-up-two-down terraced house after she had died for my mum's mother to live in for the last years of her life. Both my grandparents lived within walkable distances of Sutton. My mum and dad had met while teenagers. In a few streets, there was a timber yard, joinery and furniture makers – where my dad was an apprentice – and a French polishing shop, which was my mum's dad's, all of which kept each other variously in business. I think there was an undertaker too, but I might have made that into a memory. The war had forced them to be evacuated north, but my mum and dad were South London suburban in the 1950s. My mum became a radiographer, learning new X-ray techniques, following an interest in photography she had gained from the family she was evacuated to. They married, struggled to pay a mortgage on a semi-detached house and gave me and my brother a suburban family upbringing.

I went to Wallington Grammar School in the 1970s, luckily for me, and it was utter luck, as often things are. I was academic enough, but the sixth form had a recognised foundation course that would normally be the first year of art college. A foundation course is not a requirement to get into architecture school, strangely, but it meant that I could spend the sixth form doing physics and maths while playing with clay, painting and sketching, and messing about with metal, timber and plastics. The head of the foundation course was Donald Welstead. Initially, I thought being an industrial designer was what I wanted to do,

until I went for an interview and was ridiculed by the interviewer for my ignorance of 'products'. Mr Welstead, as he was to me, realised that if I had not taken to industrial design, then maybe architecture would be better. He sent me to the Barbican in London, Durham Cathedral. I won a school book prize in 1978, and I was given *Great Architecture of the World* (Norwich, 1975). It contained pictures of the University of Leicester's Engineering Building drawn isometrically, which I thought was amazing. The foundation course was the result of the personalities of the teachers in the school, and they helped me find a way in life that interested me, aged 17 and 18.

AS: My natural history is that I was born in Essex, my dad is from the East End and my mum is Argentinian. So, I don't really know what I am. I grew up in a bungalow in the English landscape; it was one of those private unmade roads where the fields have been divided up and turned into houses over time. I was born there in 1989. So, that was still during the Cold War, wasn't it? Before that, I think the family lived in suburbia in Galleywood, Essex. So, actually, if you look at my father's side, there's a really interesting story about social mobility and a consequent movement out of London. He was born in Hackney. He worked in Billingsgate Fish Market – started as a porter and moved up and up, and ended up owning a business there. That was during the financial boom of the 1980s when the city became a big thing. Suddenly, the city was full of fancy and exotic restaurants, and he made his money by supplying fish to them, and as business grew, he moved further and further into Essex. So, that was all tied up with the social phenomenon of the 'Essex Man', which I've spent the last two years researching and exploring in relation to housing. As I'm getting older, I'm becoming a lot more interested in relating family history to a lived understanding of these abstract social phenomena and how we came about. On the one hand, there is my mum's experience of Englishness from the perspective of an immigrant, and on the other, my dad's progression from the city to countryside is tied up with that whole idea of the 'Essex Man', class and social mobility, all the way back to his family's roots in the potteries of the Midlands. So, by learning about family history, it has made it a lot easier for me to understand how Englishness came about and those sorts of socio-regional discussions, which is what I'm very much interested in these days. I've always been interested in behaviour and sociology and these sorts of things. I think I studied architecture because it was a profession that attracted me, and there was stability to it – not so much status, but the idea that you know what your job would be afterwards – because these were the sort of values that I suppose were put into me as a child – that, especially for my parents, stability was super important.

My mum, for instance, left Argentina on her own when she was young during a politically tumultuous time and ended up in Barcelona. She was there when Franco died. Later, she worked as an au pair in Paris for an interior designer on Boulevard Saint-Germain. She came to England to work for a family in Great Yarmouth, and then met my dad through their local butcher, I think. This just goes to show the sheer

complexity that comes from the experience of migration, and her family history is just as complicated, since Argentina itself was an outpost of Europe.

She's from a small town called Sunchales, in Santa Fe. It's known as the milk centre of Argentina, and her father was a gaucho and then a farmer, and they owned a small farm. He also drove the village hearse, which was one of those baroque, extravagant artworks you only get in Catholic countries. Her mum comes from a long line of Italian immigrants from Piedmont in Northern Italy, and the father's family got very complicated . . . I think he was a mix of Swiss-German, Spanish and Guaraní. So, that's just a typical Argentinian family mix.

My mum continued to live as a live-in au pair in Great Yarmouth, and then she went back to Paris to au pair. My dad – and this was before the Eurostar – would go to Paris every other weekend on the train ferry, and they used to meet just outside Gare du Nord. They used to meet there every other week, and then they decided to live together. They bought a house in a suburban cul-de-sac in Galleywood, and I love hearing stories about this little environment because it sounded full of the sort of Reginald Perrin pastiche of Englishness. One of the neighbours used to hoover the drive every Saturday, which I just think is hilarious, but is probably more common behaviour than we imagine. So, that was a microcosm of the community there, but the house that I grew up in is in the middle of nowhere. There are plots of fields and houses and private unmade roads, but you couldn't walk to anywhere useful. We had to drive to school, and then in secondary school, I learnt to drive myself because it was 40 minutes away. So, I wouldn't say that I grew up in a community. I went to a grammar school in Essex that pretended to be a private school, which really annoyed me. We had to wear a purple blazer with Latin mottos on it. It would have been a perfect setting for a remake of *if* . . . with Malcolm McDowell. Growing up, I wanted to be a psychologist. I think it's the first career move that I could think of because I was interested in understanding people and these sorts of things, and in retrospect, maybe I would've been more open to studying some of the more ambiguous academic subjects like sociology . . . I was very good at economics: I won a national economics prize when I was 17 for a carbon-neutral housing policy. So, that was quite odd because I'd just applied for university at that point, and when I was given the award by Nicholas Stern, he asked, 'So, where are you going to study economics then?' And I told him that I was going to study architecture instead. But I didn't see much difference between them. I simply thought architecture would be more propositional rather than analytical. So, I ended up studying architecture at UCL, and that's where I met you. And then afterwards, I started working with architects and decided I didn't like it. So, I went to work at the Olympic Park in public-sector urban design, which I found far more interesting. I got far more interested in urban design and the space between buildings – how cities work as an ecosystem. Then, I went to Cambridge to do my MPhil because it was an unusual course in that you picked

your own research topic. And it was interdisciplinary, and it was a lot broader; it was about really understanding a context, and rigorously figuring it out. So, I used that as an excuse to think long and hard about Essex as a microcosm of the English condition of planning, and these sorts of things, because I was obsessed with the history of how Essex was a test bed for all sorts of development and growth and, also, what the hell Englishness is, or whether it is even a thing, and how that influences these sorts of things. So, whereas Ian often talks about the economic aspects of it, I've become really interested in the cultural aspects of property and how people view property, how they relate it to landscape, how they relate it to national character and what sort of politics comes out of it . . . So, that's where I'm sort of heading at the moment.

Ian, you published your book *Why Is Construction So Backward?* with James Woudhuysen in 2004. Could you talk a little about why you and James wrote the book and your interest in house building in this country, and how that led onto the 250 New Towns Club and what your ambitions were for that?

IA: Colin Davies wrote *The Prefabricated Home* (2006), a brilliant book that Martin Pawley rated highly. Colin had pointed me towards your pattern book. Colin's question in his book is 'why is housing so difficult today?' The Georgians and the Victorians had pattern books. You could buy houses from the Sears catalogue, and suburban semis needed no architect. In the interwar years, there were all sorts of catalogues of innovative systems and products that people would sell you: kit homes. Dorman Long produced their steel-framed asbestos bungalows, which must have been freezing cold, but far better than living in a tenement – they had an inside toilet. Housing has not always required an architect. You could go back to the architecturally generated pattern books that inform places like the Hampstead garden suburb, or the Edwardian attempts by Lever at Port Sunlight, which influenced the speculative house builders of the 1920s and 1930s. The semi-detached houses were logically generated by where you put the stairs, with a side window on a plot wide enough to drive down for a garage in the back. But even before mass car ownership, having a plot so that you could get access to the back garden was the basis for all the plot lands in Essex. If you were struggling to earn a living, you could do some additional work from home, as was my dad's makeshift attitude to suburbia, which his mum had encouraged. For the interwar generation, home ownership through a mortgage loan meant the possibility that you couldn't be evicted by a landlord, and that the landlord couldn't keep putting the rent up. Eventually, you'd pay off the loan by working out of your shed at weekends, fixing cars or making timber windows or music boxes just to make ends meet. Maybe too there is a bit of vegetable and fruit growing, which could be enjoyed more as a hobby than as a necessity during wartime. But after the war, suburbia, like everywhere else in Britain, required planning. Paul Barker and Philippa Lewis's *The Freedoms of Suburbia* (2009) explains that perfectly, although he retreated from

criticism of the postwar planning system. 'Non-Plan' in 1969 for *New Society* magazine by Reyner Banham, Paul Barker, Peter Hall and Cedric Price had marked a brief frustration with the planned environment. The authors were then imagining if things could be any worse with the repeal of the planning law. A few years later, in 1973, Peter Hall wrote a two-volume defence of why the planning system was essential to contain urban England and stop suburban sprawl. *The Containment of Urban England* established him as Britain's pre-eminent planner. In his early writings, Colin Ward had wanted to repeal the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act and set places like suburbia free again. But he too sided with Peter Hall in his later years, resigned to the planning system.

On page 287 of *Why Is Construction So Backward?* (2004), James Woudhuysen and I concluded that planning was holding back the construction industry. Since 1947, no landowner is free to build on their own land in Britain. The discretionary power of the state to deny development is delegated to local authorities to approve or reject an application to build. This planning permission is then politically handed out through a middle-class committee, often to encourage short-term constituency interests. The planning system means that the construction industry can't make the productive leaps that other industries can make. James and I started looking at why construction was stuck in the architectural project-by-project paradigm of site development, rather than able to unleash production. Why wasn't housing mass produced for customers reading pattern books or catalogues, deliberately cheapened and made easier to install on a prepared site? John Turner had wondered that too . . . Why couldn't the construction industry be advanced beyond the stuttering set of disjointed product innovations made by manufacturers that crashed in recessions? We came to the conclusion on page 287 that a project-by-project-based approach that can hardly get beyond disjointed product innovation is necessary when you have to respond to the planning system: you can't predict work, and as a manufacturer you can't line up an order book. You can't build up stock or become 'lean' and operate a low-stock approach to production because you are unable to guarantee when, or even if, planning permission is going to be given. Construction is stop-start, and thanks to the need for planning permission, it is a far more chaotic business in production.

The end of the Cold War was great, and I say that as a republican and an old communist of the internationalist sort. But oddly, it is the Cold War warriors of the 1980s who turn to environmentalism. It was a blue/green sensibility that came out of the end of the Cold War as the reds struggled with their past. So, by the time the 1990s had been worked through, the idea of sustainability has become an elastic term as politically useful as community was in the 1970s, and particularly among planners and architects. In the 1990s, environmentalism was a reheating of Malthusian ideas: the lie that there are too many people, and an anti-human sentiment. I'm against sustainability. I wanted to develop a criticism of Richard Rogers in his promotion of sustainability. It was Richard

Rogers who used the planning system to strengthen the containment that Peter Hall had identified. In the late 1990s, the Urban Task Force was instructed by New Labour to bolster the planning system. It was John Stewart (who later got a job at the Home Builders Federation [HBF]) who realised that if sustainability meant sterilising the countryside, containing the population in urban areas and opposing suburban sprawl, then lower housing production and house-price inflation would result. The phrase John Stewart was using around 2000 was 'Building a Crisis'. The HBF published his argument in about 2002, but I published his insight in *Sustaining Architecture in the Anti-Machine Age* in 2001. John Stewart has been proved right. The sterilisation of the British countryside through the planning system has meant that we've now got the unaffordable housing market that managed to survive the financial difficulties of 2008. If there had not been the planning system predicated on containment as the measure of sustainability, the British housing market would've gone the way of Ireland and Spain. Planning is a virtuous, green underpinning of the financed housing market. The beneficiaries outside of the finance sector are middle-class homeowners, or those who hope to inherit a home, and a new section of middle-class landlords who have revived the private rental sector. Institutional landlords now hope to capitalise on joint ventures with local authorities who are both landowners and planning committee, and architectural talk about 'offsite manufacture' has been given a new twist. That's the link to the 250 New Towns Club, while it lasted. We were struggling to find a way of thinking about planning and the ideological shifts in policy that affect construction practice.

Alec, you and I worked on together on a submission for the Wolfson Economic Prize 2014. The theme that year was for a garden city for the twenty-first century and the issues to be considered were vision, governance, economy and popularity.

IA: Well, it seems odd, doesn't it? Why would Lord Wolfson, a Tory peer, come up with something that seemed like it was the opposite to the orthodoxy of sustainability and urban containment? It was posed as a conservative challenge to that orthodoxy. In reality, that Wolfson competition was a sham.
AS: Yes, nothing happened . . .
IA: Indeed, and the winner was someone who explicitly believes in urban containment . . .
AS: Well, they were just proposing suburbs. There was nothing different about that. And the other thing that annoyed me was the wording of the competition; it ignored the new towns as any sort of precursor. They were viewing the garden city as something historical, but they didn't seem to realise that the new towns were in many ways an imperfect aspiration to the same sort of ideals because we ended up using the same new towns' legislation as the basis for our competition.
IA: Exactly. The New Towns Act 1946 is still on the statute books. The promise of new towns remains. If you really wanted to house the population of Britain at the rate it's growing, you would, over 20 years,

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9.5 Aspley Guise square, 1965

need to build around 250 new towns of forty thousand households each. There is plenty of redundant farmland. Legal new town development at that pace would blow a hole in the plan set by Richard Rogers to refuse planning permission on greenfield sites and force ever-denser development on brownfield sites. That inflates house prices on developable urban land, which suits a lot of people. Urban containment and densification also suits architectural practice. Architects hate the pattern-book approach because you can't make a living if designs are cheap and readily available. Unsurprisingly, the 250 New Towns Club had failed by the time of the Wolfson competition; we had set ourselves the ludicrous task of drawing 50 new towns a year, which is one a week. We lacked the resources to do that! So, the Wolfson competition was a manageable task, which we could approach by dropping a new town on Lord Wolfson's village of Aspley Guise, near Milton Keynes.

Part of our agenda to counteract the urban densification proposed by Richard Rogers was to reinvent farmland and to provide the means for people who weren't farmers to live in it.

IA: That wasn't a new idea.
AS: I thought it was about the idea of stewardship and the false assumption that the countryside is not a 'proper' place for a development – that it will somehow be better for the countryside to be emptier. But it ignores the extents that urbanisation can be a considered process of maintenance and management for the benefit of everybody, for the benefit of food production rather than aggressive consumption of resources. You simply cannot decant the countryside and expect it to become better.
IA: Well, you can depopulate the countryside if you enclose the land for farming sheep – which is what the aristocracy did.
AS: I also don't agree with the fetish for the 'wild' and re-wilding, which is so fashionable now. I just think it's not as clear-cut as that, I expect. I think what is interesting is that we were arguing for low density in terms of stewardship – that we were actually looking after the land in a productive way and promoting ecological diversity through the introduction of finer-grain divisions of land – as opposed to protecting it by not doing anything with it and trying to confine everybody as much as possible. You can relate that to Broadacre City and those sorts of ideas as part of this vast, low-density stewardship. While there are obvious issues of sustainability in terms of 'sprawl', so many of these are issues of behaviour rather than urban form. We tried to address the culture of this by presenting a different desire for a city of stewardship. I think our other innovation was to think of it in a patchwork way when it comes to land ownership.
IA: Paul Cheshire, as the adviser to Wolfson, is often claiming that suburbia is more biologically diverse than anywhere else. He does that in *Urban Economics and Urban Policy: Challenging Conventional Policy Wisdom* (Cheshire, Nathan and Overman, 2014) with birds and fancy fruit trees that were the pride and joy of your parents that

you climbed up and made a tree house in. It's a varied, lived-in landscape.
AS: There's this whole culture emerging of the 'post-pastoral' in literature, and these sorts of things. You've got people like Richard Mabey doing journeys up the Lea Valley and recording all of the ecosystems at the margins of spaces, and you've got Oliver Rackham talking about the plot lands and their biodiversity versus the sterility of large fields. And I've personally become really interested in the difference between historic open-field systems, and the way they are now, and whether that could work for suburbia: the idea that management is temporal, it's based on custom, it changes over time. It's not about having an empty field that is a single use, it's about dividing it up; and how you introduce rotation and the nuanced ways of ownership and belonging that occur with that. So, I think there's all different ways to look at how you divide land up and how you manage it that become the basis for understanding the architectural implications of a different economic system, for instance. With the patchwork idea, I think that what we didn't think about (that we needed to do) was really about the common land as social and environmental infrastructure and how it all connects up together. So, it's not about zoning and allows some flexibility in how a settlement emerges. Because I think that if you look at the idea of public realm in this day and age, it's all based on a very singular idea of ownership. It's more often than not privately owned space between buildings that's managed, but if you begin to think more about what common land is and what it's legal status is – who maintains it, who manages it, how it's designed – then I think that's really where the interesting work on master planning could be done, particularly in greenfield developments.
IA: That's British history, isn't it? The denial of the commons is the enclosures. Aspley Guise was a product of the enclosures and sheep farming. British history from the Tudor period was one of enclosure – the creation of a landless working class. By the time you get to the Victorian period, enclosure is legalised, systematised and rampant. The creation of a landless working class is what the British state is about. The 1947 planning system is a preservation of the achievements of the enclosures. Peter Hall was wrong in the titling of his book: planning wasn't about the containment of urban England, it was about the containment of the working class. But this is the twenty-first century. You would still have a working class, but people would have ready access to allotments and an acre or two, with woodland, all of which could be in some kind of private ownership. It doesn't have to be a common, although some might make it common land. We need to get over ourselves in Britain. The idea of containment is just stupid: you can live in the countryside. Martin Pawley was always strong on letting people build villages. Archigram talked about hedgerow housing. The non-planners got it, and then retreated from repeal of the 1947 Act.

You are also critical of Howard and the garden city, which was based on a self-sufficient urban unit that also seems to

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9.6 Sketching the Patchwork City

imply the idea of the containment of the countryside. We had proposed the idea of a patchwork city to situate it in the wider economic context of the Oxford–Cambridge Arc.

IA: We imagined how Aspley Guise could be extended into the former Stewartby Brickworks in the Marston Vale, between Cranfield University and the Millbrook vehicle testing centre. We hoped that farmers would give their land or there would be some kind of exchange. We worked out a plot price that gave farmers enough to retire on. We were totally strategic in terms of location. We had to build something on top of Lord Wolfson's home . . .

AS: But we weren't strategic about which parcels of land.

IA: That's right, because it was to sprawl all over the place.

AS: Which allowed us to draw our red-line boundary in many ways after we've completed land accumulation, though I don't know how legal that is.

IA: It's completely legal if done using the New Towns Act 1946.

AS: It's pretty unorthodox.

IA: Britain is so full of redundant land that if we wanted to have one end of a sprawling patchwork new town in Aspley Guise, you could have bought land in any direction.

AS: In many respects, it was like an idea that you could expand out for the entire country, in a way.

IA: That's the problem I found with the 250 New Towns Club: when you lay the map of Britain out and start drawing on it, there is so much space. You can start to put new towns in places that have got some kind of landscape relationship, whether radiating around London or on the canal navigations in Norfolk. The critical factor is paid work. Where are the jobs? How do you make an income?

AS: It makes you want to question the value of compactness (instead of just an economic thing) to think about the town centre today – what is their relevance now and what could be their importance?

Sprawl has always been a pejorative word. Is sprawl a good thing? Can we discuss it in positive terms?

IA: I think sprawl's a very good thing. I can't imagine Britain without the suburban sprawl of the 1920s and 1930s; the semi-detached and detached houses that are now selling for millions of pounds, and the kind of home that I grew up in. I mean, if you look at my mum and dad, home ownership was a dream because they are the children of workers. Their parents were renting. My dad tells the story of Mrs Talbot, who never spoke to him after she shook his hand over the fence when he moved in. He was the wrong sort, rough hands and the wrong class. The thing for mum and dad was to pay off the mortgage: you got free of the landlord and lived more cheaply. That was the freedom of suburbia: the promise of home ownership. Then, in the 1980s, there is a growing notion that the house can make you money. The early 1990s are uncertain, but house price inflation is expected by the 2000s. The house becomes your pension. The elderly homeowner can be assured of health care if they liquidate the place and downsize.

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9.7 Initial proposal for the Patchwork City

But mum and dad realise their nieces and nephews are unable to achieve the same. The younger generation can't buy a cheap place. Wanting a home to become security is one thing, but house-price inflation based in planned containment and under-production has skewed the economy. Finances are in a mess, and the thought of house-price deflation scares the hell out of people.

It has also skewed society and the dynamics of our culture. It's an obvious conversation about the North–South divide. I've just been reading George Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937) which is about interwar Britain, but particularly the North of England and the terrible conditions the working classes lived in. What kind of communities would you envisage living at Aspley Guise?

IA: You don't need to envisage it. If you go to Southend on a bank holiday weekend, the entire world is there. The world's in Southend, as it is in Essex. If only those worlds could organise to take control of a farm and build a new town.

AS: I mean, to be honest, I think Southend is a really good example of how our proposal would've ended up because it itself is a collage of sprawl, and if you look at it in a satellite photo, it's just a weird patchwork of open space, estuary and suburbia, basically. From what I remember, the town centres aren't really that great in it. It's all of the really odd bits around it that make it what it is because it takes advantage of the pier, for instance, and it now has a quite good airport. It flies to Poland, and it's creating a big connection between the two places. So, that's probably it, in a way. I mean 'community' is an odd word to be using anymore – particularly when you are going out with the intention to create new places. I mean, I'm interested in polity and that idea as something strictly administrative. How do people organise themselves when it comes to those sorts of city forms, and how easy is it to organise yourself if you live in the suburb? I don't know, but it's an interesting question.

IA: I mean, Peter Hall made a big play of London being a 'world city'. That was another trope in his academic life, which I think he took from Doreen Massey. The phrase 'world city' is first attributed to Liverpool in the late 1880s, I think, largely because Liverpool was a product of the triangular trade. So, it had the world going through it in a way that London and Bristol had too. But nobody talks about a 'world suburb'. When you use the academic phrase 'world city', you imagine it as some kind of very dense core with a walkable periphery that's got the rich and poor living in it – like Charles Booth's map of London. But the reality is the world is in Southend in Essex or spread out around Sutton in Surrey. Now, sometimes, suburbia gets very Eastern European, and sometimes it gets very Caribbean, and often those places don't mix easily, but that's a social process in itself. I mean, Alec, you're an Argentinian and an Essex Man, intermarriage is a great thing. But nobody talks about a world suburb or a world sprawl . . . which would be really good!

AS: Yes, especially on our site when we had the Amazon distribution centre as

9.8

9.8 Action plan for a Patchwork City at Marston Vale

sort of the centre of the world in many respects. That's a vastly changing environment of labour. I've just finished reading a really interesting short catalogue by Jeremy Deller and Roger Malbert called *All That Is Solid Melts into Air* (2013) of an exhibition Deller did of the everyday experience of the Industrial Revolution and its relationship to a lot of auxiliary social phenomena like heavy-metal music. We should talk more about the 'world suburb' as an important cultural place as well as an economic one, and it would be interesting to see what these changing forms of labour could potentially generate in them. It's also a criticism on the whole idea of progress: progress towards what and for whom? We always thought that we would somehow end up in a situation where we could be working four days week and be liberated by automation with plenty of time to devote the production of a rich cultural life, but it's all been a lie. Flexibility has created zero-hour contracts, while places like Amazon and Apple continue to evade millions in taxes.

It makes me think about a condition of post-scarcity that was talked about in the 1960s and 1970s by Murray Bookchin and others, and where we are now.

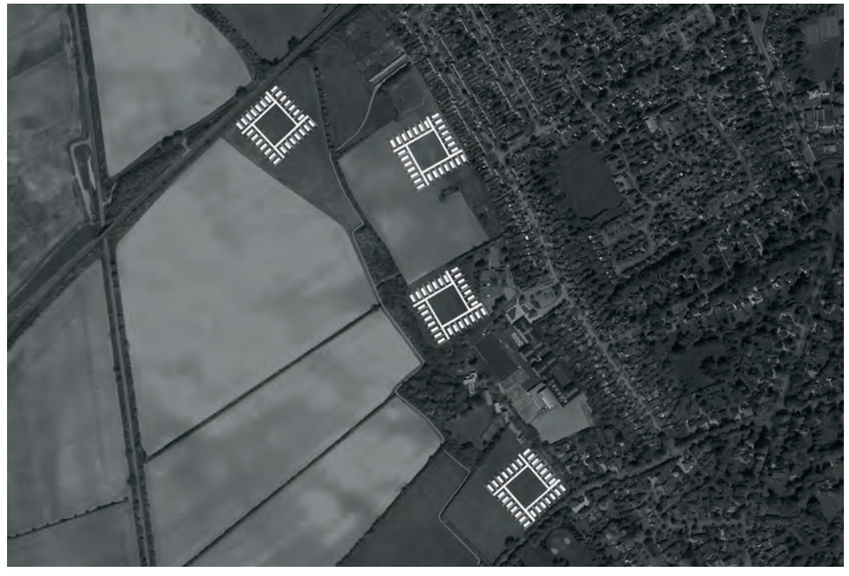
IA: Are we in a condition of post-scarcity?

I think probably we are.

IA: There's long been capital, but that doesn't end scarcity. Isn't it about how you distribute global wealth equably? It's about how you produce it – it's not about how you distribute – it's about how you produce, surely.

But we produce more than we need, including in terms of agricultural production. It's there; it's just how we choose to distribute it.

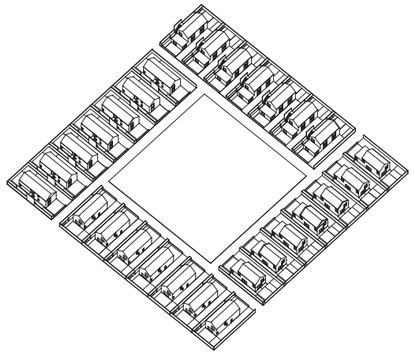
IA: Well, production is privatised. The surplus is privatised as capital. Many things have been cheapened through capitalist production, but the last thing that the British economy wants is to cheapen housing. Yet, it's the obvious thing that you want to cheapen. You might be in your 20s and paid a reasonable amount of money. Your food is relatively cheap, and you can live in cafes. But your one room is costing you a fortune. It's sucking up all of your disposable income when, if you cheapened shelter, people would have a lot more disposable income. The trouble is if you cheapen shelter in Britain right now, the City of London would collapse. That was our point in the 250 New Towns Club. If you really want everyone to have affordable housing, you have to imagine that your house is not your pension or your health care in old age. If housing is to be solved as a problem of capitalist production, to drive housing costs down, then planning containment has to cease. Richard Rogers was wrong. His dense urban notion of sustainability has built a crisis. A non-plan approach to land use is due a revival, and the repeal of the Town and Country Planning Act 1947 is required. Then house-price inflation would 'melt into air', and housing would no longer be a scarcity.



9.9

9.9 Patterns for Letchworth, aerial view of proposed housing development

1:10,000

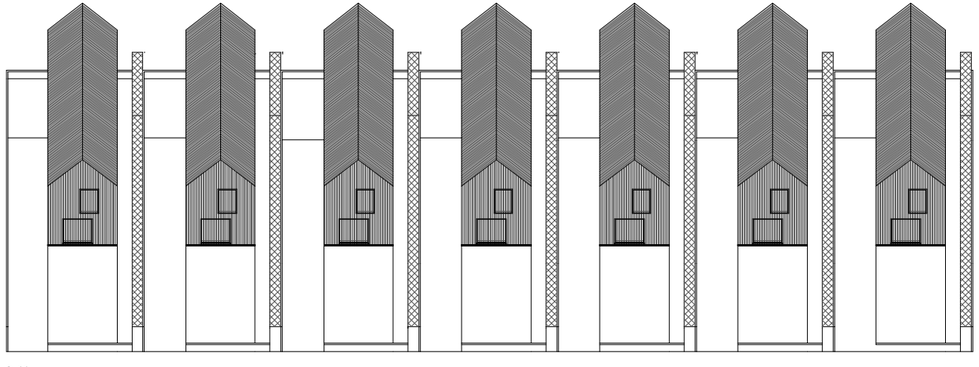


9.10

9.10 Isometric

1:2500

0m 25m 125m

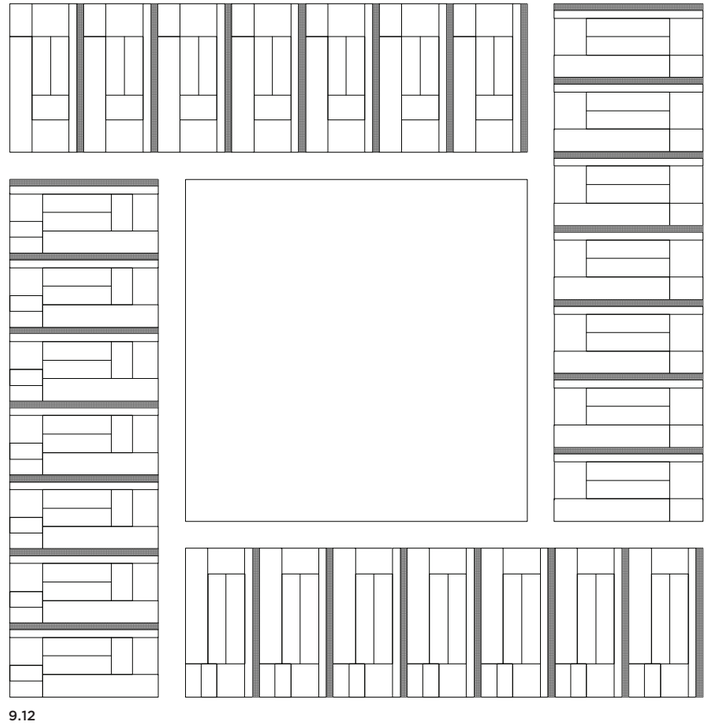


9.11

9.11 Planometric

1:500

0m 5m 25m

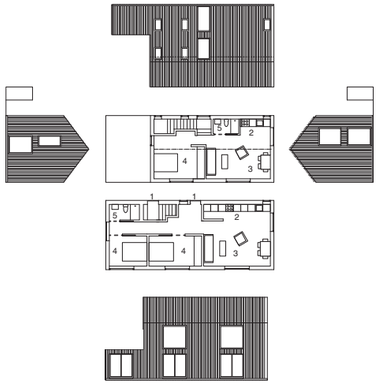


9.12

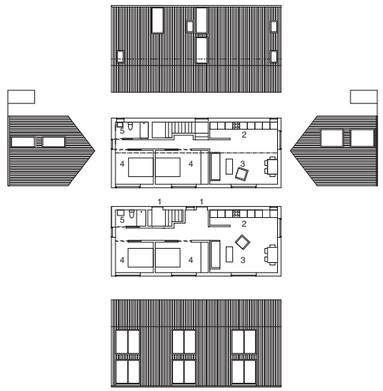
9.12 Site plan

1:1000

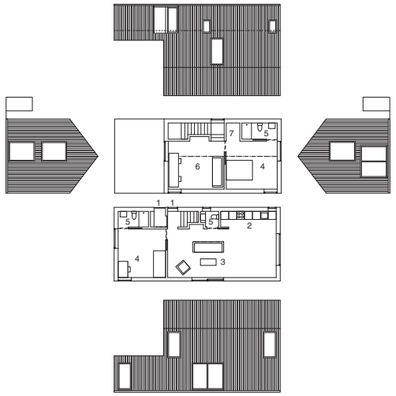
0m 10m 50m



Type 1:
2 no. Flats

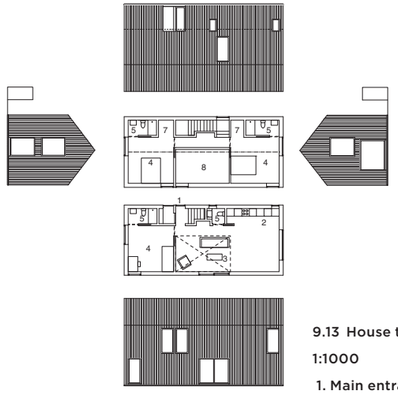


Type 3:
2 no.Two Bedroom Flats



Type 2:
Two Bedroom House

9.13



Type 4:
Three Bedroom House

9.13 House types

1:1000

1. Main entrance
2. Kitchen
3. Living room
4. Bedroom
5. Bathroom
6. Study
7. Storeroom
8. Lightwell

Type 2 *Type 4*

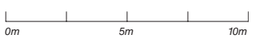
9.14

9.14 Plan and section

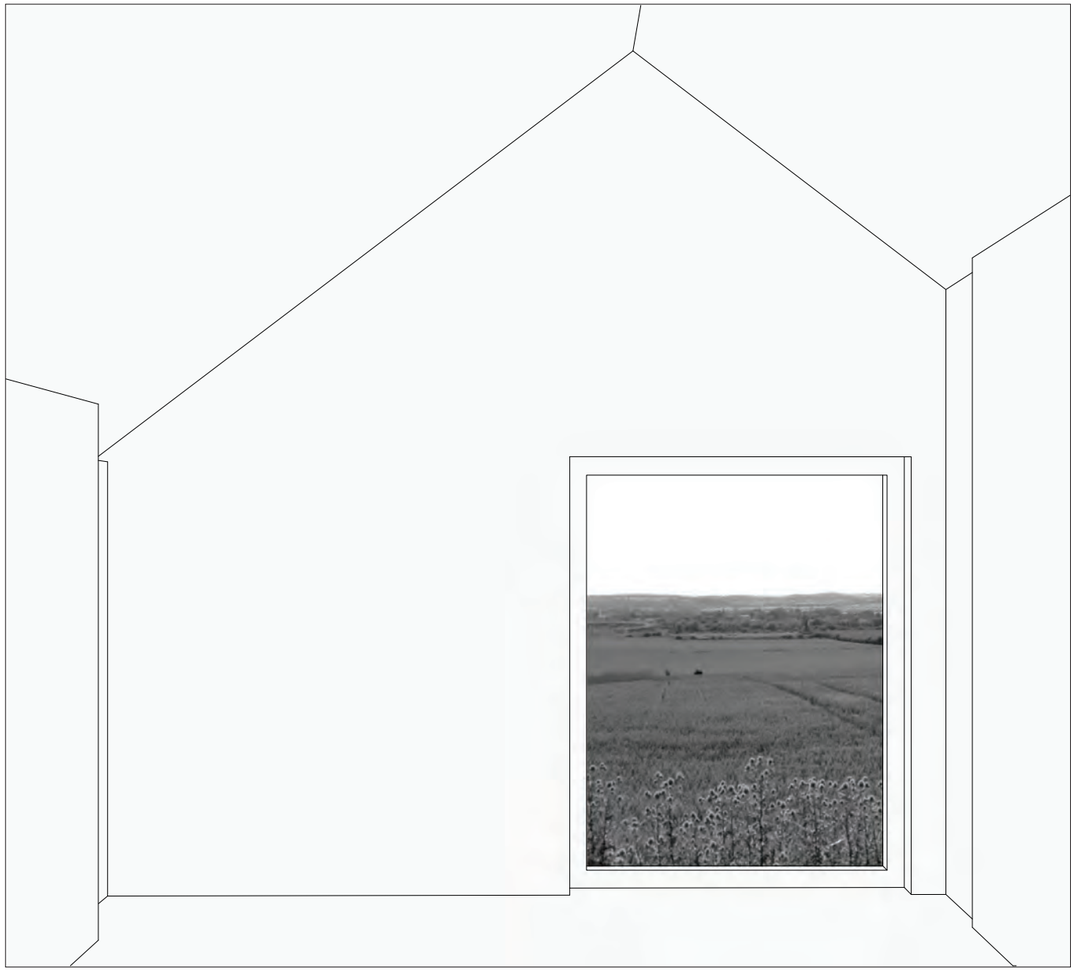
1:250

1. Entrance
2. Kitchen
3. Living room
4. Bedroom
5. Bathroom

House plots are defined by linear party structures 2.4 m high. These have been designed as multivalent timber frames acting as a pergola, arbour, garden shed, bicycle shed, meter cupboard and bin store.



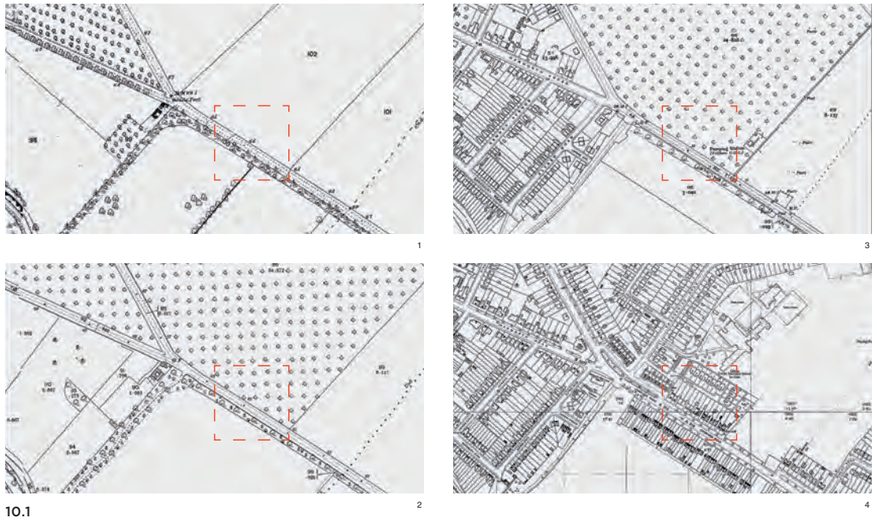
9.15



9.16

9.15 Exterior views

9.16 Interior with view of farmland (opposite)

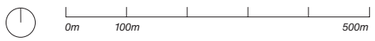


10.1

10.1 **Historical maps showing site development.** | Source: Images courtesy of Digimap.

1:10,000

1. 1860
2. 1890
3. 1910
4. 1960



2009

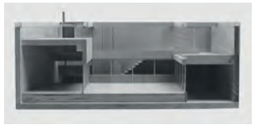
Metropolis | House + Garden + House

10.2

10.2 Back gardens, Uxbridge Road, Feltham

Feltham, the site for House + Garden + House, is an outer London suburb near Heathrow Airport and close to the M3 motorway. It was originally part of Hounslow Heath – an area of low-quality land which provided marginal cultivation and subsistence farming to its inhabitants. Feltham evolved as ribbon development during the interwar period as London grew westwards, and provided a service community to Heathrow Airport which expanded rapidly in the 1950s. It became a favourite settlement for the Punjabi and Sikh diaspora from North India and East Africa in the period after Indian Independence in 1947. Residential development is mainly modest two-storey buildings in terraces as well as detached and semi-detached houses. The period since the 1960s has seen the town centre evolve substantially, offering a bland mix of shops and malls and also an 'out-of-town' shopping centre – a huge car park surrounded by a variety of restaurants and entertainment buildings including a multiplex cinema. Feltham Young Offenders Prison is situated nearby and provides the area with an unwelcome notoriety.

A New Suburban Code for London—House + Garden + House: A New Suburban



10.3

10.4

10.3 'Invisible House' model

10.4 'Invisible House' site section. The Invisible House, London Borough of Ealing, received planning permission in 1994 on appeal. It proposed modest back garden development as a way of densifying suburbia without loss of amenity/green space. It challenged Garden Policy. A New Suburban Code for London sets out a scenario for back garden development as a further challenge to garden policy.

Code for London may be viewed as an antidote to the over-assertiveness of much of the new suburban fabric. It is not intended as a universal strategy but potentially another letter in the alphabet of London building types.

Our aim is to help provide Londoners with appropriate places in which to live. For too long, there has been empty talk by politicians and policymakers about housing need without this being translated into action.

We contend there is a simple solution and that land is available across the whole of London suburbia to build enough houses to supply the demand. This land is located in the back gardens of most suburban semi-detached houses.

It is certain the present methods of running up houses in London, not only disgraces us in the eyes of strangers, but threatens continual disasters. Till such a control shall be laid upon bad builders by public authority, those who have more skill and integrity should distinguish themselves from them by their work. (Ware, 1735)

The green belt surrounding London has encouraged more intensive development within the city and the suburbs. However, there is a profound mismatch between the old suburban patterns of development that have evolved since the First World War and the post-industrial culture in which we now find ourselves. New development in suburbs is frequently inappropriate and unaffordable. An emphasis on the single-family house has created a monocultural environment which has led to lifestyles that burden working families and isolate the elderly and single.

Pierre d'Avoine Architects designed The Invisible House for the back garden of a semi-detached house in Acton, West London. It met the planning criteria of the time and received planning permission in 1994, but not without objection from local residents and neighbours. The Invisible House is one of a series of interstitial suburban houses the practice has designed that has its roots in British architectural tradition and also as a response to major cultural changes that have occurred in London since 1945 and are continuing to take place.

There is always concern about new development in residential neighbourhoods. Back-garden development is a sensitive issue but, if carefully designed, need not be invasive and detrimental. Indeed, it could be a positive contribution to the suburban environment – one which acknowledges the rich and evolving mix of communities that now live in London and provides new scenarios for neighbourly living.

Our proposal for House + Garden + House focuses on a site in Feltham, South-West London, near Heathrow Airport where there has been a large influx of people of South Asian origin particularly Sikh and Punjabi communities. We propose new small houses, studios and workshops in existing back gardens that could effectively double the density without loss of garden space.

For example, the new house we have designed in the back garden of the semi-detached house on Uxbridge Road, Feltham, comprises two bedrooms, a living room/dining room/kitchen with mezzanine

gallery and bathroom, with total internal floor area of 76 m^2. This house would replace an existing double garage.

The new house uses 60 m^2 of garden plus a parking space of the existing garden. The existing three-bedroom semi-detached house (118 m^2) has 102 m^2 of garden –42 m^2 of front garden and 60 m^2 of back garden with a shared driveway. Topsoil dug up during construction is placed on the roof of the new house so that the visual amenity of the garden is retained for enjoyment by neighbouring houses. The roof is partly sloped to accentuate its emblematic quality when seen from bedroom windows of the existing houses. (Roofs may be double pitched or flat in response to specific locations.)

We have applied this idea to the seven pairs of semi-detached houses in Uxbridge Road to provide 14 new houses in individual back gardens. Roof gardens may be used to cultivate vegetables and flowers. Thus, the new houses could maintain the productive potential of suburban back gardens.

In accordance with current supplementary planning guidelines, each new house is provided with at least 50 m^2 of garden and existing mainly three-bedroom houses have at least 75 m^2 of amenity space.

The current Hounslow Borough Local Plan for Garden Land proposed policy options: SC8 states:

1. Protect garden land by:
(a) Introducing a general presumption against new development on garden land in view of their specific amenity, character and biodiversity value OR
(b) Assess proposals for new development on garden land on case-by-case basis using the general policies in the Local Plan.

(Extract from Hounslow Local Plan, Chapter 5 – Delivering Sustainable Mixed Communities, London Borough of Hounslow, 2010).

We strongly urge that a new policy should be drafted based on our proposal House + Garden + House: A New Suburban Code for London to presume in favour of private development of individual new houses, studios and/or workshops using high-quality design and sustainability criteria, including form, scale, massing, construction and space standards in relation to the existing semi-detached house and garden plot. To achieve this, we propose a simple, straightforward pattern-book approach that offers homeowners and their contractors appropriate models to build on their sites.

Such an approach would eliminate or at least limit the involvement of large-scale developers that currently have a hegemony on suburban residential development in collusion with local and national politicians. It is vital that a 'bottom-up' scenario for small-scale residential, live/work and other kinds of development is established in the UK in the spirit of Kropotkin, Colin Ward and other humane thinkers.

The environment of interwar suburbia, especially the built fabric, has inevitably suffered considerable wear and tear over the years. Houses have undergone a variety of changes and alterations, some good, some bad, but the effect is generally detrimental.

Current government relaxation of planning laws to permit extensive extension and

Jess Rayat, private client

addition to individual houses exacerbates the situation and misses the point by perpetuating the monoculture of large family homes and inappropriate development by volume house builders. Small new houses, studios or workshops in existing back gardens, if sensitively eased into the existing environment, can provide older homeowners with the opportunity to downsize in their immediate locale, giving them the opportunity to provide homes for grown-up children who cannot afford to move or to use for work. The new houses may also be used to provide much-needed accommodation for newcomers reflecting the fast-changing cultural changes London is experiencing in a way that invigorates and ennobles the lives of everyone who lives there.

Jess Rayat

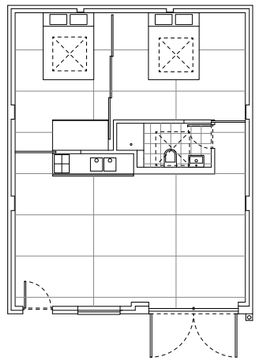
Interview at Durham Yard, London, 1 September 2016—I'm one of five children in my family. My parents are both Punjabi by origin; my father was born in North India and my mother was born in Mombasa, Kenya, Africa. I'm the second child of five, and I have two sisters and two brothers. I have been living in Feltham since 2000. I was born in Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya, in 1959. We stayed in a place called South C, where everybody used to be given accommodation wherever your parents worked, and we belonged to the railway community. My father worked for the British, building a railway line from the coast all the way to Kampala, Uganda. He left India at the age of 21 in the early 1930s. My mother was born there and was 18 years old when she married my father. At the time of Kenyan independence in 1963, my father came to the UK, and my mother and their three children, including myself, got sent back to Jalandhar in the Punjab, North India, which is where our families are from originally. This was because the political situation in Kenya was very unstable. Jomo Kenyatta, the first president, was considering sending all the Asians back, a bit like Idi Amin did in Uganda a few years later. We ended up living in India for six years before we came to England in 1969. My father had a house at Hamilton Road, Twickenham, which is where I met you. I spoke Punjabi and English, and I was fluent in Swahili.

I'm really interested to hear that you also spoke Swahili. Can you remember much about your childhood in Nairobi?

In those days, you went to school very early because of the heat. It was a Punjabi predominant school, but you had to learn Swahili as the first language. And now Swahili and English are the national languages of Kenya. So, everybody speaks English as well as Swahili. There are more than 42 tribes in Kenya, and they all have their dialects, but in Nairobi, the main language is Swahili.

In Kenya, we lived in railway quarters. They were beautiful whitewashed wooden bungalows. So, it was very cool in the summer. It was like New Orleans in the USA; people used to sit out in their rocking chairs. I really loved those houses. They had a brilliant character. The sun used to be really, really hot, but inside it was cool because of the through breeze.

10.5



10.6

10.5 Garage in back garden

10.6 Plan for an interior fit-out of the garage to contain kitchen/living room, bathroom and two bedrooms

1:200

0m 2m 10m

And what kind of house did you have in Jalandhar?

In Jalandhar, we had a proper building made out of brick. It was a two-storey building with a beautiful courtyard and a beautiful solarium at the top. It was a fantastic house. I can't remember much else, but it was very modern. Those houses were designed with insulation because the winters got very cold in northern Punjab. But in the summer, they were very cool. I think it's because of the through breeze again.

It was a very difficult time, Pierre. And do you know why? Because in about 1964 or 1965, there was an Indo-Pakistan war, and we weren't that far away from the war border . . . and we used to hear tanks firing and aircraft overhead. It was horrible as a child, and we had no shelter like you did in the Second World War in London because you had the underground here for shelter or war bunker shelters. But we had nothing. We were exposed; very, very stressful. I remember they were recruiting youngsters for the army. It didn't matter what age you were, as long as you were at a certain height then they would take you. Amazing place when you're growing up as a child in India. Very amazing. You had to be a man before you were a boy.

Tell us about your journey to England and then your family house in Twickenham.

I remember we came on a BOAC VC10. It's a beautiful aircraft. It had four engines at the back, swept wings . . . I think we flew from Delhi to Istanbul and then London. And I'll always remember this: we came into Heathrow Airport in October, and I'd never seen snow in my life until I got to Heathrow. It was so, so cold, I wanted to go back to India. We moved into my dad's house on Hamilton Road, Twickenham, where it seemed the sun shone on us for ages, including in 1976 when we had the heat wave.

I remember that summer because I was living there then.

We had about four Asian families living on our road in terraced houses that still exist today, and will probably still exist in the next century as well. It was very dark in the winter, but in the summer, it was a very happy place to be because we had back gardens connected by alleyways, and you could get from one street to the next by going through the back alleyways. And the house that we lived in, to us, it was like a big palace really because we'd never owned our own house until we came to Twickenham – and that's when we got interested in properties, I guess, and how they were laid out. When you look at the house in Twickenham, it was a very simple design, but it worked. It had upstairs, it had downstairs, it had a bathroom at the rear; some people had outside toilets at the time. We used to have a coal fire when we first arrived. The coalman used to come, and he used to deliver the coal on his back. He used to walk through the front door and take the coal to the coal store at the back. Apparently, it was a standard thing back

10.7

10.7 Model, balsa wood and mountboard, by Ayo Solola and Bola Osoba

then. And we had the milkman who used to come and deliver the milk in the morning. That was life in the UK back then.

I met you when I was at secondary school in 1973. You bought the house at the end of our terrace with the biggest garden in the street. Still small, but you had that extra bit of land on the side.

I remember you were interested in cars when you were a teenager.

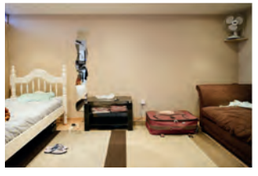
No, I was interested in machinery and how it worked. And after leaving school, I did a five-year apprenticeship on cars and motor mechanics at Acton College, and by that time, I'd joined the police force. I worked all over the place. Once I'd finished my apprenticeship, then I was based in Barnes. I met my wife Vanita at Richmond College in 1984, and we got married in 1985 at the Southall Gurdwara. We stayed at home for one year at my mum and dad's place. We left in 1986 and bought the bottom flat of a house conversion at 16a Summit Road, Northolt. We lived there for two years. We were expecting our first child. So, we bought a house at 158 Uxbridge Road in Feltham in 1989. We bought the house next door in 2000, and we moved into that property and let the other one. Then, unfortunately, my marriage sort of collapsed. I separated from my wife, and currently I'm living next door to my ex, which is brilliant.

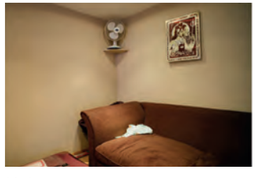
It's interesting that you decided to buy a house in Feltham and then buy the house next door.

That came about because I bought number 158 in my name, and we got the house next door for our retirement so that we could let one, and if one of us stopped working, we'd still have a way of generating an income. My son lives with my wife. My daughter has just bought a two-bedroom house in Sunbury Cross. So, yes, she's left the nest.

Can you talk about why you chose to live in Feltham?

I chose Feltham for no other reason than the size of the house. It's what I could afford. It was the biggest house I'd seen on the market at the time. And with this house, you have a 100-ft back garden and 40-ft garden at the front. The second reason why I got it is because there's a bus stop right outside, Feltham railway station is nearby and Heathrow's not that far. The house in Feltham offered a lot of advantages compared to other properties in the area. Twickenham is predominately an affluent area and very expensive. At the time, the properties there cost upward of £300,000, which was a lot of money to me, and I bought a house in Feltham for £89,000. Flats were available, but flats are no good for a young family. The only thing I like about the area is that there are only 14 houses on that street, and they're all different designs, and they've all got individual characters. It is a busy road, and 20 years ago, we didn't have as much traffic as we have today. So, there are lots and lots of disadvantages now. As you get older, you start to think, 'Well, I can't go for a good walk', although we've got a massive field next to us.





10.8

10.8 Nitan in his studio home, a converted garage in Southall

At number 156 where you were living, did you buy it with the extension or did you build that?

No, we did all of the extension, and also a loft conversion. So, now my ex has a four-bedroom house with a loft conversion and an extension. It's a beautiful house.

Please talk about your own business and building the garage in the garden at number 158.

We built a garage about 25-ft wide and 30-ft deep. It was a self-contained workshop. We used to renovate vehicles and also maintain vehicles for a large fleet company, a local aerial company which I had a contract with. But, unfortunately, the council weren't too happy about that. So, I had to close it down for legal reasons. I worked out of there for about three years. I don't do it too much nowadays because I'm getting on a bit, but, yes, I thoroughly enjoy working on cars still, but it's more like a hobby now. And I help my friends, relatives – anybody – sort out a problem that they've got with a car.

The idea of living next to where you worked, was that an attraction?

Yes, that was the attraction because you don't need to travel. At the back of your house, you've got a workshop. So, the work came to you rather that you going to the work. And also, you can work late into the night, and you're on your own premises. And also, I think the biggest thing is that you don't have to pay any rent for premises, and that's where you save your money. And I had two Jamaican guys working with me at the time.

Were they local?

No, at the time they used to live (and they still do) in the Peckham area, and they used to commute. I gave them a van so that they had a vehicle to come to and from work, and I paid their fuel as part of their employment.

How did you get to meet them?

I met them through Yellow Pages. Their names are Richard and Kayden Barratt. They're brothers; same father, different mothers (they said it was a Jamaican thing). I got acquainted with them again back in about 2000, I guess, and they've been friends since. I've been to Jamaica with them many times. I know Jamaica because of them from Kingston to Saint Ann's down to Negril – the whole lot. I've been round the island more times than Bob Marley.

We can come back to the Jamaican connection, but can you talk about the garage itself? Who built that for you?

The garage was built by a Punjabi builder. If you look at the garage, there's nothing to it: it's just a rectangular plan with an eight-degree pitched roof. It's a very simple building. There are no windows; it was designed as a workshop, nothing glamorous, no big machinery, but plenty of electricity

and lighting. It's very spacious. And I guess on a good day, I could get about four vehicles in there and still have room to work on them, but I could actually park about 10 cars.

Did other neighbours do the same sort of things in their back gardens?

No, only one other person did, and that's the house on the end. He's got a massive yard, and he had a skip business where he had skips coming in and out, and lorries used to come in because he had the grounds to do it. So, actually, there were only two people out of the 14 houses on our road.

But was this something that people did in the area? Yes, they did. On the opposite side to us, there's a carpenter. There are a lot of people who do small businesses from their garages. A lot of people back in the early 2000s were looking for premises with big gardens so that they could operate from their premises to save on the rental because lots of small businesses – people like carpenters, tree surgeons, plumbers, electricians – couldn't survive otherwise.

Did people socialise in your neighbourhood in Feltham?

There's not much socialising apart from the neighbours, just the pub routine. It was more about family. But in the 1980s, there was a National Front head office in Feltham. I don't know much about it because it closed down by the time I came to live here. There was racism in the Feltham area, and a lot of Asian people used to not come to Feltham because of the National Front. I think they moved to Northolt. I remember it used to be quite a dangerous area at night-time because there were a lot of skinhead-type characters who used to hang around because of the National Front. And even if you said today that you live in Feltham, a lot of people think, 'Oh', because they associate it with young offenders. We have a prison for young offenders in Feltham, and everybody assumes that it's all connected to that. But other than that, I don't know what Feltham is famous for apart from Hanworth Air Park.

You work at Heathrow Airport now.

I used to work for the Met Police for over 25 years. Then, I went self-employed for about three years in Feltham. Then, I didn't do anything for two years – I literally just had a busman's holiday driving here, there and everywhere, not working but sightseeing. And then I got a job with British Airways as a mechanic for their vehicle maintenance section. It was only for Friday, Saturday and Sunday, but in the space of about six months, they closed it down. I didn't know at the time that, by law, the employer had to find you an alternative job with the company. So, I went in for check-in at British Airways for one day. I didn't like it. And they offered me a role in the baggage department, and that sort of worked for me. So, I became what they call a ramp agent – but everybody knows us as baggage handlers. So, I started there in 2001, and I've been there ever since, and now I am a team leader. I have eight guys – eight personnel working with me – and I'm also an OSD on-site trainer, and I'm in charge of apprenticeships that the airline started about five

10.9

10.10

10.9 Nitan's studio in converted garage

10.10 Shared courtyard

years ago. So, we have students who join for 18 months with the airline, and we teach them from the ground to wing level. They do six months with each department. So, I have students with me for six months. So, the current job that I have right now involves me travelling a lot with the students, which is a standard thing because we're in the airline businesses. I travel to places like Los Angeles, Hong Kong and Lagos. I enjoy the job very much because you're learning from youngsters. It's always nice to give somebody an opportunity to learn about the airline business. I'm hoping to leave the airline, unfortunately or fortunately, this year because I'm 57 now, and I've done 15 years with British Airways – and I've enjoyed it – but I think it's time to look at my health. Health is the main issue.

Can we go back to the late 2000s when you asked me to investigate the potential of converting the garage into residential accommodation because you knew I had got planning permission for the Invisible House in Acton some years ago. I thought that was a really interesting opportunity, but in fact, Hounslow planners turned us down. But it did lead to us having much more extensive conversations about back-garden development and, as a result of that, you introduced me to one of your friends who works with you at the airport and lives in a garage in Southall.

Well, when I finished my business, I approached you to have a look at the garage at 158 Uxbridge Road to see whether I could convert it into habitable accommodation because clearly there's enough room there for two bedrooms, a living-come-dining area, a kitchen and a bathroom. You came up with a simple idea for a courtyard house. I've got a friend who lives in a garage in Southall. I took you and one of your students to meet him and to have a look at his home. We only saw one person, but I know many people who live in situations like that where gardens are not gardens, they're actually like courtyards. And they have accommodation where the family's so huge that they can't afford to buy a house or whatever, but they keep everything within the house; they know that at the back of the garden, there's perfectly enough room to live in, and they do. And also, I thought that idea could work with my property, and you and your team thought that it could work because I've got enough space to do that. It's not often that you get a house that's got that kind of space to deal with. I think my garage had more than my friend's garage because of the way you designed it. There would have been lots of natural light, and you could have a little courtyard. I thought it'd be like a place in Italy I've seen. But unfortunately, we got turned down by the planners. The reason why this all came about was because my daughter could not afford to buy her own house at the time. So, it would've been a very good idea for her to live close by but independent from her mum and dad where she could have her own space. My daughter was quite happy with that idea. Nowadays, London is so expensive, you need to have a bank with you all the time to get it off the ground. Indians are more family minded. It is a cultural thing where the siblings

and the parents live very close by to each other. The reason being, I think, is because when occasions happen within the family (birthdays, weddings – even death, for that matter), it's not far to travel. Also, the mother will always want to live quite close to her children simply because she could spend a couple of days with the older son then with the daughter. The only way the Asian family changes is when the daughter gets married, and she goes to the north of the country and we're still in the south, or even to a different continent because her husband's situation is like that. But the son will always stay close to the mother, very close to the mother. And it's normally the daughters who move further away. With me, it was just that their husbands were in Hounslow and we were in Twickenham. So, it just worked out that way. We didn't plan it or anything like that, but the interesting thing about my sisters is that they married two brothers, and they live next door to each other. But it was never planned. And my younger brother is married to my ex-wife's sister. So, we're married to two sisters and two brothers, and it's amazing how that all happened. I didn't really know that Mano was courting Susan at the time, but it happened, and here we are. When I was born, I lived in Nairobi for two years, and at the age of two, we moved down to the coast to Mombasa because my father got posted there. I actually lived with the Maasai tribe in a village called Mtwapa for about three years, and that was an experience. They taught me everything about life from the age of about three until about five. I was actually assigned to the village hunter, and he would provide the meat for the village. And my job – and this sounds quite gruesome – but once a month, he'd hunt an elephant. An elephant doesn't die very quickly, as you can imagine. It was poisoned, but it's not as bad as you think it is because they don't kill just any elephant, it has to be staked out to make sure it's an old bull that's had his day that's lived a good life. And sooner or later, that animal's going to die either naturally or something will kill it. So, they were very methodical in how they did it. It took about three or four days to hunt an elephant. And I know that I used to go out on a Friday and used to come back on a Monday. The hunter would make the arrow with a poison, shoot the elephant and it'd take about a day for the elephant to die; a slow death. It's cruelty, I know that. An elephant always falls to the side, either this way or that, but it will never fall back, it just can't; gravity pulls it to one side. It makes it very convenient to cut the animal up. The hunter would cut the stomach open, and my job was to get the liver out with a knife because I was the right height to walk in. That was my job. I was a butcher's assistant basically for the liver.

So, you used to get inside the elephant's body?

Yes, and you have to be very quick because a dead animal, especially when the wound is open, other animals smell it, and the vultures will be at it. You'd be outnumbered by wild animals, and so you had to move very quickly. It used to take a good half a day to walk from the place I lived with the Maasai. I also learned to light fires and even open beer bottles without an opener.

It seems it has very much affected your own life.

Well, yes it has. I thought that I had a black father, right, because I never saw any Asian people in Kenya and especially because we were out in the sticks, and honestly, once you get attached to a hunter, you think, well, that's your father, you know? And you treat him like your father because he's teaching you so many things about life: how to repair things, build, how to get water when there's no water – amazing skills these people have being nomadic.

10.11

10.11 Feltham. Image courtesy of Google Earth.

1:50,000

1. House + Garden + House site
2. The River Crane
3. Heathrow Airport

10.12 Rayat family, Feltham, Middlesex. | Source: Photographs by Sebastian Tiew.

10.12

10.13

10.14

10.13 Location plan

1:10,000

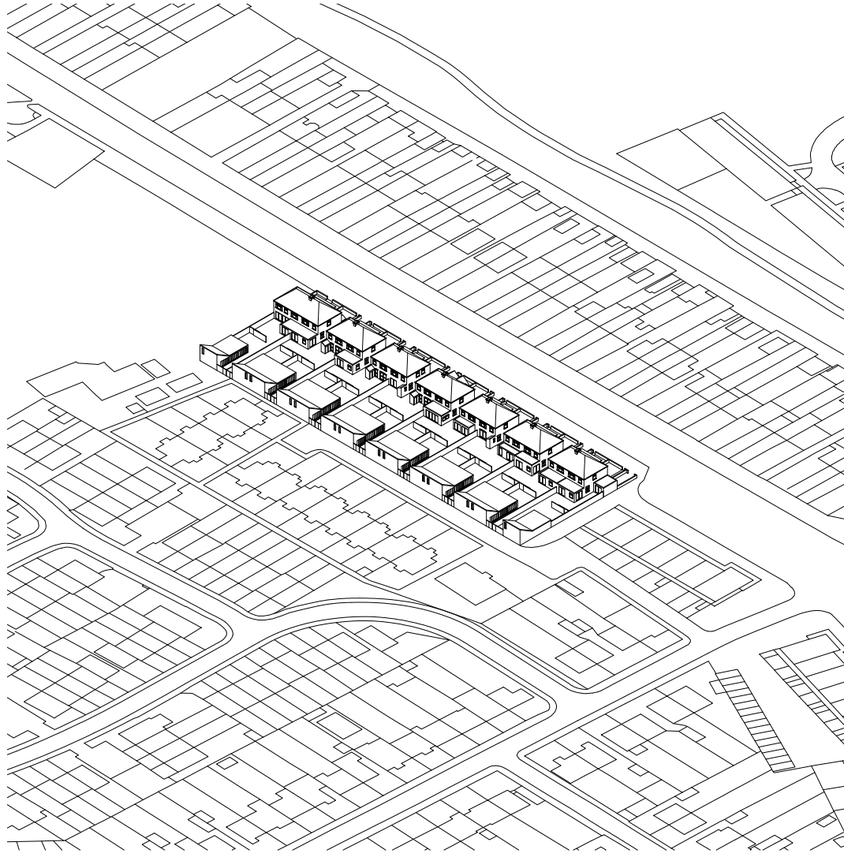
1. House + Garden + House site
2. Uxbridge Road
3. Hanworth Park
4. Leitrim Park

0m 100m 500m

10.14 Site plan

1:2000

0m 20m 100m



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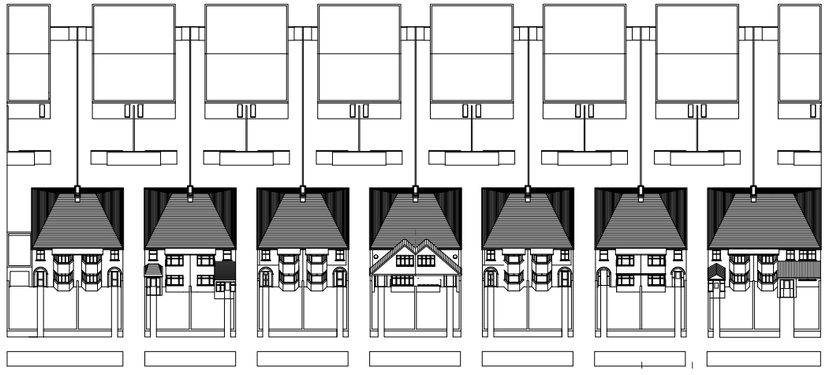
10.15 Isometric

1:2000



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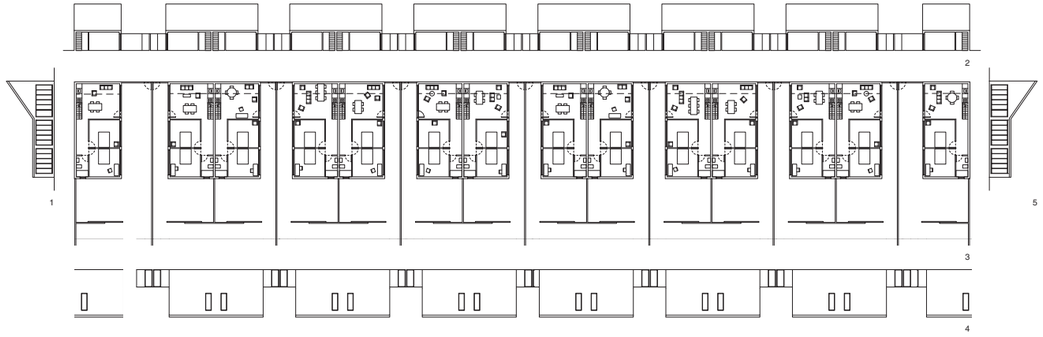
10.16 Planometric

1:1000

10.17

10.17 View from street showing garage to rear



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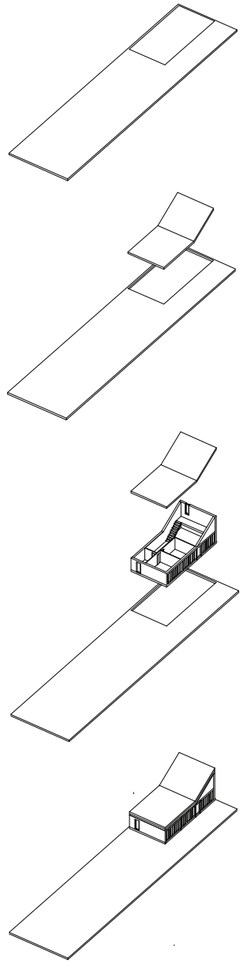
10.18 Plan and elevations
1:750



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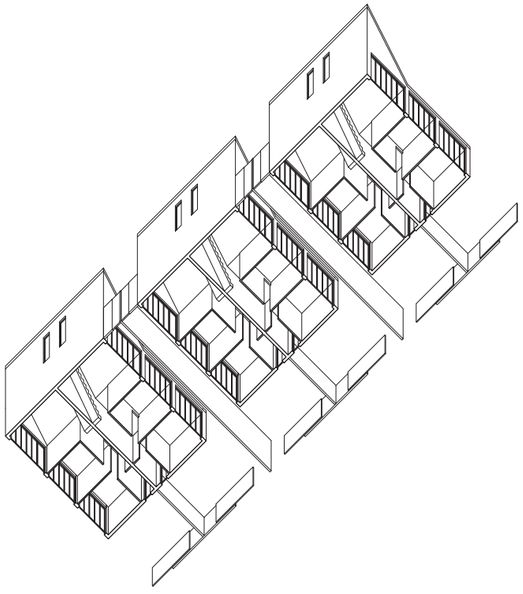
10.19 Exploded isometric
1:400



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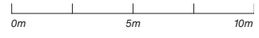
10.20 Worm's-eye axonometric
1:250



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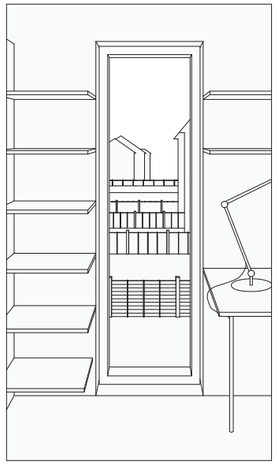
10.21 Interior view of kitchen/
dining room



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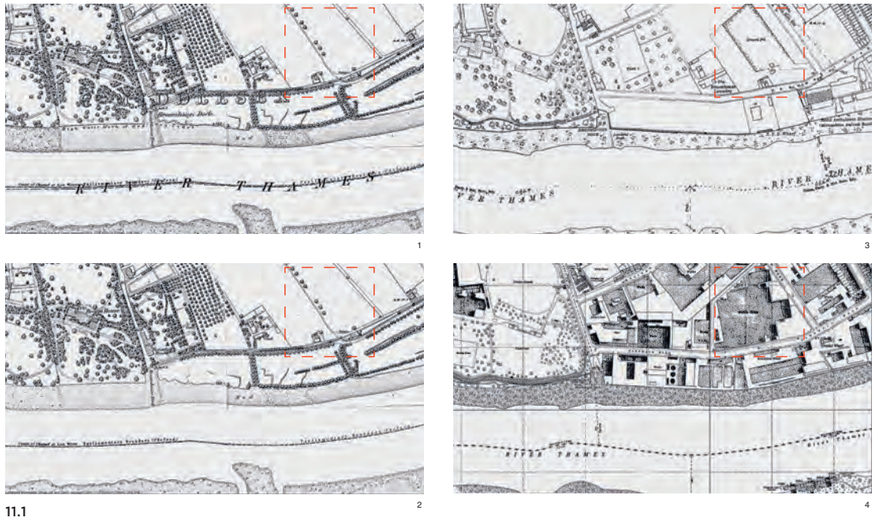
10.22 View of adjacent rear
gardens from mezzanine study

10.23

10.23 View from mews



11.1

11.1 **Historical maps showing site development.** | Source: Images courtesy of Digimap.

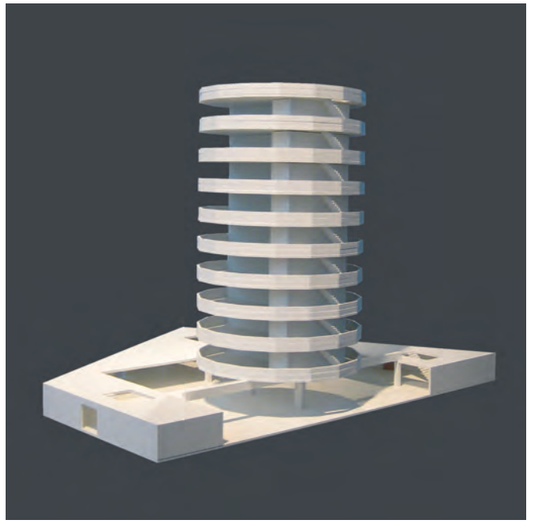
1:10,000

1. 1860
2. 1870
3. 1910
4. 1960

0m 100m 500m

2009

Metropolis | Rocket Room: Pencil Tower



11.2

11.2 Rocket Room model, painted MDF

Pencil Towers occupy a small footprint and contribute to a new city silhouette for luxury urban living in London where land is in short supply and where domestic space and view sell for a premium. The idea has been tested at Rocket Room, designed so that each floor level comprises one apartment with panoramic views. Pencil Towers are slender forms that can extend upwards to 30 storeys and beyond in response to land value and demand – an opportunistic response to the flow of global capital into the metropolis. The site of the Rocket Room, Fulham, may be termed inner London suburban. The area has changed dramatically since the 1960s, and is now considered an extension to more well-to-do Chelsea to the east. Fulham, like much of riverside London,

Crispin Kelly, chief executive, Baylight plc. | Source: Image courtesy of Crispin Kelly.

was given over to intensive industrial development, including Fulham Power Station. Redevelopment of these sites as upmarket private residential enclaves started in the 1980s at Lots Road, including Lots Road Power Station, and at Chelsea Harbour. The area, although primarily working and lower middle class, contained pockets of high affluence, including The Hurlingham Club just to the west of the Piper Building site, itself a conversion of a research and development complex built in the 1960s. The site was bought by developer Crispin Kelly in1996, when it was known as Watson House, and was the headquarters of North Thames Gas.

The upper floors of the building were used for offices, the ground floor for research and testing of gas appliances and gases. The Rocket Room got its name from the testing of specialist fuels there. Between 1998 and 2000, the building was converted into apartments and B1 and warehousing space. The scheme included demolition of about 20,000 ft^2 of ground floor space to enable circulation and parking. Pierre d'Avoine Architects converted the existing tank rooms on the roof of the main 12-storey Piper Building into two rooftop houses in 2004 built using volumetric modular construction. The proposal for the Rocket Room includes a faceted tower comprising nine flats one on each floor above a B1 plinth and porte cochere.

Crispin Kelly

Interview at Baylight plc, Queensway, London, 24 August 2016—I was born by accident in County Wexford, and I have an Irish passport. My mother was British, but she married my father who was half-Irish and half-French. His parents lived in Ireland as retired diplomats, and they went on holiday there regularly, and that's why I was born there, but I have lived in the UK all my life.

I studied history at Oxford. I suppose I liked reading books about things that happened as a reality that had passed, and the Medieval Period was one where you could read relatively little, and that attracted me. As my special subject, I did St Augustine of Hippo and the beginnings of the collapse of the Roman Empire. I was the only person to do that. So, they had to set me a paper. Being with very bright teachers who were very methodical and quick at pulling ideas together was interesting. As much fun was the people I was learning with. I'm not sure how I would make the connection to what I'm doing now. I still enjoy reading and putting together my version of a reality. So, I suppose that's about the closest one could get to how Medieval History is influencing me now. There is also an excitement of being with the source. So, if one's working in a team now, one is with the source, and you're putting things together in real life.

When I left university, I didn't really know what I wanted to do, and as a result, I wrote fiction for three years, which really didn't suit me at all. It was a lonely business, and when I was doing up my first flat, which was in Fulham in 1980, I realised that I really enjoyed the whole business of doing building work with sawdust, plaster and so on. I increasingly looked round to doing other similar projects, and that was my introduction to property: very small-scale residential development using the intricacies of the leaseholder's format and the ability to buy the freehold through the process of enfranchisement.

I formally set up Baylight in 1982 and spent five years doing increasingly larger projects and some mixed-use projects like converting an old taxi garage into studios. Then, I was concerned that my soul was being overtaken by the desire for money. So, on the advice of my ex-wife, I enrolled at the AA in 1986. I took a year out in 1989 and was doing the 60 Sloane Avenue project with Stanton Williams. The recession was pretty full on at the time, and I wanted to finish diploma at the AA as quickly as possible – perhaps not the best approach to my architectural education. The fact that I was very busy meant that I didn't get as much out of it as I would've done if I hadn't had three children and a full-time job. That's a question really – whether life would've been different if I'd have been in a different position. When I left the AA, I felt that I didn't have a clear kind of aesthetic or mission as an architect, but that I did have the skills as a developer who now understood more about architecture. I pretty much continued as I was before, working with architects who I had met and who were part of the AA network, which was a pretty big group of people. I continued to do mixed-use projects, and after Sloane Avenue, I was very anxious that I would do another big project. I felt that the Sloane Avenue project had been a rather magnificent undertaking which we more or less won through with, and then suddenly I didn't have a project anymore. That was when the opportunity of the Piper Building arose.

Before we talk about the Piper Building, can you talk about studying with Peter Salter in Diploma at the AA?

I suppose there was the idea of a touchstone – the idea that an object could be made that would in some way summarise a place or an approach. It was a potent ambition which had material at its heart. That was something that one couldn't escape in Peter's project: the idea of materials and that materials were loaded. Peter didn't really like talking about theory or culture in its widest terms. So, Peter Beardsell was always brought in to deal with that side of things. I was very interested in that, so Peter [Beardsell] and I used to discuss theory. I think Peter [Salter] was looking on to see what was going on in discussions about Proust of whatever. And then I suppose that there were two other very strong things with Peter Salter. One was locating your building on a site which I thought he was sort of very obsessive about. To me, it seems it could be here or it could be there, and you know, why did it take a whole term to experiment? But that was a very strong thing for Peter [Salter]. The other was the idea of detail. You know that he would constantly embellish and refine and make anything in your project amazing. Anything could be turned into gold really with his thick pen on trace. So, it was quite a challenge to see that going on – that he had the generosity of taking on your gutter detail for instance and making it into something rather amazing.

Did you feel that you were influenced in terms of how you designed and drew and conceptualised things like Peter?

I think not in terms of making shapes. I think Peter's imagination was his own, but I think in terms of what materials could do, definitely. You know the sort of importance of materials and what impact they could have. I think that was very, very obvious for everybody. I think for me it was about materials and detail and the idea of the touchstone – so, everything to do with the power of materials really and materials over time, and places over time.

How did the project for the Piper Building happen?

From my office in Sullivan Road, I could see what was called Watson House in those days, which was a great hulking 1960s glass block. I think it was 1997, and the economy was still kind of recovering from the 1989–92 recession, and there wasn't much confidence in the market about anything in particular. There was certainly not a lot of interest in sustainability, and one of the main buyers of property were housing associations. So, you couldn't really have had a more different approach to property than we have now. I'd heard that a housing association had agreed to buy Watson House and were going to knock it down and build a terrace of houses, and I thought this was an interesting opportunity to look at the existing building and see if one could keep it because it was enormous (about 250,000 ft^2 on, I think, three and a half acres). I went round (this was all directed through the Property Director at British Gas), had a look and got very excited. There were endless spaces, just acres of space, all double or triple height, and I thought one must be able to do something better than knock it down. It was completely covered with stuff from the occupier so that what we call the Rocket Room was filled with turbines and machinery and huge bits of kit. They were no longer using it; there was just a skeleton staff knocking about, and the top floor was the staff canteen. I think most of them moved to somewhere else. So, I thought surely we can pay as much as the housing association which was a tiny amount of money like £2.5 million. The guy at British Gas said, 'You know you're going to have to act very quickly if you want to do this. You've got a week in which to exchange contracts'. So, that was a hectic week, and what we uncovered was a series of quite serious problems with the property, which I suppose explains why the housing association thought it was better to knock it down. The problems were that it had asbestos which was embedded in the structure. It wasn't really a question of being able to remove it; it was going to be there. It had been used in the formwork which was left in the building. It then became clear that the building had been built on a tip, and there was methane coming out of the tip and that some of the stuff in the tip was quite nasty: heavy metals and things. So, there was contamination, there was gas, there was asbestos and also the last joy that we discovered was that high alumina cement had been used for the structure, which was cutting edge in 1959. So, really, we had to address all those things to see how we were going to get round them. There was a particular consultant at Waterman who held our hand through that process.

So, we basically thought that we would probably be okay – that we would probably be able to address these things if we kept the building. So, we bought it, and then it became quite a big worry really because suddenly we owned this big building which had all these problems and was empty. So, you know, I was worried about vandalism and the planning and so on. Basically, we bought ourselves a big worry . . .

When you refer to 'we', is that Baylight?

Yes, Baylight had got going. It wasn't large; we were four people. So, that was kneading the worry really. The team included a manager, an accounts person, a projects person and then there was me. So, Watson House was my project.

In terms of a model for being a developer, what were your influences?

There wasn't a small developer model that I had seen. Much more prominent was the big developers like Land Securities and British Land who had big operations with lots of capital, and I definitely felt that I didn't want to be doing that. I wanted to be my own agent really.

I first met Peter Salter in the early 1980s when I had an office in Fulham with David Conner and Julian Powell-Tuck, where Peter was working with Ingrid Morris. We rented space from Nigel Crump whom I think you know because he also studied at the AA. We used to call him the 'gentleman builder' because he was doing posh apartments in South Kensington and Knightsbridge, but he was different from you in that he was also doing the contracting. He would buy the property and do the whole package. That was the 1980s model: developers like Nigel who'd seen opportunity in smart West London residential development. In contrast, you dived in with Sloane Avenue: a different type of project where you were in competition with larger mainstream developers.

I think our projects were always slightly off-pitch. Sloane Avenue, although it was a smart area, was slightly off-pitch for a big commercial developer, and Piper Building was definitely not a development a large established property company would do. The idea of converting office/industrial buildings wasn't around at that time. I think Manhattan Loft had been doing their project in Clerkenwell at the time, but it was very early days for that idea. I went to visit the one in Clerkenwell and thought it was great. I suppose my training as an architect had shown that these big existing spaces could be something else.

It was visionary in a way.

It definitely was at the beginning of the B1 to residential. Planning was the big thing because planners were fairly opposed to the whole idea. Planning has always been a big battleground for me. It was at Sloane Avenue, which went to a public inquiry. I remember the first meeting with the planners at Hammersmith and Fulham Council. They said, 'The Piper murals are being listed, the whole building is going to

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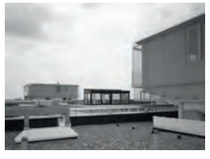
11.5



11.6

11.3 Assembly in factory, Manchester. | Source: Photograph by Greg Ross.

11.4 Craning onto rooftop. | Source: Photograph by David Grandorge.

11.5 View of rooftop west from rooftop east. | Source: Photograph by David Grandorge.

11.6 View of both rooftop houses. | Source: Photograph by David Grandorge.

be listed so what are you going to do? You're not going to be able to change anything'. So, there was constant opposition to everything that was proposed really. Luckily for us, English Heritage decided not to list it in the end.

How did you set up the Piper project?

The first thing was choosing Alex Lifschutz to be our sort of partner. Alex was unusual in that he has a lot of interest in the process of development. I'd met him through his wife who was on the same course as my ex-wife at the National Film and Television School. Monique was a writer like my ex-wife. Alex has got an acute interest in the development process, and we immediately clicked. He was pretty important in handling the negotiations with the planners, and the key thing there was giving them money. They wanted money for the Section 106 agreement.

What did that involve? Was there anything in particular like buildings on other sites?

No, no, they just wanted money. So, I was extremely nervous because this was not a field I'd ever got involved in, but Alex had the whole thing in perspective, realised they were quite happy to get the money and that this whole thing of B1, kind of blue-collar workers having Labour votes, was something that they would suspend because it was an Employment Zone, and they were willing to let it go if they were paid enough. So, Alex was very good about that.

And how did that project evolve? Was it straightforward in terms of the way you organised the space for residential?

From the outset, the ground floor was going to be commercial. We thought that we would edit some of the outbuildings and that the upstairs was going to break into flats off corridors, and that the flats were going to be double height with small mezzanines. We took the decision that we would have to put a new skin on the building, and I suppose my greatest worry was how we were going to fund such a development. We were coming out of a recession, and banks weren't that interested, and so I looked around for a partner and found a tremendous, charismatic managing director David Calverley at the Try Group. We did a joint venture on the residential with Try Group which paid for the B1 to be modernised. So, there was a very sweet deal. I never could believe that residential was going to sell. I thought this is so weird and there are so many problems with the building and so on, but David held my hand and said, 'No, this is all going to be fine' and was pretty much breaking new ground for the Try Group who were doing suburban housing. He wanted to learn about this, but even while he was learning about it, he was pretty good at sorting it all out. His insight was that if you have a good firm of solicitors when you're selling the flats and you've prepared reports for all of the problems, other solicitors will just accept what this big firm says. And there's no reason why they shouldn't. So, that was my worry, which quickly went away. They sold very

11.7

11.7 Piper Building with rooftop houses from north-west. | Source: Photograph by Greg Ross.

well. They sold very quickly, and it was very exciting. We had our first ad in the *Sunday Times*. I was on holiday in the Lake District when I got the paper and saw the ad which included one of the Piper murals, and it just seemed really fantastic.

Did the Piper murals have an influence on your decision to buy the building?

Yes, very much so. Piper was a post–First World War artist who got mixed up with all the great twentieth-century artists in Paris at the time. But back in the UK, he was really having to earn his living. So, he also took on commercial work. After the Second World War, he had a successful career, including public commissions like the one from North Thames Gas for the Piper Building. I think it's reasonably unusual as a Piper mural, which represents the 'spirit of energy' for North Thames Gas, in that he was confident to do something abstract. I think his church series or landscape series were more typical commissions. And it was typical of Piper that he used fibreglass, which was a completely new material in art practice. He actually got two graduates from the Royal College to make the pieces that went on the Piper Building. He did his drawings, and they made the artefacts. Apparently, a part of Piper's understanding of craft was that he would let go and let the craftsmen evolve the work from his small drawings. It was definitely a collaboration. He wanted to see how the craftsmen would extend and intensify what he had drawn. I've remained interested in the spirit of optimism from the postwar period and also the idea of craft. Subsequently, I bought one of the panels from his widow that was made as a trial panel, which I've got upstairs.

You also acquired Piper's sketches and drawings?

Yes, I've got quite a lot of material.

How did the design of the building evolve with Alex Lifschutz?

We thought we couldn't spend too much money, as it was a new initiative, and we didn't really know the market. Our approach was to use economic materials generally, such as Sto-render for the elevations, and add quality in the details, including the balconies, the blinds and the double doors. I think it has been pretty successful. I think having a white building in London is a bit of a challenge, but we've redone it regularly, and it still looks pretty crisp. The yellow blinds haven't worked so well, they're more problematic about how they operate; they still look good, but they don't all work. I think those decisions were pretty sound. The roofscape was something we didn't really understand, and it's been much more ad hoc in its development, first of all with your rooftop houses and then with people doing little access pods and gardens.

We refer to the rooftop as Dungeness.

I think that people really enjoy the rooftop spaces. They're very unusual for Fulham.

The residential units weren't all sold as shells. About half were shells. We did three standard types. We actually ended up building most of them and selling them as that, and then the ones that were shells, people would do their own fit-out. I think it's probably fair to say that of the ones that were sold as shells, about 70 per cent, were quite ordinary in the way the fit-outs were done. But I think 20–30 per cent were pretty interesting and had interesting architects doing them. It's unusual to have tall ceilings in a building with exposed concrete beams and large windows. So, it was the warehouse dream really, and with amazing long views.

Did you set up a residents' association?

We didn't set up a residents' association. The building is owned by the company that originally bought it. There's an intermediary company; we continued to own the commercial space. In fact, we're taking the next evolution now, which is converting most of the building on Carnwarth Road into flats.

What drove you to change your view about change of use of the Carnwath Road buildings which are not residential or haven't been residential historically?

I think, as a property owner, each recession shakes out commercial tenants who go bust, and the landlord then pays empty rates and service charge for that space which, as it's a recession, is pretty painful because by definition things are hard. Also the Piper Building is a long walk from the tube. So, it's hard to re-let in a recession. My feeling was that to have more flats there would be a good solution to that problem.

When did you take that decision?

Only about two years ago. It was when the B1 to residential as permitted development policy came through, but we'd been thinking about it for a while.

I know it's very much a personal project for you because you've had your office nearby and your parents live on the top floor of the block on Peterborough Road.

I think the reason they went there was to help me really. You know, it was sort of the first sale. They used to live in a very conventional large Chelsea townhouse in Carlyle Square, and for them, this was a pretty big jump in terms of both living on one floor and living in Fulham. But I think they both really enjoyed it. My mother died about six years ago, and she was not the most obvious person to live in a flat like that, but I think she actually did enjoy it, and my father definitely enjoys it. They've got a massive flat, and he loves entertaining and having lots of people round and so on. So, it's really the perfect party flat. He has the security of reception and people around to help him out. He has lots of his grandchildren visiting. So, he's very well supported.

Can you talk about the Rocket Room?

The building was used by British Gas for testing fuels. It has one extraordinary

triple-height room. Originally, it was all like that, and it just seemed like an extraordinary space to use for commercial. We didn't really have much of an idea of how it was going to be used, and the first tenant, Shiltons, were not really a very suitable tenant, as they wanted a conventional office building. It is currently occupied by Phase Eight, who are a fashion company, on a short-term basis.

How receptive are the planners regarding more development on the site? Rocket Room took us nearly a year in pre-application planning. At the time, there were schemes to develop the Fulham riverside by others.

The whole world changed about 10 years ago when people started thinking towers were a good idea. I suppose there's always the thought that towers along the river were a good idea, but the towers that were proposed seemed to be really bad. When we were doing the Piper Building, six storeys was a tower, and we were the big building in the local area. About five years ago, the idea was that everywhere could be a tower, and I think that when we were developing the ideas for a tower on the site of the Rocket Room, there still wasn't really the appetite for towers that there is now, but it was logical that you could have a building that was the same height as the other buildings on the plot. We're looking at projects on other sites and thinking of a tower where the existing building is two storeys, but you know, towers are fine. So, Piper's slightly odd in that having a tower there would have been controversial when we first talked to the planners, but now it's completely normal. In fact, you would ask, 'Should it be taller?'

You could double or triple the height?

I think young developers do think like that.

It just seems like you can try it on, in a way. There was a shift of opinion about what development in London could be . . .

Needed to be.

Needed to be or could be taller. Deyan Sudjic, in the *Evening Standard* recently suggested that if London is a world financial centre, it should look like one. It shouldn't look like the London of old or even anything remotely European, but that it should look something like Shanghai (Sudjic, 2016).

That's not my perspective. I think from my perspective, what happened was Canary Wharf got built, and those were really the first towers that I would see in London. And you expected the centre of the city to be tall buildings. So, there was Canary Wharf, where a new place had tall buildings, and you thought, 'Well, that's okay. That's in the middle of nowhere. No-one cares about tall buildings there'. But then I think what happened was that the pressure on land became more and more intense, and people felt, 'Where are we going to find the space for all the trade and desire for homes in London?' So, I think this idea that it was going to be like a world city followed the

reality of becoming a world city, so that people thought, 'We need to have tall buildings because there was a need to meet'. I don't think it was like saying, 'Wouldn't it be nice to have lots of tall buildings'. I think people thought, 'If we don't do a tall building, we're not making proper use of this site'. There's probably a slight overlap.

I think the other point Deyan mentioned was that in London for 50 years after the war, the population remained steady at around seven million people, but since the start of the millennium, the population has increased to more than eight million and is predicted to increase much further. As a reaction, there has been a resurgence in the idea of living in towers.

I have a difference of opinion about that. I think some people love to live in a flat in the city. The Barbican is a good example, and, you know, the taller the better. But I think that is a minority sport, and I think that most people who have families and who want a good school for their kids are less certain about that as a way of life. So, I think it's divided, and it's also about phases of life. A lot of people want to start in the city, maybe move to the suburb and maybe come back to the city, but I think it's much more that the city offers some things at some times, some things that some people think are really attractive, but I think, equally, a house with a garden is also very attractive, and London has a lot of houses with gardens. So, you can live in London and live in suburbia at the same time. So, saying 'I live in the City' doesn't mean that you live in a flat. If you live in Islington or you live in Fulham or you live in Wandsworth, you're probably living in a house. So, I think there's a great attraction about living in a house: you know, not having a neighbour on top or below you and having your own garden and the idea of the street as your common ground. I think building towers of flats is much more problematic. I think it's great for some people, and at the moment, there's enough demand for it to be met.

A completely uneducated opinion would be that young people are much more willing to live in a tower block. You see that in Trellick Tower, for example. But I think people with two kids are not so keen. I mean, it's a hassle. But some young people with kids do like living in towers, and there are a few architects who would put up with that and enjoy it, but a lot of people don't, and I think schooling is a big thing. Schools in London have got a lot better in the last decade or so. That's been a big change. So, you can get a good education if your kids are in London, but I don't think that automatically means that you'd want to live in a flat. You can live in a house and get your kids a good education, and that's a pretty good deal.

Did you anticipate the incredible property bubble that occurred in the noughties and which still continues? Not that long ago, we were astonished that a flat in Regents Park sold for £17 million. Now, flats are being sold for £150 million.

I'm always optimistic in terms of how things are going. So, I don't see that this

is a bubble in the sense that it's all going to collapse and that you'll be able to buy a £100 million flat for £10 million. I think that we have lived through a big change in London, and London has got a new status that it didn't have even 10 years ago. I don't think Brexit will change that. It might even be good for London. We've got the advantage of language and a time zone that's very good for financiers and trading. We're now a place where everybody wants to be, and I don't really see that changing in my lifetime. I'm sure it will change one day. There may be a city in India where everybody wants to be, but we've got a lot.

Do you have a comment about the quality of the environment, not just in terms of buildings but the public realm that's being delivered now?

I think what's ironic is that there are the best intentions for public space now. If you talk to any developer, they come up with the most tremendous lines like, 'What's important is the space between buildings and so on', which you'd only hear in architecture schools. But there's no real understanding of what that is, and most of the public space that's delivered is poor. I think the problem is that big projects are impossible. I think it's very, very hard to create something new that is good. So, if you look at King's Cross, which you couldn't have put more effort into making look good than Argent did, yet you could say it's quite banal.

Well, just coming back to Piper, it's a gated community, and I suppose it has been since British Gas developed the site. You haven't adjusted that. Do you think Piper contributes positively to the locality because of its change of use including residential?

I think that my experience of doing projects is that lots of little projects tend to make a more interesting place than one big project, and Piper is that thing. It's made that little area an area where people live and people will walk or bicycle and they're close to the River and so on. So, there's lots of little changes that have happened to that small environment because of that development, and that's good enough for me.

What is happening to Fulham riverside now?

Well, the big thing is digging the Thames sewer, which is going to take seven years.

Has that called a halt on any development on those sites?

Not on any development but on the ones that are by the river. If you go a bit further east, there's a big new Sainsbury's and some massive developments that are taking place there, and I do think that massive tends to mean bad. It's the loss of grain that you get from these big developments. You go along the river, and it's terrible. But I think London's got enough of its protected villages that it will remain very attractive as a city. If you look at Bedford Square, I can't see that ever changing, and that's why people will come.

11.8

11.8 South-West London. | Source: Image courtesy of Google Earth.

1:100,000

1. Piper Building
2. Wandsworth Bridge
3. Kew Gardens
4. Chiswick House
5. Kensington Gardens/ Hyde Park

0m 1km 5km

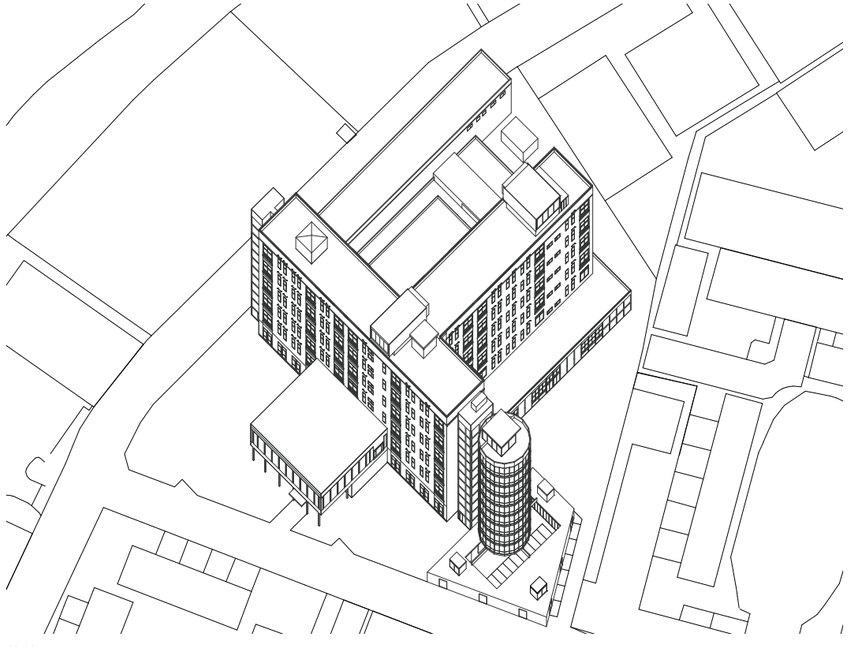
11.9

11.9 Location plan

1:8000

1. Site
2. River Thames
3. Wandsworth Bridge

0m 80m 400m

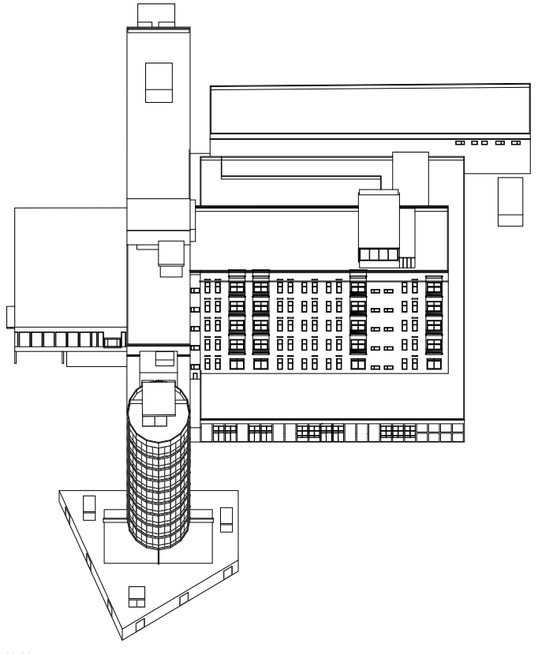


11.10

11.10 Isometric

1:3000

0m 30m 150m



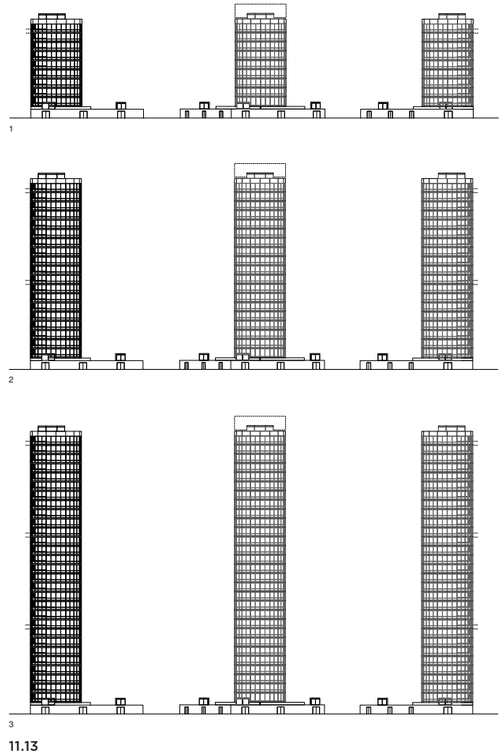
11.11

11.11 Planometric

1:3000

11.12

11.12 Gas holder



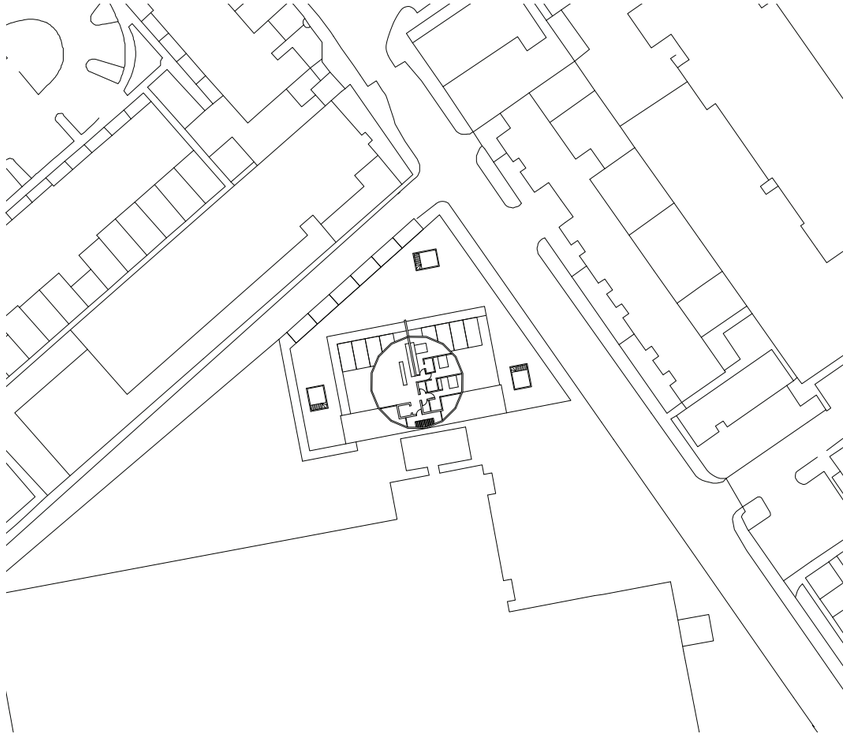
11.13

11.13 Elevations

1:3000

1. Ten storey
2. Twenty storey
3. Thirty storey

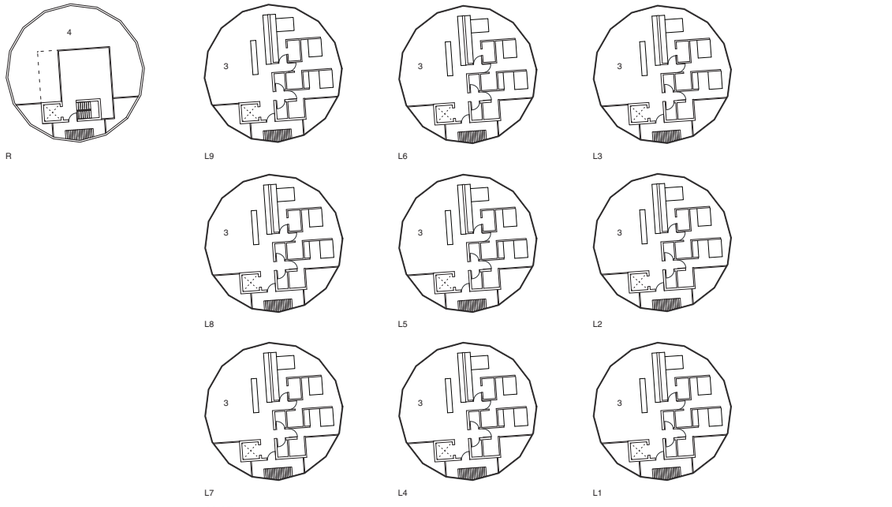
0m 30m 150m



11.14

11.14 Site plan

1:2000



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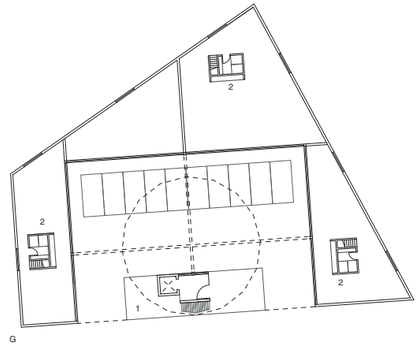
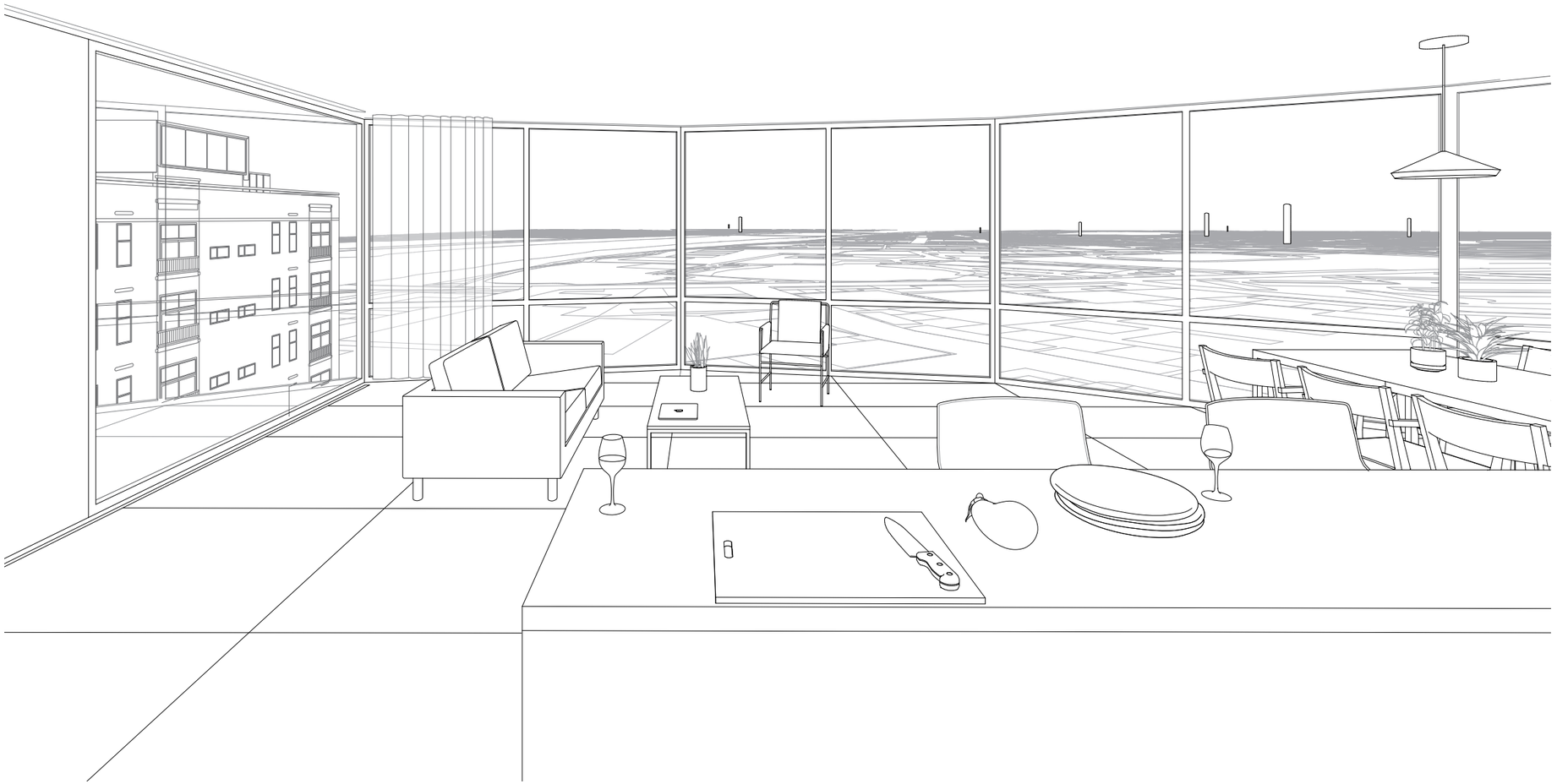


11.15 Plans

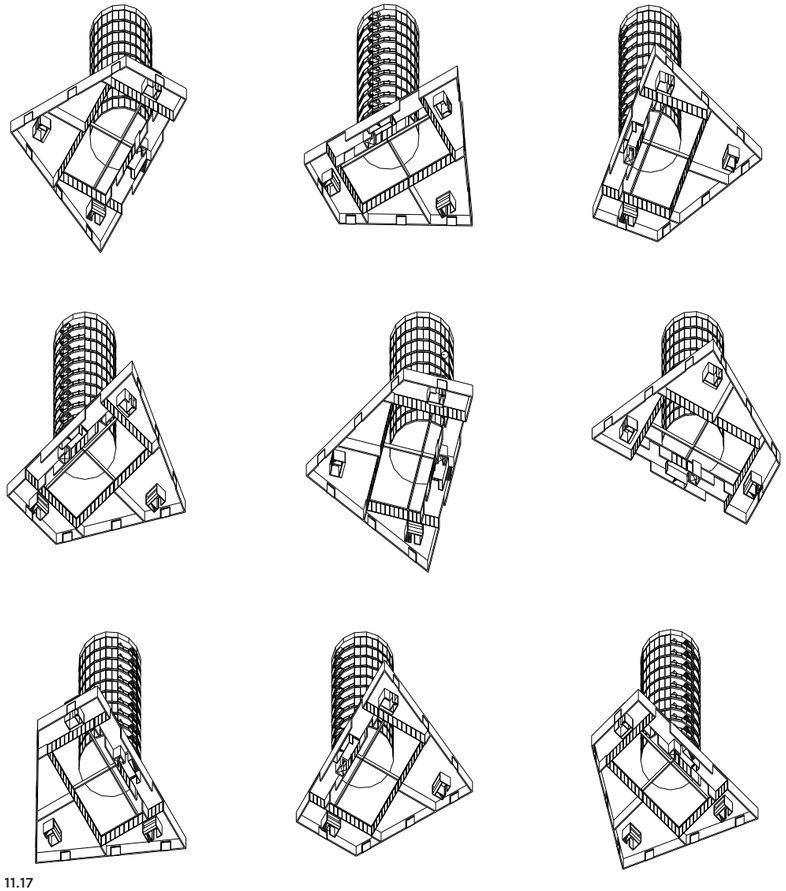
1:2000

1. Porte cochere
2. Office
3. Flat
4. Roof garden



11.16

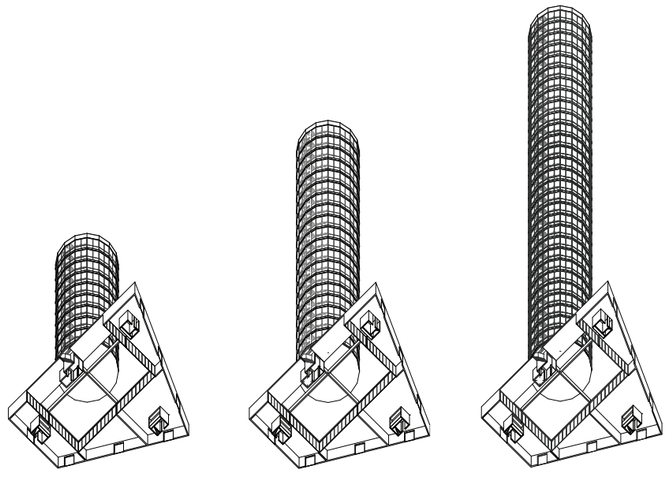
11.16 Panoramic view over the Thames and South-West London, by Andrew Skulina



11.17

11.17 Worm's-eye axonometrics

1:1500



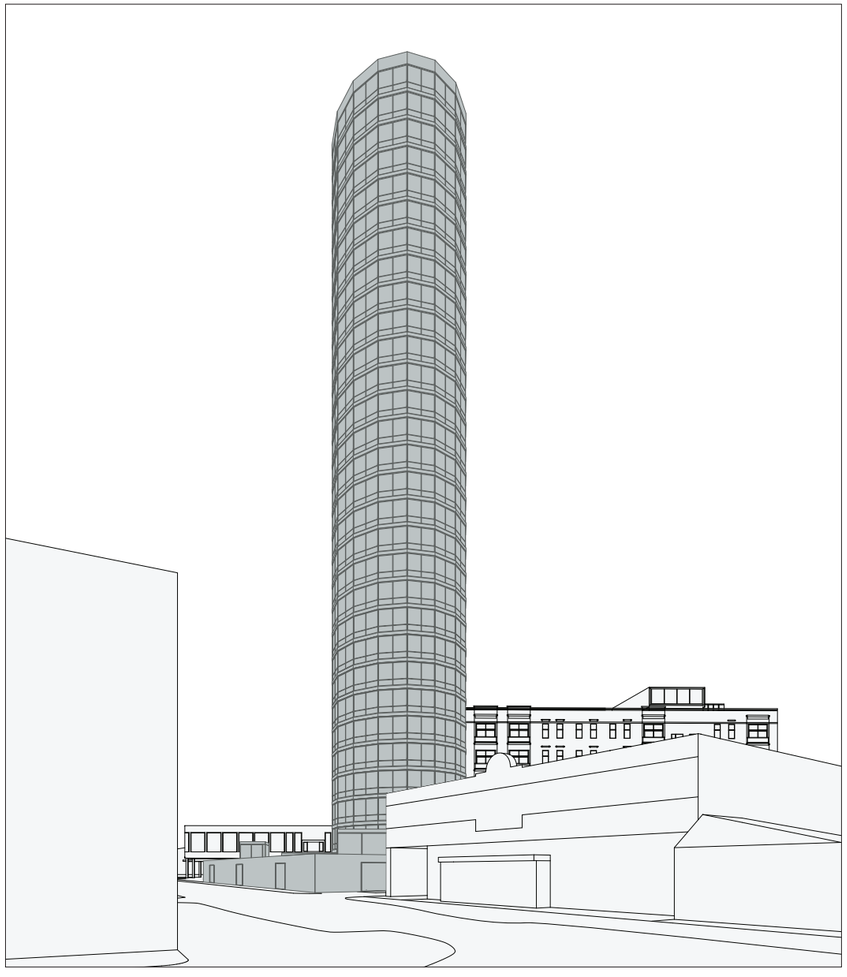
1 2 3

11.18

11.18 Pencil Towers, worm's-eye axonometrics

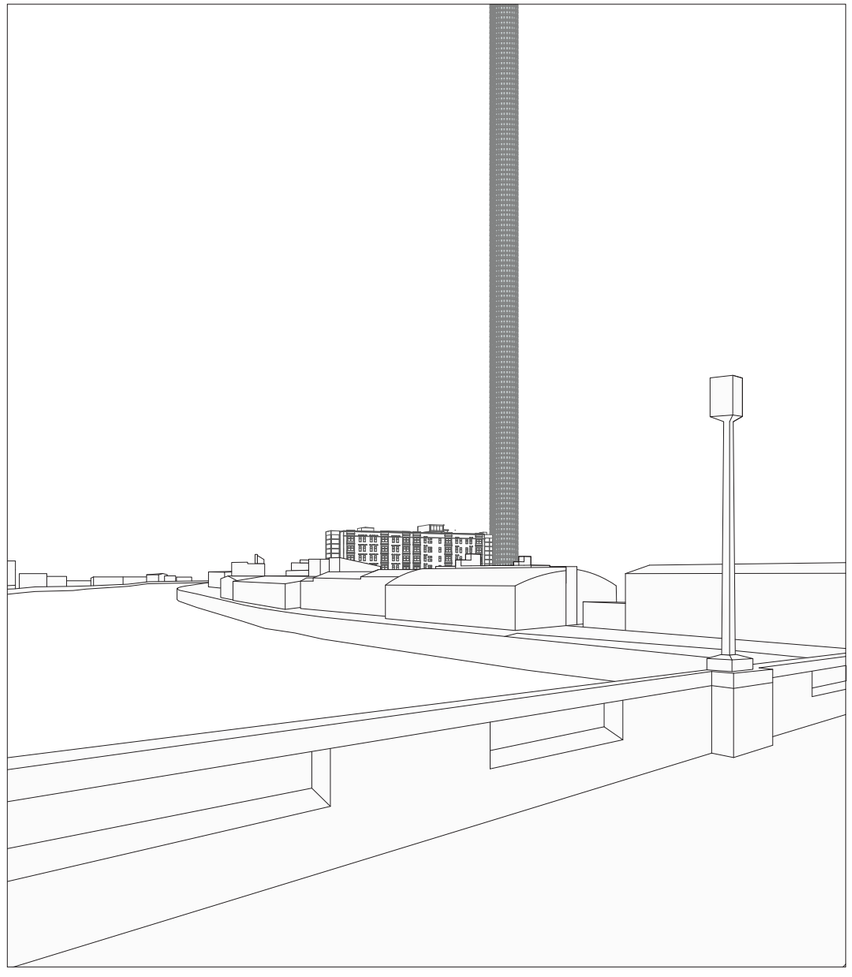
1:1500

1. Ten storey
2. Twenty storey
3. Thirty storey



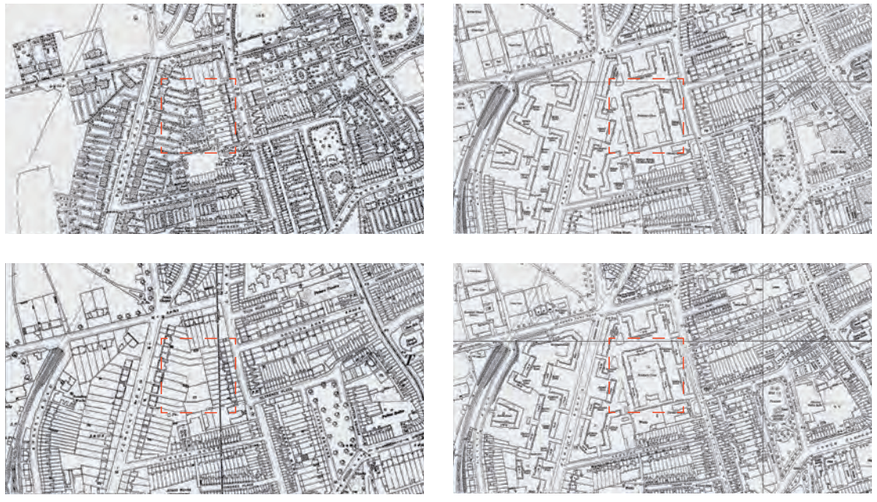
11.19

11.19 Pencil Tower from corner of Hugon Road and Peterborough Road



11.20

11.20 Pencil Tower from Wandsworth Bridge



12.1

12.1 **Historical maps showing site development.** | Source: Images courtesy of Digimap.

1:10,000

1. 1870
2. 1910
3. 1950
4. 1970

2013

Metropolis | Pembury Octagon

12.2

12.2 Site as existing

Hackney in East London, the location of Pembury Octagon, used to be a predominantly white working-class area. Like other similar inner London suburbs, its population experienced unemployment and a diminishment in living standards as local industry declined owing to a lack of long-term planning and investment as central government focus on services increased throughout the postwar period. It was famous in the 1980s for having the greatest concentration of artists anywhere in Europe. This may be understood as the first wave of change leading to gentrification that occurs in run-down inner-city areas where property is cheap and available. Today, it accommodates a wider demographic, including immigrant communities from Turkey and West Africa, as well as young professionals who are attracted by its close proximity to the City of London. The revitalised London Overground railway infrastructure has helped to open up the area to new initiatives. It currently contains a lively mixed community. However, the pressures created by gentrification are causing further change to take place. Not all of this is desirable to the more established residents, including

Liam Dewar, director, Eurban. | Source: Image courtesy of Liam Dewar.

the indigenous population and more recent ethnically diverse inhabitants. The Peabody Trust owns and manages the Pembury Estate which consists of two parts: Old Pembury built in the 1930s as mansion blocks and New Pembury which was laid out in the 1960s with smaller maisonettes and bungalows. It is a large estate with near two thousand residents. The Peabody Trust was founded in 1862 by George Peabody, an American banker/philanthropist based in London. The Trust was later constituted by Act of Parliament with the objective of relieving poverty in London by the provision of model dwellings. It is now a housing association, saddled with all the attendant strictures necessary to operate within an economic agenda framed by austerity. Pembury Octagon is a proposal for affordable housing on land currently occupied by a community building situated at the front of the main courtyard of Old Pembury. The aim of the proposal is the provision of generous residential accommodation supported by communal rooms on the ground and top floors, including a roof-garden crèche, and an architectural response to the grand formal setting.

Liam Dewar

Interview at Eurban, London, 24 August, 2016—I guess one starts with my parents: one's German and one's Scottish. I was born in Edinburgh and lived there until Primary One, then moved to the Borders and lived in the country until I was 10 years old, and then moved back to Edinburgh. My mother spoke to us in German, and we responded in English (or Scottish). She'd studied at Edinburgh College of Art where she met my father. She's an artist. My father's a computer scientist. With no architects in the family, architecture wasn't something that was really on the agenda. I didn't want to study in Edinburgh, and Bath was quite far away and quite congenial in a sense because it's quite similar to Edinburgh. We had very good tutors at the University of Bath. One doesn't always know it at the time. So, I'm happy that I went to Bath. It's small enough to actually have a community feeling. It is a campus university, but the town's not that far away, and there's a lot of architecture there. So, you're always subjected to it. It's a poisoned chalice at times, but at the same time, it does mean that it's very much part of your study. The course itself was a mixture of engineers and architects in the first two years, and Ted Happold was leading the school at the time. He had valuable insights to give us as architects, but it also set us on a track to consider architecture as being a collaborative process involving others like the engineers. But it didn't really matter to what extent they were involved, it was more that one already perceived it to be that . . . And yourself and Richard Padovan, Patrick Hodgkinson and Keith Bradley – we had some very good architects, each with their own focus to comment on our work and guide us in the right direction.

I remember you making a bench which led to an interesting conversation about economy and robustness in terms of making.

12.3

12.4

12.5

12.3 Shatwell, Hugh Strange Architects/Eurban, 2014. | Source: Photograph by David Grandorge.

12.4 Press House, Geraghty Taylor/Eurban, 2017. | Source: Photograph by David Grandorge.

12.5 School of timber engineering, Meili Peter Architekten/Eurban, 1999. | Source: Photograph by Georg Aerni.

That bench still exists. It's at my father's. Yes, there was craft involved in our course, and the people who I didn't actually mention were my fellow students. We had a relatively small year, and it was a very interesting year. There were a lot of different people, including Erasmus students which made for an interesting dialogue. I particularly remember some of Steve Tompkins's briefs . . . I remember one had a wine stain on the front cover. You know, they were creative briefs. We were interested in trying out new ideas, and experimentation was allowed. Computers did exist in our fourth year. We were in that transition period, but really, we were studio based, and we were working in an Alison and Peter Smithson building, again being subjected to architectural theory as much as architectural practice, and I think it all added to the mix.

Working for Jurg Conzett and Herzog & de Meuron after Part 2 came about because Patrick Hodgkinson wrote letters introducing me to them to get an interview, and the fact that I could speak German helped. My role was much broader in the end because I could speak German and because I was prepared to put my hand to anything. When they had visitors from other countries, I was showing them around the Herzog & de Meuron buildings, and I was able to participate in at least the discussions that were being held that excluded English speakers. Herzog & de Meuron are quite hierarchical in the office, and I didn't quite fit in any box particularly well. So, I was allowed to upset the hierarchy.

Conzett started working for Peter Zumthor in his office; he is an engineer. I saw him speak in Basel, and I was just very interested in what he had to say. He was just inspiring. It was very much about architecture (although he is an engineer). So, I felt that as I was doing my learning, this was a person who could teach and who I could learn something from. So, I applied, and he accepted, and the next thing, I was up in a ski resort. Herzog & de Meuron was only 15 people when I joined and 50 when I left. So, there was quite a big jump in the year that I was there. That was 1995–6. And then 1996–7, I was at Conzett's. There were a number of bridge projects in the office. So, I was helping draw those. I was doing corporate reinforcement drawings. One of the projects that I did quite a bit for was the Holzbau Hochschule, Biel, which was one of the largest timber projects in Switzerland at the time. It was for timber engineers in Biel, and their new building was all timber cladding and based on Lignatur cassettes, quite large spanning with acoustic perforations. It was an interesting project because it was all based on looking at the cost benefits of different ways. There were details to be done for that building, and I was heavily involved in that. Then, I also had a little hut to deliver in Chur, which was a primitive hut where the floor plate was given. It was a square, which I wasn't particularly happy about, with a pyramid roof, but as Jürg said, that was one of the most primitive ways of doing it. And most of the timber came from the site itself. So, we ended up putting logs on their ends and cutting them down, tongue-and-grooving them and insulating with wood-fibre insulation, and putting shingles on the roof. So, I had some influence. I had

some Lewerentz-type glass details, but it ended up looking quite Japanese, I think, because of the formality that was forced upon it.

I was thrown out of Switzerland, not because I'd done anything wrong but because the market picked up, and I was an outsider. So, my work permit wasn't renewed. I went to the UK, and I looked for a practice to do Part 3. There were a number of us who were project architects all roughly the same age, with the same experience, doing mainly residential work for Part 3. I had a chance encounter at a place called Construction Resources because I had ordered various sustainable timber products from them. They were looking for someone to lead the building envelope side. I knew most of the products because they were German products. So, it was of interest. I wasn't really building much. I was doing interior fit-outs. So, I thought at least this is a way of getting more involved in construction. And I quite enjoyed the materials and felt that I was learning about the materials that they use, and having direct access (being the distributor in the UK for some of these large companies on the continent), I/we would have direct access to good technical information and discussions straight from the people who know best. It meant travelling to the source companies, doing training courses and preparing English literature for them because it didn't exist. It was all in German. So, that meant that I did need to understand it, as I needed to translate it for an English market. In terms of what we were doing there, we introduced a lot of innovative materials at the time whether it was hemp insulation or even grass insulation. There's a whole bunch of projects that were the first in the UK using certain materials that had been developed on the continent and were cutting edge at their time, but that no-one had heard of in this country. One certainly got an introduction to building biology – the idea that there is actually some sort of relationship between the building and the people who might inhabit it on another level than purely aesthetic. One also saw how contractors were largely uninterested in what clients wanted to do or indeed what the architects wanted to achieve and then found ways not to do it.

Is that something which you think is more particular here than, say, on the continent?

I think it's easier here due to the way that buildings are procured. I think it's to do with the business model as well and, again, it's very much about what people's interests are. Unfortunately, a lot of builders in this country are not that interested in building. Eurban got started almost out of frustration at the apathy towards architecture and construction from the contracting side. For anyone who's interested in design, it's almost the end of a process. If one doesn't get to that end, it's very unsatisfying. If it remains on the drawing board, one doesn't deliver what one had hoped. So, it was a way of short-circuiting that in a sense, but also remaining in the delivery side. I say it often now: life's too short. I wasn't saying it then particularly, but actually, I was genuinely frustrated at how slow things were. I could

12.6

12.6 Hemp insulation. | Source: Image courtesy of Eurban.

think quicker than things would happen, and therefore, there was always a delay in things. That's just a personal thing that happened but there was certainly a feeling at that time that 'This is obvious, and why don't people see it?' and 'Well, if they don't see it, then we'll do it anyway'. Our first projects were a little bit in that vein in the sense that we were offering to do other complicated things because no-one else wanted to do them, but it gave us an entry into doing what we think is actually very simple. We just had some tough projects at the beginning. Our first contractor went under, but that was unfortunate, and we'd asked for the money up front. We didn't have a choice, to be fair, but it could have gone so badly wrong if we hadn't done that because that would've been the end of Eurban on our first project. But again, it shows you the whole risk involved in the process, which isn't necessarily your own competence, but it's just to do with the fact that you're so subservient to others in terms of whether it's going to be a success and whether you're going to be able to do what you want to do. And I think the same is true for architects. A lot of their frustration is the fact that it's not the architects' competence, it's just their ability to actually deliver to what they can deliver. It's frustrated by various others who actively turn things so that things don't happen. So, the whole idea of collaboration, I think, is a question. As much as one could aspire to it, there is a question as to whether people are capable of it.

We've evolved remaining largely curious. We've been slow to pin ourselves particularly to be one thing or another because we didn't really fit that well into the typical traditional procurement route. We were a consultant on the one side, we were a contractor on the other side, and what tended to happen was that consultants thought of us as contractors, and contractors thought of us as consultants, neither of which was good. So, it didn't really matter what we did. It was all to do with how the people viewed us. Being an architect, I was very surprised at how we were being treated by other architects because, again, it wasn't anything to do with the fact that they didn't know, it was just the fact that they thought, 'Well, we look down at you because you're lower down in the food chain', and contractors certainly do that in terms of you being a subcontractor, and money's nine-tenths of the law. So, it's very easy for them to do that as a payee. We have evolved in the sense that we've done more and that it's harder for people to dismiss us in the way that they could in the early days. We have had people who have supported us.

Eurban was set up in 2003, but there were certain key projects in the beginning where it was of course collaboration. I was very much working with the architect and, you could say at times, with a naïve client, but that's kind of what was required. They weren't stupid, they just weren't affected by the way that things typically happen. So, they were just naïve to how much a contractor could change something and were therefore more willing to trial what we were proposing and to their success as much as to ours. So, we did have those sorts of successes, and it did enable us to start building higher: five storeys in 2005, which was sort-of unheard of in the world at the time. Then, once we got traction,

there were others who came to compete mainly because architects were unhappy as to there only being one. Suddenly, you come up against all of these things you didn't quite expect when you set out, which is that people are actually very unhappy if they don't have the choice, even though you're offering alternatives to some of the other things that went out of the window. There's a sort of fear in society of being ripped off or whatever else and a lack of trust, and a lot of what we do does depend on trust. If we don't have the trust, then we spend a lot of time doing stuff that's really unnecessary, and unfortunately, we still do that, but we notice it, and the larger the clients are, the more unnecessary work we do [laughs]. And it's not really because they don't trust us. Actually, it's because they don't trust themselves – it's more of a reflection on themselves than on us.

We no longer use consultants or contractors. We decided that they're not helpful in that context. So, we do refer to ourselves as being specialists in the field of solid timber, and that then allows one to provide a stronger synthesis between the designer team and the contracting side. And the collaboration is more of delivery; it's more of process rather than about trying to bring people together. And the material is the medium. I mean, I've heard it described in lots of different ways, and one always looks for one way to best describe what it is and how one can work it. I mean, it is a medium as an artist has mediums to use. So, it is one of a number of things that they could be painting with, let's say. And one chooses to use it or not. The issue is more that if one does choose to use it, one makes that decision and doesn't think one can wait until halfway through the painting before one decides what one medium they're working with. Artists certainly wouldn't do that, but for some reason, architects feel that they're able to do that because of planning or because they don't get the confidence. It's very strange, this lack of feeling towards their tools or the materials that they're actually going to use. Because it's such a base material and is relatively primitive (it's one of those fundamental materials), it has technological advances that means it takes away a lot of issues, particularly moisture, which is not an issue, but it requires a lot of experience to deal with moisture – with timber one doesn't have. So, it's a primitive material, but it's also a material that's open to beginners in the sense that some of the more risky aspects of it have been removed. But that then almost makes people fearful of it in the sense that it's too good to be true and then there's no grid, so there's very little to hang on to as well. So, one sort of ends up with this material that's actually ideal; it's this ideal architectural material that you can do whatever you want with it, but like the tabula rasa, it doesn't necessarily give people confidence. It worries a lot of people, and they start looking for questions and looking for reasons not to use it rather than just accepting that it is an ideal material. And the final aspect, which is actually the wheel driver, is that as a crop, as a material that you're harvesting to use for something, its utility value is best placed with the architect because it's worst placed by burning it. In 1968, Reyner Banham introduces *The Architecture of the Well-Tempered Environment* with a parable about the tribe who want to create shelter for the night, and they have a choice: they either use the timber to make a hut or a shelter, or they burn it. And he states that architects tend towards the structuralist approach, which is to use it as structure and as the building envelope rather than as an energy source. But, of course, as time goes on, the energy side, the idea that architecture's all about energy, the technical approach seems to be quite prevailing. A lot of what's happening now is very much driven by that; architecture's very subservient to energy, which I completely disagree with. I do hope that at some point we overcome this and actually realise that there is an abundance of energy; we just don't really know how to harness it. But energy's not a problem, whereas there's not an abundance of good architecture. That's actually the thing that we should be focusing our energies on. Those are the two sides of what you can do with it, but what's interesting about that, which Banham doesn't talk about, is the fact that in burning, it releases carbon immediately, whereas building with it stores it for 60–100 years.

We have a huge issue just now. On the one side, we're trying to build more housing, and on the other side, we're trying to reduce our environmental impact. Now, construction's one of the greatest increases on the impact. So, how on earth can we increase construction while at the same time reducing the impact? Well, there's only one way, and that is to build in timber. There is just no other option. You've got to do something at source; you can't just make it an externality. So, that's the wheel driver. It's not simply a question of architects' choice. It's kind of an obligation that's imparted upon the architect as the person who's deciding to use timber unless they've got a good reason not to. And there is good reason why one doesn't use it, whether it's because of the ground conditions or whatever else (it wouldn't necessarily perform for that 60 years). But in most instances, timber does perform as long as it's protected, and as a rule, it should be protected, and it should be robust. And again, part of the architect's responsibility is to detail and design it so that it is protected.

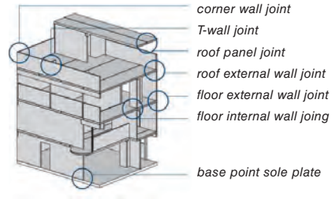
With regard to the technology, I talk about solid timber rather than CLT because the use of less timber rather than more is all about an economic material, and of course economic means financial. Now, some would argue that less material is good because we don't have much material, but that defeats the story on the carbon side. We actually have a lot of timber, and we need to use it. And this is sustainable timber. So, it's premised on the fact that we're talking about a crop here, not a hardwood forest in the Amazon. So, the idea that you're using more timber is because the timber is a multi-performing material, it's not just structure. We have to get beyond 'structure'. So, a lot of people do look at it as a structural solution. It's not; it's a construction solution – it's a method of construction. At that point, one is dealing with, again, what an architect deals with, which is all of the performances of strength achieved, as well as the arrangement and the context and the other aspects. And once you start looking at it in terms of thermal, moisture, air tightness – all of these other

things – then you suddenly realise that this is more complex. This isn't just a single, one-trick pony. And it's exactly for that reason that more is better because the more material that you have, the better that it can do those things. It's more durable. And this high-tech approach is the opposite for me and was very much the British way to use it as structure and then to try and get it down to the minimum. But in the timber industry, that's meant that everything's been reduced to the absolute minimum, so that any failure becomes a catastrophe because there is nothing there left to protect against human error or against unexpected circumstances. And that's a very high-risk way of building. It's not a very durable way of building, and we need to start looking beyond it. It certainly is noticeable. People do now talk about life cycles. They do start understanding that it's not simply about today, it's about tomorrow, and that's another example why we have to build more robustly. Our biggest issue in Britain is that we have such old stock, and there's a reason that it's still there: it's because buildings are meant to last. But equally, it means that we've got an obligation to this stock in the future, not simply today.

So, the cross-laminated material is different from, let's say, a wood cabin, which is lots of timbers dowelled together or butted together in a big board, because it has the cross-lamination. So, it uses small sections of timber, and rather than creating a glulam beam, it creates a panel. So, it's panelised rather than linear which of course is ideal for a building enclosure rather than a frame. And because of cross-lamination, it doesn't have the moisture movement that you'd otherwise get across the board, which is quite significant in a piece of timber. Along the length, it's not significant at all, but radially and tangentially it is. So, that's really the development.

The technology is actually the same as in the glulam, and the reason for glulam is because you don't have such large trees anymore. So, you have to use smaller bits of timber. You get better utilisation out of smaller bits. You can use younger trees, and you can use more of the tree. The small component of glue (which is less than 1 per cent) is the main environmental issue of a glulam component, but it would be a lot less environmental if you tried to dowel it together with glue or screw it together. So, it's the most environmental way of introducing bits of timber together.

In the UK, we're importing from Switzerland, Austria and Germany, but factories exist in Norway, Sweden, Finland, Eastern Europe, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Legal and General are setting up a company to import boards and manufacture here and in Scotland. There is an argument to say that Scotland shouldn't be planting low-quality timber or the sort of timber that you'd make boards out of. With spruce, you get much better yields in a place like Sweden than you would in a place like Scotland because of the landscape. One has to think of this as a crop and choose which crop to grow based on the context. A higher-value timber as such is hardwood. Cherry, for example, would be a better solution for a place like Scotland, and then it wouldn't be used for timber panels, and the issue of transporting the



12.7

12.7 Luigi Snozzi, Guidotti House, Monte Carazzo, Switzerland, 1984. Eurban axonometric drawing illustrating how the original concrete house could be built using cross laminated timber as a sustainable alternative form of construction. | Source: Image courtesy of Eurban.

materials is always a question as to how local is it. When it comes to moving timber, you can move it five times as far as concrete because of its weight. So, you can get five tonnes more on a lorry for the same environmental impact. But then, equally, people start shipping things once you start talking about larger quantities. Timber is often shipped around the world. So, then you have very low impact, actually.

Currently, our work is housing, specifically for mid-rise which is anything between 4 and 10 storeys. There are cheaper ways to do low rise like timber frame. It's not as if house builders aren't interested in this, it's just that their driver is cost, and the value is in the land. The industry here is about speculation. Fritz Schumacher was aware of this back in the 1970s and proposed ways of changing this, but unfortunately, we are still dominated by the whole speculative market, and all that happens is that people try to manipulate the speculation by subsidising rather than addressing it. In this context, once you get to medium rise, the competition is no longer the lightweight SIP panel, timber frame or cheaper methods. You're talking about more serious construction methods such as concrete, and then it's in that sort of context that some of the inventors are really coming through because there's a lot less disruption than when you build in solid timber. There are a lot more deliveries for concrete frame construction. There are more people on site. There is more noise on site, more dust. It's much slower. So, actually, what happens is that the costs are not necessarily different, but the disruption is a lot less, and the programme is a lot less and therefore the cost should be less or certainly the return should be quicker. It's for that reason that we have now delivered a number of large, mid-rise residential projects with 100+ units in London because of the market.

The way that houses are sold in this country, people tend not to have much choice. At Eurban, we are aware that companies are beginning to prefer occupying a timber office building because it is representative of them and their ethical position. However, people are very uninformed when it comes to purchasing a house and have very few rights in that purchase. For example, a structural warranty that only lasts as long as the collateral warranty of the design team is not worth anything, particularly when there are £2 billion worth of claims a year against these companies. Clearly, it's not a system designed to really protect the consumer. So, I'd like to see an opening up of that market because it's necessary. And I'm waiting on that revolution in a way. There's now communication media that allow people to find other ways of learning rather than simply believing what they're told. I think that's a good thing, but it has its negative side which is that people are also now being overwhelmed

with information. It means they're incapable of making decisions these days because there are just too many conflicting bits of information out there.

You wrote your dissertation at Bath on Luigi Snozzi. I thought it was a brilliant piece of work. How did your interest in Snozzi begin?

I wrote my dissertation on Liugi Snozzi at Bath, and I've started to think that I've been influenced by him. One doesn't always know what attracts one to certain architects. I mean, all of his work is in concrete. You could argue how curious it is that someone who does so much in timber started off writing about someone who does so much in concrete. There is a similarity there, and part of what I was picking up on was the fact that the material medium wasn't as important as what was being said. He came up with the idea of the Alternative Project, which was a critique of the brief in the form of a project. To a degree, we also have an element of that where one wants to proactively do something to introduce change and one doesn't necessarily see what one's doing to the end result, but one feels that it's important in order to deliver a change over a period of time. And in that same sort of way, it's a critical approach. Now, whether you then take to mean it's a political approach, I'm not so sure.

What I like about Snozzi is the fact that he's not scared of having this opinion; he's not scared of taking a position. He's not in that English way of avoiding the potential conflict. He's quite clear, and that then allows you to either react or agree to it, but it introduces an idea of dialogue and of position. It also is very much to do with an approach to the world that (not from a sustainable side but from a cultural side) he's very much addressing these very important aspects about when we do something as architects, we actually have quite a significant impact whether we like it or not, and we should take that seriously. It's a privilege to build. And one often feels that other people who are building just simply don't understand what responsibility they've been given and are almost irresponsible in the way that they perform their duties.

I live in a 1960s tower block, and I'm constantly fighting against the devaluation of the asset – the putting in of plastic windows to replace the metal windows – and I feel why are we so happy to discard the good work that was done then? And where is the continuity? You really have to look for it, and fortunately, I can afford to buy architecture books so that I can look at them to understand what people were doing, but where is this in education? I think about what we're doing now and it's images, it's information – there's no depth to it. We don't know where it's going. I mean, there is interesting stuff happening in housing. It's happening in places like Japan where they're just conceptually very active and perhaps because they don't have planning to disrupt them as much as we would here. In Switzerland, because they respect it more and they're prepared to write proper briefs, it's funded by the councils, so from the government. There was a silent beauty in Brutalism, and it is coming back. Society today is reflected in the buildings that we're producing. It's all

about money, and at what point do people step in and say, 'No, our cultural heritage and our cultural future is not all about money'. We can't simply say that 'banks pay for art' and link them that way. That's not healthy. We need to set standards. Snozzi in Monte Carasso was trusted to deliver a good quality of work there, as was Giancarlo De Carlo in Urbino. They were hard-nosed modernists in their way and changed the face of those towns, but if they did a bad job, people wouldn't like it, and so it was a brave move. But it also enabled something to change and to happen in development, and there's a scenario where one can say that one needs to have leaders, one needs to make allowances for some to fail, but by doing so, you also have the opportunity for some to succeed. And it's this sort of idea that you can control everything. The totalitarian approach is wrong, and that whole social side of things seems to have gone out of the window: how, then, at Atelier 5 it wasn't about consulting with the community, it was about architecture and its social responsibility. And Neave Brown was quite critical about Halen, but I'm not sure how, 50 years later, one can say it's a failure. Neither would I necessarily say that Neave Brown's work's a failure. I think Neave Brown's very good, but it's interesting that even at that time, you've got two people who we now look back and think that they're actually very similar in terms of what they were delivering but who were not actually agreeing on their approach. But isn't that where we want to be? We want to have people who are batting for the right side, even if they're very different players.

12.8

12.8 Central and North-East London. | Source: Image courtesy of Google Earth.

1:100,000

1. Site
2. Hackney Downs
3. The River Thames

0m 1km 5km

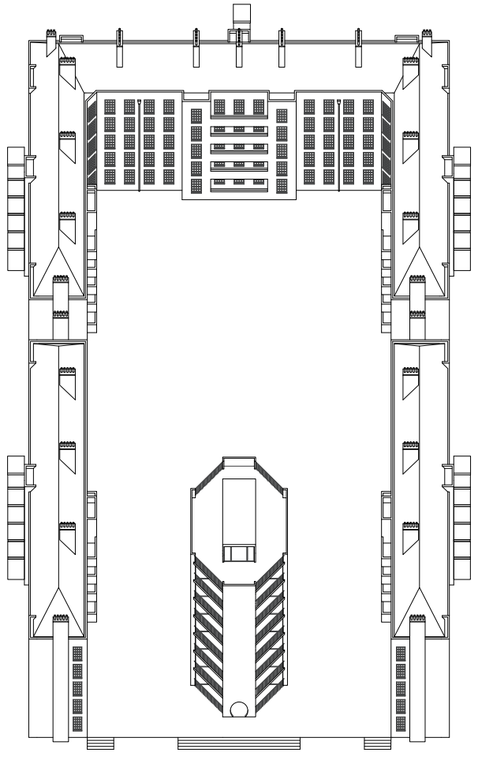
12.9

12.9 Location plan

1:5000

1. Site
2. Hackney Downs
3. Peabody Estate
4. Penbury Road

0m 50m 250m



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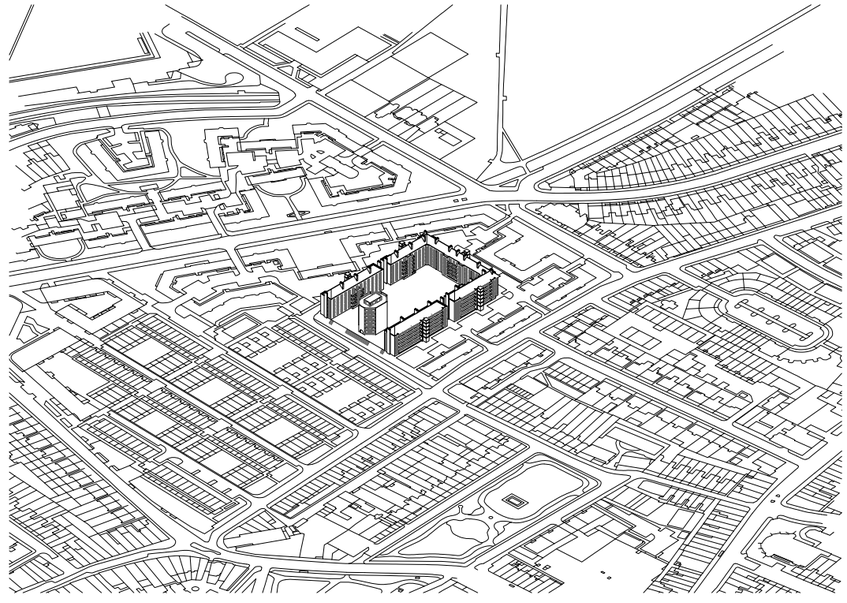
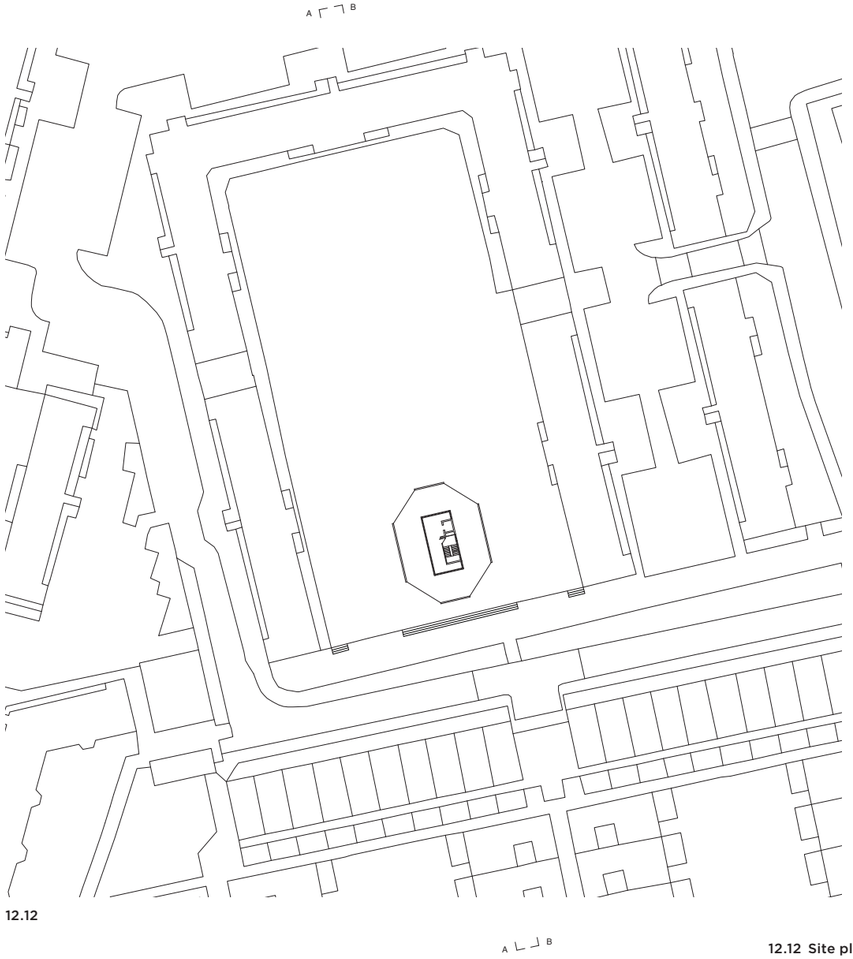


12.11

12.10 Planometric
1:1000

12.11 Isometric
1:1000

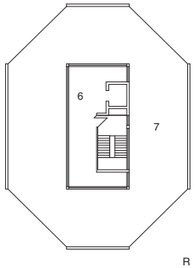


12.12

12.12 Site plan

1:1000

0m 10m 50m



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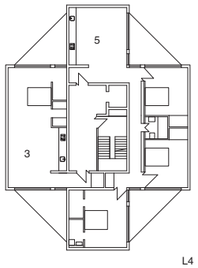

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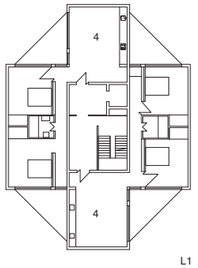
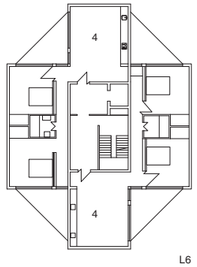


L1

B A



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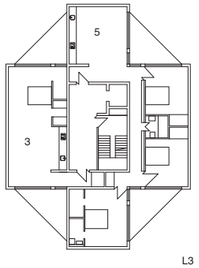

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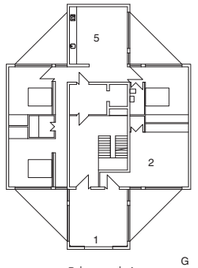

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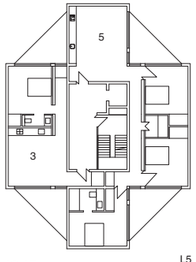

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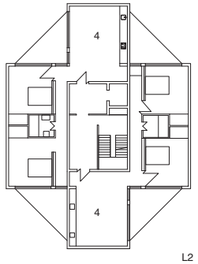


L2

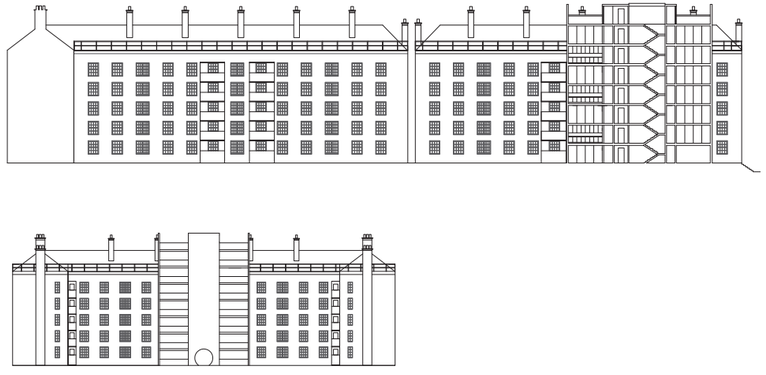
12.13

12.13 Plans

1:500

1. Main entrance
2. Communal room
3. One-bedroom flat
4. Two-bedroom flat
5. Three-bedroom flat
6. Creche
7. Roof garden

0m 5m 25m

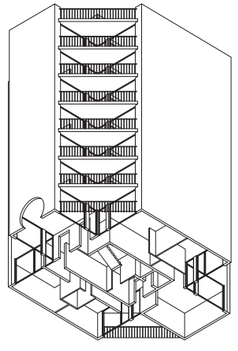


12.14

12.14 Section and elevation

1:1000

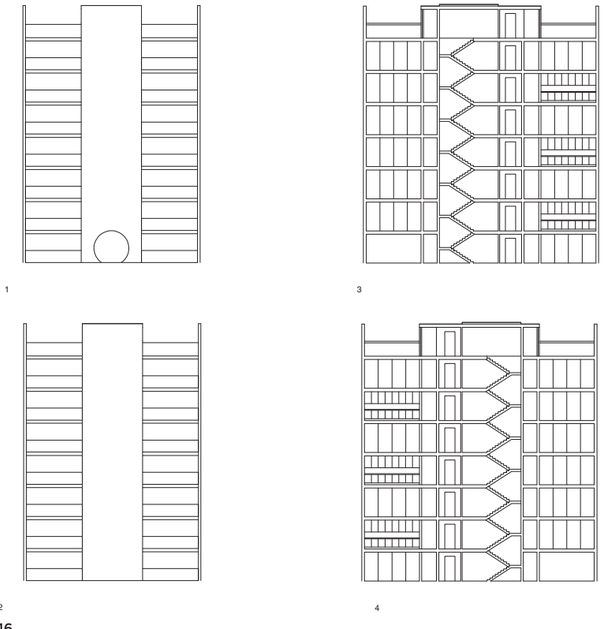
0m 10m 50m



12.15

12.15 Worm's-eye axonometric

1:500



12.16

12.16 Elevations and sections

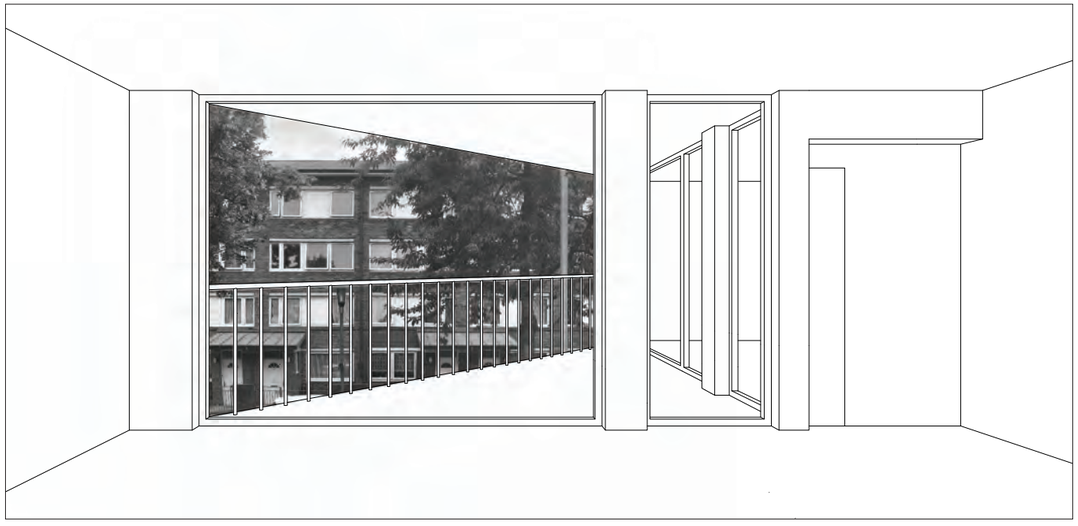
1:500

1. Front elevation
2. Rear elevation
3. Section AA
4. Section BB

0m 5m 25m

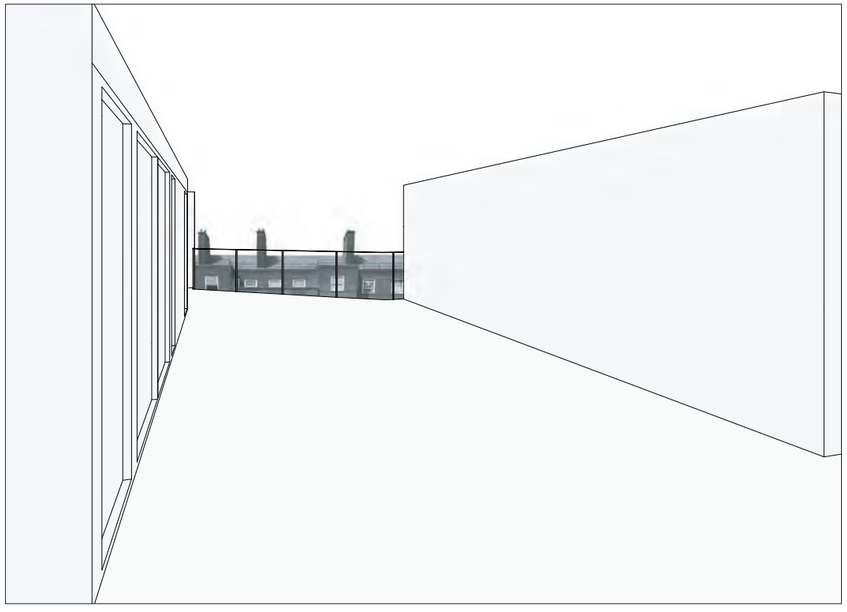
12.17

12.17 View of entrance front



12.18

12.18 Third-floor bedroom



12.19

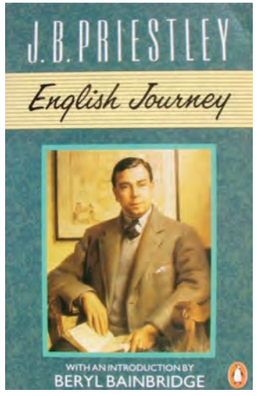
12.19 Roof garden

Postscript

Dwelling on the Future

It is easy to feed the pessimism of the intellect, but it is important to find sources of hope to keep fuelling the optimism of the will. And the best basis for optimism might ultimately be the strangeness of the situation we find ourselves in . . . There are junctures in history when the elements come unstuck and rearrange themselves in new and surprising patterns. The course of events becomes impossible to predict. Time moves raggedly, in leaps and ruptures. Another world becomes possible. (Tarnoff, 2018)

English Journey by J. B. Priestley was published in 1934. He referred to it as 'Being a rambling but truthful account of what one man saw and heard and felt and thought during a journey through England during the autumn of the year 1933'. Priestley's journey begins at the seaside in Southampton and Bristol. He travels through the Midlands to Yorkshire, Lancashire and the North-East before returning to Highgate, London, where he lived, via Lincoln and Norfolk. *Dwelling on the Future* echoes this trajectory. *English Journey* was written to commission and probably 'conceived as a travel book of the popular sort' (Bainbridge, 1987, vii). At the time it was written, Priestley was hugely popular with the public, with Middle England, and this probably accounted for his unpopularity with the literary establishment, including Waugh on the right and Orwell on the left. Priestley writes that he '. . . had seen a lot of Englands. How many? At once, three disengaged themselves from the shifting mass . . .' He identifies, first, Old England, then the Industrial England of the nineteenth century and, third, England between the wars when 'England belonged far more to the age itself than to this particular island. America, I supposed, was its real birthplace'. Millennium England may be in Priestley's terms the fourth England or even the fifth or sixth, given the accelerating pace of change that is taking place in a globalised world where even the USA's prepotent influence has waned and dissipated, as a myriad of competing cultural narratives declare themselves in the age of the Internet. The impact has dissipated the influence and authority of the centre to which Middle England and the provinces has always deferred. However, an anti-authoritarian mistrust with the centre, the metropolis, which has to some extent always been there, as ways of life in rural England and the post-industrial Midlands and North have been undermined by economic forces beyond national borders, has led to anger and resentment of disaffected



13.1

13.1 English Journey by J. B. Priestley: cover of 1977 paperback edition. | Source: With permission from Penguin Books Ltd. © Penguin Books, 1977.

communities unable to provide for and maintain themselves in an age of austerity and global migration. We appear to have a political system that is incapable of engaging with a society in which family and personal life has become increasingly individualised and employment less secure and more fragmented. The complexity of the situation is discussed by Ulrich Beck in *Individualization*: '. . . we cannot think about societies as we did before, as existing within the container of the nation-state with clear boundaries and relationships with others. We have to think globally. People are no longer living even simply local cultures any more' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2003, 211). The interviewees in this book are evidence, even with such a small sample, of the range of mixed backgrounds and identities, including Anglo-Welsh, Scots-German, Anglo-Irish, Franco-Indian-Irish, Anglo-Argentine, Kenyan-Indian, Anglo-Swedish, as well as English, that contribute to the body politic and create a national identity. The interviews themselves, although deliberately informal and discursive, have elicited a wide range of responses to the current housing situation. The aim has been to record narratives of personal and professional life focussing on the projects documented in this book in order to provide a commentary and wider understanding of the conditions for the production of contemporary architecture.

Priestley in *English Journey* describes the changes to landscape and the built fabric of the villages, towns and cities and reflects on his visit to the Cotswolds and the valley of the Slaughters that he 'thought these two villages, Lower Slaughter and Upper Slaughter, beautiful before, and think them so still. They should be preserved for ever as they are now. A man bringing a single red tile or yard of corrugated iron into these two symphonies of grey stone should be scourged out of the district' (Priestley, 1934). The dilemma for architects, for Middle England and for most of us is the innate understanding we have of Priestley's symphonic, conservative vision of continuity exemplified by the Cotswold village in the 1930s and its corollary in the confusing multiplicity of choices we have available to us now. This manifests itself in the new materials and construction methods we have at our disposal in the design and production of the built environment, offering perhaps too much choice. There is also the confidence the wider public – individuals – now have in their own taste and judgement to take an active role in the determination of their own domestic environments. An Englishman's home has always been his castle, but increasingly with his own choice of 'knobs on'. For architects, it has certainly become problematic to design houses and homes in such a pluralistic scenario in order to accommodate conflicting requirements of individuals and community, and within the institutional context of the welfare state, the nation state and a work-oriented society. The quality of architecture and especially housing provision is a reflection of the current situation, and has led to a poverty of expectations amongst the general public and the construction industry, including

the architectural mainstream, so much so that most people 'expect to live in a crap brick box and so they do' except the well-to-do who used to include a shrinking middle class. As Simon Jenkins has pointed out, in England, it is all about class (Jenkins, 2016). In the aftermath of the Second World War, working-class communities were broken up, and many rehoused in local authority tower blocks. Many of these are substantial works of architecture and provide decent accommodation. However, a lack of management and maintenance, as well as supporting communal facilities, has led to the towers, as well as other forms of social housing, being demonised and discredited. There is nothing inherently wrong in building high. It is possible to build better towers with a sense of community and good amenities for more than just the rich, just as it is possible to build new settlements with houses supported by appropriate and necessary community, commercial and industrial infrastructure instead of:

Mean little boxes dotted around dead end streets with no shops or amenities. It's not just the layout either, it's the quality. Outside you'll have crap bricks, crap concrete tiles, crap plastic windows and crap detailing. Enter through the pvc door with its twee Edwardian glass, noting the plastic carriage lamp. The hallways will have cottage height ceilings, with a faux Victorian staircase and stunted Georgian skirtings made of mdf. The living room will boast a fire surround that apes some period between 1720 and 1920 and looks like it was made on a 3d printer. . . . (Proud, 2014)

The lack of joined-up thinking on the environment, including provision of decent physical and social infrastructure which embraces new models for homes and housing, is a problem that is actively addressed in schools of architecture and increasingly by recently qualified young architects. This generation is developing strategies to engage with the status quo in an attempt to bring about much-needed change from inside the system, but increasingly the situation calls for a radical reconsideration of the availability of land on which to build sustainably. It also requires a parallel initiative to first ensure that the existing building stock is brought into full use for the people who need it most and in ways in which their voices will be heard and responded to with a duty of care and responsibility. One returns to the question posed by Le Corbusier in 1922: 'Architecture or Revolution? it is the question of building which lies at the root of the social unrest of today'. Le Corbusier saw architecture as a means of avoiding revolution. It seems, however, that a revolution has taken place over the last 40 years in the sense that the civic has been increasingly diminished, and that architecture, including house building, has increasingly been avoided, and so have architects. The housing crisis is systemic and not just limited to house builders. We urgently need to redress the increasing inequality in our society being instigated by the Establishment in Britain – a demonstration of its evident disdain for the wider population. We must urgently reconsider to the way we make provision for housing and the

built environment which now most importantly includes the land outside our cities.

Franco Berardi suggests that human emotions and embodied communication become increasingly central to the production and consumption patterns that sustain flows of capital in post-industrial society, and that 'the solution to the economic difficulty of the situation cannot be solved with economic means: the solution is not economic' (Berardi, Genosko and Thoburn, 2011). Mark Fisher discusses a diminishment of expectations in the 'sheer persistence of recognisable forms', despite the massive changes of the last 30 years brought about by the transnational restructuring of the capitalist economy during which:

> the shift into so-called Post-Fordism – with globalisation, ubiquitous computerisation and the casualization of labour – resulted in a complete transformation in the way that work and leisure were organised. In the last ten to fifteen years, meanwhile, the internet and mobile telecommunications technology have altered the texture of everyday experience beyond all recognition. Yet, perhaps because of all this, there's an increasing sense that culture has lost the ability to grasp and articulate the present. Or it could be that in one very important sense, there is no present to grasp and articulate any more. (Fisher, 2014)

He goes on to suggest that the current neo-liberal system has systematically deprived artists (and architects) of the resources necessary to produce the new. The ideological attack on public services has increased drastically over the last 10 years of austerity and has almost completely extinguished the space and time for considered cultural production. Further to this, massive increases in the cost of land on which to build homes to buy or rent has contributed to endemic cultural conservatism and subservience to the market model for delivery of housing and the environment generally.

Dwelling on the Future proposes a wide range of models for housing that offer informed choices and invite meaningful collaboration at every point in the process, so that we may materialise liveable environments at every scale, available for all. An inclusive vision of housing for everyone should be a fundamental requirement in the twenty-first century. It is worth stating, again and again, that all architecture is political and it is most evident in the way that land has been systematically been privatised in the UK over the last few decades. It is a criminal scandal that since Margaret Thatcher became prime minister in 1979, some two million hectares of public land, about 10 per cent of the entire British land mass, has been sold off to the detriment of the majority of the British population (Christophers, 2018).

The answer as to how to reverse the situation can only come from below. It will not be a top-down initiative, given that the political classes almost everywhere are now completely compromised and ultimately discredited by their corrupt relationship with global capital, almost to the point of derangement and self-destruction. We need a new groundswell of public expectation and demand for change to secure a new socio-democratic settlement similar to the one that politicians responded to in the postwar period and then went on to create the welfare state. The situation calls for political initiatives to activate 'green' industrial policies to help establish a post-carbon society focussing on properly funded and rewarded production in order to create and maintain a more equable society. This includes the creation of inspiring well husbanded environments, including housing, in which we may all dwell equably.

Credits

Aberystwyth Arts Centre
Architecture: Pierre d'Avoine Architects (Pierre d'Avoine, Clare Melhuish, Alex Bank, Chris Thorn, Alex Tsangarides)
Structural consultant: Atelier One (Aran Chadwick, Dave Morison)
Quantity surveyor: Dobson White Boulcott (Phil Boulcott)
Environmental consultant: Max Fordham LLP (Guy Nevill)
Client: Aberystwyth Art Centre

Pleasure Holm at Birnbeck Island
Architecture and landscape: Pierre d'Avoine Architects and WYG (Pierre d'Avoine and Jonathan Vining). Pierre d'Avoine Architects: Ana Nicolaescu, Sebastian Tiew, Mo Wong. WYG: Kirsten Anderson, Phillip Bryan, Gordon Lewis, Carlos Nicolini, Siân Rookwood, Matt Williams
Structural consultant: Atelier One (Aran Chadwick)
Environmental consultant: Max Fordham LLP (Bill Watts)
Client: Urban Splash

Crowcombe Court
Architecture and landscape: studioDA (Pierre d'Avoine, Anne-Marie Cifsza, Marie Jorgenson, Bodo Neuss, Sebastian Tiew, Mo Wong, Diana Zaharia)
Client: Pat Smith and Richard Anderson
Historic England: Kim Auston

Bengough's House
Architecture: WYG (Jonathan Vining, Kirsten Anderson, Gareth Lewis, Carlos Nicolini, Siân Rookwood, Dean Summers and Paul Thomas with Pierre d'Avoine)
Client: Bristol Charities (David Jones)

Glastonbury Houses
Architecture: Pierre d'Avoine Architects (Pierre d'Avoine, Ryan McStay, Sebastien Tiew)
Landowner: Edward and Jane James
Property adviser: Nick Oliver, Cooper and Tanner

A Counterproposal for Belper
Architecture and landscape: studioDA (Aslihan Carapapoulle, Pereen d'Avoine, Pierre d'Avoine)
World Heritage consultant: Barry Joyce
Local history consultant: Adrian Farmer
Belper Urban Forum: George Jones, Pippa Mansel
Transiton Belper: Ian Jackson

Swaythling Housing
Architecture and landscape: Pierre d'Avoine Architects (Pierre d'Avoine, Carlos Cottet, Greg Ross)
Structural consultant: Atelier One (Aran Chadwick)

Crouches Field
Architecture and landscape: studioDA (Pierre d'Avoine, Ryan McStay, James O'Brien, Andrew Power, Hawar Sagalo, Sebastian Tiew, Joseph Van der Steen Amelia Baldie, Rachel Buckley)
Construction advice: Eurban (Liam Dewar)
Developer: Baylight Properties plc (Crispin Kelly, Jim Green)
Client and landowner: John Wickham

Patterns for Letchworth from Garden City to Patchwork City
Architecture: studioDA (Pierre d'Avoine, Pereen d'Avoine, Siobhan O'Keefe)

House + Garden + House
Architecture: studioDA (Pierre d'Avoine, Jo Greiveine, Ana Nicolaescu, Sebastian Tiew)
Client: Jess Rayat

Rocket Room: Pencil Tower
Architecture: Pierre d'Avoine Architects (Pierre d'Avoine, Kuo Jze Yi, Colette Sheddick, Mo Wong)
Structural consultant: Atelier One (Aran Chadwick)
Environmental consultant: Max Fordham LLP (Max Fordham)
Rights of light consultant: Scahtunowski Brooks
Client: Baylight Properties plc (Crispin Kelly)

Pembury Octagon
Architecture: studioDA (Pierre d'Avoine, Pereen d'Avoine, Kate Tomlinson, Urim Islami)
Client: The Peabody Trust

Book Drawings Team
Tamir Aharoni, Amy Glover, Jo Greviene, Georgia Hazblutzel, Eleanor Lygo, Ryan McStay, Bodo Neuss, Ana Nicolaescu, Geeta Pandit, Elena Pardo, Erika Pietrovito, Andrew Skulina, Sebastian Tiew

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DESIGN RESEARCH IN ARCHITECTURE

Dwelling on the Future focuses on the design of dwellings and their varied environments, and questions how an architect responds to the challenge of providing humane places in which to live for a growing, multifarious population in an increasingly divided world. The issue is never just housing. People — individuals, groups and societies — can and do have different goals and aspirations. Is it possible to imagine and implement a world in which a level of comfort and stability is available for even the poorest members of societies?

Pierre d'Avoine covers a wide range of examples, including proposals for luxury housing and designs for low-cost dwellings, which all address the needs and desires of their potential inhabitants. He explores an inclusive approach to the design of settlements — and not just in cities — that recognises difference, an approach that demands a fresh political vision to resolve humanity's increasing inequality, for the benefit of all. D'Avoine asks if we can respond with optimism to the Kabakovs' mordantly titled installation 'Not Everyone Will Be Taken Into the Future (2001)'. While this was perhaps a statement of fact in Russia and elsewhere in the Soviet Union during the Cold War, it is implicit, and ever more so, in the West today.

Pierre d'Avoine is an architect and teacher based in London. He set up Pierre d'Avoine Architects in 1979 and studioDA with Pereen d'Avoine and Nilesh Shah in 2017. Pierre practices, teaches and exhibits internationally. He published *Housey Housey: A Pattern Book of Ideal Homes* with Clare Melhuish in 2005.

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