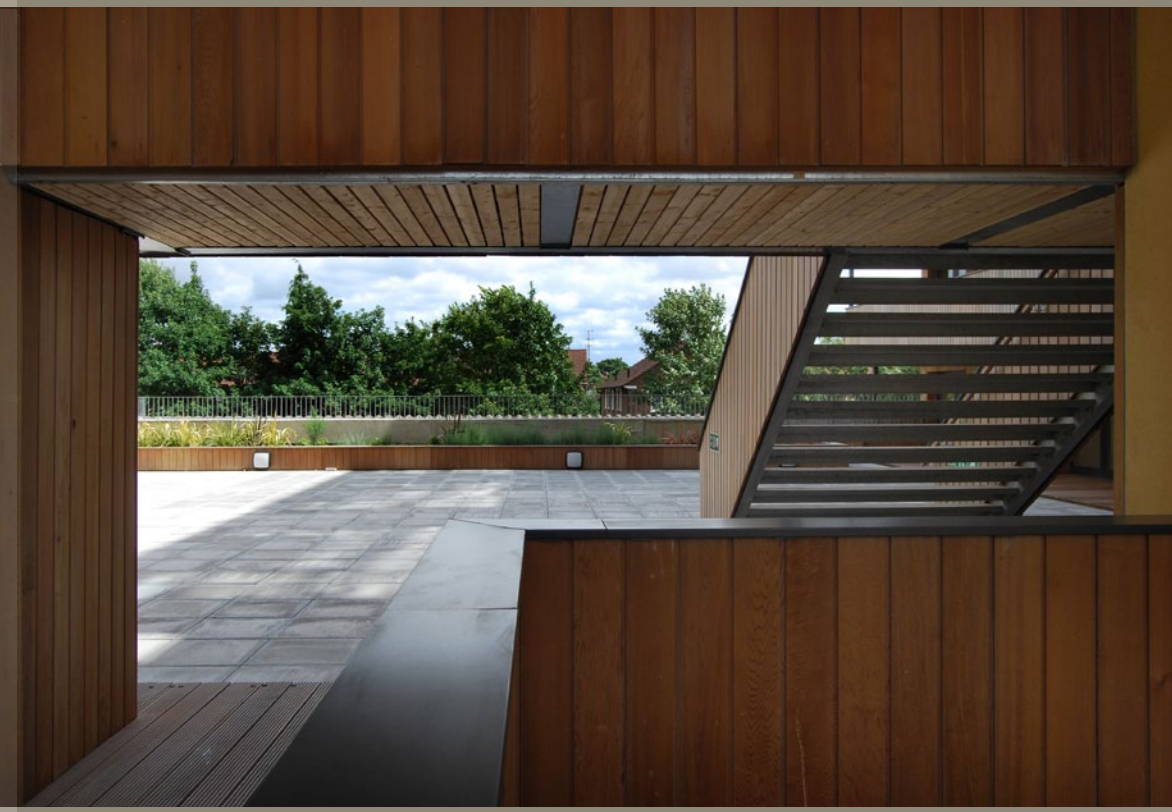
stephen davy peter smith



stephen davy peter smith | architects



Front cover: Issigonis House
This page: Swallow Place



Micawber Street

stephen davy
peter smith

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introduction



Stephen Davy and Peter Smith

‘A fresh approach, with no preconceived ideas, signature or language.’

If there’s one way of describing how we at Stephen Davy Peter Smith Architects operate, it’s probably the above. Or at least it is when coupled to a strong emphasis on placemaking and rigour, taking our cues from every potential scheme’s set of unique contexts.

In short, we design not for design’s sake, but for people.

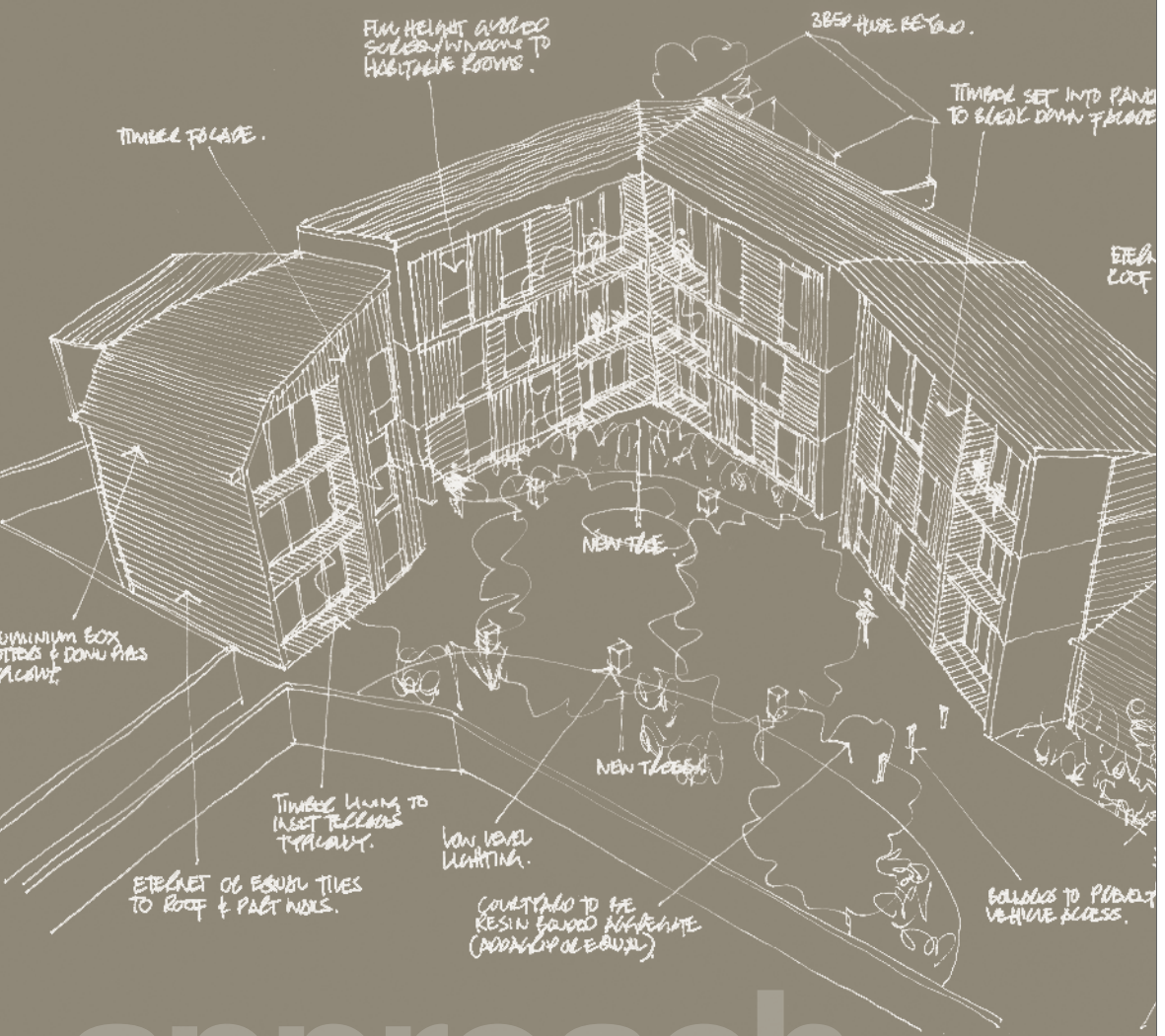
We first met each other studying architecture at what was North London Polytechnic. We were both in the same unit, with Steve having already completed an interior design course and Pete having already studied as an architectural technician and worked at a structural engineering practice. Because of the tutors concerned – including Florian Beigel – there was a real rigour and an international flavour to our courses then that has developed into a practice with an international staff and a distinctly European approach today. East London Poly followed, with a similar ethos behind diplomas under tutors including David Porter and Christine Hawley.

Then, however, it was time to put some of those theories we’d worked hard to absorb and hone into practice.

Early explorations whilst working for other firms included winning a Country Life magazine competition to rebuild the burnt-out Windsor Castle, amongst other successes such as a project model that made it into the Royal Academy Summer exhibition, and a RIBA competition to design a Glasgow tower, for which we were shortlisted.

From those early signs that we were on the right track, contacts and hard work brought about our first job and planning consent – 12 housing units in Muswell Hill. That brought us confidence both externally and internally, along with more contacts and the means with which to set up formally. And from there came the portfolio of projects and skills – across a number of sectors – that form the bedrock of the practice and the bulk of this book.

We hope you enjoy our story.



approach

Fresh eyes on every project.



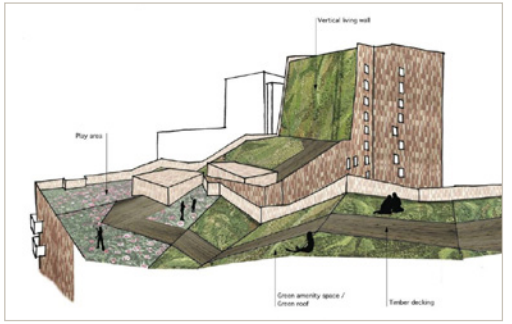
Left: Development sketch
Above: Digby Road

We at Stephen Davy Peter Smith Architects pride ourselves on looking anew at each potential scheme – eschewing formulaic, rigid, prescribed approaches and instead looking to the individual characteristics of the sites concerned. Having said that, however, we have found that there are principles and solutions that we have worked on in one project which we can take on to another – perhaps a door fitting, an approach to communal spaces, or a cladding solution, say. All in order to bring about greater efficiencies and, bottom line, to save the client money.

A case in point is **Digby Road**. This is a scheme of 97 new build, affordable housing units on a difficult triangular site over the Channel Tunnel Rail Link in Hackney, east London, for Turnhold Properties and Kingstreet Group. We created a roof with an undulating form and façade inspired by the geometry

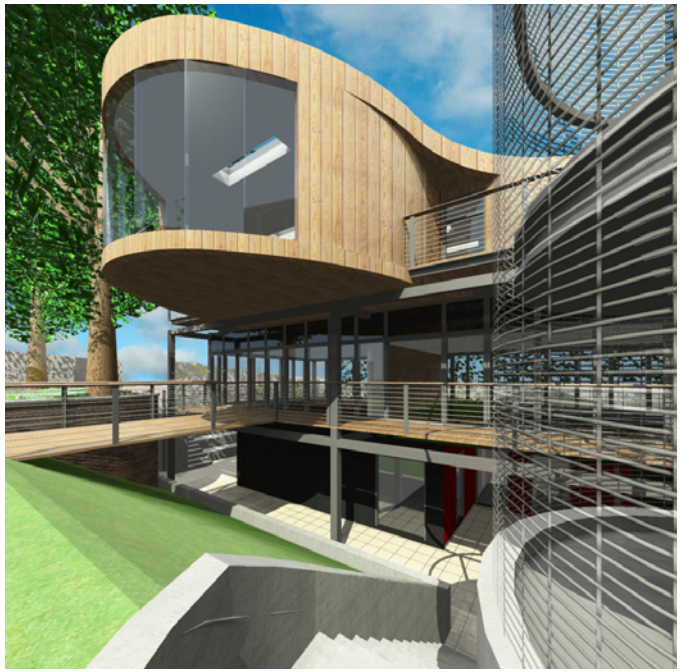




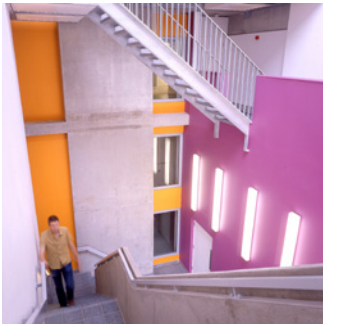


of the site and the roofscape of local industrial buildings, with each home boasting dual aspect and private and shared amenities, including a rooftop children's playground. But beyond tricky limitations over weight – the terracotta cladding could not have been brick because it would have been too heavy – the key focus is perhaps a green wall that rises to the 14th floor and is thus the tallest living wall in Europe. The scheme is an example of how to get the most from tricky site constraints and testing budgets.

Another site where we had to be sensitive to major constraints was **St Ursula's School**. This was a project in Greenwich where we could flex our design muscles in the education sector. The proposal was for a new humanities block, drama room and art classrooms, all built within the school's existing courtyard. We felt that, although the school sits within a conservation area, a contemporary approach was called for. So we designed a counterpoint to the existing school buildings, with a primary structure made of steel frame combined with structural timber infill panels, curved to create external walls of the art classrooms on the top floor. We opted for glass and timber cladding, and encouraged a screen of foliage along the external boundary of







Left: Digby Road
Above:
St. Ursula's School
Right: Wenlock Works





the site in order to soften the building where it addresses the adjacent private gardens.

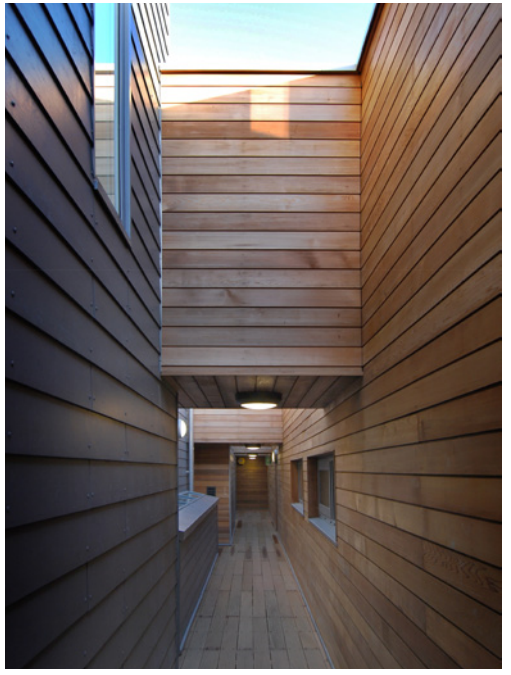
Wenlock Works was a new build live/work development for 97 units we created on the site of a former print works. We worked hard to create places and spaces not just in the flats themselves, but also in the corridors which took you to each home. So often in flatted development schemes we see long, dead corridors, so we ensured that we articulated spaces outside each door here and – where we can – in other projects. It helps make the schemes less institutional, more personalised, and is a common theme - we look at the social, communal spaces with equal weight to the private accommodation we design. The scheme faces Wenlock Park to the front and Wenlock Basin, (a canal) to the rear. Elsewhere, colour was used to articulate the













Previous page: Wenlock Works

Left: Morris House
Below: Livity School

main entrance and highlight other communal elements including the main staircase. A similar principle was at play in our **Morris House** project, where we designed what is effectively an open street at the top of the building. The scheme was a chance for us to get involved in a formerly industrial warehouse building, creating B1 units, duplex units and one row of single level units behind an existing façade. The project became something of a complex puzzle but allowed us to create at the upper level an external passageway or street with a bridge link in timber and coloured cladding, and corridors broken up with natural light from above through skylights.

Livity School is a scheme for houses on a former school site in Lambeth for a perimeter block which takes on board some of the lessons learned at Morris House. The development comprises 15 terraced houses and 28 duplex flats with private entrances and rear gardens at ground floor which create active street frontages. Tenure is split 50% private sale and 50% affordable, but one of the main features is that we strove to create a scheme where all the homeowners had dual aspect properties, with views over a communal garden in the scheme's middle. Our approach here was



also one in which we persuaded the client to go beyond the initial brief to a more ambitious project which will reap bigger financial rewards. At **King Edwards Road** we also persuaded our client to think again about what they might be able to achieve, creating an open aesthetic for the live/work scheme after presenting ideas using models and drawings. And at **Morrell's Yard** (see Materials), we used our experience and initiative to come up with the idea of cedar-clad boxes within a private courtyard, on a difficult, overlooked site. Again, this exemplifies our approach of squeezing as much value as possible out of schemes, many of which are on awkward sites. Less, after all, is often more.

Above: King Edward's Road

Right: Morrell's Yard



environment

Each and every project we design at Stephen Davy Peter Smith Architects pays homage to its environment and seeks both to develop it and, if appropriate, preserve some of its key characteristics at the same time.





Left: Dalston Lane
Above: King's Wharf

We are interested in placemaking – providing places for people to live in, work at, or play within. Context, as ever, is king.

King's Wharf is an example of this in action. This project was a bit of a groundbreaker for us because at the time we designed it, precious few other architects were looking to create deck-access schemes. We thought it was appropriate here on its waterside site in Hackney for Lemon Land. The project would sit on a rectangular former garage site between Kingsland Road and Kingsland Basin. We created a scheme arranged around a central courtyard and linked by open walkways of galvanised steel frame, timber decks, and external staircases protected by perforated aluminium sheet cladding. We designed dual aspect live/work units over two floors to allow for multi-functional living and working areas, the exposed concrete





and full-height glazed windows to the front elevation, bringing something of an industrial aesthetic in addition to light-filled spaces.

Sedgwick Street is another exercise in picking up on clues laid down for us as designers by the project's context. The scheme sits in a former industrial area north of Homerton Station in Hackney, so we again responded with a design which had something of this aesthetic about it – with engineering brick and galvanized steel. A new-build mixed use development of 55 units of 100% affordable housing for client Servite Houses, the project is distinguished by the fact that all dwellings have private balconies and share landscaped communal terraces at first and ninth floor levels. An environmental thrust is furthered by the incorporation of solar water panels on the roof and a brown roof as a wildlife habitat.

It has some of the same elements

Above: King's Wharf
Right: Sedgwick Street









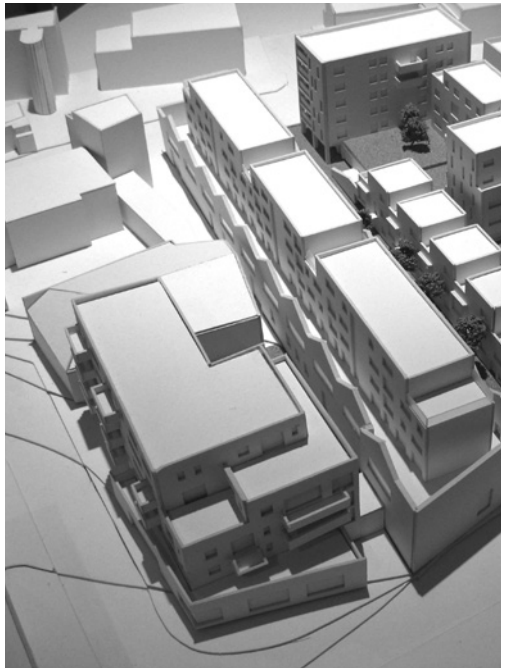


as **Digby Road** scheme, but there, in a more residential area, the treatment was softer, demonstrating again our desire to respond to and respect local conditions.

Sometimes, a well-judged, contemporary contrast can set off a sensitive historic environment to good effect. **Ecclesbourne School** is one such. Working for Durkan Estates, we took an old school and converted it into residential units, adding a new infill block onto the site of the former school's playground. We were able to create 63 apartments and houses within a conservation area of Islington, the majority going into the Victorian school, with single aspect units clad in pre-oxidized copper, red brick and white render going into the extra block. We could then re-landscape the space between, creating defensible space for cycle racks, refuse stores and front gardens using

Left: Sedgwick Street
Above: Ecclesbourne School, Digby Road (top right)









Above and left:
Upper Clapton Road
Previous page:
Ecclesborne Road

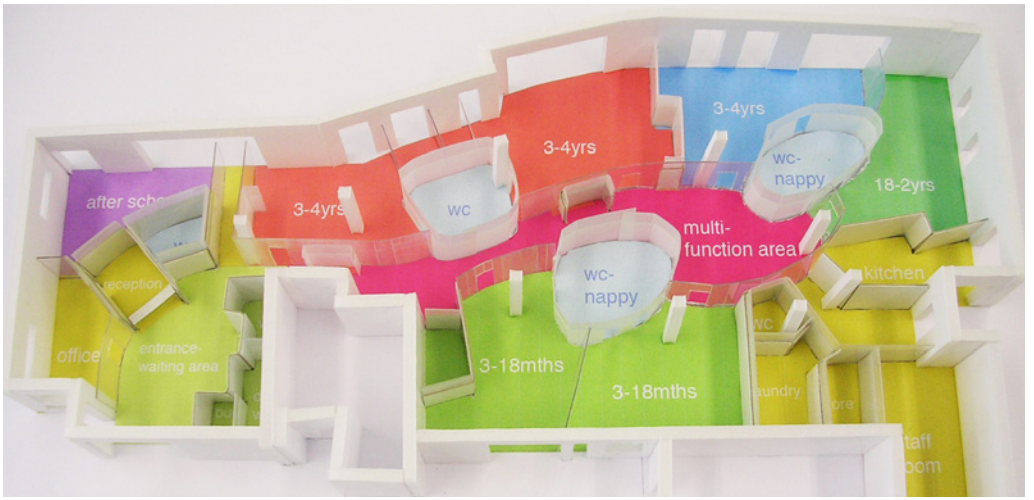
gabion walls. We deliberately chose a modern idiom for the new buildings to create a respectful contrast with its older neighbours.

The **Upper Clapton Road** tram shed is a part conversion, part new build residential-led mixed use scheme with planning for a site in Hackney on which stood a shed for horse-drawn trams. We came to the project after a series of architects had tried and failed, with a fresh approach that aimed at maximizing the potential of the site without destroying its history and character. Our scheme retains the tram shed, designing commercial space on the ground floor and building a four-storey residential block on the roof, akin to our project at Morris House. All of the residential units are dual aspect around cores which sit behind the existing saw-toothed gable ends. This allowed us to create a new route running through the scheme, with commercial units on one side at the bottom of the tramshed and a safe pedestrian route through to the residential at the back of the site. Ultimately, the scheme uses an existing building, respects the street pattern and gives both a public route through and private amenity space for residents above street level.

layout

One of the things that sets Stephen Davy Peter Smith Architects apart is that we really practice what we preach in our search for interior organisations and well-planned initiatives.

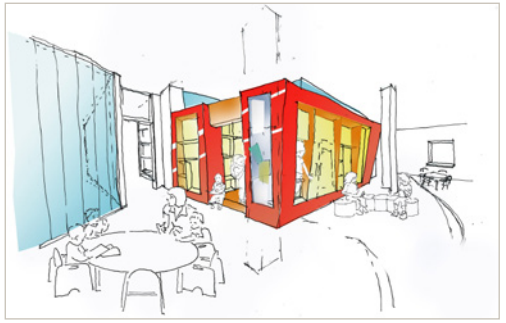




Left: Parkside School
Above: Comet Square Nursery

Some of that is on our own doorstep, which is another reason to get things right. We designed **Bright Buttons**, a nursery at our offices near the City, and are running the facility for local parents and their children as a standalone business. We developed the scheme for 35 children on our offices' ground floor and use it as a model for clients who want to explore converting areas in their schemes for alternative. As with many of our projects, we did a lot more than just the architecture here, concentrating on being proactive and helping to make things work.

We also developed a scheme for **Comet Square Nursery** in Hatfield. We developed with models and freehand sketch drawings because we felt they were the best way of communicating ideas to a relatively inexperienced client who might be intimidated by the usual architects'









Above and right:
Parkside First School
Left: Comet Square
Nursery

paraphernalia. The scheme uses a great deal of colour, with classrooms clustered around a visually exciting and centrally located multifunctional space, which forms the hub of the nursery's activity.

Again in the education sector, and making a strong use of colour, we designed an extension to **Parkside First School** in Borehamwood, Hertfordshire. Here our focus was on providing flexible, multi-functional spaces which primarily accommodate a new support base for pupils with special educational needs. It also serves as an outreach teaching facility, an advisory support centre and a facility for the local police. We picked up on the existing building's characteristics, scale and rhythm but provide a new identity for the building, which can operate as part of the school or as an independent, self-contained unit, with its own entrance.

Carterhatch School – as with most education buildings – was another case of striving to create an environment which balanced effective, light and airy spaces with good circulation and high degrees of flexibility for the staff and pupils alike. The first scheme we worked on at the site in Enfield was to extend the main building with three extra classrooms. Working closely with the school and education department to best tailor

Right and bottom:
Carterhatch School
Below: Parkside
First School







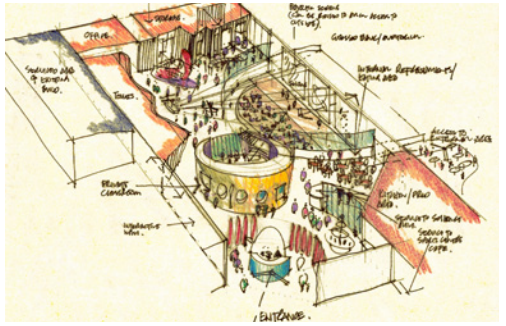


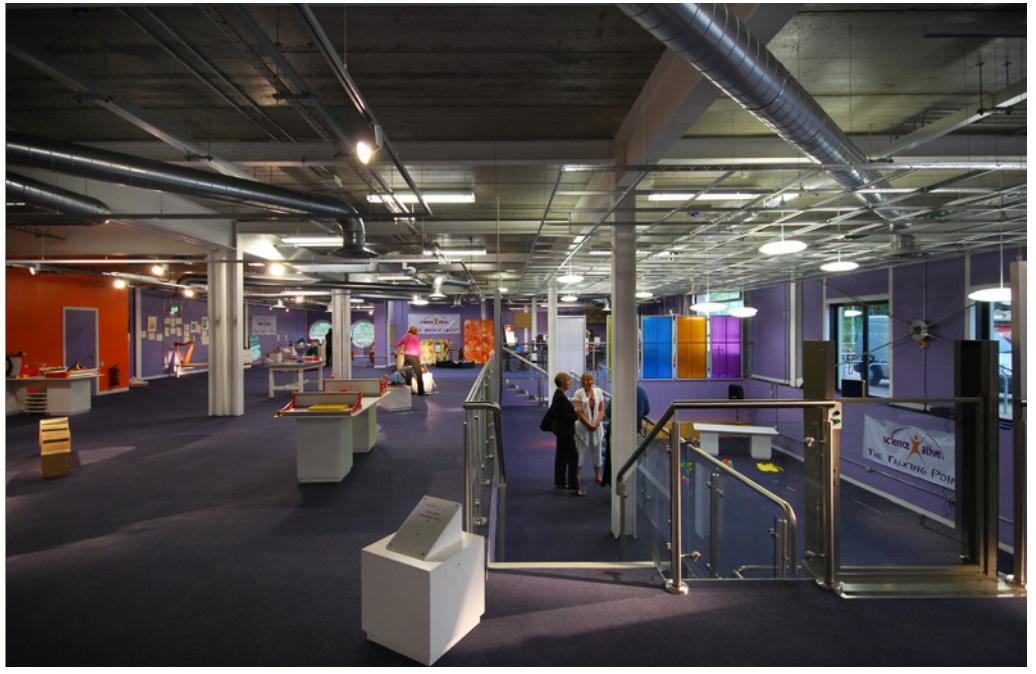
the design to meet their need, the classrooms continue the theme of the main building with high ceilings, steel beams and clerestory windows. These provide a good level of daylight and natural ventilation, whilst we went with a cheerful colour scheme of white render and one yellow external wall, as well as purple, yellow and orange internally. The three classrooms are arranged in an 'L' shape around a generous corridor that can also be used as a teaching space. We followed this project with another at the same site, this time to add new admin and staff rooms, along with a wind turbine to be used to power it and provide an educational resource.

When it comes to exhibition design, interior layouts are paramount. So our project to design the **Science Alive** science and technology exhibition and education centre allowed us to demonstrate our skills in providing an exhibition space, interactive space and high technology space as attractive, efficient and interesting attractions. Designed to a very tight budget, the scheme was a conversion of an existing sports centre in Harlow, Essex, involving a flexible space which included the pit – a double height space for shows or activity.

Although the vast majority of our work is in the UK, we do also venture further afield. In Luxembourg, for







example, our design entry for the **Maison de l'Ingenieur** competition organized by the Fonds Belval made a clear distinction between the teaching areas and researchers' offices. This was set in the brief for this new engineering faculty building at the new University City site, just south of Luxembourg. The former we located in a concrete cube with large openings to the eastern edge of the site, while we envisaged the research offices in an L-shaped brick tower with linear window strips to the opposite side. The layout allowed us to propose a coffee shop, library and multipurpose hall at the lower levels in the space between cube and tower. In essence, we tried to concentrate on creating good, open and active circulation spaces and alternative break-out learning spaces springing from them – to suit how people tend to learn today in less formal environments. Although we didn't win the project, we were the only British team in an eight-strong shortlist.

Left:
Science Alive
Right: Maison
de l'Ingenieur











materials

We delight in using innovative and aesthetically pleasing materials which are appropriate to their site, but beyond that, which are also more than adequate for the job in hand.

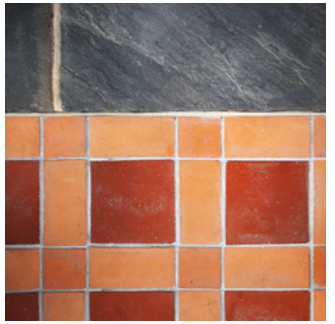


Left: York Way
Above: Old Montague Street

Old Montague Street is an affordable housing mixed tenure scheme of 27 homes in Tower Hamlets for ONE Housing, which we lifted from the usual offering in this sector by our decision to introduce coloured elements within the glass balustrades, balconies and terraces. Across two distinct blocks on this former car park site, we created open boxes of white render above dark brick bases, along with distinctive green render panels. The result is a clean, crisp aesthetic, along with a performance rated as 'very good' in the Eco Homes system. On a different scale, another exercise in choosing the right materials, this time for a private residential client, was our scheme at **Burwash** in East Sussex. Here the task was to design a house extension with a sunroom and kitchen extension alongside







Above and left: Burwash
Right: Merrowdown

a refurbishment of the living room, study and kitchen. We responded with a simple form following the rest of the building, dramatic roofslope windows, and the interior improved with bespoke oak furniture, display shelving which incorporated windows and folding oak panels, plus a wood-burning stove. We also used a local reclamation yard for roof tiles, wall tiles and stone paving and commissioned a local craftsman who created hand-made terracotta tiles for the flooring.

Another private residential client we worked with built a new home in his garden, **Merrowdown** in King's Langley, Hertfordshire. We created two long volumes with double height, open plan spaces in a barn aesthetic, clad in black zinc. Black was chosen for this generously proportioned contemporary home because of its links with agricultural buildings in the local landscape. This approach was well received at local planning meetings and the scheme was commended at the Chilterns Building Design Awards 2013.

Morrell's Yard shows another key choice of materials to enhance a building. This was seven units – five flats and two houses – in Kennington on which we used cedar









shingles for the first time. The small brownfield site was surrounded and overlooked on all sides by residential (many of whom opposed it) and public buildings including a Grade II listed Library and Lambeth County Court. We designed a small-scale development of two timber-clad 'boxes' within a private courtyard. The shingles add detail and texture to what are fairly simple facades, while we chose Iroko for the cladding and decking of an external stair and access walkways. Both timbers will also weather to a similar grey colour over time.

A variation on this theme of timber boxes was evident in another project we designed, this time **Micawber Wharf** in Hackney. The scheme sits at the end of Wenlock Basin – in fact that basin used to extend beneath it,

Above and right: Morrell's Yard















Above: Randolph Street
Previous page and left: Micawber Wharf

so it was effectively in the water. We conceived it as a series of interlocking structural ribbons which weave together to create floor, wall, and roof elements, with the timber boxes slotting inside to provide residential and B1 spaces. Since there were many rights of light issues to get around locally, with the Victoria Miro gallery nearby we had to design a building which responded to those constraints. This resulted in a stepped form like a series of books laid upon each other with single level and duplex live/work units aimed at local artists and clad with timber screens.

Glass was the predominant material featured in **Randolph Street**, a refurbishment and extension of a four-storey Georgian house in Camden for a musician client. The project included the creation of a light-filled basement as main living space and large roof terrace which was accessed from a bespoke glass pavilion. The interior of this difficult corner building includes cantilevered walnut stairs with a steel balustrade providing access to the main living spaces, along with a kitchen island made from concrete.

Swallow Place, meanwhile, was a case where we thought zinc was an appropriate and interesting





choice as cladding material but which provided a challenge given the scheme's illustrious near neighbour.

The site for the scheme in Limehouse sits next to St Anne's Church – a Hawksmoor-designed, Grade 1-listed church and alongside a park and row of listed houses. We created a series of six, three-storey houses entered via a corridor from the street and thereby not impinging on the park. The building was conceived as a zinc box raised on an irregularly shaped plinth above ground level in order to create a sense of privacy. All in all, it demonstrated our adventurousness, ingenuity and inventiveness in one of the most sensitive contexts we have had to deal with.

Left: Randolph Street
Above: Swallow Place



Left: Swallow Place
Right: York Way



Our project on **York Way** was something of a pioneer in a materials sense in that it was the first use of this particular profiled cladding in the country. We created a strong street presence for this paper storage warehouse, with a playfully articulated wavy timber gate and colourful horizontal cladding and windows above suggesting boxes on shelves, hinting at what is inside. We designed the scheme with foresight, too – it was created with flexibility in mind, with easy conversion into a standalone office building should values rise in the future as a result of the nearby King's Cross Central project.

Ultimately, in materials as with all the other facets of our work, we seek to achieve several main goals in every project we undertake. We strive to be appropriate; we aim to be efficient, and we set out to be cost-effective. If we can do that, combining those basic tenets with rigorous design ideals and whilst pushing the brief beyond all expectations, then we're happy.

And we trust that the client is too.

awards

List of current awards:

Branch Place (Lime Wharf)
Shortlisted: First Time Buyer Magazine Readers' Awards 2014

Merrowdown
Commended: Chilterns Buildings Design Awards 2013

Upper Clapton Road
Shortlisted: World Architecture Festival 2010

Digby Road
Shortlisted: World Architecture News Awards 2011
Winner: Estate Gazette, Green Building Award
Highly Commended: World Architecture Festival Awards 2009
Shortlisted: RIBA Housing Design Awards 2009

Sedgwick Street
Shortlisted: First Time Buyers Awards 2010
Shortlisted: World Architecture Festival Awards 2009
Shortlisted: RIBA Awards 2009
Shortlisted: RIBA Housing Design Awards 2009
Commended: British Homes Awards 2009

Swainson (Issigonis House and Morris House)
Winner: Chicago Athenaeum, International Architecture Award 2010 (Morris House)
Shortlisted: First Time Buyers Awards 2010
Shortlisted: What House Awards 2009 (Issigonis House)
Highly Commended: Ealing Civic Society 2009 (Morris House)

Micawber Street
Shortlisted: RIBA Housing Design Awards 2008
Shortlisted: RIBA Housing Design Awards 2005

Architect of the Year Awards 2006
Shortlisted: Public Housing Architect of the Year

Morrell's Yard
Shortlisted: RIBA Awards 2006
Shortlisted: Grand Design Awards 2006
Shortlisted: Evening Standard Housing Awards 2006

Dalston Lane
Shortlisted: Hackney Design Awards 2006

Architect of the Year Awards 2005
Winner: Private Housing Architect of the Year

Parkside School and Carterhatch infant School
Shortlisted: Enfield Design Awards 2005

Swallow Place
Winner: AIA Architecture Award 2005
Shortlisted: RIBA Awards 2005
Shortlisted: RIBA Housing Design Awards 2004

Architect of the Year Awards 2004
Shortlisted: Best New Architectural Firm of the Year
Shortlisted: Private Housing Architect of the Year

Lever Street
Shortlisted: RIBA Housing Design Awards 2004

King's Wharf
Winner: Hackney Design Awards 2004
Nominated: Civic Trust Award 2003

Scotts Road
Shortlisted: Evening Standard Housing Awards 2003



Merrowdown



Swallow Place



Lever Street



Micawber Street



Dalston Lane



Sedgwick Street



Swainson (Issigonis House and Morris House)

Text written by David Taylor, Freelance Architectural Journalist
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With thanks to our clients and employees, past and present, for their contributions to this body of work.

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Lever Street



Rear cover: Issigonis House
This page: King's Wharf

