## The Shared Space



Published by Alumno Group www.alumnogroup.com

Editor and photography: Martin Gray

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### **David Campbell**



Alumno was really borne out of an opportunity that sprung out of a few things that happened rather than a grand plan. I guess it was the right place at the right time. Just before starting Alumno, a number of healthcare projects we were working on had come to an end. After selling our interest in those we were left with a bit of a blank page, and I had to make some decisions about what to do. I think I'd reached the point in my life where I felt ready to take a chance, to strike out on my own and formulate my own ideas. I didn't

want to go back to a job where I was working for someone else again and so fear, in part, was what spurred me on. I knew I had to give it a good go and working with Mevan was the catalyst as he was firmly behind my ideas.

We had very little resources but plenty of drive. In those early days I was working at a frenetic pace and everything was an opportunity. I was going up and down the country, meeting people and pushing the envelope as much as I could. I think just sheer endeavour and persistence and some naivety got us breaks. It was as much about convincing and persuading people that we could deliver and were a good horse to back.

I had previously worked for housing associations in the 1990s and through this had exposure to many different housing models. After a period working in traditional housing, I moved into key-worker living and social housing, addressing issues of affordability and looking at shared ownership. Although this is in vogue now, it was new in the 1990s, and I liked the juxtaposition of commercial elements with a strong ethical basis.

In 1994, as part of my masters in Housing and Urban Design (at Bristol University), I spent eight months on placement to Nottingham Trent University looking at how they could establish a model for student accommodation. I picked up quite an insight there in terms of how universities look at things and what their key drivers were. It was quite groundbreaking at the time because no one had researched it properly before. We were on the cusp of the Blair years where there was an emphasis on 50% of 18-year-olds getting into higher education. I could

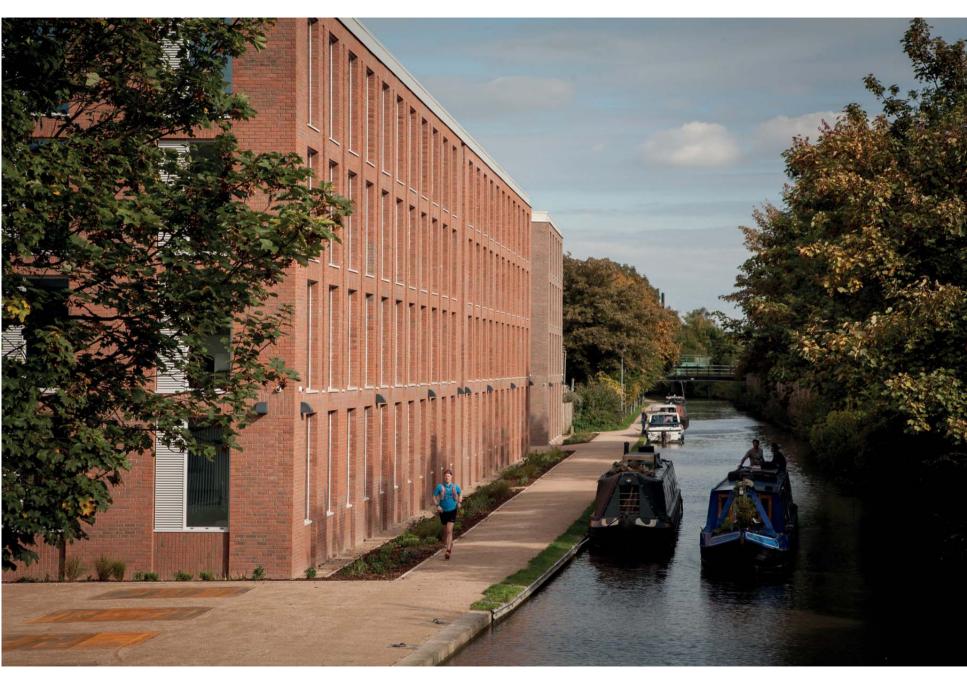
see there was a big potential market there that hadn't yet been tapped into. It was an interesting period and marked the beginning of a sea change in the way universities operated. I got an idea of where demand was, the potential market and what people wanted. This remained in the back of my mind even when working for mainstream housing associations and inevitably led me to doing more student housing, giving me further exposure to this growing sector.

Social housing, affordable housing and key-worker housing are all forms of tenure that are geared at helping people establish a roof over their heads and, at their best, fostering a sense of community. I don't view student housing as any different from that really. To me, student housing is a form of tenure and it all links in. It's often a young person's first experience of a home that is away from family.

When I initially left that sector I joined BHE, as they were then, which was where I met Mevan. We worked on healthcare projects and building medical facilities which gave me another angle on private-public partnerships. After selling the business in 2006 I felt the timing was right to look at student housing again as it was something that had held my interest, and there weren't many people doing it even by then. So it was really from that point on I suggested to Mevan that this would be a good thing to look at. Mevan was very supportive and could see the sense in it. He said, "Let's have a go," and it was as simple as that. There was no grand master plan or agenda, it was really about having the energy and ability to work at an intensity. It was equally exciting and terrifying!

I had the knowledge base. I was interested in cities, regeneration and design and I see young people very much as being a part of that move to cultural rebirth and regeneration of our urban landscape, particularly in respect of the re-invigoration of inner cities and town centres. I think it's been proven that universities in some cases have been the galvanising force in the reinvention of many towns and cities in this post-industrial age.

In general, university towns and cities have moved more towards a learning economy, and it's counter cyclical. When there's a downturn the students still come, and people still want to learn, so in some ways it's quite a robust sector to be in and is resilient. From where we started to where we are now, Alumno has evolved – I'd like to think – and we now



Leamington Spa The Union

### Introduction

need to be on the cusp both of student housing and the other elements that students are giving back to the towns and cities. That's where we've moved to. It's about making it a more sophisticated offer and a more sustainable one.

We look closely at where we feel there are issues with student housing and try to resolve these. We try to find a way of making sure that our developments are benchmarks of place-making, the cutting edge of the sympathetic development of cities. We obviously put a lot of emphasis on our research and relationships, to try to understand what the key drivers are in each location and where we can add value. I've always liked the idea that each project is bespoke.

You could look at one of our buildings and you wouldn't know necessarily that it was done by the same person if you looked at another one of theirs in another location. It's about establishing individuality and identity. Can we go in and do something that complements what's there already, allows the students to integrate and draws the community in in a successful way? It's that constant push to evolve, to learn as we go along and to adapt and grow. I think we're at the point now where I really feel we're doing a bit more in the way of widescreen regeneration with our current wave of projects.

All of our work is driven by consultation. When we start a project we make a conscious effort to go out and talk to people and to listen and understand the place. If we're doing a project in Norwich or Bermondsey, we need to remind ourselves that we don't live there. We find out from the people that do live there what's important to them. One advantage of not being local is that we've got the benefit of having developed in a lot of other places and know what's worked well before. Of course, there can be parallels and we may get feedback from people that suggests we should be doing something similar again. It's all about striking the balance between bringing this to the table while being mindful of the fact that you're in a different city, a different location with its own identity.

On our very early projects, there was only so much Mevan and I could do by ourselves. And gradually, with experience, we've evolved and taken more steps into the cycle. So we've gone from a handful of projects in the early years to where we then started to develop and build projects ourselves, taking more of an active role right through. It was a natural sort of organic growth. We'd obviously been successful at getting schemes

through planning which gave us more exposure and more opportunities to go beyond what we'd done before.

In around 2009-10 we did a few projects in partnership with a construction company. A lot of that was driven by the fact that people could see that we seemed to know what we were doing, and so it was natural for us to take more of the lead role in development. This is where we really began to make a difference, although a number of the early schemes weren't easy.

The Peckham Road buildings gave us one of our first major challenges. We had signed a 35 year lease agreement with the University of the Arts and bought the buildings from Southwark Council with a view to creating a campus down there. The buildings were derelict Grade II listed and it was an interesting brief that a lot of people wouldn't have touched due to its complexity. I think the fact we did it stood us in good stead. I've always believed in the old adage that you're only as good as the last thing you did and so I take the view that every project is the most important one. Retaining great architecture can also be a vital part of regeneration, maybe changing its use but in a very sympathetic way. Things inevitably won't always go to plan, but you use your experience and a wee bit of resilience to work your way through it.

There is no doubt we made some mistakes in the early years, but we learned from them and the fact we got through it really set us up strongly for what we've subsequently gone on to do. I've still got the same fear I started with, I've got that tension where at any moment a project could go wrong and I'd be back to square one. When you've been knocked down a bit it makes you more determined to come back and do your best work, and I want every project to be different and better than the last. And throughout we have maintained a tight and close working team around us and built up a trust and a committee to do our best work with every project.

We want to work with people who have ideas and individuality. A lot of how we choose architects is driven by personalities and whether we feel we can bounce ideas off them.

The people that you bring onto any project are important. They could have a local connection or knowledge, but they must share our ethos about trying to do their best work. I also want to avoid doing stuff that's

formulaic. I approach every scheme like it's a blank sheet of paper. That's why I like working with someone like Iain Carson or Jonathan Yates. They come to a scheme design on a very honest basis and do a simple sketch. The fact that they can make something look good on day one, simply by drawing it, signifies what our whole approach should be – it's about making things work on a base level before you then start adding the layers.

So every bit of the process interconnects and it's all part of learning about the city and making it sympathetic so it will carry on evolving. In most of our schemes we include the likes of community cafes and community halls, creches, artists' studios, restaurants, retail outlets and community educational facilities (including Peckham Theatre) - a whole range of different community resources. This is something that we feel is very important. It's place-making, that's the key point. It's about enhancing the community so we're not just building student accommodation, we're also building other things in and around these sites.

There is no doubt that people have, in my view, made errors in student housing. For a long time the perception was of a box with a front door and people disappear into the building, with no sense of activity or daily life, difficult to tell what's going on, as they have their back to everything. I think we need to turn this view on its head. The outdoor space to me is just as important as what goes on in the building. We're always looking at how we can position the building to make it feel welcoming and actually engage positively with what's around it. People turning up to this kind of building are only going to have a good experience. They will have a better sense of place, the sense of being part of the city instead of locked away from it, as will outsiders.

So it's opening things out by blurring the lines between student and non-student, social and non-social housing. All are part of the same environment and are helping bring people into a town or a city to contribute, to add something to the fabric of that place. I've just never understood why people view students as being something different, of having nothing to contribute, and that's probably because their housing has historically been done badly.

With student housing you've got footfall, you've got activity and you've got young people doing what young people do – and there's good and bad with that – but they're out there and they're spending money

locally. They have friends round, they do things that really embody what a modern city should be about and, if they have a good experience in that city, there's every chance they will stay there and get a job there and contribute positively to the economy. If they're from abroad and go back into the world they will pass the word on, not only about the accommodation but about the city itself, forging links with new generations. I think this is a well proven point which most people would accept now.

Design undoubtedly comes into it too – I mean we've always emphasised the importance of breakout space and amenity space - areas where people can bump into one another. You're not shoe horned into your corridor, into your room, you're really making it a space that allows people to circulate and have those accidental meetings and occasional discussions. This is about people being adults generally for the first time and, if you put a bit of effort into the building, if it's well designed and thought through, then people genuinely respect it.

We also work hard with architects to be sympathetic to local materials. To source local stone, like the brickwork in Norwich that matches the flint with the reflections, or elements of the stonework in Glasgow that links to the tenemental structure. We're developing things internally and externally so that all the people who are living in the city can feel the buildings are physically adding something to their space.

The best compliment for us is when the students move in and we hear that they love it. At the end of the day that's what it's all about as they're the end users. It's about people. It's about giving them the best possible start in their university life, and being in a good living environment is going to give them a really good chance of doing the best they can within that window. Making the most of their degrees and their qualifications, getting the best degree, but also learning from an environment that is well designed and created around them.

With all of our projects we instil and bring a common thread to every level of the project brief, maintaining an enthusiasm and an energy, so every single person on the team tries to do their best work, to go to the next level. I've always viewed each project as its own piece to stand alone: bringing in the abstract and developing a unique theme and narrative. It's what spurs you on and gets you going.

### Introduction

I mean for us it's always been personality driven and a blend of different types as well. That's why we've got a tight team of people that work with us now. We've taken them with us on a journey and hopefully everyone is getting a positive experience out of it. As some famous actor once said, "It's took me 15 years to become an overnight success".

I've always liked the idea of people coming to the table from different backgrounds and disciplines, bringing a blend to what we do. If you met some of our employees in the street, you wouldn't necessarily think they would work for Alumno or even in a property environment. For us, that's always been an important part of how we put the chemistry together. We've been lucky in the sense that the team we've got now all get along really well. We give them enough of a platform to feel that they can lead their projects and really have an opportunity to shine. They implement their own ideas, bring enthusiasm and energy and have an almost obsessive desire for excellence.

I don't want to do humdrum run of the mill developments because other developers can do that. We're a smaller developer and we're arguably punching above our weight. We've got to strive to do something different to really stand out, so whether it's architects, employees or artists we've commissioned, we always engage people from a diverse set of backgrounds. We want the energy of that creative mix so what goes into our buildings is not in danger of becoming "one size fits all". We'll find an architect who has worked not just on student housing and we'll say, "What can you do with this, how will you solve this problem?"

In many ways bringing in people with a different set of disciplines, who have never worked on student housing before can lead to a re-interpreting of the conventional view of how student housing should work. I like that clash and conflict, the juxtaposing between how the model is "supposed" to work and something totally different. It embodies a more public housing, retail or hotel-centred viewpoint and then clashes with it to bring together a blend that is much more interesting. We can then move away from the institutional view of how you "must" do things. We're now at the stage where we can actually do proper regeneration, but we're not so big that we're not still allowing ourselves freedom to experiment. It's trying to get that balance between being big enough to do regeneration in the way we want, and taking more control, but still having the creativity to be the indie label.

In this respect we're kind of like a Factory Records. In many ways Tony Wilson was a vanguard of regeneration, he was about changing cities culturally and physically and embodied what I've been trying to do on a smaller scale. He completely changed the perception of Manchester. His quote "You're in Manchester and we do things differently here" could be applied to an Alumno building. In a funny way he's been very influential person in terms of what I've ended up doing, even though he's not an architect or designer, and was arguably not the best business person.

In a lot of ways he's a signpost for everything that was right about moving from post-industrial cities: having communities with a more artistic focus celebrating culture. If we can operate on any level like that I would be delighted. Some of our developments are in post-industrial cities like Birmingham, Glasgow and Stratford in the East End of London. These locations that have a very similar historical legacy, they have gone through hard times, and sympathetic architecture is an important part of continuing cultural placemaking and regeneration.

So we've now got students from all over the world coming to these places, adding something to them and taking away the sense that they are great cities. If you can help facilitate this in what you're developing then you're influencing the next generation. We are working with people who get all that, who are ready to absorb all those influences and believe in the importance of respecting each other. Good development should always be about reflecting and enhancing people's experiences.

During one of our early projects, I was fortunate enough to meet Chris Wainwright, through our engagement with University of the Arts and Camberwell College. Chris was college dean. Chris was very interested in our approach, could see our potential and most importantly where we were trying to go with it. He offered solid advice on how to engage successfully with artists, drive cultural place-making and also to widen our remit and appeal. He was a real champion of our work and opened our minds to the possibility of going beyond being seen as simply a developer of student housing. He has been a pivotal influence in our development and approach as a company.

For us working with architects is a two-way thing, it's a sharing and evolution of ideas. They will take on board our comments and at least try them out and allow us to influence how the design evolves. We're hands on, and commission architects that have impressed us based on previous work they've done. You also need to feel that these are people who will really take a personal view on the project and want the best outcome from it. Of course, there's got to be an understanding of the commerciality of a project, but in every scheme you have to make some sacrifices. It doesn't necessarily mean you're diminishing the quality - it's just finding other ways and solutions to come up with your best work and about striving for people to do their best.

Good architects will also care about place making, about the role of their building within the community. We will fight their corner for maintaining a lot of the design integrity, as opposed to many developers who would just strip it out to save money. Some architects will talk about how we have developed things together and certain aspects of buildings are a combination of our idea and theirs working together. In many ways this was how we got into the relationship with Tom Bloxham and Urban Splash. They were there at the forefront of urban regeneration in the 1990s and were focused on great design, trying to work with the best people they could and reinterpret communities. I think they saw us in the same sort of category and recognised a kind of shared ethos. That's a great compliment for us since Tom's written the rule book in many ways and got an MBE on the back of it. He's been in the mire and come back, so he's a good person to get advice from. For us, it's great to have the opportunity to position ourselves alongside such a fabulous company and, in a way, this has probably been through our dogged, dogmatic approach to design and how we want to deal with it. Some people may think it's too rigid, but you've got to stay true to your core principles, which is why our buildings have now won many awards across Britain.

As well as working hand in hand with some of the best architects, we've also tried as much as possible to work directly with the universities, to learn from them what their needs are and what their students' needs are. You need to know who your partners are, who your stakeholders are and understand your market. You need to understand who is going to be living there and who the custodians are. Research is key - looking at the growth of each university: where the students are coming from, what buildings have been put up before, what the economic set up is of the building, how students can benefit a local area, what our economic

influence is going to be, what sort of rooms would be attractive and what graduates do after they finish studying – building up that story. It really gives us the grounding for why we are doing this and where can we make a difference by understanding these dynamics.

Know your place, know your strengths, do the research. You've got to know where you're going with it, how to shape it, who you're going to affect, whose lives you're going to impact on, who you're to bring in and put out. That's what it's all about.

### **Mevan Alwis**



I trained as an accountant where I was guided by inspiring people, then decided to move away from professional practice to develop my interests and use my skills differently. That was the start of an important new chapter. In fact, the company I decided to join later became the first people to introduce the now successfully established retail mall model into hospitals. We learned a lot about the health sector in the process.

This led us to develop primary care centres and we were the first in the UK to develop multi centre practices, starting with Bonnyrigg in Scotland. This seemed to work well and led to there being more multi centre practitioners throughout the country. We won a twenty-five year contract from the government to establish these NHS facilities in areas including East London, Coventry and Liverpool.

The NHS agreed that it was beneficial to the community to have Multi centres, which provided multi services. Instead of only providing standard GP services, they include the likes of physiotherapy, podiatry, mental health, dementia team and a pharmacy. A normal surgery couldn't possibly provide all this, so our idea was to get most of the work done in the surgery rather than patients having to use the hospital facilities, which proved to be highly successful.

In 2006 David Campbell joined us and thought we could develop our social model further by looking into providing student accommodation. This was around about the period of the financial crash, so we were taking quite big risks, but David was bringing us interesting new ideas on how we were going to develop this, not just in a bog standard way following the normal patterns. He had real vision. We joined together and first we did some planning for other people, a few companies, a few projects, and then we thought we'll start doing things ourselves – and that was how Alumno started. We started doing one or two and received positive reviews and commendations, and then it multiplied and grew, and here we are.

My input was very much about creating a financial model to suit the objective of giving students quality accommodation at affordable rent and creating value, especially in areas where existing private landlord rents

were very high, or there was no access to safe and secure accommodation within easy access to lecture theatres and the like.

This was something I identified with, from my primary care and healthcare experience, so there's a strong link. We applied the same sort of financial model I had already developed which is fundamentally the model we are still basing things on. That's the reason we manage to keep the rents down, but still create value for all our stakeholders and create a reasonable return.

One of the things that motivates us is that we are often building in regeneration areas. In Birmingham, for example, we were creating something from scratch – an idle land turned into a useful site. Likewise, in Leamington the particular area was run down and under developed. Now there's a beautiful canal side building that's sympathetic to the surroundings and will bring other buildings in tow, if you pardon the pun.

Some of the more visionary cafe owners and other local business people developed their facilities, which also increased regeneration, in the knowledge that we were going to bring the right amount of students to add huge economic benefit to the local area, whilst respecting and engaging with existing communities.

My primary role in Alumno is building the financial model and raising the finance. Before we start work on a project we do a demand study, talk to local government and other relevant authorities, to see whether we can successfully achieve the desired objectives, rather than just going straight in. We spend a considerable amount of time and expertise on thorough research and if the area is viable and the demand is strong enough, the rest follows fairly smoothly. We can demonstrate to the local government and the stakeholders that there is logic behind what we are doing.

We would rather be bespoke and produce the highest quality. As opposed to building a large complex we will often choose to build, say 250 units. We are taking the risk away and also creating an excellent product that doesn't flood the area with too large an influx of students at an inappropriate site.

That's what we do - from scratch. If all the elements are there we can create something good. We can work around obstacles, helping other people into the schemes to make it work for everyone.

The community in St Andrews needed a state of the art nursery for the local children so we agreed that we would also build that. In Southwark, South London, the Peckham theatre was crumbling so we built a brand new theatre for the community and a community cafe. In Birmingham we provided necessary retail and learning areas. In Glasgow we created a site for a large deli, cafe and restaurant. In Norwich we restored a neighbouring historic building and created a range of community facilities. Whatever site we develop, we try to bring something extra.

We give quite a lot of importance to art and landscaping, to make the buildings look nice, inside and out and give something back to the community. A lot of research that we do from the beginning to the end of a project, including some of the artwork we have commissioned, is encouraging engagement that benefits the whole.

We want the end result to be a beautiful thing, which helps us to successfully develop the next one. We are not bog standard student accommodation. We build something we are proud of, so we can say, "Hey, we built this". Life is short, so what you do, do well.



## The Projects

# Southwark Town Hall





**Project** Refurbishment of former Town Hall

including artists studios and community café

with new build Theatre Peckham

**Location** Camberwell, South London

**Architects** Jestico + Whiles

**Completed** 2016 for Goldsmiths, University London





### Andy Costa Architect - Jestico and Wiles

The brief by Alumno Developments was to regenerate the site of the former Southwark Town Hall as a mixed-use building which includes the new Theatre Peckham, accommodation for Goldsmiths College students, the new Theatre Peckham, Artists studios for 'Space Studio's' and a Community Cafe/bar, restaurant and gallery.

One benefit of having such a strong and rich brief is that you can really work on the narrative of the building and think about how that expressiveness manifests itself, in order to make both the student and community experience much more holistic.

Since my own student days and throughout my architecture career, I've been interested in exploring narratives in design, thinking very much about the way that buildings, through their physicality, can convey an element of surprise or experience or joy.

There were layers to the original building just as there had been layers of different users over time. There was the original 1870's vestry hall, with the 1950's Town Hall architecture essentially enveloping this original building, and adjacent Georgian houses providing a rich historic context. There is a real connection with the way that the surrounding area builds in time and, rather than try and make it homogenise, we felt that each element could be expressed and stand on its own merit. I thought about how any new elements could be constructed against this backdrop of heritage while fitting with the values of the local community and we worked closely with the planning team to develop a complementary, contemporary response. The idea was to really create something of its time and of the moment, so that it would become another layer of pantheist, another layer of memory of the building reflecting its enduring vitality.

The scheme was designed to include private student gardens, generous common spaces and lounges. The new extension made use of insitu slab with pale bricks complementing the hall's Portland stone and weathered brick, tying the new and historic together. We had some fantastic essential uses proposed in the early stages of the scheme. These were testament to the strong ethos that Alumno shared with Jestico and Whiles, to engage both Art and Architecture and promote them together. We were really very lucky that these evolving and changing ideas were something that manifested right through the physical element of the building.

The building is topped by a sky lounge with magnificent views across London, providing social space. The roof-top pavilion is enhanced with coloured glass which creates interesting shadows and reflections. At ground level twelve self-contained artist studios are provided to nurture emerging talent, augmented by an independently-operated public gallery and café. When we were designing the layouts we allowed the building to tell us where to divide it up and didn't really force sub division behind the facade which felt unnatural. We had a great opportunity of both height and volume in the rooms driven by columns within the building. We allowed the existing building to guide us in its own reinvention as it has a sort of life of it's own and informs you as to how it can be re used. As far as the actual student rooms are concerned, there are many stunning big rooms where you still feel you're in quite a grand mid 20th century building, though with modern pod style bathrooms – appropriately in keeping with the quality of experience we wanted for the students.

Within the old building there was a repository of plans and safes which contained decades worth of symbols and emblems, for example crickets sets that had been given out as awards. We were able to salvage guite a lot of this visual data. This ensured we could keep some of the old Town Hall alive for local people who would have memories of it.

Part of the development involved reconstructing Theatre Peckham - a community theatre housed in an adjoining badly run-down community hall on the site. The goal was to create a state-of-the-art studio theatre complex with 200-seat auditorium, rehearsal space and dance studios - all under one roof - with a foyer and breakout space accessed from a new public piazza to the north.

I had been particularly inspired by a project in Spain in which a beautiful but simple ceramic tiled box was placed in a naturalistic landscape, reflecting the sky and the moods of the different seasons. The iridescent whites of these tiles had a lot of dynamism within them which I thought would add a richness to the auditorium, situated at the back of the theatre. As this is also to the front of the residential housing estate, we wanted something that was vibrant and ever changing in different forms of light.

I was drawn to the personality of these tiles by my own early experiences of theatre. As a young person I recall the feeling of anticipation and excitement when the red velvet curtains were just about to be drawn. I wanted to re-create that sense of "what's going to happen" by creating a tiled interpretation of this. Although the tiles were originally manufactured







as a one off, the Spanish architect agreed to oversee a run of them. We used specialist software to calculate the geometries needed for the irregular and dynamic patterns and worked in conjunction with Alumno to resolve classic supply chain issues such as what would happen if tiles were to break. Alumno were fully invested in the vision Jestico and Whiles had for this and it's very much liked by the local residents.

We worked with the theatre from the outset. A very enjoyable process where we communicated some of our ideas. The children contributed their opinions and I have dozens of post it notes with children saying this is the best thing ever. Lets just do it now. Its a fantastic idea. So very heartwarming how local users responded to the initial idea and the development of the theatre. I've subsequently been back and spoken to Theresa Early, who founded the Theatre, and she's been very positive with feedback on the appearance of the building. It feels like it belongs to the community which I think is something to be proud of and testament to the support that we had as designers from Alumno. I think the common human factor, of excitement, is something we all share regardless of how fortunate we are, what we were born into or how much income we have. I think the ability to create a space that is all inclusive and belongs to the people is absolutely something that humbles you when you see it actually in use by the local community.

Although I wasn't involved in the construction element of the project (which was undertaken by Jude Harris) I've kept up to date with it and regularly go back to talk to local people. I actually just enjoy sitting there watching people going in and out of the building and experiencing it. The ethos and spirit which Jestico and Whiles brought to the project continued right the way through so essentially anyone involved on the project was equally responsible for it. The project was finessed and completed very well.

Overall this eclectic mix of uses really makes the building, and Alumno's foresight to be more than just a student housing developer has really enriched the scheme and made it the success it has become.





### **Jude Harris**

Architect - Jestico and Wiles

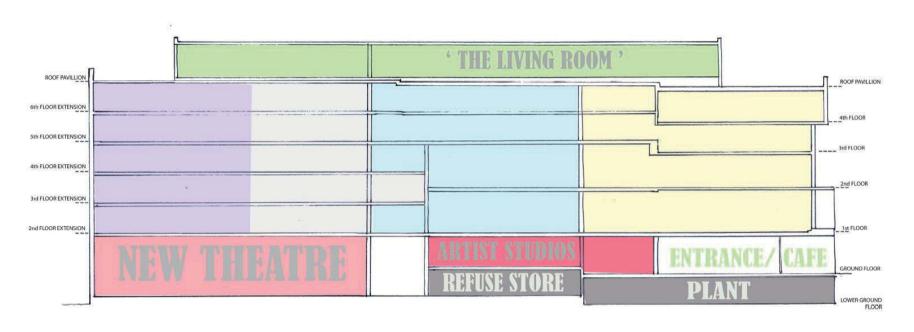
I joined the project in January 2015, and shadowed my colleague Andy Costa who left the business in March 2015. Andy had worked on the project in the early stages and worked with Alumno to develop the brief and secure planning permission. At the time I joined the project Alumno were working with their construction collaborators H G Construction, who also played a key role in delivering a quality building and working with us to protect the important heritage features of the original town hall building.

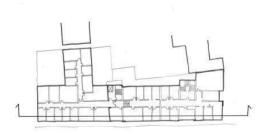
The planning officers were very supportive of the project throughout, and in particular Michael Tsoukaris helped us to protect the original qualities of the scheme and realise the ambitions with the new public plaza and the bold contemporary theatre aesthetic.

One of the most striking features of the development is the Sky Room – a student living room with magnificent views over London. This space adds real value to the building and also brings the local community into the building as it is let out for special functions.

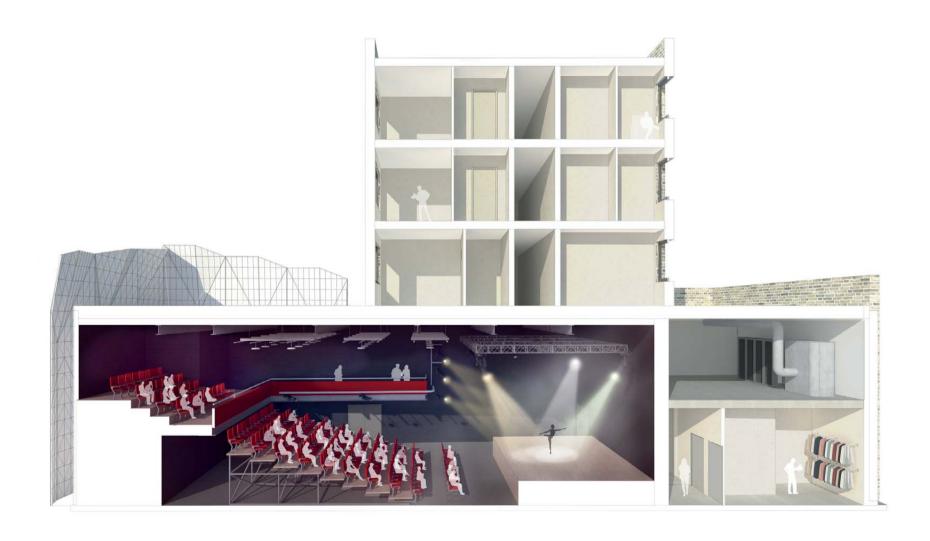
Jestico + Whiles really enjoyed working with Alumno and it was great having a client with the foresight and appetite to take on such a difficult project and to challenge conventions. The planning process of preserving a heritage building and the community theatre on the site made the project complicated enough, but a further rich mix added additional activity to the building in the form of the café gallery and the artists studios which make the building such a success.

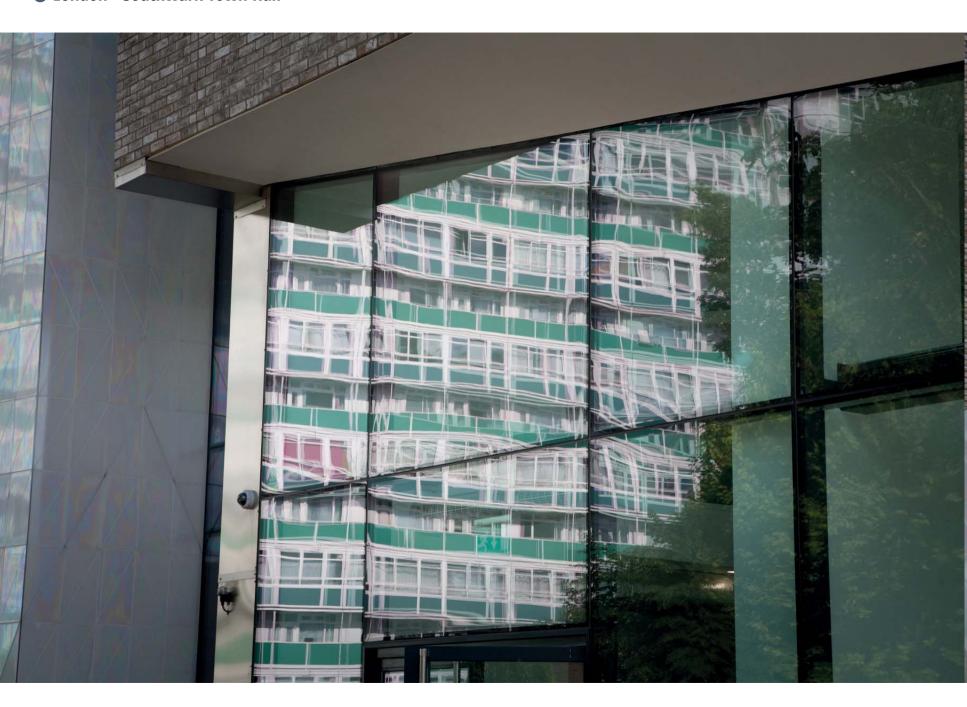
It is great to receive such positive feedback from the multiple users of the building and to see the contribution that it has made to the locality in Camberwell.

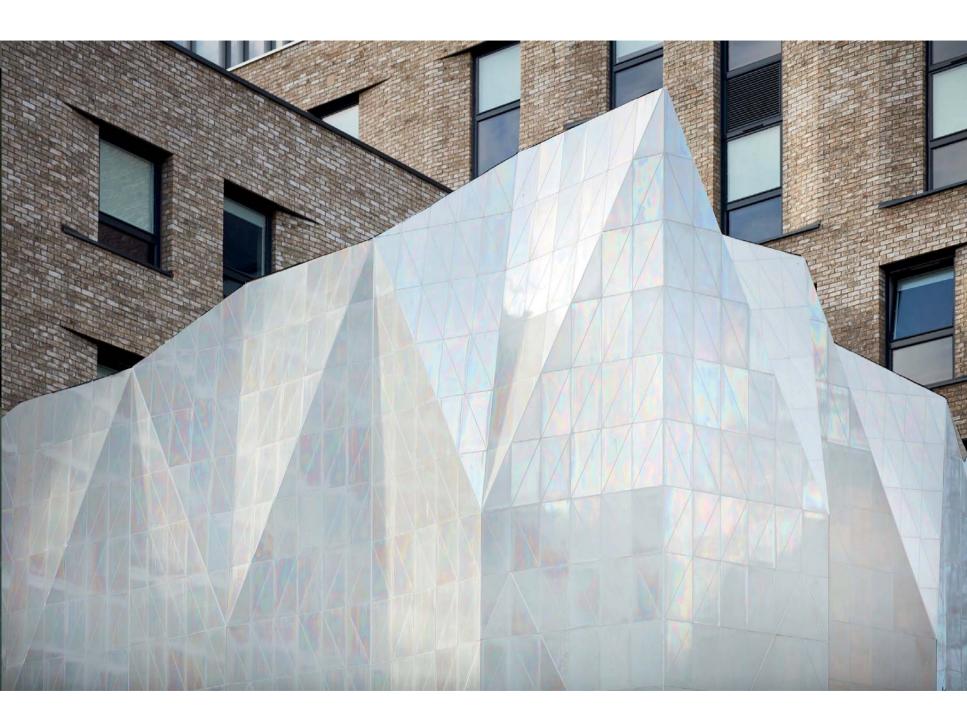




LONGITUDINAL SECTION







### **Theresa Early**

Founder and Artistic Director, Peckham Theatre

Theresa Early is the founder and artistic director of Peckham Theatre, which focuses on providing training opportunities to young people living in London and has patrons including highly acclaimed actors Sir Ian McKellen, David Harewood and John Boyega.

Our old venue had always been quite rough, but we looked after it as well as we could, for as long as we could, until it was in just too bad a state. I remember during a hard winter, this production we put on had a big tropical set and snow was falling down on it because the roof leaked so badly.

I met David Campbell while he was considering what to do with the area at the back, when redeveloping the Old Town Hall, and I said "we want it". I explained why and he agreed. It was a huge commitment and a big challenge to get it right, but we got there and it's working very well. He would be proud if he could see all the good it's doing.

It's so important to have this place. It really means something to a highly diverse community, to be able to go through here and end up in mainstream theatre or in film. We actually have people all over the creative industries. Take our current alumni for example; two of them are writing books, one is converting one of her books into a play right here, a piece of children's touring theatre. We have graphic artists, we have designers, we have administrators, we have people who are producing.

46 As a graduate of the
77 company, I admire Theatre
Peckham's continued
mission to increase
diversity in the creative
industries, inspiring young
people like myself to be
the change we want to see
in this industry

John Boyega





#### **Anita Graham**

Occupation: Parent and ex student with Peckham Theatre.

I was painfully shy as a child, but Peckham Theatre helped me so much. Now my daughter is here, loving it and blossoming. She's done two productions already and she's only eight. Theresa remembers me as a five year old, walking through my estate and saying "sorry about the mess" back when things were pretty rough. She was astounded that a five year old would even be worried about something like that, but somehow I was acutely aware.

This place has historically been somewhere that gives kids a real opportunity. Even if they don't end up working in the performing arts, the discipline, values and experiences instilled from a young age are very important. My daughter could go on to be a public speaker if she wanted to, because she has been on the stage and learned lines and songs. There's so many different skills you can take from it. Who knows where she is going to go as an adult.

We've been given this wonderful new building, which is beneficial to the community as a whole. I believe it still should very much be a place that also supports kids that aren't privileged, as so many have benefited enormously from this place. There are bursaries, subsidised fees – even the standard fees here are very very competitive. If this changes, it may force some children not to be able to afford to come.

I work in Higher Education with Imperial College London. The confidence Peckham Theatre gave me has helped with my whole life. I think it even helped me in my degree course. I was pretty much put up as a spokesperson for any group work, they were like "oh Anita will do it". So this girl that could barely speak when she was six is now being put up as a spokesperson.

Theresa is a remarkable woman who has nurtured some great talent and has amazing success stories. When John Boyega was in Star Wars my godson and daughter were in a production here, and so proud that John was initially trained here, that this was where his roots were. Seeing him being catapulted to fame like that, it's been brilliant, and there are many more out there working in the industry.





### Aneliya Vodkova



Occupation: Head Chef, Spike and Earl

I'm from Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria, where I trained and began my career before moving to London. I actually dreamed of being a chef since childhood, apart from a brief period when, for some reason, I was convinced I wanted to be a policewoman.

After gaining experience in an Italian restaurant, then a fine dining French restaurant, I thought I was prepared for a more promoted position and so applied to be Head Chef here. I like the way this organisation is run. When I source the food I try and source it ethically, because this is an ethical organisation. I operate a seasonal menu, which also makes the products more sustainable, and thankfully the customers seem to really enjoy the food. There are staff here who have had problems in their lives and I think we all work well together as a team.

### **Sebastian Lyche**



Occupation: Head Barista, Spike and Earl Cafe

Spike and Earl cafe is part of the regenerated Town Hall building in Camberwell.

I initially moved here from Norway to study Politics at Goldsmiths University, and stayed in the area after I graduated. I'm also looking to work with Old Spike

Roastery which is part of the same company. It's a coffee roastery and a social enterprise. So they buy really high quality coffee beans from all over the world. They pay a good price to the farmers, support sustainable projects and also hire and train homeless people, just as we do here. There's a political aspect to this company, where everyone can grow and develop - from the suppliers to the employees - so I do feel like my degree is already kind of relevant to what I'm doing.

#### Adan Abobaker



Occupation: Chef - Spike and Earl

I was born in London, but we moved around a lot. I actually trained to be a chef in New York. So it's been quite an unusual life, even finding myself in the midst of civil wars, especially when I went to Somalia to get my Uncle over the border when his life was in danger. There have been times when life was very good. I was happily

married before we were hit with some really bad luck, then I started suffering very badly from depression and lost everything.

I came back to London penniless, homeless and lived on the streets for quite a while. I ended up saving a couple of people's lives and got the Queen's Gallantry Medal.

Jamal, who's also one of the owners here, heard about this and wanted to meet me. He offered me a job and helped me get back into the land of the living. His partner Dave, who runs this place, knew I was a wasted talent and gave me the support I needed.

So, as well as working in the kitchen here, I also work with Jamal for Change Please. It's a non profit organisation. We try to take people off the streets and give them support. If someone tells me this, that or the other, I just say "look I've been there, you can talk to me, just take it one step at a time". I enjoy it but it's quite emotionally intense.

It's almost like a release for me here. We cater for everyone. You can see students from all over the world mixing with the people who've lived here for generations; old people, young people, all types, all together. It's really lovely for me to feel part of.







### Veronica Mbugua



Occupation: Customer Service Advisor

I was born in Nairobi and came to London when I was about six years old. I still speak Kiswahili and the local vernacular for our tribe, as well as English. I began a Law degree, but felt it wasn't for me, so I took a long gap from university while I worked out what would suit me better. I'm a people person and enjoy customer service. I

currently work here part time so am thinking of combining this with further study. The strongest tool we have is our brain, so we should develop that as much as we can. I immediately felt welcomed in this job and the training is excellent, so, if possible, I'd like to continue to be part of the Homes for Students family.

As I'm basically an East London girl, I see a lot of quite big cultural shifts between different parts of London. You find growth in that, wisdom through connecting with different people and an opportunity to develop skills. There are students here from very much everywhere - from China, to America, to only a few miles away.

I'm aware of the importance of trying to encourage actual engagement, and the communal areas here are so successful in that way. Social media has its place but sometimes it's hard to keep a balance, especially with online peer pressure. Amusingly, when I decided to go off social media for a while some time ago, people were panicking. They were like "are you all right, what's happening, you're not posting, what's going on, are you well, have you gone through a bad relationship, is everything OK?"

### **Zarah Mughal**



From: Surrey

Studies: BA (Hons) Media and Communications

I'm from Walton-on-Thames in Surrey, so distance wise I didn't exactly come very far, compared with many of the students here, but culturally South London a good distance from home! I'm quite culturally diverse

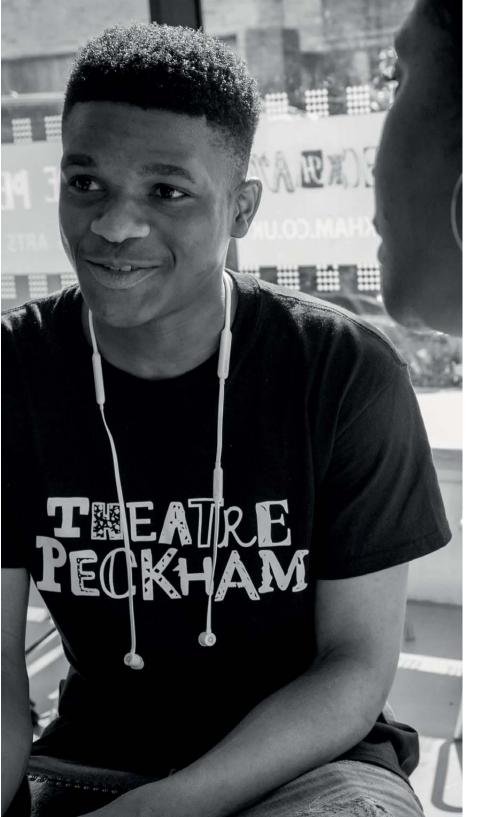
anyway, with both parents being immigrants. My Dad is Indian and my Mum Swedish. Walton-on-Thames is a lovely area, and I was fortunate to grow up there, but people reach their twenties and want to experience something different, so it's wonderful being part of this great buzzy mix.

My course at Goldsmiths ticked all the boxes because it was 50% practical, 50% theory, and I wanted that mix. I feel I like to utilise the city that I'm living in, and job opportunities in London are potentially good anyway, so I thought what better place to be than here.

I chose these halls as I was struck by it being such a lovely building, even from the outside. It's probably the nicest halls I've ever encountered. I've been to a few of my friends' ones and this is just so much more impressive. I think we've got the best common rooms anywhere and they're really well used. The top floor one is like a penthouse art space with an amazing view. Everybody goes up there on the rooftop, so it's great to get to know as many people as possible, rather than just your flatmates. I feel like I at least know everybody now which is great. So I've found that I've met the world through the people that I'm meeting here. That's not something that happened to me at home.

With Media I want to reflect the world, so physically being in and among it is going to help me reflect it, especially within these halls. The whole place feels creative and that's refreshing to see.

I feel like the experiences you soak up, just as much as the degree itself, are important. I think my course is excellent, but you also need to soak things up outside the lecture hall, and Town Hall really allows me a safe but stimulating environment to go out and explore further.



#### **Elizabeth Lefevers**



From: USA

**Studies:** MA Applied Anthropology – Goldsmiths - University of the Arts

I'm from a small town called New Whiteland in Indiana. I studied in Bloomington then moved to Indianapolis, working full time in an after school programme. I really loved it, but the pay was really bad. I had

a ton of youth work experience and wanted to professionalise that, to gain a stronger qualification whilst broadening my horizons.

The course here was one of the most unique and exciting programmes I found, in Applied Anthropology. We conduct an actual research project and I'm doing three fieldwork placements, all with organisations that have a community development undercurrent to them.

My friend recommended this accommodation. She had lived here last year and loved it. It's a beautiful building with real character and history.

I come from a really small Midwest suburban town where you have to drive to do anything. I couldn't just walk about, soaking up the atmosphere, like I do around Town Hall. It's a genuinely multicultural, multi-everything area. I'm from a very homogeneous part of Indiana - very white and very middle or lower middle class. So living here is giving me a real insight into people from all walks of life, both within and outside the accommodation. I'm academically working with something and also actually experiencing it.

Coming here has been a worthwhile experience personally and academically. I'm exposed to different ways of thinking, which prompts different discussions.

Some people in the US are a little wary of the outside world because they don't know very much about it. There are of course people doing really interesting things, even in New Whiteland. There's just a tendency to be self absorbed and not really look outside when you live in such a huge country.

Europeans struggle to get their heads around the sheer scale of it, because even another state is often the same distance away as a completely different part of Europe.

Our sports "World Series" sums it up. People do somehow half believe that it actually means the world. I remember asking my Dad when I was a kid "so are there teams from other countries?" and he was like "no".

I have become so attached to the UK. The mindset, when it comes to community development and empowering people, seems generally more proactive than reactive - at least in the circles I'm currently exposed to - it's more about advocacy. I hope I can soak up as much as possible and take that back home. There's a lot of good about the US as well, but we can all learn from each other.



### **Harry Pourdjis**



From: London

Studies: BA (Hons) Visual Cultures

I was born in North London and raised there till I was about ten, when I was sent to boarding school in Yorkshire. I spent all my school holidays in London till I was about thirteen, when my parents moved to Berlin,

but when I came to London to finish off my A levels the memories flooded back and I decided to stay. I had an opportunity to live with family in North London, while at Goldsmiths, but I wanted to feel connected to the culture and community around where I was studying, as well as not having a commute every day. I weighed up all my options regarding halls. Town Hall really stood out to me so luckily I got a place. I love it so much that I want to spend the summer here and stay next year as well. I was so keen to extend, I set my alarm for the moment the applications opened. I literally wanted to be the first person to apply since it's so sought after.

I've made a really good group of friends here and a lot of us want to live here together next year.

There's a massive terrace on the top floor where you can see the whole of the London skyline. It's absolutely stunning, especially at night time. The common room itself is really spacious and well appointed. People study there during the day and chill out in the evening. Events are held where people are invited from outside. We've had great DJ's, the lot. There's a big photographic artwork along one wall, like a mural. Images of the local community are below with an interlinking electric buses theme. They are brilliant! You really do feel like part of the community living in this building, especially with the cafe as part of the building.

I originally wanted to study architecture but I developed a particular interest in 19th and early 20th century art, particularly the Pre-Raphaelites and Impressionists movement, so decided to study Art History. This Goldsmiths course has so far exceeded my expectations. It's widened my horizons way beyond the areas I was specifically interested in. I'm learning about things that I have never really taken an interest in or even known about and am reanalysing the whole process and surrounding culture. I spent time researching careers I could go into with an Art History degree. The one that really jumped out at me was being an art dealer. It sounds idealistic, but I want - as much as possible - to be a compassionate art dealer, helping less established people develop a more sustainable career out of their art, be it painting, sculpture, photography, whatever.







**Project** New build in city regeneration of East Side

Locks. Includes music rehearsal space for BCU/

Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

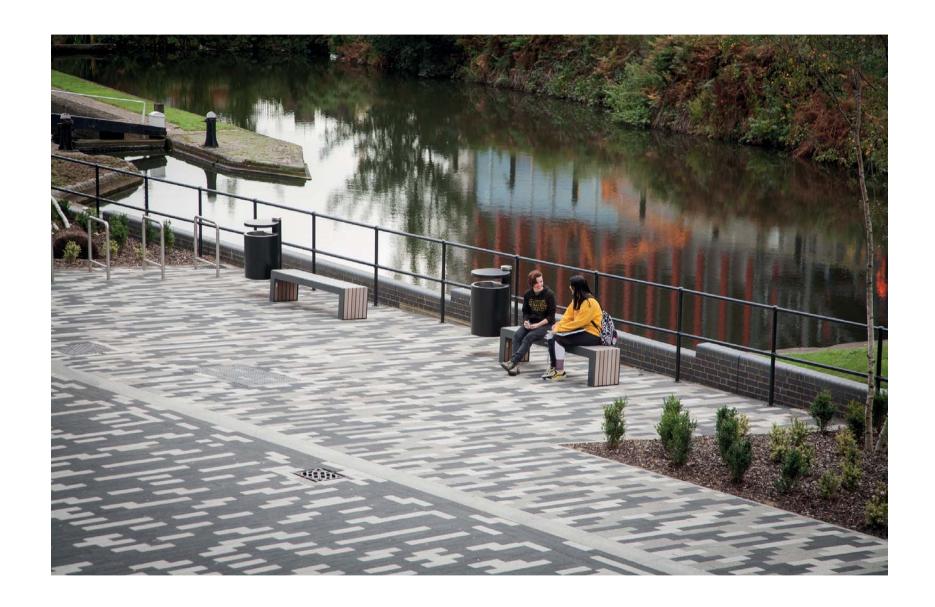
**Location** Birmingham

**Architects** Glenn Howells

**Completed** 2016 for Birmingham City University







# **Day Bansal**

Architect. East Side. Birmingham

In 2010-2011, following the announcement of HS2, Glenn Howells Architects were commissioned by Birmingham City Council to re-evaluate their master plan, given that this major infrastructure would have quite an impact.

There are some great examples of stations becoming a successful part of the fabric of a city, where thinking of them as more that just stations can really benefit, like the development of King's Cross & St. Pancras in London. There are also examples where huge pieces of infrastructure are a stumbling block in a city's connectivity pattern; separating and segregating areas that would otherwise benefit from being connected. This is obviously what we wanted to avoid.

Part of the master plan included Eastside Locks; how the new park would arrive and how development around the park would then subsequently be phased.

Birmingham City University were relocating to the area and that's when Alumno were introduced to the bid to develop student housing which would be regarded as part of the campus experience. We were brought on as the architects and saw this as a great opportunity.

We've been based in Birmingham for 28 years. It's our home, so therefore it was very important from both a professional and personal objective to get this right, because it was going to be transformational for this part of the city; a catalyst project. Having met David Campbell a few times, I knew we shared a very similar vision about what buildings do, beyond just functioning as accommodation. There's so much they can do in terms of cityscape and the public realm, connecting places and bringing communities together.

Eastside is a post industrial site, historically used for warehouses that were butted right up against the canal, but the area had long since become an empty, bulldozed wasteland. This was a great opportunity for regeneration within the growing boundaries of the city centre and already enjoying excellent transport links. It was also going to be on the doorstep of the HS2, so a sustainable location with huge potential growth.

It made a lot of sense that a really high quality inclusive student housing scheme could work well together with the relocating University. Apart from the obvious advantages for the students, one thing we wanted to avoid

was the campus becoming a ghost town in the evening, when the lectures stop and the library closes.

When housing is brought in, next to businesses, next to a park, areas as a whole starts to become a vibrant new neighbourhood for the city. Eastside is being developed along these lines. There's the Millennium Point, which is home to many tech start-up companies and a wide range of science, engineering and creative industries. There's the first new city park since Victorian times. There's one of the internationally renowned British Conservatoires and an Architecture School. The university is not just teaching space, but also invests in research, technology and the Arts. There are residential developments on other parts of the master plan, catering for a wide variety of needs, including graduates looking to settle in the city. The aim is to grow a very mixed community, with professionals, students, start-up businesses and tech companies. A lot of universities are working in partnership with other businesses, so what we're now seeing in Eastside Locks is real vibrancy in a learning quarter.

The pieces of the jigsaw then come together, begin to take shape and the area creates its own unique role within the city's DNA, rather than becoming a student ghetto; all about students and nothing else. The approach that we and Alumno embraced, was to create an environment that's focused on community and social values. Not only should the development achieve the brief in terms of creating high quality student housing, that actually raises the bar and shows what's possible, but also becomes part of a gateway landmark development when HS2 arrives. There are a lot of housing providers out there that develop a very strong brand, but that brand can be a bit of a one size fits all, rather than really considering what's best in a specific context.

The opportunity here was to create a canalside environment with an animated ground floor that addressed the canal frontage and managed the harsher environment along the very busy 'Middleway' dual carriageway. It was also to become a local marker not only for Birmingham City University as a campus but also for the Eastside Locks regeneration and so a catalyst for the quality of development that will be coming forward. Very early on with Alumno, we established some of these very important principles.





### **Glenn Howells Architects**

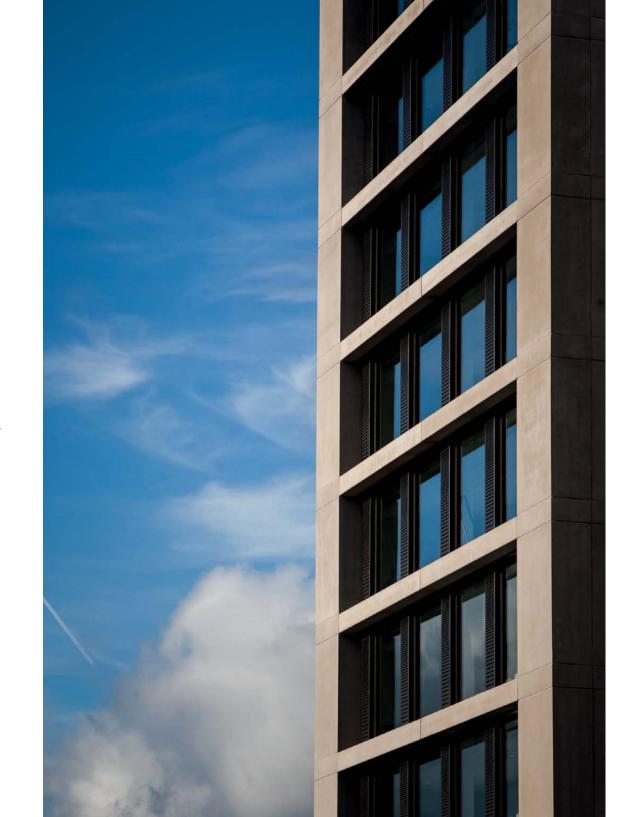
Glenn Howells Architects has been an enduring presence in British architecture since its inception in 1990. The practice has grown into a design studio with national and international reach.

Underpinning our practice is an approach rooted in the constant exploration of how the built environment can improve the lives of individuals and communities.

Glenn Howells Architects projects have won a diverse range of awards including the RIBA, the British Council for Offices, Housing Design, RICS, Civic Trust, Concrete Society and Brick Awards. The Savill Building was shortlisted for the RIBA Stirling Prize in 2007.

Currently, the practice employs over 120 people across its studios in Birmingham and London and works throughout the UK in sectors including residential, masterplanning, office, culture, education, retail, health and leisure.

77 The principles we79 shared with Alumno allowed us to work together in harmony



This development has really encouraged the canalside to flourish. On arrival you've got this attractive setting which is peaceful, safe, secure and welcoming. There were parts of that canal where people would previously not have felt at all safe or comfortable. The regeneration opens up this asset more as an amenity and another form of network across the city. The canalsides have reinvented themselves as a very healthy amenity where a lot of people walk, cycle, and jog, while barges gently come and go. Canals, public parks and open spaces form part of a green infrastructure that our high density, growing cities need to survive, so we want to reinstate and create these. Birmingham has got more miles of canal than Venice but far too little is being utilised, so creating these canalside destinations and joining them together becomes another layer of connectivity. It's a great infrastructure within the city that should continue to be embraced and enjoyed.

As far as the buildings were concerned, the principles we shared with Alumno allowed us to work together in harmony. We consistently took environmental considerations into account. For example, we wanted to make sure that all the living spaces were at the ends of wings so they could benefit from a dual or triple aspect. Even if a bedroom suite was on the side of the building that only had a single outlook towards the Middleway, that student could still enjoy a view of the canalside from their living/ dining area which has dual aspect. These are simple principles that we agreed and developed in a dialogue with Alumno.

We also looked together at developing the facade design as a response to the environmental strategy. We developed a fabric first approach, creating a very deep model facade, ensuring that the orientation of the building maximised East/West aspects for many of the rooms. We tried to make sure that each of the clusters had dual and triple aspect living spaces, so they could really enjoy a panoramic view, bringing as much natural light as possible into the communal areas, whilst respecting privacy of the bedrooms. Alongside the use of robust materials this reduces the cost of heating and ventilation, with significant environmental benefits.

Modern, and very carefully planned, methods of construction were utilised. The floor, the walls and the facade are all precast concrete units which came to site having been fabricated in factory conditions so the quality control and snagging was all done in the factory. They were brought on site as complete modules, with the glazing pre-fitted, and then fixed together. We intentionally used the concrete structure to do a number of things: hold the building up, provide a thermal mass to the building (so we could efficiently regulate the temperatures) but also to be

the finished surface for a proportion of the internal decoration (as it can be painted) rather than covering everything in vast amounts of plasterboard. So we got one material to do three things.

That is the added value of taking a holistic approach where you make structure, services and architectural design work together. This was something Alumno fully embraced. It was different from building a lightweight metal frame solution, for example, but the benefit of doing this was beyond just the capital cost of the facade. There was also honesty in the materials in terms of its context. Some of the remaining traditional structures, including the canalsides themselves, are brick with stone detailing. We therefore decided on a dark brick base, which could also deal with the harsher, slightly more polluted environment, from the Middleway, but have a light coloured precast masonry building sitting above it. We believe the architectural language delivers a timeless design with an aesthetic quality that is both functional and responsive.

We explored a number of materials and textures, concurrently with the planning, the design and layout of the building. The principle was to develop a very simple composition of forms, slightly faceted to follow the canal. The canal has this very gentle crescent and we wanted to reflect that in the plan of the building.

Instead of creating a curved building (which would have all sorts of complications in terms of wedge-shaped rooms, etc.) we developed this composition of six rectangular forms that sat in a faceted arrangement creating a gentle curve. In the gap between these heavy precast buildings were glazed slots and they then accommodated the change in angle. That faceted plan was gentle enough to be a curving crescent. When looking at materials, we believed a precast reconstituted stone finish and a dark brick base paid homage to local traditional materials.

The scale of the building also shields the environment and creates a tranquil edge to the canalside. When you're walking along the canal within the Eastside Locks it feels calm. That was very important. We've seen a lot of large scale buildings trying too hard to be complex. We wanted to keep the palette of materials simple, functional and robust, with the design timeless, understated and confident, so it aged gracefully and created that sense of permanence. This building is here for a long time.

In terms of the longevity and adaptability of this building, it also has both present and future possibilities for different usages, such as accommodating visiting tutors or academics. It can provide conference accommodation, so has a summertime use as well as term time. At the

street level there are a number of incubation workspaces for graduates and a retail unit open to the local community as well as students.

To sustain the flexibility of residential uses if requirements alter over the decades, the building is arranged with three cores; therefore it can be divided so parts of it could be for hotel and conferencing, while others could be student housing. Future proofing and being smarter with building design is what delivers a sustainable city. If we're building things to knock them down in 10-15 years time to start again, that's certainly not a responsible or sustainable approach.

Placemaking, communal courtyards and the public realm was also considered holistically; so it was very important we understood what was private, what was public and what was shared. So keeping the new canal road as part of the public thoroughfare and connecting the streets along the canalside was important.

We designed elevated courtyards on the first floor that had great views over the canalside, and the level change meant that they retained privacy and security as communal spaces for the students.

A project on such a large scale has a huge range of complex issues to address. Utilising a pre-fabricated approach embracing modern methods of construction demanded significant development of the design and stringent quality control early on in the process.

We're designing a building with a very clear vision from the outset and understanding of how it would be put together on site. This was all very much something which we closely worked on with Alumno, the design team and the contractor.

It was also vital that the facade contractor, for example, really understood the design details and technical parameters to help us achieve the details/ joints. I'm a great believer that in our construction industry it is not about just delivering a project, because every project will encounter its challenges and problems. The strength of a relationship, and what will test our endurance on the project, is how we manage these problems. There have been some steep learning curves and lessons learnt to deliver this ambitious scheme, yet we've managed to remain colleagues and friends, which shows a huge amount of trust with each other. That's what a partnership should be.

Going into higher education is the first step for many young people; engaging with others beyond their school friends and families. It is more than just creating rooms for people to sleep in, with sharing spaces and amenities. There's a bigger picture of how do we create an environment that brings the best out in our next generation.

One of the basic principles that we consider when we approach university housing projects is to regard them as bringing a community together. Within the community of the building, the clusters behave similar to a family structure and subsequently the bedrooms are private spaces for the individuals in the family. This hierarchy of spaces helps us to develop a simple diagram for the organisation of the design.

The synergy between life skills and being in student housing need to be quite joined up because it's about developing social skills. If you walk into student housing you have people from a hugely diverse range of backgrounds; so how do we bring everyone together while respecting their individual needs and privacy? Everyone needs their private space and specific needs, but at the same time a respect for others.

If we can offer students a valuable experience it's something they can take into the rest of their lives. My university experience was the most important part of my life, where I really grew. Even now, in my forties, talking to friends and colleagues we remember what we learned from our experiences at university, the great fun we had and what great cities we were in. These memories remain with us for the rest of our lives. A lot of talented students stay on in a city, meet partners, develop their careers, and settle down. We've been successful where we can help retain that talent within a great city like Birmingham.

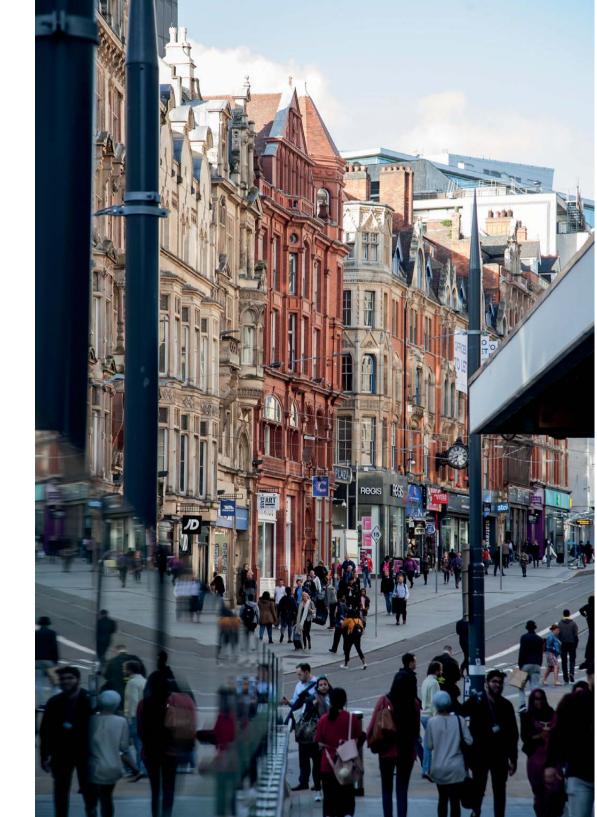








99 as soon as they walk through the front door, they're not only going to grow as people, but hopefully achieve what they want to achieve while they're in Higher education



# Victoria Wilson Customer Service Assistant



I'm the first person the students see when they walk through the door in the morning. Every day is different but they're all little rays of sunshine in their own way. Some of them have their troubles and that takes a little bit more experience. We try to make their environment as comfortable and safe as possible. Many are far away from home, and many have never left home before. If they feel comfortable as soon as they walk through the front door, they're

not only going to grow as people, but hopefully achieve what they want to achieve while they're in higher education.

The university ensures that many of the students are introduced to each other before they move in. They start online flat chats and things like that, so when they move here they have a little insight into each other. The allocation also depends on what they've requested. The university takes on board exactly what the student is looking for, so you'll have flats that are purely the same course and mixed flats that are all studying different things, but they seem to click really well. The students can put forward their requests from day one, as soon as they're applying to BCU. That's something that I feel the allocation team definitely get right here, as we have very little movement (students applying for a transfer to another flat once they're here) which I've noticed on other sites. I think that's down to matching students on best prospects. Students will come with a list of what their interests are, what they're studying, what age they are, where they're from, all of that and the allocation team think about who they are likely to be comfortable with, but still try for an interesting mix. We've got a lot of diversity here. China to Japan, India, America and then European students and local type students as well.

I also get involved with the gardens. I get the lucky job of dead heading the flowers. Sometimes things don't always fall into the job description, but the building is as much of the job as the students and I like it to be as nice. I must admit it was a proud moment, putting that last pot in and looking back.

I'm a local girl, from Yardley, seven miles up the road. We get parents and students here for viewing weekends, they generally tend to ask where are the best places to eat, how far are the shops and that sort of thing. So I can give them an insight on the bit of Birmingham that I know and Tracy, the lovely woman that I work with, she's from the other side of Birmingham. So we've got a little bit of diversity as far as which parts that we know and which parts we don't.

Because I'm a Brummie, I've seen big changes in this area. I remember this when it was just old warehouses, weeds everywhere, old tarmac. I'd happily go and sit and eat my lunch down at this section of the canal. So the new campus has actually completely transformed something that was a kind of no go area before. You didn't even want to walk down this far, but it's like a nice part of the city now. So I feel that this kind development is really helping Birmingham as a whole. It's now like you're waiting for the next part to be opened, the next little gem to be added. I can bring my children here and walk down the canal. Eventually this bit will connect to Gas Street. Across the road here, is the oldest train station in Britain and it's going to be retained as an HS2 station. I'm really proud of that.





### **Rachel Fleming**



From: Preston

**Studies :** BA (Hons) in Applied Performance at Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

I'm from a small town in Lancashire. I wasn't sure if I'd ever go to Uni, but I came to the Conservatoire open day and fell in love with the course. It's not straight forward

acting and allows us to tailor it to our needs. I can use placements in the second year to explore options like teaching, or starting our own company, as well as performing. One area that interests me is how drama can be used to help young offenders with speech and confidence building.

I looked around the accommodation options and chose University Locks. I just thought it was the nicest one. It clicked for me the moment I walked into the foyer. It looked beautiful and just felt good. Like a hotel, but one I could be at home in. When I went to look at the flat and saw the nice shared kitchen, living room with big windows and good views I thought 'Yeah, I like that.' The cost was pretty much the same as the other options and actually seemed cheaper than living in a private house or flat, when you consider all the things that are included in the price; plus we've got the security, which is a bonus for me. I was nervous coming from a small place, a village near Preston, to a big city like Birmingham, but I almost feel more secure here than at home. The staff are all so great. I love the security quards at night, you can go have a chat with them.

My flat is a mixed flat, with three guys and four girls, including one girl from my class. The funniest thing is that she was actually brought up really close to me, but we'd never met before. We moved in on same day and were together for 3 days straight, so became really good friends. My other flatmates study a variety of things; Criminology, English, Music Technology, Theatre Design. I like my room. I get peace and privacy when I need it and I love my en suite. At first my flatmates and I didn't all click, but one of us brought in a Wii and we played tennis and stuff. I brought in Mario Kart. We soon started having nights out and already feel like a family now we're into our second month. The whole flat is already planning Christmas.

It's great to have the common rooms as well, where you can hang out and meet people from the whole accommodation. There are different sizes and types of flats, some only sharing with one other person. Quite a few people who live here have disabilities and the facilities cater for them well. It's really nice to meet and mix with variety of people, but still have your own space when you want.

#### **Tiziano Landis**



From: Switzerland

Studies: Gemmology and Jewel Studies BSc (Hons)

It's actually quite an unusual journey that took me here. I went into an office straight from school. Then I did an apprenticeship as an office clerk and worked there for about seven years. I did statistics, but it got a little bit

boring. I became determined to try and do the thing that really interests me. This was the turning point.

When I was a child I liked collecting minerals, but developed more and more of a fascination with cut stones, for jewellery, especially the ones with all the different colours. I'm not as big a fan of colourless diamonds, but the diamonds that are coloured gemstones, they really give me something. I feel really good when I see them and the closer I study them, the better I feel.

I took the German Gemmological exams and also the European ones. The Gemmological Association is about gem stones; the clarity, the cut, the carat and the weight of gem stones as well as the colour. This is a very old science. An art. When I got my initial certificates, I found out that they had just started an excellent new course in Birmingham, where I could advance further. I decided to apply and was accepted. So far I'm really enjoying the course.

I researched various accommodation options for my time in Birmingham and decided University Locks was the best quality and value. It's no more expensive than the other options, but much better. I immediately liked it when I came to look round. Many other students thought the same, so when I tried to apply, it was a bit difficult, but I just managed to get the last place, which was a big relief.

I'm twenty eight, so bit older than average and have a flat with just one other student. He is studying Silversmithing. They tried to put us together because we are doing something similar. We both have the school in the Jewellery Quarter, so can walk there together, which is perfect. Thankfully, he's a very nice guy, we get on well together and I feel really comfortable. The flat is nice, with our own bedrooms and en-suites. There's a shared area with cooking facilities but I have to improve my cooking skills a little bit, before I let anyone else taste it! It's the right size for me, I can concentrate on one or two people but if I have to communicate with bigger groups, it can be a struggle.

I have Asperger Syndrome. It's on the autistic spectrum. I actually think autistic spectrum is very misunderstood. If you search for information about Asperger's and relationships for example, it isn't that positive, it's rather negative, and people – if they read that – they maybe misunderstand.

Sometimes people with Asperger's learn social behaviour in a slightly different way, because it doesn't come as naturally. I see how other people act and try to interpret it. I try to learn the codes and join in, but it's not always easy and can be tiring. I speak to other people with Asperger's and we compare notes. We need to also feel that there's something positive about us. I should accept my own strengths. For example, I can concentrate easily on subjects that interest me and develop knowledge and expertise.

I like University Locks, I'm getting to know it. I always start by soaking up the atmosphere of a place. I like the foyer and the common areas, the pictures, the sofa and view out to the canal. Today I walked around the city centre and I went into a restaurant and I ate a pizza and drank a wine, and I just enjoyed it like this. All this is soothing to me. The accommodation staff are good and very kind. They always seem happy to talk to me, so even though I'm aware that I've got some issues and don't feel as natural as I would like to, I still find the atmosphere more friendly and pleasant than any similar environment I've known. Sometimes I go downstairs in the evening, to speak with the security and watch all the students coming in and going out to have fun. It helps me to have fun somehow, when I don't need or want to go out. It's a very mixed group here, so it's interesting for me to see all the different types from different countries and backgrounds. Where I'm from in Switzerland, things are less mixed, but here, the inhabitants are more international. I find that an interesting and positive thing.

But when I do leave, I hope I have this sense that I've almost experienced more of the world through being in this building, and through wandering about, being in Birmingham and taking trips to London and beyond.

### **Patric Schwaab**



From: USA (Coeur d'Alene, Idaho)

Studies: Drama at Royal Birmingham Conservatoire BA

I was at a theatre school in Chicago, but the first semester of the course wasn't really working out and I didn't like where I was living. I had a friend who had actually come all the way from the UK to be on the Chicago course and he

wasn't happy either, so planned to audition for a good place back in the UK. This prompted me to try as well and was fortunate enough to get into the Birmingham Conservatoire.

Even though the second semester in Chicago got better, I thought, three years in another country could be a great experience. Also I think UK actors are generally better trained than American actors. There are some very highly regarded schools here.

I've already got a background in acting. At twenty four, I'm comparatively older, but I think it can be an advantage to be a bit older as an arts student. Even in Chicago the older students were the ones I got along with most and the ones that generally I thought were better.

Before I came here I didn't know much about Birmingham, so it was a kind of a leap of faith, but I'm very happy with how things have worked out, with the course, the city and the accommodation.

We'd been emailed about a bunch of different accommodation options, but University Locks seemed to be the newest and most desirable place to get into. I knew that early on, as I was in an online group chat with my class before I actually met them and many mentioned they all were trying to get into University Locks, so I'm like, "Oh I guess I might as well try." I did and feel quite lucky, as I know people who didn't manage to.

I'm in a two person flat with a Law student and he's super cool. The location really works out. It's only a five or ten minute walk to the Conservatoire and close to pretty much everything you'll ever need. Perfect really. I think that this kind of helps me, having not to really worry too much about things; well apart from my laundry rearing its ugly head now and then. This allows me just to completely focus on what I'm doing and what I came here for. None of the extra worries that come along with renting private flats, but still peaceful when I want it to be, which suits me. I find the cost here quite reasonable. It's equivalent to the other accommodations that I could have been in, but much better.

My course is really full on, from about 8am to 5pm almost every day, often to 6pm. We'll start public performances in the third year at professional theatres around Birmingham. In second year we'll also do some work in the Patricia Yardley black box, but that's not open to the public, more to the faculty.

The first big plus about being here is the local culture. People seem really friendly and a lot more willing to talk to you, than my experiences in the States. They're at the pub, they're having fun. Birmingham particularly seems like a very open place. Everybody seem to embrace each others differences, and are just together in Birmingham. The students especially have all been very welcoming to me. They find out that I'm American and some of them find it interesting. Some of them tease me about it and some even find the accent quite suave, which I don't fully understand, because in America it's the British accent that's considered the attractive one. So that's a plus.

Even though I'm very busy I try and go out when I get some time off, mostly with other students. We'll go to the pubs and cafes nearby and find good places to eat, listen to music or whatever. There's loads of great shopping as well and all just a short walk away.

Birmingham has really gone through a bunch of changes. I read an article saying that when the old Queen used to come through here, way way long ago, she would draw the curtains in her coach, because she didn't want to look at it...and now it's becoming this big cultural hub with loads of great modern architecture and all these lovely old restored canals.

Like everywhere you go, there's the odd niggle of very trivial stuff. It's hard to really say a lot of things I don't like because I've really enjoyed my time in the UK so far. I would say my biggest negative is my fear that I won't be able to work and travel here afterwards, as much as I'd like to.

### **Jennifer Smyth**



From: Northern Ireland

Studies: Product Design. 2nd Year. Birmingham City University.

I chose Birmingham, partly because I wanted to experience living away from home and also because this is one of the only universities that did the course I wanted to do. So I was like, well why not?! It's quite a specialist course, within product design, 3D

designer maker. There's a lot to do with 3D printing and the computer software associated with that. I find it very interesting and enjoy the challenges it throws up. I've always been interested in both arts and science.

I'm not exactly sure what I'll do after I graduate, but with the product design I'd very much like to to go on and make exoskeletons or prosthetics; something along these lines. I would like to use my situation, education and experience to help others. At this stage, however, I'm not really sure how things will go, so I just kind of go with the flow and will see what happens.

Things are progressing really well at the moment. I like the way the course is structured. For example, at the moment we are given briefs, but they're really open, so we can develop what we want as long as we relate it back to the brief. With my interest in prosthetics I'm already trying to move things in that direction within the course. I'm going into inclusive design, designing things for everybody, that everybody can use, and then you just kind of progress from there.

I've really grown to love Birmingham. I'm from a little village in Northern Ireland and this is a big city, so it's quite a change. The accommodation is in the vicinity of the city centre, so everything is nearby, with easy access, which is really convenient and great for exploring. I think the thing I most like about Birmingham is that the people are really nice. Everyone I meet seems really friendly.

A lot of the university staff are really helpful, because of me being in a wheelchair they are like, "Do you need anything?" - they are always making sure I have enough room and that, they are great that way.

I'm enjoying being here at University Locks. The general atmosphere is really good. Our flat is a disabled flat and it's huge. We've got a double kitchen so we have a standard height one and a lower down hob and everything. You get like a little family. We have a TV in our flat, and so everyone comes in after lunch and chills out. The place as a whole is well designed and very inclusive, with good security. The reception and security staff are lovely. Really friendly and helpful, so we feel safe, welcomed and well provided for. I very much want to stay here, so hopefully I'll be able to keep my room till I finish my degree.





















# Leamington Spa The Union



Leamington Spa - The Union

**Project** New build on brown field canal side location

**Location** Leamington Spa

**Architects** Glenn Howells

Completed 2017



# **●** Leamington Spa - The Union





# Dav Bansal Architect Leamington Spa - The Union

There's a huge amount of land next to canals that is now underused, or vacant, derelict and dangerous. The fact that David Campbell is seeking canal side sites is not a coincidence. It shows how, in the right hands, this industrial character can be re-energised with new uses. University Locks is not on a university campus but the fact that many students choose to live there shows how regular, reliable high-quality transport links means we can live further away in terms of miles but still be close to where we work, study or want to visit. We agreed with David that this could be a very sustainable location. It was an underused brownfield site and more importantly it had local community, local amenities, shops, businesses and great transport links.

What people sometimes seem to forget is that bringing students into these sort of areas can also benefit a lot of the businesses. The economy that students bring to regeneration areas is significant and shouldn't be underestimated. Student housing done right can be far more resilient and predictable than market housing, or commercial offices, because there's a demand for local universities to provide good quality housing. It's one of the factors that determines whether a students wants to come to a university and also gives confidence to their parents that their kids will be in a very safe and secure environment. It's actually helped be a catalyst to regenerate areas - the one we did at Kings Cross happened before a lot of the commercial and residential moved in.

An important thing it did for Leamington was to alleviate the issue of poor quality under-managed HMOs, which in turn were taking away family housing in a town centre. With HMOs you've got absentee landlords instead of a managed estate, so it's difficult to sustain a high quality offer for students, that is also culturally inclusive. You often end up with isolated streets which become a sort of student ghetto, whereas developing a purpose-built estate gives students a managed environment where they feel secure. As referred to previously, University Locks was also about bringing life back to Leamington's post-industrial canal side. By improving the public realm, safety and bringing in activation it becomes an attractive amenity for the indigenous local community, as well as the students.

Reconnecting Althorpe Street to the High Street, through the canal side towpath, began from the principle that David and ourselves wanted to develop a scheme that brings in wider benefits to the community. That connection was previously a very unsafe part of the canal towpath, riddled with needles, so you were not going to get people using it to move

between the industrial guarter to the High Street. Therefore businesses and local amenities were not benefitting.

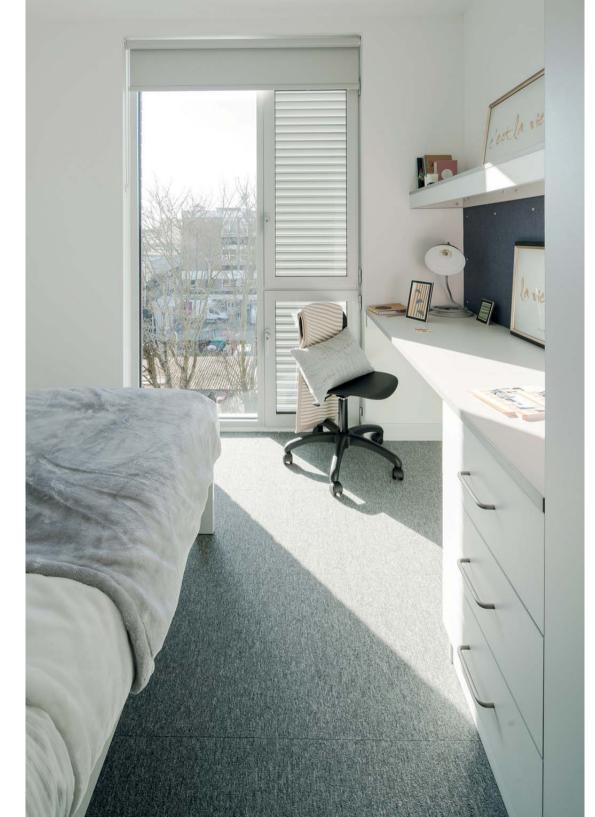
As well as radically improving the towpath, we also proposed a plan to provide a wider public realm that the communities and the students could enjoy as a breakout space. Although much of the towpath is guite a constrained pathway, there are opportunities where you can open it for sitting and relaxing. So we brought in a new square and installed a public art installation. If you give something of quality that instils pride, the chances are, it will be embraced and therefore looked after by the community. These things can have a hugely transformative effect and allowed us to look at how we could use this development to convince planners that by doing the right thing here it unlocks bigger things going forward.

We developed a collection of two buildings. One building addressed Althorpe Street building line, bringing you into the canal side towpath. These two blocks did very simple, but effective, things in terms of a design as they turn the corner and then bring you along the canal side. The composition is two warehouse blocks connected with a single storey glazed link, which as you walk through give framed views of the canal.

What was also really interesting was that when the common room was taking shape, we were looking at what we should do in terms of the interior design, wall colours, and warmth. We decided to keep the walls white. If you're going to be sitting in this room looking out, a degree of colour, warmth and interest is going to come from the towpath, the canal, that lovely old brick wall and trees on the other side of the water. All of that is bringing colour and life into the room. A neutral approach also becomes a canvas for the artwork, which brings in subtle elements of colour. The artwork reflects the surrounding area, so if students are looking out the windows to the canal, the artwork is also effectively a window to the community beyond, encouraging students to explore and feel part of the town. It also exists as the windows to the town when it's dark outside and there is no canal view.

Having that common room on that corner, was extremely important, because what it had to do, was address both the street and the canal side and bring them together. It was about turning a corner and doing it in a way that you feel safe and it's attractive. It's giving some animation.

We also felt that putting the main entrance on Althorpe street was very

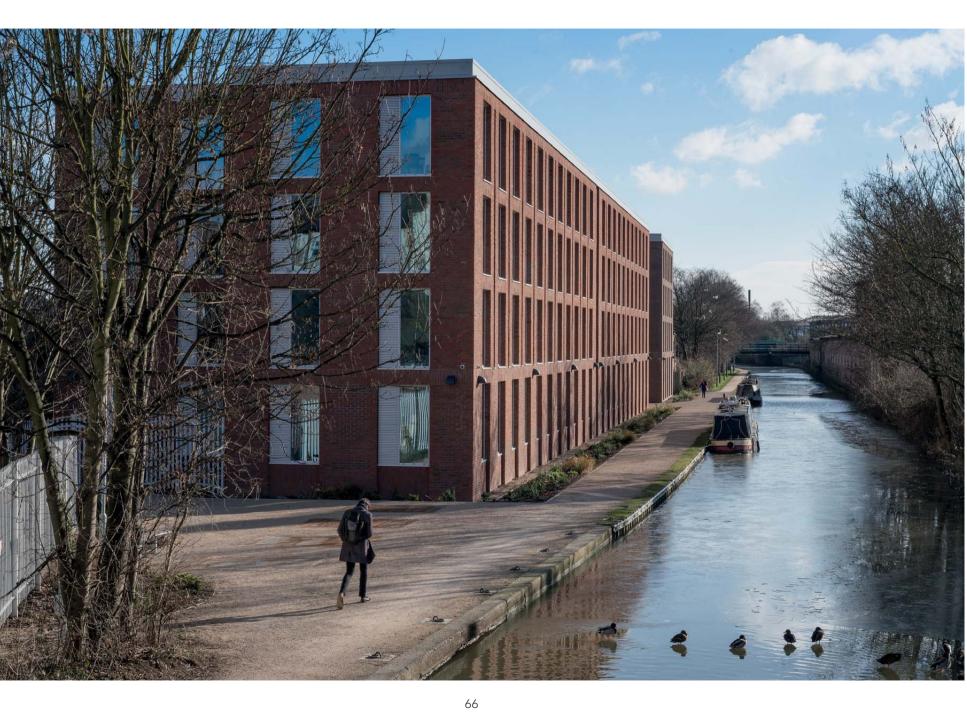


important. We could have very easily turned our back to Althorpe street and put the entrance toward the canal bridge. Instead we said we're going to put in on to the street and create a very welcoming presence and manage the perception of Althorpe Street being just a cardriven industrial estate kind of street. Putting the front door there and creating this welcoming approach to the building also managed the parking. It sort of pushed the parking out and created a very attractive setting, making it a very important connection.

The student rooms themselves are a very simple arrangement of cluster rooms with living spaces on the ends of them, so the communal living spaces are all located on the gable ends, giving them the opportunity to have double or triple aspects. We used a very similar principle to the one we used in Birmingham; let's use the corners of buildings as these communal living and dining spaces because they can be less private and therefore more open. Every approach you take, whether it's from the High Street, or whether it's from Althorpe Street or along the canal, you'll always get a view of the corner of the building which is animated by the communal spaces, therefore making an attractive destination for that jogger or that walker.

The simple thing about warehouses is keeping a very well ordered, mannered grid, with vertical proportions. Placing light-coloured windows in a dark-toned brickwork so you could read each structural bay and it was consistent. We were very focused on ensuring these proportions - the depth and size of the piers, the proportion of the windows.

# ● Leamington Spa - The Union



All of that was tested rigorously to ensure that we maintained the proportions to the industrial warehouses, but it had a very contemporary language to it. It's not about being pastiche. It's about respecting the proportions and scales, but then using modern methods of construction and traditional materials but in a very contemporary detailing approach. Both buildings were very meticulous and we tested these slightly different tones of the brickwork because it was important that they felt like a collection of buildings,. It was a fine balance between them being very different to them being too subtle, or too close, that it looked like one was a slightly dirtier version of the other one. It was important that we chose the two bricks that complemented each other, gave them their own sort of subtle identity, but they felt very much as a pair of buildings.

We worked with the subcontractors to test bricks on side samples and on mock-ups. We went down to a local factory to look at the window screens because we were interested in how much perforation do you create in those louvres, so that you manage privacy, but at the same time also achieve the free area for the ventilation.

We worked very much in partnership with Alumno when making these decisions, to make sure that the metalwork, the brickwork, the detailing and all of that was coming together - so it created the right palate of materials.

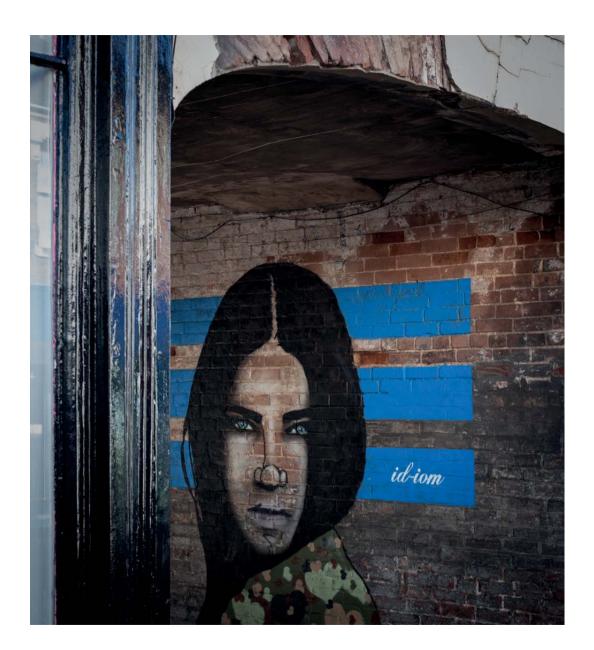
Our shared vision with David, right from the outset, was that this was going to be a collection of industrial warehouse buildings. The biggest problem on a project is when you can't share that vision early on with your client, so you're not confident about what the client is expecting and the client is not confident about what we are trying to achieve. We were going forward with something we both believed in - even if it meant we had to have bigger openings, or service access, or doors to plan to - everything would have to fit into the framework of the facade with no compromising that would take it away from that industrial language.

My biggest satisfaction with this project is how we're redeveloped a disused site to provide good quality student housing for the most important stage of anyone's life, but also how much it can support the local businesses for the wider community of Leamington. Everything from the local cycle shops to the cafes, and the convenience stores, has suddenly got this influx of students who live nearby and benefit their business. It brings that livelihood where you've got a daytime and an evening economy. It's sort of predicting the future, as a growing town.

Where student housing has failed, quickly starts looking very tired and becomes an eyesore for cities, is where the build quality and thinking of their possibility as a place hasn't happened. There are probably far more examples of where student housing has failed than there have been successes, because student housing was never taken seriously or as an inclusive part of society. It's far too often been seen as a sort of short -term fix to bring lots of students into a ghetto and charge them. The best of what happens now is seen as an inclusive part of communities. For us it's important that we do create the right environment for students whilst also benefiting the wider community. That's where we feel any project is a real success. It's beyond the actual building itself.

# Leamington Spa - The Union

There are lots of **99** accommodation providers but I think we are giving the students accommodation with a soul



# Joanne Wojtas-Turkis Property Manager



I think working with students keeps you young. They keep you updated with all the new fads and fashions, and you get the latest news, all first-hand. I like the variety – every day in the job is never the same. When you think you're going to have a quiet day it turns out that it's not. It is always interesting and always dynamic.

I really like this accommodation because it is not just any accommodation. I mean there are lots

of accommodation providers but I think we are giving the students accommodation with a soul. There is a spirit to this building. I felt that the moment they put the artwork up. It inspires us to grow with that ethos. The students really like the artwork: the screen prints and photography. It makes us different to the others. Everybody has walls, floors and windows but I feel that having this artwork makes us different. People notice, not only students, but people passing by for a walk down the canal sometimes try to see what is hanging on the walls of the common room. A few even come and ask what the building is about. We say, 'Oh it's for students, it's brand new,' and they say, 'Oh I wish I was a student.'

Leamington as a town is on a very human scale. Nobody feels locked in this building. As well as being encouraged, they just naturally go outside and explore the world around them.

It's not only the building, the whole town has some kind of soul. Without that you are in a crowd but actually you are alone. It was amazing when we had the grand opening of the building. We had the mayor of Leamington, Warwick University dignitaries, all sorts of representatives. A lot of people from the local community came, because for them the opening of this building was a big thing.

So if you are looking to be in the community, a part of the community of this building and the community of Leamington Spa, this is the place. Here we live together with local people and, as I say to my students, half jokingly, 'When you pass by my desk, I will probably speak to you. If you don't want to talk, then go through the other door.'

My job is a subtle business, obviously I've got to take care of running everything, but the human touch, the interaction, is particularly important because some of these students are quite young - 18 or 19 years old. You need to guide them a little sometimes. We are basically the first point of

contact. If the friendly communication between us is established we don't get stroppy emails about things we weren't aware of. I just get to know people in person so we can try to avoid any problems. There are a lot of them that call me by name, which I think is great because I don't have a name tag.

The human touch is so important especially in this age that we live in now. There is isolation and loneliness, because all this online world can't replace real human interaction. A lot of what the artwork is about, the photographs and everything, is trying to say just go outside and wander around and experience and share things. The building has floor to ceiling windows that integrate the outside. So when you see the barges going up and down you feel like exploring. When you sit in the common room people wave to you. That's brilliant. It's so nice. I think people here are more relaxed which makes them more friendly.

Everyone picks what suits them. Not every student wants to be in the middle of the madness so to have somewhere quite quiet like this suits some. I do enjoy a bit of clothes and shoes shopping, and a quick walk via the canal and over the bridge leads you to The Parade. I stopped asking questions of local people about where you can get so and so because I know the answer is going to be the Parade. Everything is the Parade. 'You'll find it on The Parade.'

# Leamington Spa - The Union

# Sue Sherlock Customer Service Advisor

I've lived in Leamington all my life, for my sins. I was born in Masters Road and the house backed on to a cemetery. I spent many a happy moment down there with my doll's pram and my brother. We had some great times, being shouted at by a red-faced man from the lodge. The old lodges are private now. I wish I could actually move into them because I think they are lovely extraordinary places. I find it quite peaceful there.

The local community has welcomed East Shore. It seems to be somewhere people feel is a positive addition to the area. Warwick University has been linked with Leamington for decades, but the town has retained a distinct, though evolving, character. I remember 1970's South Town as a child. There were a lot of independent retailers. All these wonderful family-run independent shops, and I think that's stayed around this area. There's always been that independent streak. Now there are shops reflecting newer communities mixed with some of the older ones. There was some money given to do up South Town, so that has helped too. There are community initiatives for people of all sorts of different backgrounds, like Sydenham, for instance - they've got the SYDNI Centre that's very multicultural. The students fit right in; a soup bowl we all get on very well together in. I think the strong, growing community stems from the district council having councillors from different backgrounds, which can help.

I went to Coventry University for both my degrees, though continued living in Leamington, so I can help to almost educate the students about various things. I was a student ambassador for the open days as well. I know Leamington, Coventry and a bit about Warwick, so I've been that little bit of a bridge to those students.





# Leamington Spa - The Union

### **Anastasia Traberg-Christiansen**

From: Denmark

Studies: Economics and Statistics at Warwick University

I'm originally from Copenhagen, but I had part of my childhood in the UK, before moving to Denmark again. I decided to come back to fulfil my studies, as it's arguably the best place to study certain disciplines, including mine. Warwick has an excellent reputation and not a lot of universities do the course I wanted.

Because I'm in my fourth year now, I planned to either live by myself or live quite closed off . A lot of my friends had already left and I didn't want to live in Canley, which is the town closest to the university, like most of my remaining friends were doing. So I started looking into studios and stuff like that, then this came up. I saw it had a nice en-suite room with a massive kitchen for a good price, with a common room and everything. I decided on that option because I wanted to kind of live by myself, but still have people around me without it being this whole student crazy life culture. This is a bit more calm. I'm currently sharing with seven other girls, but we all get along and there's no crazy partying, no drama; it's just very calm and relaxed. I can have a bit of social life but not too much. It's a very good balance, which is kind of what I needed. This is my final year, so I've got to stay extra focused.

I commute to Warwick by bus. I've been doing so throughout my studies so I'm quite used to it. I've lived here for three years, so I know Leamington inside out. I also spend my summers here, so I do feel as if this is my home. It's a lovely town with an interesting history, everything you need really. There are beautiful parks, as well as a good selection of bars, restaurants and cafes for a smallish town. I work in one of them myself, which also helps me get a feel for the place. It's a good vibrant community.

University Locks compares well with my previous houses. First of all, this doesn't have any mould – so that helps! No, seriously, it's really lovely. I've had some interesting experiences in student accommodation before. Not too bad, but just the normal kind of student houses where you rent a relatively run-down property from a private landlord, hence my familiarity with mould. That's what I've been doing for the past two years. I went through the university in my first year, who organised student accommodation, and it was fine. I find the idea of being in this university accommodation set-up convenient because it's a one-off payment, and

then I don't have to worry about anything. I can just focus on my studies, but still feel part of the town as well.

It's convenient not to have to think about gas, water and electricity because obviously, when you're living in a house and you've got to pay all those bills, you're concerning yourself with how much you're showering or how long the heating's on for. It just wasn't something I wanted for my fourth year. I wanted to focus.

We've got a great common area for everyone. It even has Danish furniture, which is an unexpected bonus, especially for me, being Danish. University Locks doesn't feel closed off, so you can go out and explore – you definitely want to do something else other than to always be here. They've got pictures all around the common room of Leamington Spa so you can see the different areas you can go. They're really good. I love how they even make a cheap late-night takeaway look interesting. Not an easy task.

# Lysah Priya



From: Linconshire

**Studies:** BSc Business and Marketing at Coventry

University

Coventry is a very highly rated university, especially for the course that interested me, so although it wasn't right on my doorstep I decided to come. I'm in second year at the

moment and really enjoying it.

I found this accommodation online, through Facebook. I liked what I saw, so I came to take a look around with my Mum. They were still completing it, so it wasn't fully finished yet, but we could see the potential and really liked the position. I decided to go for it, which I don't regret. I really like it here. Feel really at home.

I knew Leamington already, which was another factor in my choice. During my first year at Uni, I worked here but lived in Coventry. I love Leamington far more than Coventry. It's really beautiful.

I'm sharing with six other people, so it's a seven cluster flat. I find that helps with meeting people and socialising. It's nice because when you're making dinner in the kitchen, or reading on the sofa, or whatever, you can spend time together with your flatmates, but you've also got your own room when you want privacy. I like my nice en-suite as well.

The Union isn't too big, but there's a really nice mix of students, from all types of backgrounds. The common room is lovely. When you're sitting there, you just naturally meet people, which is really nice. People often come down and spend time there at night. I haven't got a TV in my room so soon after I'd moved in, I went down to the common room to watch a programme, and there were other people reading and playing pool in there so I got to meet them and we all started getting to know each other.

I like to go out locally as everything is so close by. We're right on a lovely stretch of canal, but there's everything from supermarkets, to all sorts of good smaller shops and some great cafes right on the doorstep. I've got my own car but if I wanted to take the train or bus it's literally just up the road. Everything is so local including bars, clubs, restaurants. I went for an interview the day after I got here. It was a group assessment and I met some people from the University of Warwick, who were going out to one of the clubs that same night. They invited me along and now I'm seeing them every day. That was people I just bumped into round the

corner, here in Leamington, so it really makes the whole place, from the accommodation to the surrounding area, feel very inviting.

After I graduate I plan to do Marketing. I'm already a professional beauty therapist so ideally want to go into the beauty industry but specialise in marketing. I feel that would be an interesting way to combine my interests and experience, with a good academic education, which could be beneficial to developing my own business, or working with large organisation. As well as working as an employee, I've already had my own mobile, part-time beauty business. I'm also a henna artist so I've been travelling all summer doing festivals around the country. Ideally I'd like to go into marketing within a beauty company like L'Oréal or something like that, and eventually have my own salons.

1 found this accommodation online ... They were still completing it, so it wasn't fully finished yet, but we could see the potential and really liked the position, so I decided to go for it

#### Leamington Spa - The Union

#### Fikri Gusrizal



From: Indonesia

Studies: MA in International Political Economy at Warwick University

II'm from Indonesia, so quite a distance away. I lived with a host family in a private house when I first came to the UK to complete my A-levels. They were nice, but I was young and I must admit I felt quite culturally isolated, as I wasn't living with fellow students, so I used to stay in my room a lot. Looking back I felt I'd wasted a

year and should have explored that great city more. After completing my undergraduate degree in Portsmouth, I decided to take a Masters in Political Economy at Warwick University. The course has an excellent reputation and I felt it would be very useful for my future. I have always wanted to be a diplomat with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Vacancies are rare however, so I may look to do a PhD here or in the USA.

Regarding accommodation I first looked at a place beside my University campus, but there wasn't one that fitted. I found out about The Union and heard it was excellent, so went to have a look. I immediately took to Leamington. I fell in love with the architecture and relaxed pace of the town. Peaceful, but still plenty to do. There are even bars and clubs open till 2am if you want a big night out.

I'm very happy with the decision I made. Some of my course mates are in accommodation in Coventry and I don't think they are having nearly as good an experience. I really like the accommodation here. It's a nice scale for me and the location is lovely, right on the canal, with everything you need on the doorstop and great transport links. I get the bus to Uni, which is only £4 per day and takes half an hour

There's a good community feeling here. Everyone is in the same boat. Helping each other out. New students together, but from a lot of really interesting mixed backgrounds. The staff are really good too. You can have a laugh with them. Makes it feel more like coming home when they're there.

I have an en-suite room with shared kitchen/living room, which is amazing. Really good quality. My flat mates are great and I really enjoy spending time with them. If I had a studio flat I don't think I would have made friends as easily. The big common room is stylish, but cosy and comfortable. There's a pool table, really good furniture and artwork, floor to ceiling windows with views out the canal; so you can see barges gently passing by. I think all of this encourages you to go out and explore.

I already have very positive and warm feelings from the years I've spent in this country that I'll take with me, wherever I go. The UK has taught me a lot of things. Not just what I learned on my courses. I like the diversity and it's made me think about, and experience, different ethnicities and cultures in a way I hadn't before. All sorts of people get along remarkably well despite perceived differences. I've always felt welcome and accepted. It's strange though, that a lot of quite major things have happened during my time here, in both UK and global politics, and it's very interesting to see how a country other than my own deals with such things. An education in itself.

**66** There's a good **99** community feeling here. Everyone is in the same boat. Helping each other out





#### Leamington Spa - The Union

#### **Jacinto Traguedo**



From: Portugal

Studies: Management and Leadership: BA(Hons)

In English, they pronounce 'j' as 'jay' not 'zsa.' In Portuguese you don't say 'Jay-cinto' you say 'Zsa-cinto.' That's why everyone just calls me "Jay" instead of Zsa-cinto. It's even become my nickname in Portugal.

I came for the first time two years ago, for a summer course, and I liked the country. So when I was choosing universities I gave priority to the UK. I also want to improve my English. Coventry was also one of the top ten for my specific course. I'm probably going to go to London to do the MBA. You can do it, even if your previous courses are not related to business, you can do a BA on Cultural Arts and then go and do the MBA – I actually know someone that did it after Historical Art, or something like that.

I arrived in the UK and didn't have anywhere to live. I'd applied for accommodation through a website but, for some reason, it still said 'awaiting allocation.' So I came earlier and I just had a look and found Leamington Spa. I phoned 'student.com' and they'd told me just to come here directly and they'd do everything here; that it would be faster and easier. So that's what I did. I was staying in a hotel in Coventry. I just walked through the door with all my stuff, but Joanne was so friendly and helpful. She's lovely. I'm so glad I made this decision.

I think that the accommodation is much better here and actually also cheaper than the other options I saw in and around Coventry. Cheaper and better - that's a good combination. And everyone in the town seems so polite and helpful. We look out onto a beautiful bit of canal here and there are peaceful green places all over. I like to walk and there's also a good gym close by. I find that a bit of peace is actually quite good for me. Everyone's different I suppose.

English is my third language. My second language is Spanish, so Portuguese, Spanish, then English.

The first time I came here Joanne told me about the Portuguese community and the Portuguese shop near the Co-op. I went there and it was strange, you walk into the Portuguese shop and it's like you're in Portugal. The men are standing around drinking Portuguese beer, the woman are eating Portuguese tarts with coffees.

They also sell a lot of Portuguese products. Even the TV was tuned in to a Portuguese news station. It really felt like a little bit of Portugal in Leamington Spa. Even though Joanne told me there was a big Portuguese community, wandering in there was an accident, I was at the Co-op and I saw 'Taste of Portugal,' so I went in and everybody is speaking Portuguese; talking about football and politics. In Portugal they live for Fado (which is the Portuguese traditional music) politics and football.

So the good thing is that I actually ended up in a good place and my flatmates are all cool as well. They're a mix of people from different countries. There's a Greek girl, a guy from Indonesia, a guy from Macau and the two others are British. The moving wasn't new for me because I've been moving all my life. I lived in Angola for eight years, then South Africa and other places, then Lisbon in Portugal. I was born in Funchal, which is the capital of Madeira, near where Cristiano Ronaldo was born. It's my town where they made the Ronaldo statue that doesn't look anything like him. It's ridiculous. The best footballer in the world and they've given him the worst statue. The job went to a public auction sort of thing, so they chose a guy from Madeira to do it, and he's not... Well, I better not say.











Project Mixed use new build on beachfront site including

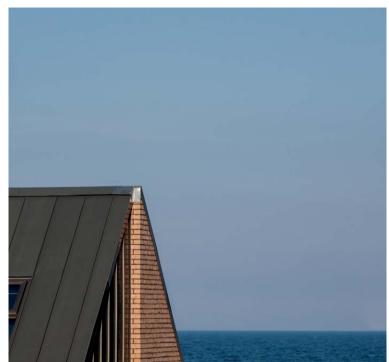
pre-school nursery for university of st Andrews

**Location** East Sands, St Andrews, Scotland

**Architects** Carson & Partners

Completed 2015













# **Lain Carson**

Architect Scotland - St Andrews

St Andrews was the second project for Alumno, and it was quite a journey really. I remember being introduced to the site for the first time, seeing a nursery which was part of a self-build project by the owners, and quite a large, under-loved car park. I don't know if you can love car parks

It was quite bleak as well, next to the sports complex at East Shore, with a looming embankment - which had seen better days - crowned by a city of caravans.

It immediately struck me, when we were on site, the relationship not only to the coastline but the view back to the old harbour. Also, looking north, you can see the lovely skyline of St Andrews, where the University can be easily identified, as well as the cathedral. So there were lots, and lots, of good pointers that one could relate any development to. That was the starting point, identifying views, vistas and relationships - whether it be in section or in the distance perspective.

So we started looking at the site from various viewpoints; one of which was along the shoreline. I took pictures of the ripples in the sand which I found quite interesting in terms of pattern. They were not only changing heights, but in plan they kind of moved, and snaked - shifting in the planes. That became part of the inspiration for the setting out of the buildings themselves. First we orientated the buildings towards the sea, with them stepping up from the shoreline back toward the housing estate to the rear. Secondly, we took the blocks and then divided them – we had three linear blocks parallel to one another, but then we divided and shifted the blocks in plan, which broke-up the mass, but also enabled us to identify a place to have the circulation.

Each block contained, in plan, one full cluster either side of the staircase or the circulation space. At the front block, toward the sands themselves, we referenced some of the older parts of the Fife coast where you have the fishing villages, and you have these open staircases, and you go up and access the clusters from the stairs.

The other two blocks we made more enclosed, because they were taller anyway and contained lifts, but we decided to make them transparent. When you are looking from the furthest away block there is some kind of visual connection through the blocks themselves, toward the sea.

We catalogued a lot of the roof forms within  $\operatorname{St}$  Andrews, which tended to

be quite traditional pitched roofs, but of varying degrees of pitch. Rather than having bland gables we took the opportunity to have dual aspect windows into the common spaces - with these spaces having the best aspect not only towards the sea, but also towards St Andrews itself.

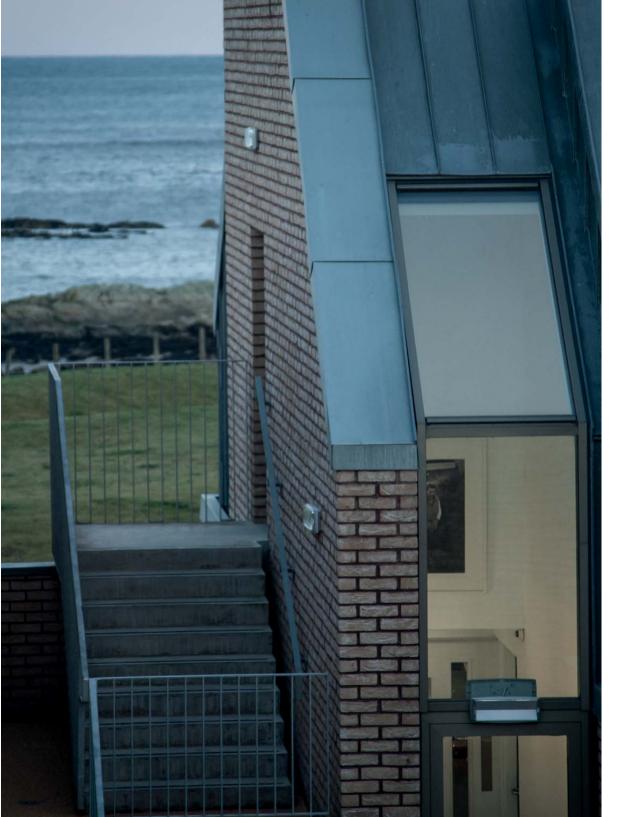
The materials used within St Andrews and their colours, whether it be the stone or the bricks, tended to be either a lighter sandstone or greyer stone. The pitch roofs themselves tend to be dark slate. We wanted to use contemporary materials but referencing these older materials from within St Andrews.

One of the viewpoints which people tend to forget about is the caravan park up on top of the embankment. There is a good view from there over toward St Andrews and we wanted not to intrude upon that. We wanted to nestle in with the landscape. So we looked at introducing the green roofs that you get on the buildings, which helps to soften the impact of the development itself.

We obviously had to create a nice car park; well as nice as possible! We were told by the University Estates Department that they'd had a complaint from one of the students in the past regarding the size of parking spaces. The complaint being that where this particular student was staying, on the official St Andrews University campus, the spaces weren't big enough to take her horsebox. So we made a bit of effort to make sure that some of the car parking spaces can actually accommodate a small horsebox.

The landscaping element of it was very important. We didn't want the buildings to be a completely gated community but to have some sort of visual connection as you move toward the sea, in the public realm, to have glimpses into the courtyards. Closely working with the landscape architects to develop, as we saw it, some form of amphitheatre which addressed the old harbour itself. Also it gave back, to the people who live, work and study in St Andrews, a space that they hadn't had access to previously.

David Campbell was very keen to introduce an artist into this, and we spoke to the council about the coastal trail. There was a plan already being implemented to encourage art to be part of the trail, and so this became an ideal opportunity to add something by involving Jacob Polley, the poet.



A poem was specifically commissioned by Alumno, inspired by the history of photography within St Andrews. The poem - about the light of St Andrews - appears with his words engraved in stone, on a stepped, sculpture-like landscape; a permanent installation.

Throughout the process it was very much another example of good collaborative effort, in this case between Alumno, the landscape architect and the poet.

One of the components of the scheme was to incorporate a nursery. There had been a nursery before on the site, and there had been employment on the site. So there was an opportunity to create a contemporary space, and we worked quite closely with the relevant body in Scotland.

It was a nursery for children whose parents worked, in the University or in other industries, within St Andrews. That gave it a nice feeling because you are integrating young kids into a building which houses undergraduate and postgraduate students. So there's quite a nice progression of age groups.

It is quite a wonderful place for a child to be able to go to nursery, and it's secure as well. We wanted to introduce as much glazing as possible into the nursery as the most important aspect was toward the sea itself, and being able to see the sky. We were able to create a space for them to play outdoors, but also a semi-covered space with a canopy, green roof, over it.

We've effectively built student accommodation and a nursery for young children together in the same complex, and the interesting thing is they are both places of learning. Everyone within the buildings are learning, whether it is a kid or



whether it is a teenager, or a postgraduate, or mature student – they all have that learning attribute.

The flats themselves are quite rational in a sense, they tend to have either a westerly or an easterly aspect. When you open the door the first thing you see is the window in front of you, and there is that connection between the window and entry into the room. They are all en-suite of course, and there are some studios.

The common rooms really are the jewel in the crown in the sense that we were able to create quite grand windows which is, again, relating back to some of the grander aspects of some of the older buildings within St Andrews. Having done a lot of loft apartments in the past, some of the more interesting spaces are usually in the roof spaces of older buildings with sloping roofs, and being able to create dormer windows. So we looked at creating a slightly more contemporary dormer, which wasn't just a window set in the roof, but actually canted down to the floor as well.

It all feels very linked to the landscape and the views from the communal spaces. I would say that the roofs are very sympathetic to the surrounding seascape, landscape, and even the townscape in the distance. The zinc-based material is akin to the traditional lead even though it's much more up-to-date, and safer, better material. I would say it gives a successful nod to the historic aspect of St Andrews, and the colours of the landscape as well.

We were taking reference as well, because zinc has been used in some of the more contemporary buildings within St Andrews; it's not as if it's alien.

Materials tend to mature over time and gain some form of character, especially when they are exposed to the coastal elements. With Glasgow, for example, we considered very much the material we were using which developed a successful patina in keeping with the surrounding tenements. We've taken this into consideration with the materials for St Andrews and that they will weather well.

We were really enthused by the coastal path because, not only does it link other villages along the coast, it is a direct route right into the centre of St Andrews. Quite an inspiring route for a student to take in the morning. Safe, car-free, pleasant and quiet, with so many aspects along the viewpoints. When I first came to London one of the first places I worked

was on Richmond Green. I used to walk along the river every morning and you experience the different qualities of light; you become more connected to the place.

By the sea you are very aware of that light – and seasons, tides, all of that. Different times of year there are different qualities to the environment, and that went into the landscaping, and how that can be perceived at different times of the year.

The general public walking along the coastal path will see your building in the distance, the landscaping, and the public art part of it – something for everyone - that continues and enhances the coastal path. Some people might be walking for a few hours along that path, so it gives them a place of arrival and rest.

## Pammy Armstrong Collins-Crewe Customer Services Advisor

The students are generally very good here and try to be as accommodating with us as we are with them. We have little running conversations throughout the week, so it's lovely. We've got quite a good range of people, ages, disciplines, nationalities and all that. It's very diverse which makes for an interesting mix and they all seem to mesh together so well.

My role is multiple. First and foremost I'm here to obviously make sure people have the best experience they can while living at East Shore, and try to facilitate whatever helps in their day to day life, whether that be taking in their parcels, or getting stuff posted off. Plus emailing them, and some social media, on things that might be of interest. If they have any issues they come to me and I look into how that can be sorted for them as quickly as possible. If anyone has a big problem we try to liaise with whoever might be able to help. I'm here to support Catherine, the property manager, so I take on board as many of the day to day tasks as possible. She takes the upper decisions, but we work well as a team, so at the end of the day the focus is all on the students. I also keep the property looking nice. You're almost a bit of a Girl Friday in this job but that's fine with me.

When East Shore was built, they tried to make sure there was good artwork on the walls of the communal spaces and even built into the grounds, so it didn't feel like a clinical kind of place. We try to follow that principle, whatever the season. Obviously we decorate it at Christmas. This year in fact we had students coming forward and saying could they help decorate, so we popped a tree in ready for them, and the decorations, and they made it more the way they wanted it. We were delighted at them showing an interest in keeping the spirit alive. When there's something on, say Halloween for example, a few of them arrange a get together. The place feels friendly, homely and warm.

I'm a Fifer, born only five miles from here, so I know things that are going on. For example, a couple of girls have come to me that are, like myself, coeliac. I've been able to point them to the best places they can buy their main food sources and where they can go out to eat. All these little things benefit from local knowledge. If students want to find their own way and are totally independent that's absolutely fine, but I've noticed over the last few months, with the new intake, that more and more come and say, "Pammy, my relatives are coming up, is there some place you can

recommend?" It seems to have travelled round our community here that I have some knowledge and if I can help them I will. I'll point them in the right direction. Because I'm local I know the not necessarily mainstream places.

Private rented accommodation is actually quite shockingly expensive in St Andrews. East Shore has really made a difference. It means you can get somewhere nice, where the bills are paid, for a reasonable amount of money. Most of the properties in this area are, to be honest, rather fallen down and landlords still can charge a fortune. Then, for the very rich students, there's another level – a money is no object level where you get something nicer. It's good that this is here to fill a gap. East Shore has I think become very popular because of its reputation and the fact that the facilities are very nice. It's a modern fresh building, it's well appointed, and it has fantastic views. It's not right in the middle of town, but not so far away that it causes a problem.

They tried to make sure there was good artwork on the walls of the communal spaces and even built into the grounds, so it didn't feel like a clinical kind of place.



#### **Kyle Anderson**



From: Shetland Islands

Studies: BSc Maths and Physics.

I'm from the Shetland Isles. I decided to go to St Andrews, as it's just one of the best places academically and, to be quite honest, I wasn't going to go outside of Scotland because it's cheaper to stay in Scotland. People wouldn't normally expect anyone to choose St Andrews as a cheap

option, but I'll get my fees paid, this accommodation is reasonably priced and there are no daily transport costs.

So St Andrews was a definite choice, as opposed to Edinburgh, Glasgow or Aberdeen. An awful lot of people from Shetland end up in Aberdeen. That's where everyone goes on their holiday, and some of them don't come back. I decided I'd been there too many times already.

Joking aside, St Andrews appealed to me as it's a smaller place, but I'm from a very small place, so this is big for me, but small enough that I thought it would be easier to adapt.

This accommodation is really nice. Beautiful location. It's a lot better than the first year flat I went to. The place I was in last time had a wonderful view of a bike shelter. There were also lots of niggles, like not having heating for a week in December.

The immediate environs are kind of nice and I've got the sea beside me, so it reminds me of home. The mix of people in my flat is pretty good. I think they've put all us maths and science types together and they seem nicely antisocial, which is fine, because I'm quite antisocial myself. I've got my room and my en-suite and everything, but if I go to the kitchen, living room bit, I can still sometimes be on my own, or I can be antisocial together with other people. I hear there are other flats where groups of sociable people stay together. I'm sure it's very nice for them.

My friends, they have this thing where they're trying to get me to go to the Student Union because, so far, this is my second year and I haven't even been ten times in total – I'm not a big drinker or anything like that, so I don't really mind, but they're actively trying to drag me to nights out and stuff. I really don't feel the need, but we'll see.

I'm planning to stay in St Andrews till I get a Masters but it depends how this year goes. The Physics department have this weird thing where you have to get a certain average grade for the year to go on to Masters, and another to do Bachelors. If I can't do Masters I won't cry myself to sleep at night. I'll be perfectly satisfied with a Bachelors at this stage.

I'll definitely try and go back to the Shetlands to find a job in future. It really is a nice place. Very much my home. With modern technology, I hope I can work in a large variety of places in all sorts of different areas. Even the Shetlands.



#### **Rose Caitlin Macauley**



From: Selkirk (Scottish Borders)

Studies: MA International Relations.

I decided to study at St Andrews, partly because International Relations is quite a niche course, so there's not a lot of departments that have it. I originally applied to do law everywhere else and then I decided that this

looked more interesting. I'm interested in human rights and International Relations kind of encompasses a lot of different disciplines – there's a bit of philosophy, a bit of social anthropology – it's a political science really but it's much more multi-dimensional so I thought it would be more interesting than studying straight law. It's a fascinating subject and I can go on and do a variety of things: journalism, law is still open, obviously politics. Human rights is what I'm interested in however.

In St Andrews there's a major problem with supply and demand in terms of housing, so when you're in first year there's quite a mad rush, by about December, to get a good group of people together and start applying for houses, but a lot of people actually don't get houses. It's very competitive and it's quite stressful. I had a group of four friends and we were starting to look at places, but a lot of them were very expensive as well for what you got. Some people live in the middle of the town and are paying £800 a month each for a room in quite dingy flats.

At East Shore you've got a really nice room in a lovely modern shared flat and it's £500 including all the bills. It's a really nice location. It is a bit like halls in that it kind of feels a bit like a work environment which possibly make you work harder. The staff are very friendly and helpful as well. So me and a couple of friends just decided to avoid the whole two month stress of trying to find somewhere in town and so we all booked here.

There are eight people in the whole flat but the three of us made sure we were in together and then we met the other people just on arrival. So it was really nice, we kind of got the best of both worlds.

I've heard of people being placed, and sympathetic management looking at who might fit and whatever, but I've not heard of groups of friends just organising it together, like you would if you were just choosing a flat, but it seemed to make sense. We came over for a viewing. We had a look at one of the flats and we just requested to be together and they said that was fine. In fact next year, if we rebook – which I think we probably will - we are going to try to be together again.

So in St Andrews, the actual private rented sector is very expensive for low quality and if you want high quality it's silly money. This is a small place, with a lot of wealthy students, so the landlords can charge a fortune. Most people aren't familiar with this corner of town, so they think it's quite far out which is quite silly. St Andrews has this weird thing where you end up with 'St Andrews time' in your head, so walking from one end of the town to the other becomes a big walk – so I'm like 15 minutes away, or a 20 minutes walk from Tesco say, or a 15 minute walk from my lecture theatre – but people here see that as a lot. It's nothing!

It's beautiful here. The coastal walks are stunning and then just walking to my lecture theatre is gorgeous. It means I get a ten or fifteen minute walk in the morning and I really like it.

It's also very positive that East Shore has obviously provided people, who aren't from wealthy backgrounds, with somewhere really nice to live and study in St Andrews. People have been commuting in from Dundee, for example, as they couldn't afford to live anywhere near St Andrews even though this is where they're studying.

I'll be here till I graduate, then I'll probably get out because I actually am quite a city person weirdly enough. I love cities, I always have, I'm not really that into small towns but it was mainly the course that brought me here and I do really like it. So I'm hoping to go to a city and maybe do a graduate law degree – if I still want to do that – or maybe something in media instead. I can't really decide between the two. There's plenty of room for choice and this course will give me a lot of knowledge. It's a really interesting course and I'm going to specialise in what I want as well, so Middle Eastern studies or something. My dream would be to work for Al Jazeera or something like that. We'll see what happens.

#### Teresa Zischkin



From: Austria

Studies: M.Lit Art History

I grew up in a little village and still lived there when at University in Vienna, which is a long daily commute. I had to drive to the nearest train station, take a crowded train to the city, then crowded subway journeys, so I really enjoy having this beautiful fifteen to twenty minute walk

from East Shore to my department at St Andrews University.

Beforehand, even though I was studying in the city, my life hadn't taken a massive leap because I was basically still living where I'd always lived. Now it's taken a massive leap, different country, different everything.

At the moment I am still here as an exchange student, doing the Erasmus programme, basically to get credits here and use them for my studies in Vienna, but I am seriously thinking about becoming a regular student here. For one thing I am studying medieval manuscripts and illuminations and there is an internationally renowned Professor here who specialises in that. The library also has a special collection with the gospels and gospel manuscripts, but also Islamic manuscripts, which I am currently researching. It's quite an extraordinary thing, to have the manuscripts before you and actually have a look at them.

There are also lot of very interesting medieval lists here with very specific topics that I would be interested in, such as book illumination or early Islamic art, because I am also studying Classical Archaeology back in Vienna. Art History and Classical Archaeology are looked upon as two different studies that I can't really bridge in Austria, but it's nice here because they're combined.

As far as accommodation in St Andrews is concerned, I can't tell you how happy and relieved I am to be here, rather than any of the other accommodation options. It's even better than I imagined and wonderful being right on the shore, beside the beach, with the sea crashing in. I really enjoy my walks to the Uni and back along by the beach, past the ancient cathedral, especially with me being a medievalist. I'm inspired every day.

Living here has more than fulfilled what I hoped it would from going online. It's a very nice setup between the rooms and the shared spaces. So

there's actually a good balance of privacy and having nine other people share a flat with you, which is a rather large amount of people. I've never lived with that many people before, so at first I was a bit insecure about it, but that quickly changed. You have your very private room with the en-suite bathroom, which was a must for me. The kitchen and communal living room area is very big so there's actually no problem if all of us are in there, which isn't that often. Sometimes we organise meetings though, or a big dinner, which is really nice, to get to know the others. We're from lots of different countries, cultures and backgrounds. We have two Chinese people, three Germans, one from Ireland, two from Wales and one from Hungary, then me from a little village in Austria, who'd certainly never met half these nationalities before.

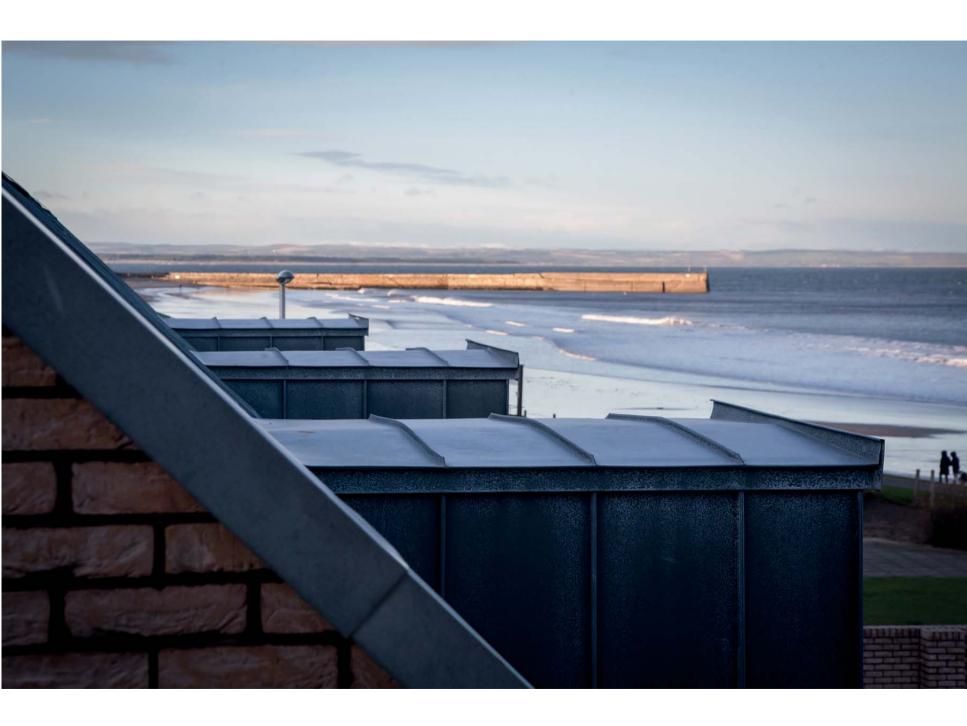
So, in a way I'm learning a lot about the world through the people here. Obviously I'm studying very specialised and fascinating history, but as far as the modern world is concerned, I'm getting a microcosm of a lot of things, through the people I'm getting to know, through being here.

I'm also learning about other subjects because there is such a range. One of the guys is studying Divinity, another Classics - which is more closely related to my field - others in the flat are doing things involving complex economics, which is cool to learn about, though I'd rather stay in my field.

It's very interesting to see what they have to do, though, in contrast to what I have to do, the kind of essays I have to write and the presentations. So it's a nice place for connecting with others and exchanging information and learning about new cultures.

This experience has shown me how nice it is to live in an independent way. I would like to come back and do a PhD and probably when I come back I would again choose East Shore. As well as being really practical and all the other things I like about it, I'm not doing much sport so I really need those walks along the beach to the department.

I can focus on my studies here. Feel peaceful, but not isolated. I think that because I'm studying something that is deeply historical, feeling that I'm in a small city that is steeped in so much history does put me in the mood. There's loads of history in Vienna, but it's a really big city. It's very rushed and very stressful and here it's calmer and more relaxed. The whole environment, and the ruins, are just beautiful to look at. Definitely I think that is one of the points why I prefer it here.



#### Zervaan Borok



From: USA

**Studies:** MA Economics and Statistics

I was born in South Africa, but moved to Chicago in the States when I was about a year and a half old. I chose to come here, partly because of the four year Masters. Also the fact that, in the States, the first year or so of university are general education - it's essentially like doing the last year of high school again. I figured I'd rather come

to a university where I could, right off the bat, start with classes in what I'm interested in.

St Andrews also ranks really high in many of its departments across the board and I find the departments I'm in brilliant to work with. After rounding down to Oxford, Edinburgh, and St Andrews, I took a summer school at Oxford and loved the city, but found out that the way they structured things would not suit my style. There's a lot of one-on-one or one-on-two teaching and mandatory contact hours. I'm not saying that's a bad thing but personally I prefer a more removed approach to study, where I'm allowed to do stuff on my own time.

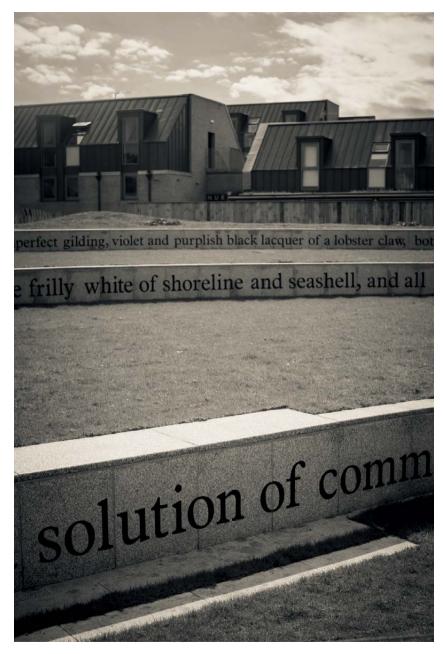
Edinburgh is not an enormous city, but it's a proper city, with four different universities. I loved it when I visited it, but I definitely felt that if I was going to go to a city, I may as well have gone to a really big city. The thing that nailed it, was when I visited St Andrews, went to the open day and just really enjoyed the smaller campus vibe.

I was in essentially very similar accommodation last year, just not nearly as nice. The location wasn't good and the facilities here are significantly nicer. I figured that if I'm studying in a coastal town, why the hell am I not living on the water. At East Shore I couldn't really be a lot more on the water without being on the beach. I've got a sea view from my bedroom and my living room, which is amazing and one of the mains reason for me living here. For the most part I absolutely love it.

There are always funny little differences that you have to adjust to in other countries and cultures. One I would think of is that in the States we have drain disposals where you just press a button to grind everything up in the sink. This is totally part of the culture, standard issue and it makes life so easy. Many people this side of the Atlantic don't know what I'm talking about, apart from comedy moments in American films and TV involving faulty drain disposals and bad plumbers.

After my degree here I'm probably going to get more qualifications, maybe even an MBA. As for where I work, if I had to guess, I'm more likely than not going to be in the finance world, so probably Chicago, New York, maybe LA or London.

This is an absolutely beautiful place to go to university, a beautiful place to learn. However I know that after these four years I definitely am going to want to be in a big city. One of the issues here is that it's very unusual for social circles to not have some overlaps because of the size. So in a way people have to get on with everybody more than they perhaps naturally would. I mean it's not a bad thing and, to be fair, it's probably a good skill to learn, because it could be similar in the work place.























# Sheraton Park









#### Durham - Sheraton Park

**Project** New build plus renovation of Edwardian buildings,

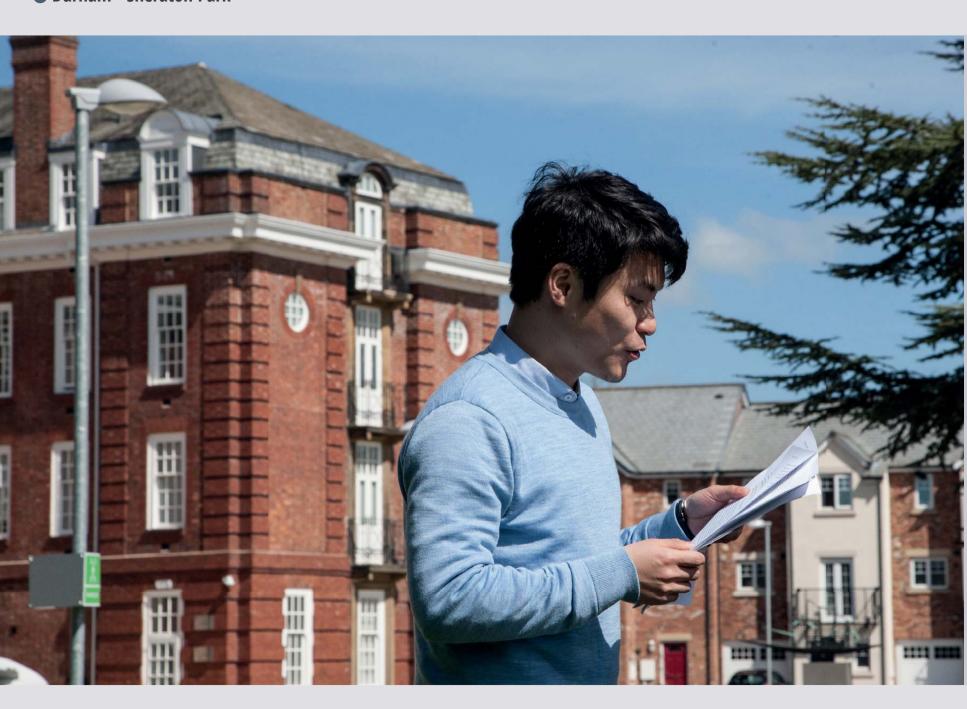
formerly part of New College Campus

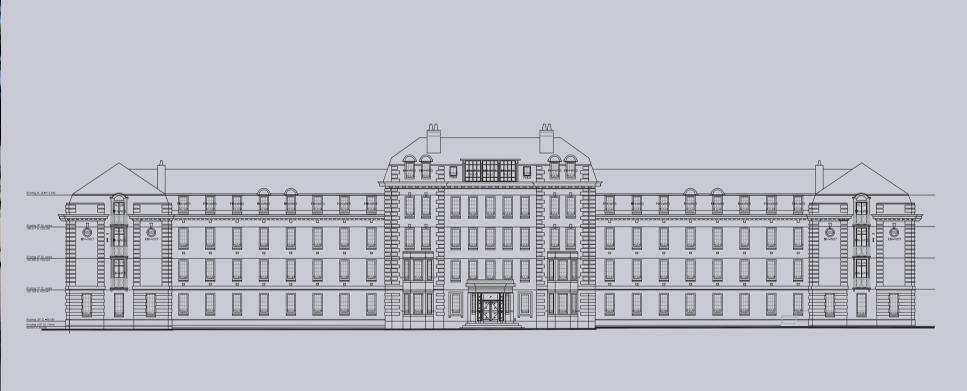
**Location** Neville`s Cross, Durham

**Architects** Howarth Litchfield

**Completed** 2017 for Ustinov College, Durham University

## Durham - Sheraton Park





# Jonathan Yates

Architect Durham

We first met David Campbell and Alumno when we were invited to look at Sheraton Park; a derelict site at Neville's Cross, Durham, in order to explore how we might transform it and provide contemporary student living. The idea was to somehow breathe life into the heart of the community, creating a place for everyone to enjoy and share, with Ustinov College taking occupation in September 2017.

The three acre site is just over a mile from Durham city centre and had originally been home to Neville's Cross College - a 1920's teacher training college. This would later become part of New College Durham, having been owned previously by Durham University for a time. Within the site are two unlisted Edwardian architectural landmarks; Neville House and Sheraton House, which were in a serious state of dereliction after lying empty for several years. As the site is within a conservation area, the Council had initially determined that both of these important landmarks should be retained.

The site also lies at the heart of a residential development of town houses which presented additional problems, having themselves been partially abandoned in 2007 as the recession took hold. The drawings, hard hats and site calendar all testified how, on a Friday in February, everybody downed tools and the site hoardings were secured for the last time. This is how it remained for several years. The intended luxury apartments partly progressed, with only the base of the large car park being completed. Local residents and Durham County were keen to find a solution to remedy this situation. The site was an eyesore and the white hoardings a bone of contention with local residents.

Like all projects, you are never quite sure at the outset where the journey may lead. It's all a bit of an adventure, made all the more intriguing by the sensitivities wrapped around student living, and how to harmoniously integrate with the adjacent home owners. Initially there was some resistance, but it was all about collaborative engagement and good design forging the story of how things could be if we all got on board.

Working with Alumno, we developed a proposal to transform these landmarks into purpose-built accommodation for 418 students – an approach which would not only address residents' concerns, by bringing the buildings back into viable use, but would address a need identified by Durham University for "bespoke student accommodation".

Client engagement and the management of multiple stakeholders were of the utmost importance to the successful progression of this project. It was particularly important to ensure that the plans were fully inclusive and that stakeholders clearly understood the proposals, timescale and implications of the build programme

The proposals were developed carefully and we openly engaged with all parties, including ward councillors and residents, to fully explore the potential opportunities and constraints of redevelopment. In fact, the development team set up a specific web link to keep the community informed, and pre-planning public consultations were held in the local scout hut.

The consultation stage took two years of negotiation with key stakeholders, including Sheraton Park Residents Association (SPRA) and Durham County Council. The process afforded them ample opportunity to consider and comment upon the proposals at each stage of the design. Howarth Litchfield's role, as a university framework partner, enabled its team to fully understand the significance of the student experience within the collegiate system and immediately engage with the issues to formulate a way forward.

Early engagement with the local community and Council afforded time to convince both that demolition of one of the unlisted heritage assets was in the best interests of regeneration. Through collaborative working with all parties, and an innovative, thorough and consultative approach, the design team were able to demonstrate that the most viable proposal would be to retain, extend and refurbish Neville House - the former residential building - and to demolish and replace Sheraton House, the former teaching block.

The loss of Sheraton House, which was of moderate heritage significance, was accepted to allow the site to be brought back into full use. A contemporary replacement was designed to enhance the character of the site, complementing Neville House in massing and materials and refreshing the public and external spaces, while also taking into account the scale and proximity of the existing residential buildings.

The topography of the site has been transformed with the creation of new public art spaces encouraging shared enjoyment of the parkland setting. A sculpture park with bronze and marble works of art from Italy, China and



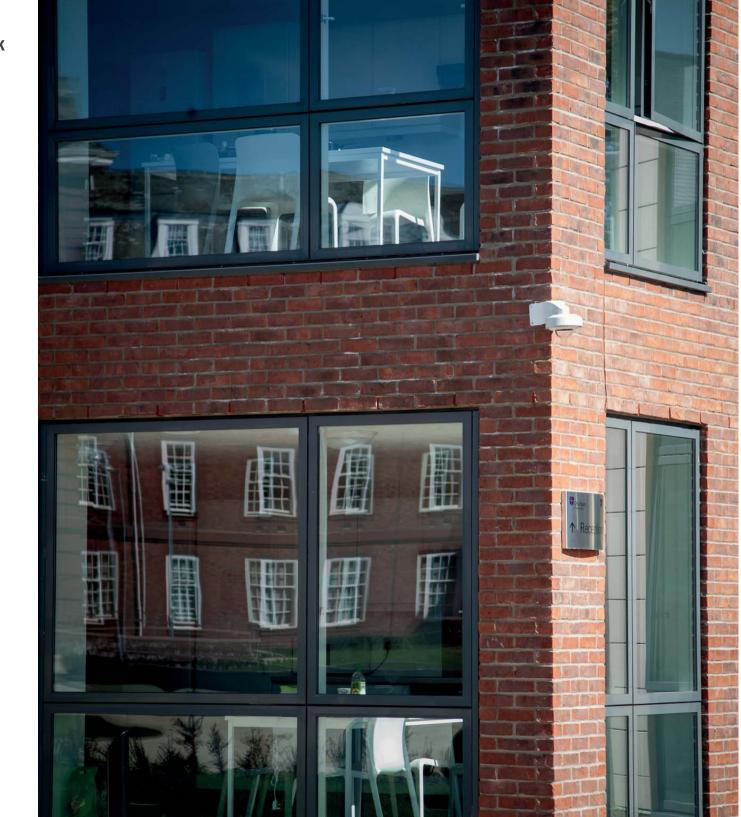
America are, without doubt, the highlight of the parkland and celebrate Durham as a centre for pilgrims. These sit together with the Sheraton Park Poetry Wall, where the 'welcome' poem by Ira Lightman is routed into Corian screens across the ground-floor, with poetry verse on walls and seats.

The community had direct involvement with the landscape scheme and could comment on features and finishes. A dedicated community resource space is provided on the ground floor within Neville House, with secure access. This flexible facility provides a community room with associated storage, kitchenette and accessible toilet and baby change. This provides for a multitude of community activities; a residents association, interest groups, children's birthday parties etc. University and resident engagement has continued with parent and toddler coffee mornings in the Ustinov Common Room and the post graduates and residents live harmoniously and enjoy the communal spaces.

Public access has also been massively enhanced by the opening up of pathways and desire lines. The main public space was previously fenced off, and would have been a large private car park had a pre-recession apartment scheme gone ahead. Fortunately this did not happen and the community now benefits from access to this beautiful public realm.

The development also provides cycle parking and a number of Brompton bikes for community and college use. Shared use and ownership of the public spaces and facilities is encouraged.

As part of Alumno's brief, the design of sustainable spaces was paramount from the outset. Best practice was used in their Durham - Sheraton Park

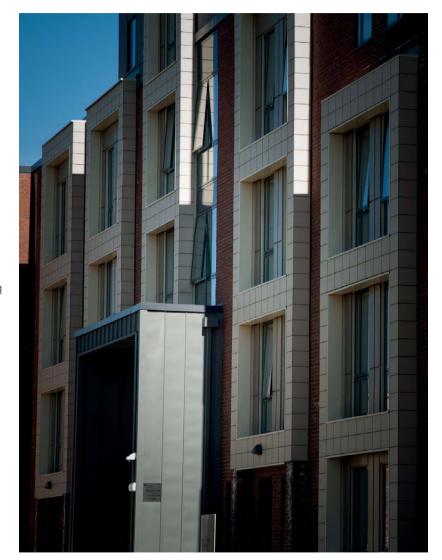


construction, with the use of Building Information Modelling (BIM) Level 2, allowing for the design process to be successfully managed. The sustainability strategy looked at energy efficient systems to reduce consumption and minimise carbon emissions, using A/A+ rated building elements and taking into account the embedded energy in materials and products, all in line with Durham University's carbon reduction policy. This collective focus on low environmental impact and sustainability resulted in the building fabric being 20 per cent enhanced above current building regulations.

A range of water saving measures has also been implemented and residents are encouraged to recycle. The new development is aligned closely with Durham University's green travel policies which promote cycling, walking and the use of public transport.

The long-term prospects for the area are excellent. Ustinov College provides a home for post graduates, forming the first piece in Durham University's residential strategy for developing their unique collegiate offer. The viability of the site is secured after years of dereliction providing the local community with amazing sculpture and parkland as a shared resource. The vision of the development team lead by Alumno has to be recognised, with the project taking 6 years to reach fruition. The public spaces created the roots go deep into the heart of the immediate community and postgraduates who now share this amazing place.

Two factors lay at the heart of the Sheraton Park design development; the need for sensitive 'place making' and the goal of creating a low environmental impact. Sheraton Park now creates a home for Ustinov College "pilgrims" within the heart of an established community; regenerating a derelict former Edwardian college site left vacant by the recession. A blend of sensitive renovation, alteration and contemporary intervention creates architecture, public spaces, landscape and sculpture of the highest quality to realise the vision for collegiate parkland, for the shared enjoyment of the university students and local residents. The project's success is testament to team commitment, stakeholder engagement, imagination and creativity.



# Glen McGregor

Principle of Ustinov College



Ustinov College has about 1600 members, with 410 living at Sheraton Park from 2017. We've also had about 400 living down at the original site and by the beginning of the 2018-19 academic year, totally based here.

When the local residents first saw us coming over the hill about eighteen months ago as the whole idea was mooted they were not all that receptive, but before we moved in we articulated very clearly at a number of resident meetings that these are Post Graduate students. Their motivations and

behaviour is very different. The average age is probably around twenty six or twenty seven years old, with many Post Doctorate researchers considerably older than that.

The residents should therefore expect something more than a little different to what they may perceive as student behaviour. Since we moved in September 2017, they have indeed been pleasantly surprised. In fact we've put on a number of events to directly engage the community.

We're living with new neighbours, as they are, and you've got to get on with your neighbours. So we've been reaching out in a number of ways. The students have been fantastic, putting on some family friendly events like Halloween parties and inviting the local families. Also an art event where twelve very talented students from one of the local high schools contributed work. So we are actively reaching out to our neighbours.

We're very conscious of our role in the reputational status of the university. A lot of that reputation is related to what the local residents think of us. They could see ambassadors for the university or quite the contrary. I think having this public space is great. Not only do the local residents wander through it, but there is a chance for them to interact with students, even if it's just, 'Hello, how you doing?'

I don't particularly like the expression 'town and gown' but it's often used in Durham and we need to try and address the issue, as I think it does cause division. Because of our physical position we are doing our best to integrate and live as local residents. Ustinov is not only about building globally competent graduates, but also about focusing on how people can develop personally and engage with the wider community. A lot of

that we do through our volunteering under the umbrella of our global citizenship programme. It's obviously not compulsory, but a lot of our students volunteer to reach out into the local communities.

As far as the layout here is concerned, you've got a new building and a beautifully restored old building. We like the complementarity of the two. The old and the new. The refurbishment has been done to a very high standard, so everything that needs to be functional in the modern world is brand new, efficient and squeaky clean, but the whole site retains the best of its historic elements. It really is a great achievement.

I think the students are generally very happy with the facilities. The cafe bar was not part of the original plans so we had to go into a negotiation with the developers and the owners about having an extension built, because there was no real interior common space and a bar cafe serves as the emotional heart of the college. That's where students gather. They gather in their kitchens at dinner time, but for socialising they are drawn to the cafe and the bar, so having that facility is extremely important. In some ways these elements make the difference between a straight halls of residence and a college. In the original design there was quite a large courtyard in the centre of the building but we had to push on to that to build the cafe.

The students are starting to build a sense of belonging to Sheraton Park and also the new buildings as a location as well. It's very, very good, so this has been a great success.

The permanent public art adds to the whole flavour and atmosphere of the place and makes that outside space quite attractive. We've also put out some benches in the park, which quickly fill up when the sun blesses us with its presence.

Durham Council has given some funding to student community events. It's very reassuring that the council really see the value of building community between students and local residents. Sheraton Park has become a symbol of mingling and growing together in this great little city, through consideration and mutual respect. You've got to plan ahead to get that across the line. You have to plan to encourage that engagement and interaction. That's how Alumno saw the space. It was a bold vision, but it's working.



#### Durham - Sheraton Park

#### Hannah Davita Ludikhuijze



From: Netherlands

Studies: PostGrad Modern Literature. MA

I had a rather broad undergraduate study, involving literature, anthropology, history and philosophy. This was in the Netherlands, but on an English programme, as it seemed like the closest thing I could get to these shores, whist not feeling quite ready to move here. I became

fascinated with the idea of living where English literature happens at a very early age. A lot of children read 'The Secret Garden'. I read it a lot.

When I applied for a Masters I had to choose between Oxford, Sussex and Durham. That was a difficult decision to make, but I thought Durham would be a good safe place, with an excellent academic reputation, but a little outside the Oxbridge bubble. After Durham, the plan is to undertake a PhD in Brighton.

I suppose you come to the UK with a particular idea in mind, and you can't find it, because of course in reality it's very different. It's funny how you then find something else that makes you decide to stay. I came with this romanticised idea, based on a lot of literature, and that wasn't quite what I found but I ended up liking what I did find.

There can be issues, when academic life doesn't ask us to assimilate as much as we should, or ground ourselves more than just being a student community in the bubble that this provides.

It's very nice to see everything that happens here, because you are around college staff and international students, but also local teenagers having their first romances in front of your eyes. The surrounding families and their children very much use the park that's specifically developed for us all to share. One day this very old man came by, carrying his very old dog. Images like that are very touching.

Some people can be a bit reticent at first, but it's very interesting when they get used to you and greet you. Maybe have a little chat. It's lovely to establish those kinds of relationships, beyond the general student experience. The way this whole place is designed encourages this mix. I know there was tension to begin with, as people have preconceptions about what living among students might be like, but I find it's wonderful when it switches and you recognise each other as just another neighbour. This kind of accommodation does encourage that. It would be nice if this model was used more often.

What I am focusing on now and will continue to develop is community construction, which is one of the reasons I find this all so fascinating. My idea is to look at working class autobiographies. I want to focus on the power of literature and how the school curriculum and surrounding culture affects this.





#### **Matthew Roberts**



From: USA (Los Cruzes, New Mexico)

**Studies:** Masters by Research in the application of Digital Imaging to Archaeology

Il did my undergraduate in computer science. What drew me to that was the sense of accomplishment you get when you write a program. It's almost like solving a

problem, a puzzle. It's something you can see being built. It's kind of like engineering, even though it's not.

I grew interested in archaeology when I started working in a local museum. We held several events there. I stared making contacts with the people there and discovered that I really enjoyed working with museum collections.

Through that I started wondering if I could apply the various tools and techniques I was learning from computer science to a museum collection. So I made my dissertation all about the application of digital imaging to museum collections and started getting positive results. It was just a little bit too short.

I decided to approach the archaeology department and told them I wanted to make this in to a more long term research proposal. They had people already working in that domain and needed someone with the relevant software experience, so were willing to bring me on.

I've been in Durham since 2016. Part of the reason I came here was because I wanted to live in the UK. I'd visited before. I looked at universities with strong backgrounds in my preferred field. Durham is also in a Unesco World heritage site which swung things for me.

Ustinov college is all post graduate with a high proportion of international students. I found this accommodation online and it seemed like what I was looking for as it was wholly Postgraduates, so older and more mature. I got my undergraduate degree between 1999 and 2004 then worked as a software engineer for about 12 years, before deciding to undertake a Masters degree.

The time I've spent here has been one of the most life changing experiences I've ever had. It's a combination of Sheraton Park and Durham as a whole. It's definitely the fact that Ustinov is an international community. We have so many different students from all round the world. Living and socialising with people from so many different backgrounds

and disciplines, creates this very unusual community. I've met people from all over the world and made real friendships even in the short time we've been together. It's been an incredible experience.

Last year I shared a flat here. That was also a very good experience. I had flatmates from China, Turkey, Mexico and India, so all of us were coming from different cultures and sharing a kitchen and living space. Cooking together is a great way of breaking down barriers, bonding and opening up discussions about each other's cultures. We began to get together and share meals. This evolved into us each taking turns making recipes from our home country. People would cook from their food culture, which would open up into discussions about their culture as a whole, as food is so often intertwined and enjoying people's food is such a primal act of sharing.

This year I got a scholarship and that comes with one of the studio flats. It's a different experience as I now have my own kitchen, so not the same opportunity to bond over food. Sometimes I miss that. However there are now good common areas in Sheraton Park, building up that sense of community.

#### Durham - Sheraton Park

#### **Vinay Utham**



From: Cochun. (Kerola. India

Studies: PhD conditate in Finance

I did my Masters at Durham, so had a reasonably long association with Ustinov College, then a gap year where I went back home to India to work, before returning for my PhD.

I originally did an undergraduate degree in Engineering back in India. The primary reason I came to the UK was that it gave me a chance to switch to the field that I wanted. I did my Masters specifically in investments and Durham was well known for having an excellent course. Also a daughter of one of my father's colleagues was an ex-Ustinovian as well. She's the one who recommended that I come to Durham and that if I come to Durham I should come to Ustinov,. So it's almost by sheer chance, but I'm so glad it turned out this way.

I've absolutely fallen in love with the place. It's been an ideal setting especially for studies. It doesn't have too many distractions, but at the same time it gives you the kind of social life you expect in a college setting. Durham is big enough to have a bit of fun, but small enough that you can pretty much walk everywhere.

I go to London to visit, or for conferences and appreciate that it's a fantastic city, but think I may have found it more of a challenge to build daily human connections. Ustinov is family away from family. You mix happily with everybody, whether it's the cleaning staff, the management, or friends and colleagues. When I came to the UK it was my first time living away from home, so there was still a slight fear of the unknown, mixed with excitement. My masters came straight after eight months back in India, working in engineering. I was twenty three at that time so felt a little trepidation when I came to collect the keys for the first time, but the staff made the transition feel as smooth as smooth could be and the whole look, feel and layout of the place just works.

I'm a big fan of cinema, but mainly used to watch Bollywood movies. I came here and people introduced me to all sorts of eras and genres of film making from different countries. It's been a real eye opener and cultural exchange in much the same way that Matthew describes the sharing of food, in that it prompts wider discussion. I've made friends from the rest of the world.

I came here to study, but I've also learned things that have contributed to my growth and development as a human. Things I would never have dreamed of, sitting at home, looking at a computer. You can learn a lot from the internet these days, but there's no substitute for real life experiences. I think my experiences here have helped me understand life a bit better.

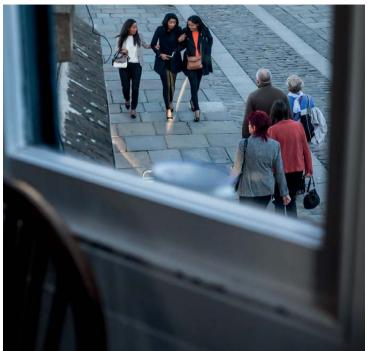


## Durham - Sheraton Park















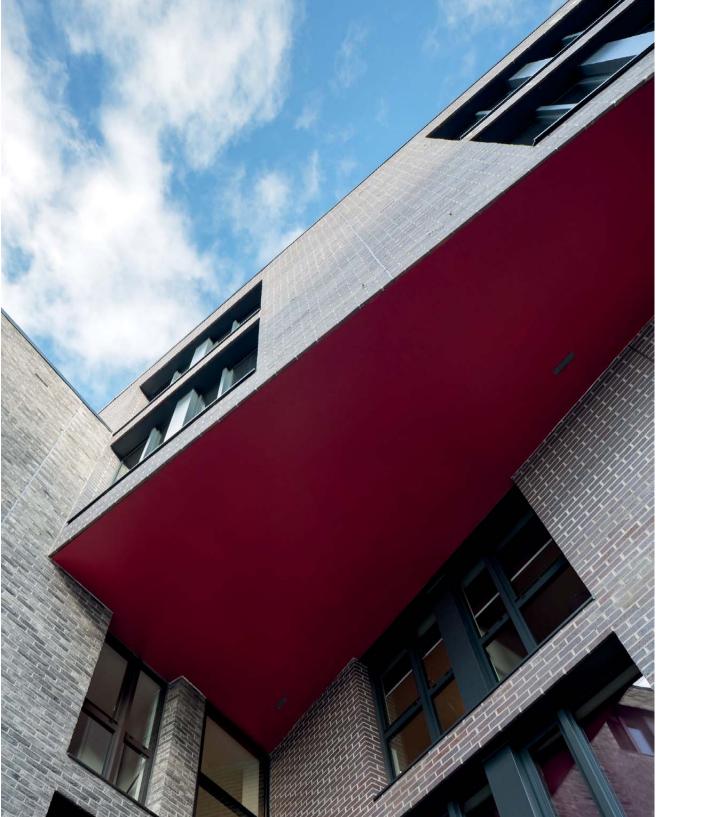
**Project** New build on brownfield site

**Location** Aberdeen

**Architects** Carson & Partners

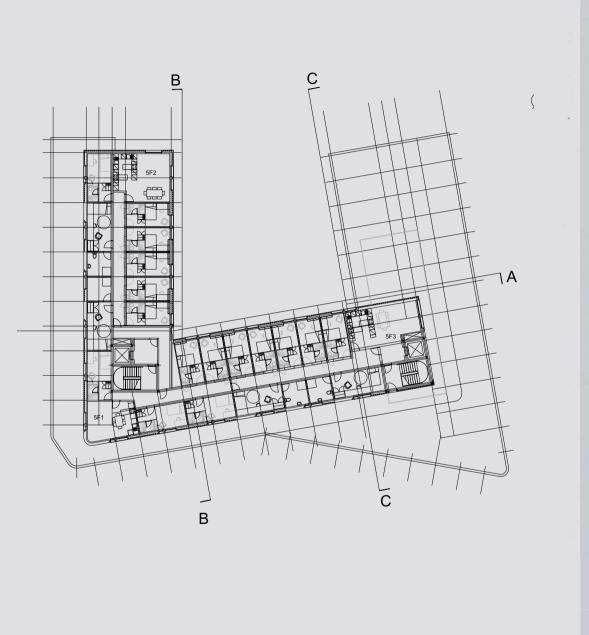
**University** Direct let

Completed 2016











# lain Carson Architect Aberdeen - Powis Place

Powis Place lies at a significant junction on one of the major approaches into Aberdeen, sandwiched between more established residential areas to the East and West and the suburban and city centre areas to North and South. The vacant or under-used sites at this crossroads presented a natural redevelopment opportunity and Alumno initially approached the site having high aspirations to take a leading role in its regeneration. Alumno then gave us the architectural commission and we worked closely with them as a strong team, with a shared vision, in order to achieve creative and workable solutions to a wide range of challenging issues.

In terms of urban and architectural design, it was imperative to consider 2 Powis Place as a coherent contribution to both the current condition and longer term prospects of the area. Situated roughly midway between the main campus at Old Aberdeen, and the city centre, it lends itself well to both walking and cycling and is ideally placed for student living. It has been a challenging site to develop however, with significant level changes present and space and access being severely limited by busy roads on three sides. Our shared desire was to consolidate a fragmented urban fabric and initiate more intensive patterns of use for the area, which was arguably more demanding than simply addressing the status quo. It also prompted a more urban approach, suited to the scale and potential of the thoroughfare.

As well as ongoing dialogue with the local planning authority, we sought early community involvement during the planning stages of the project, with a public consultation event and a presentation to George Street Community Council. Some key changes which were adopted after this period included an overall reduction in the height and mass of the proposed building, which addressed local residents concerns about density; an increase in the quality of the public realm and the creation of roof terraces to maximise the proposed amenity space. We also received influential feedback from statutory consultees, in particular from Roads Projects and Waste Services who canvassed for the creation of a larger car park and refuse store space. We took these suggestions on board and accomplished them by raising the courtyard to the first floor level. This left the planned amenities for residents mostly unchanged and our proposals were warmly received by the Aberdeen Design City Review panel.

The six-storey building now accommodates nearly 200 students in a mixture of en-suite rooms, in shared apartments, and a selection of single studios. The architecture of the building is robust, depending largely on bold sculptural form and proportion, executed with crisp but straightforward details to achieve it's intended character. It is built with a limited palette of inexpensive materials, selected for their visually animated texture and tone, while the steel frame structure allows for future adaptation for different uses. The form of the building naturally creates a series of flat roof terraces and, even those areas which are inaccessible to residents, have been finished in such a way as to enhance the visual amenity for anyone that overlooks them. On the corner, the building has significant bulk and presence but diminishes in scale towards Canal Road to the rear, working with the rising topography to meet the more domestic scale of areas to the north across the railway. The inflected geometry toward Fraser Place creates positive space in the urban realm.

We have endeavoured to achieve a simple, rational organisation of good quality spatial sequences both inside and outside the building. As far as possible we sought to avoid internal corridors in favour of more generous, day-lit lobby spaces that encourage interaction. This allows both ease of use, and an enjoyable route to and from the student bedrooms. By locating the main communal areas, such as the common room and reception, at street level we sought to establish a lively public presence with a fluid, visual and physical relationship with the street, as well as high quality, well appointed, carefully considered interior design and Artwork which also reflects the surrounding community. Successful, comfortable common areas, where students want to spend time, study and interact, are vital to the success of communal living on this scale.

The main entrance frontage, on Fraser Place, was also enhanced by planting a number of semi-mature clear-stem trees within the public area at the side of the building. Light from the generous open plan reception spaces leads, via a broad staircase, up into an internal landscaped courtyard garden and then via stairs to the accommodation above.

The internal landscaped courtyard provides vertical circulation - a secure and sheltered amenity at the heart of the building, away from the traffic noise of surrounding streets. It was envisaged and designed as a space for coming and going, for occasional pause or conversation, and as an overspill from internal amenity areas on brighter days. Its 3-dimensional scale and character is reminiscent of many of the courtyards and lanes found in the City of London. The courtyard has been hard landscaped with a local granite, with significant ground cover planting, while clear stem trees with translucent foliage animate the natural light within the space.



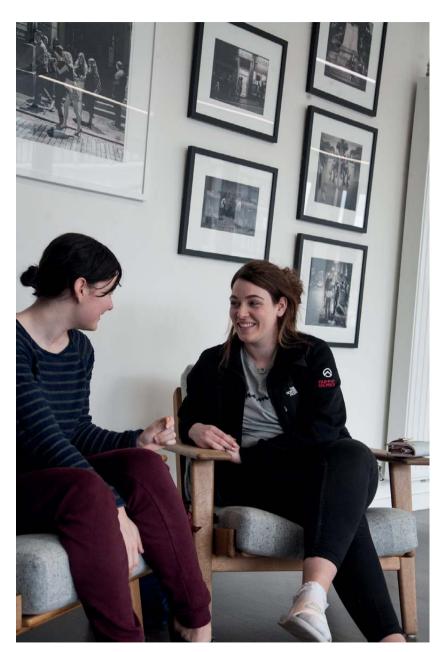
This landscaping adds significantly to its visual impact, both for ground floor users and for those overlooking it from the surrounding accommodation. We sought a degree of permeability through it, with a main entrance from Powis Place and a secondary entrance from Canal Road. Beneath it are parking spaces for 70 bicycles, including 8 motorcycle spaces, 20 cars and a fully accessible disability space. Within this area long term cycle storage is provided by covered "Sheffield" stands which have been carefully located so as to minimise intrusion to the student bedrooms.

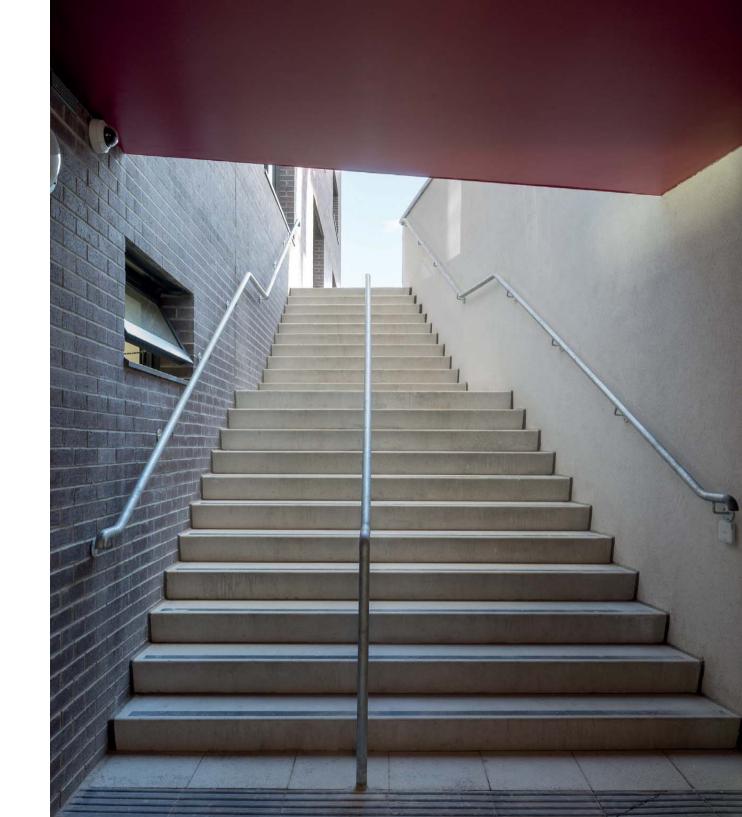
As the courtyard is in shaded light for part of each day, we have supplemented it by the creation of a communal roof terrace, at fifth floor level. This space is in direct sunlight for most of the day and benefits from an open aspect over the green corridor of the branch railway and the city beyond. An existing row of lime trees along the boundary on the adjacent site provides significant amenity for the neighbouring community centre while also forming a green backdrop of foliage for our development. Surface lighting is also a key part of the landscape design, used both to illuminate space and highlight features. Along with the light spill from accommodation windows, more structured uplighting within seating areas has been incorporated, creating an interesting mix of light and shadow during the evening.

The student rooms themselves are compact and efficient, providing a comfortable and stimulating base for life in the city. The surrounding streets are generally broad and open, with very little overshadowing by neighbouring buildings, and so all the rooms gain more than adequate amounts of natural light. This is further enhanced by the use of generous timber framed windows, which we decided to make significantly larger than the minimum regulatory requirements in order to promote a fresh and naturally bright internal environment. For those few rooms that are situated near pavement level, on Canal Road or Powis Place itself, we have planted raised beds in order to protect the privacy and enhance the outlook from these rooms.

Being in the city centre, the site's location does not allow for a large number of sustainable energy sources such as ground source, wind, biomass or solar systems. Despite this we have met the regulatory carbon reduction requirements by using a combination of gas fired boilers and gas fires CHP. A building management system has been installed to control and monitor all building services systems, with all accommodation areas having local heating controls - easily monitored by independent metering . This centralised system has also been designed in such a way to allow for possible future primary connection from a Local District Heating System, which we were informed was under discussion with the local Council.

We firmly believe that the site at 2 Powis Place realises a high level of architectural ambition and is forming a very positive contribution to the urban fabric of Aberdeen. We again had a very successful working relationship with Alumno from inception to the finishing touches, which has resulted in a building we are all very proud of.





# **Kimberley MacDonald**

Customer Service Advisor: Homes for students

I started here in 2017. Before that I worked in a letting agent. In my old job I didn't really see that many people. Being at reception you get to know the students and build up a relationship with them and that's what I probably enjoy most about it. I realise I like working with people.

You can see how they change after they get there, especially the first years, if they've previously stayed at home. You can see them trying to figure things out and developing a lot in the process. That's really interesting and sometimes quite touching. Sometimes they come and tell you their problems, so I learn a bit more about them. I always try to help, even if it's just as a listening ear. It's an honour really, as it means you've earned trust and respect.

There's a really diverse set of students. Many people come on recommendation, particularly the Chinese students; it's difficult for them to come and have a look beforehand. Some of them book a flat together and some opt to stay in flats with different nationalities.

So a lot of students say to people back home that this is the best place. It's one of the main reasons we get so many bookings. Especially with international students.

I'm here all the time. It's important to have a face for the students because they know they can always come to me, Joe, or Robyn. The parents' main concern is safety so we've got keycards to get into the building and CCTV. People can't get in without the right card and the doors close automatically, so there's no way for unauthorised, or uninvited people to walk in.

I'd never really thought about working in student accommodation before, but now I'm in the job I do really enjoy it. I think I would like to be an assistant property manager, or even move to a different site in the UK. Maybe Glasgow or Edinburgh. I know they'd be a lot busier and I'd enjoy that. I definitely want to stay in student accommodation.

I'm from close to Aberdeen so have some local knowledge. A girl came yesterday and asked me to recommend a hairdresser, so I hope it meant she thought mine was ok. Wherever I work I feel I should learn about the area, as my role is partly to make people feel comfortable to come and ask about anything, and encourage them to engage with the community.

# **Adam Morrow**

Assistant Property Manager

Before this I worked in retail management. I initially came here as a customer services advisor then got promoted to assistant property manager.

My colleagues and I share various tasks but viewings are one of my key roles and something I particularly enjoy. The students usually book viewings on the website, then arrive with whoever they want to. They sometimes bring friends, parents, or just come by themselves.

The first thing anyone sees, before the grand tour, is the reception area which is a very important first impression. I think the one here has got the balance just right. As a team, we really do take pride in Powis Place and that's very important. It's always much easier to work somewhere you really believe in.

We do some social media posts to students a couple of times a day. Let them know what's going on in the building, if there are any offers, promotions or events, and help everyone integrate with one another.

I get involved with planning who shares the flats, which is also an interesting challenge. Some people will request to be all male, or all female, or mixed. People sometimes book flats as groups of friends. We review all the applications, see what people want and try to accommodate everything as much as possible. It's really good to get people in together who don't know each other and watch friendships grow. We try to keep it by year, so if you're in first year you'll be in with first years, etc. If anybody isn't happy, or wants to change anything, whatever the issue, we try and do that for them.

They come not knowing anything about here, and leave having made friends and knowing and liking the city and the country. It's good to feel like part of that process. I want to stay in the sector and be a property manager., having various sites. This place has inspired me to do so. Given me real pride in the sector.

It's nice to see all sorts of people coming and getting the feel of the place and it being recognised the way it has been. The balance between private and communal space is well designed and the communal areas in particular look really good. The common room almost feels like a particularly stylish living room, with elements of a recreation space, a library and an art gallery.





#### **Megan Thomson**



From: Elgin

Studies: MA (Hons) Business Management

I'm from Elgin, well outside Elgin, pretty much a field outside Elgin, but Aberdeen is less than two hours away. When I lived in Edinburgh I thought I'm just staying somewhere for a bit, but I'm really settling in here.

Although my course is technically called business management, I'm doing finance as well. This ties in well, as my University has got particularly good links with the area I want to work in, so there are more opportunities than I would get in many other places. I think the finance industry will continue to grow in Aberdeen and given my experiences so far, I'd be happy to remain in the city long term.

I've already got a part-time job here, working in a shop in Union Street, so I'm learning to deal with all sorts of different people. Some easier than others, but I think that's making me a more rounded person.

A city is totally different from where I'm from way outside Elgin. That has its own charms, but I think the move has done me good and Powis Place has allowed me a safe way in.

The population here is really quite multi-cultural, so that broadens your knowledge and understanding of life. I think I'll travel more widely now, because I've met people from around the world and become intrigued.

It was an easy decision to choose Powis Place. I visited friends here last year and really liked it. I've been in different halls before. I was in halls in Edinburgh, then another place in Aberdeen, but these are by far the best halls I've ever been in.

My flatmates and I use the common room a lot. We study down here. It's such a good common room that it also functions as our library, especially during exam time when it's virtually impossible to get a seat in the University library. It's really peaceful, though sometimes it busies up at night when it's not exam time. Students have people over for parties, or just visiting family and friends. I've had my family over. My Dad's been up and my Mum. They think it's surprisingly posh and really appreciate the safety aspect. The price is also very competitive; compares really well with private flats, but much less hassle.

#### **Caitlin Clack**



From: St Andrews

Studies: MMA(Hons) Joint. German and French.

I could have gone to St Andrews University, and considered Glasgow and Edinburgh as well as Aberdeen, as I thought it was important to move away and get more independence though stay in Scotland to begin with. The

other Universities tend to major in one language, which would mean me dropping the other in third year, whereas at Aberdeen I can continue with both all the way, as a joint Honours, which suited me well.

There's a lot of old money in St Andrews. People in tweeds, pop-up organic markets all over the place, that sort of thing. It was a bit of a culture shock coming to a bigger city like Aberdeen, especially as I arrived when I was just seventeen, and the first time I'd ever been away from home. It can get quite lively here on a Friday night, but it's a lot of fun when you get used to it. I feel more freed up here than at home.

St Andrews is small enough that you know so many people. If you walk down the street you usually bump into about ten of them. Here there's a bit more anonymity. I miss St Andrews too though. It's a beautiful place. I have a dog back there and love going to the beach and meeting all the other dogs and dog people.

I have a very specific plan at the moment, though it might change. My course is five years and in the third year I go away to France and Germany. Afterwards, I plan to do a postgrad law degree, so that I can work for the EU. My goal is to be a barrister in the EU Law Courts. For this you need to be able to speak French and one other foreign language fluently, which is why I'm doing this course. I'm British, but my parents are from Australia and Malaysia, so I've been brought up with an international outlook.

I'm very happy here. I stay in the same flat as Megan, so it's the usual shenanigans and we've become good friends though being here. Powis Place is ten minutes away from Uni and ten minutes away from George Street, which is where the city centre starts. Ten minutes from the train and bus station too. So it's perfectly placed for Uni, going out at night and transport. The accommodation is about half an hour away from the Uni.

I've got a part time job, so gone from not knowing anything about clubs to working in clubs, sometimes at the bar, sometimes on the floor, sometimes in the cloakroom. You learn a bit of everything, see all aspects. At the end of the night, you can't get much sense from some people. You try to give them their coat and they ask for your phone number. Everyone's generally quite pleasant though.







#### **Pengyu Chen**



From: China (Guanzhou)

Studies: Finance & Business Management . BA (Hons)

My University back in China has an affiliation with Aberdeen University and Aberdeen also ranks in the top three for my course, so I just kind of landed here, not knowing what I'd find. I didn't even know much about the UK as a whole, never mind Aberdeen. I knew a little bit about London but that was about it. I'd previously

moved to the US, having been accepted for UCLA, but I wasn't sure if the major I was on was right for me, as it didn't quite seem to fit with my plans.

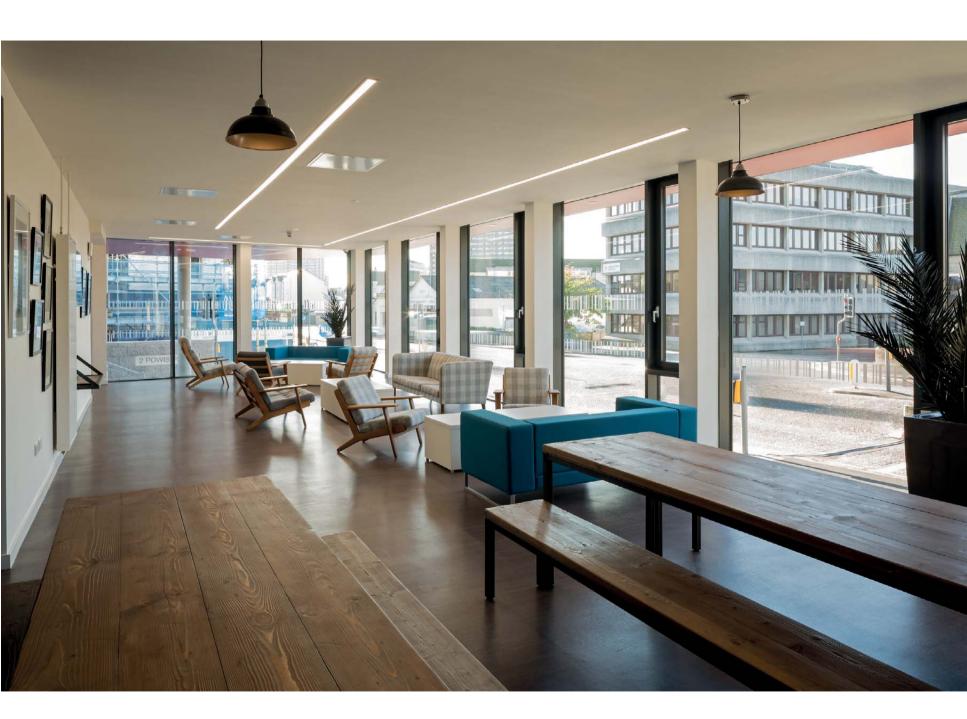
I predominantly wanted to be an entrepreneur, so went back to China to develop business interests with friends. It went well enough to start with, though I had conflicts with my parents, who wanted me to go back to University. I began to realise that they were correct and I simply didn't have enough knowledge to support my aims. So I swallowed my pride and realised I should go and learn some more stuff. What I'm learning here is already giving me really useful knowledge, which is a huge relief, as I can now see I wasn't completely wrong about my previous course and ended up taking the right direction, even if was all in rather a roundabout way.

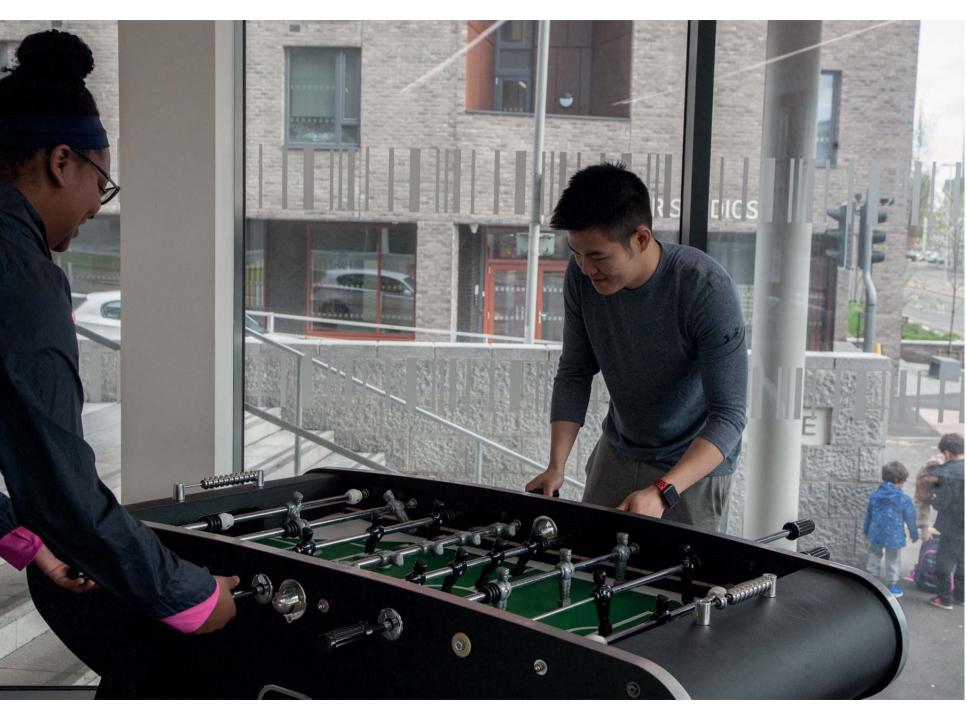
I've been here for two years. To begin with I wasn't a big fan of the weather. On a grey day, in a city built from grey granite everything seemed a bit grey. I tend to adapt to things pretty quickly though, so after a couple of months I started to fit in.

A major reason for that was finding the community here at Powis Place and the surrounding community in Aberdeen really kind and friendly. I didn't see some of the racist behaviour I witnessed elsewhere. Most people in the UK, especially Scotland, seem to be genuinely welcoming, embracing of all kinds of cultures. They seem more interested than suspicious.

I chose Powis place because a Chinese friend of mine was here before me and she highly recommended it. She's still here and will be next year as well. I've made new friends through staying here. None of my flatmates are from China, which is very interesting for me. Sometimes Chinese people are all in the same flats, but I find it pretty cool that I get to live with people from different cultural backgrounds. I would like to work internationally in the future. It's great to try and understand not just people from one place, but people from many different places.

I often use the common room for revision. I like it a lot. It's really well designed and decorated, with nice furniture and interesting artwork. It's quiet inside, but you see the motion of the street outside. The combination of all these factors just seems to work in harmony and make you feel good.





#### Rachel Ball



From: Bermuda

Studies: Physician Associate Studies (MSc)

I chose Georgia, Tennessee, in the United States for my undergraduate degree, studying Pre-Med and Health Science. I come from Hamilton. A close knit, family orientated community of about sixty thousand people on a very small island. My first big cultural shift was to come to a city. Any city.

My chosen field has been established the US for many years, so is well developed within the medical profession. We are trained to diagnose and manage patients, much the same as a junior doctor.

In the U.S. Physician Associates also conduct their own surgeries and run clinics. It's much newer in the UK, so we're still more heavily under the supervision of consultants. I've always been very interested in medicine, but the challenge comes when you want to build a career, but also want a family life. I wanted to work in an area I love, but have time for my family. This seemed like a career choice that could make that happen.

There was a list of all the places in the UK that do the course. My initial plan of action, was to apply for the first four universities and see how that went. I ended up getting accepted to all four, so I thought, I don't need to apply to any more.

Aberdeen had the resource for me to go snowboarding if I wanted so that made the decision very easy. Snowboarding is my new favourite sport. You have to have a hobby and Scotland has beautiful snowy mountains for me to indulge it. There's been lots of lovely snow this winter, but unfortunately I had so many classes and so much studying, I've not been able to take advantage very often. When I do I just love the extreme weather you get up a mountain, the thrill of tackling a hill and meeting other lovers of extreme conditions. The irony is, as soon as they find out where I'm from, they almost always ask about the Bermuda Triangle, which is actually a bit of a myth. Most people don't know this but at first it used to be called the Miami Triangle but Florida wanted to shift the attention away from them, so we got the blame for all disappearing boats and planes.

So far I've really liked UK cities. They have the bustling energy of the big American cities, but people are generally a lot more friendly.

I really like Inverness and I'm going there for a full month as soon as I can. I've also been to Glasgow and Edinburgh. They both seem really cool and I want to investigate more. I like the Midlands and London as well; though no mountains, so no snowboarding.

I chose Powis Place as I wanted somewhere close to Uni, but not too far from the city. Somewhere reasonably priced, where I could feel secure and have my own room.

The building is great. All the staff are really friendly. They actually take time to get to know you properly and we always have a laugh. I do a lot of studying in Powis Place. I enjoy the combination of my own space and the shared areas.

I would like to continue working in Aberdeen and really glad my course exists here. It's good to think that the city is at the forefront of new things.





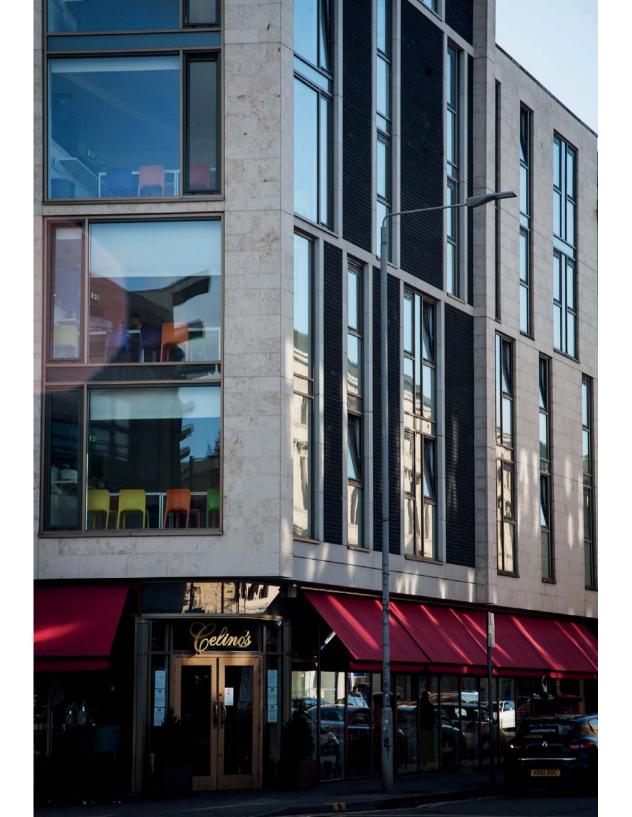












# Glasgow Hyndland House

Glasgow - Hyndland House

**Project** New build on brownfield site

**Location** Dumbarton Road, Glasgow

**Architects** Carson & Partners

Completed 2014



## Glasgow - Hyndland House





# lain Carson Architect. Hyndland House - Glasgow

The development of Hyndland House initially began with an introduction to the site, which we presented to Alumno as an opportunity to build very close to Glasgow University, right in the heart of Dumbarton Road. The site was very run down, housing a defunct, two storey electrical goods facility within a building that almost resembled an old electricity substation. It added nothing to its surroundings and was instead regarded by most people as a blot on the landscape.

Partick was originally a village until the Victorian tenemental infrastructure was then implemented along Dumbarton Road, up into Dowanhill and Hillhead, toward the University itself. The area then declined, particularly in the mid 20th century, to the point that it had become a kind of missing tooth. Since then the West End has evolved a lot with that particular part of Dumbarton Road and Hyndland Street becoming a sort of extension of Byres Road; very much an addition to what's perceived as West End, even one of its more exciting flag bearers. A multicultural, more bohemian atmosphere has been increasingly prevalent in recent decades, very much connected to university life, but still missing buildings that would further enhance that connectivity.

Parts of the West End are renowned for a lot of student HMOs within Victorian tenement buildings. Many of these were beautifully designed as guite grand flats, but badly neglected over many decades, particularly during the latter half of the twentieth century, being bought up by absentee landlords to rent out to mainly students and DHSS tenants.

One of the main reasons for promoting a development for students in this particular area was to take students out of HMOs, in existing tenement buildings, in an area which is in high demand for families and young professionals. This would only be possible if managed student accommodation was available at affordable rent.

Since the process of designing and building Hyndland House began other developments have appeared within the area. The difference was that David Campbell, at Alumno, was insistent that they get nominations with the university, which they successfully achieved, so more than half of the students living in the building are from Glasgow University on recommendation. The rent competes very well with other developments, and are lower than others in the vicinity, which tend to be much larger complexes with up to 600 student rooms a piece.

Hyndland House sits comfortably, within the tenemental structure,

overlooking a square, and is designed to be very much part of the community. It was basically a modern interpretation of tenement blocks. If you look down Hyndland Street you get these stepping tenements gently descending towards Dumbarton Road. Hyndland House is at a pivotal point at the bottom.

An increasing number of high quality independent businesses, including cafe restaurants, delicatessens, artisan shops and galleries have opened on the ground floors of these stepping tenements, so the building was seen as a continuation of that. It was clear we had to develop a mixeduse proposal with a large retail unit. This is unusual for Dumbarton Road because a lot of the retail units tend to be very narrow and deep. This was an opportunity to create a landmark in terms of both accommodation and the best of retail. This big unit is operating as a very successful Italian cafe, deli and restaurant. This is a high quality family-run business adding to the city square surrounding Mansfield Park.

The building as a whole mirrors the surroundings, whilst having a form and modernity of its own. It links in to the tenements and the predominantly traditional Glasgow Victoriana around it. In materiality terms we introduced a stone facade at nearly the same price as a brick facade. The nice thing about the predominantly Victorian West End is that you get the blonde and the red sandstone and we wanted to mix those elements.

We also have the celebration of the bay window and the living rooms. There is a kind of hierarchy within tenemental structures, so you can read where there are living rooms and where there are more intimate spaces like bedrooms. So there was a language to the building. We were insistent on having an interesting active corner, shared by the students within and addressing the two main vistas, one looking east along Dumbarton Road and one looking up Hyndland Street. It also gave activity that could be seen within; especially at night when one travels along Dumbarton Road or down Hyndland Street.

I think that corner has been a very important part of the design, also the stepping of the building down towards the lower, smaller scale, houses toward the rear; at the south of the site. We've been very careful to be sensitive towards this residential area at the back of the building and worked very closely with the planners to achieve that acceptable stepping solution which also allows views towards the south as you climb up the building.







#### Glasgow - Hyndland House

We also saw those glazed corridors as viewing positions through the building, likened to the hen run in Charles Rennie Mackintosh's Art School. You do get some superb views from corridors.

The main entrance is at Keith Street rather than place it on the main busy thoroughfare. We also created a courtyard which the students could share with one another, with allotment-type bedding, and that gives a nice aspect from the rooms that look onto it at the back. At the front there are stunning views from the shared kitchen and living rooms across the topography of the West End. One of the things that we also looked at, rather than creating a monolithic block, was dividing the blocks up in not only stepping forms but what we called open and closed boxes.

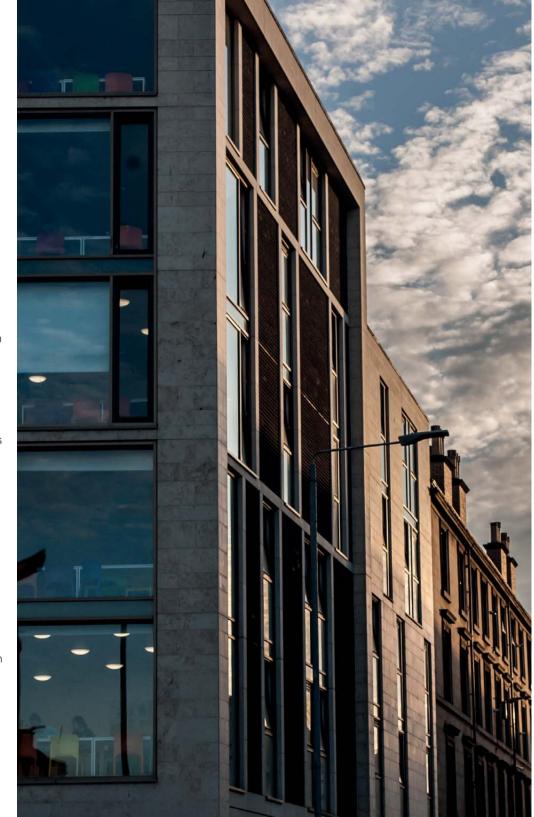
The ends are like skeletal frames in-filled with brick, or you get the side of the box, which is solid stone. You get this change, as you move round the building, of open and closed situations. The colour change was directly related to the colour changes that you get within blocks of the tenements but reinterpreting that in a more modern idiom. We wanted longevity as part of the skyline.

Throughout every stage of the process we worked very closely with Alumno. Alumno also worked closely with the University to establish what kind of clusters the University would prefer to have their students living in. Alumno very much tried to work out what was really best for the University, and best for the students as well as the local environment and community.

We were able to create varying sizes of clusters throughout the building, sharing a common space which has a kitchen, dining and seating area. These vary in size, from ten, to five, then more intimate clusters of three, as well as studio accommodation with everything self contained. There's something to fulfil every need and every age group and culture. Some students like to be in a larger cluster and some prefer a smaller. Also, within the building we colour coded the clusters so there was a bit of fun.

We made sure that every cluster has at least one area where the students benefit from a view and a sense of connecting with the city that surrounds them. At the ground floor we created a large common room overlooking the gardens.

The stonework works beautifully and will continue to wear well over time. It's very robust. Unlike many modern buildings the patina is actually improving and that's something we've taken very much into consideration for the longevity; having worked with housing



associations and taken a similar approach. Alumno are committed to long term sustainability and the importance of using robust materials, that have low maintenance issues, but also look good and age well. It's very much about placemaking and adding value to the city.

The combination of the glazing and the stone comes to life in different ways at different times of the day. In the evening, it fits with the profile of the buildings, which are silhouetted as the sun sets. In the morning you can see the tenements opposite reflected in the large glazed area linking to the stone.

It had to be quite a strong design in the sense that it's working within a Victorian tenemental structure. They're very large, ornate, solid, grand buildings built by different developers.

It follows a theme but brings it into the 21st century.

There was a very strong ethos from Alumno's side to create a building which was environmentally eco-friendly, so we chose specific elements such as the green roofs and the photovoltaic cells.

Alumno also wanted to incorporate very efficient heating systems within the building, heat reclaim systems as well to reduce the running costs, and then of course good insulation and good sound insulation – to create an eco-friendly environment for the students to live in.

There were also some interesting structural challenges. An example being that we had to work very closely with Strathclyde Passenger Transport because the third oldest underground in the world basically goes down the middle of Dumbarton Road parallel to the building. We had to monitor the tunnels 24/7 as the structural engineers came up with a suitable solution, so we could build the foundations for the building in a way that didn't interfere with the tunnel structures. Also, in the process of clearing the site, we found a mine shaft which had to be carefully grouted and filled with concrete.

The living spaces are specifically placed to read with some of the views, taking on board the best views from the building. We also spread them throughout the building so they're not all just at one end. In the ground floor we've got higher ceilings. That was to do with mainly creating a kind of plinth base along the base of the building which then has the rest of the building hanging above.

It also gives it a sense of grandeur as you enter into the building.

The fixtures, fittings and art works were high quality, with stylish, but robust, mid-century Danish furniture, which has been revamped and re-

upholstered. We installed low energy lamps throughout, so there is LED lighting which, again, reduces the running costs. We are able to offer the students a very good value accommodation but a sense of luxury and design.

We wanted to give the students floor to ceiling windows as well. This helps create a feeling of more space within rooms, and also engages with the community, rather than being hidden away. This is integral to the students getting to know the city they're studying in; something they can take on through all their lives. A view encourages the students to go and interact with the outside world.

#### Glasgow - Hyndland House

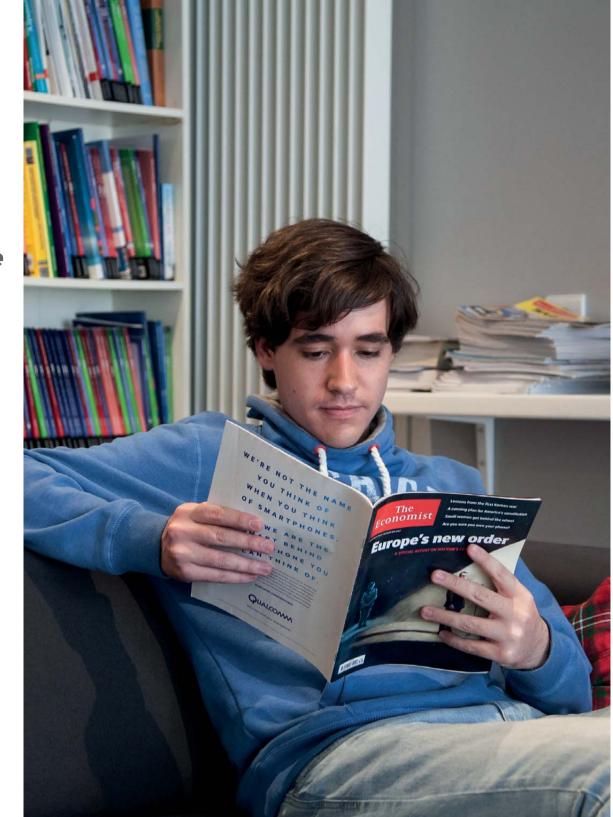






Glasgow - Hyndland House

66 Many of the students
99 are newly living away
from home. Some have
just turned eighteen
and are embarking on
not only a new course,
but also a new city,
a new country and
culture



## Kayleigh Stevenson Scheme Manager



I'm originally from West London, but I did both my Undergraduate and Masters in social anthropology at Queens University, Belfast. I wanted a different experience from where I'd grown up. Sometimes it's too easy to get caught up in the whole London thing and you don't venture outside it enough.

Throughout my studies I had a part time job in a hotel. It was nice to meet people from all round the world and showcase the Belfast I had discovered, so

I kind of developed a bit of a passion for hospitality. When I finished my Masters I was offered a full time position.

I got a job opportunity with Prada, in Glasgow, so moved here; but after a few years I decided this wasn't the right direction for me, but I loved Glasgow. So I left the job, but stayed in the city, then decided on a career in student accommodation and I truly think it would be hard to find a better example of it than Hyndland House. I love my job. The core of this work is people and the way they function and communicate, so I feel I can apply my degrees in practice.

Many of the students are newly living away from home. Some have just turned eighteen and are embarking on not only a new course, but also a new city, a new country and culture, whilst studying in their second, third or even fourth language. There's a lot of pressure on them, but we don't want them to be frightened of the outside world as that is part of their broader education. Glasgow should be the foundation of their experience; with the West End and Partick in particular as their immediate community.

There are an increasing number of exciting new restaurants, great little cafes, boutique shops, yummy mummies, pop up galleries and hipsters patrolling around here. That used to be more of a Byres Road thing, but it seems to have filtered into Partick, Yorkhill and Finnieston. Gentrification is a good thing in some ways, but this is a still where a lot of proud hard working people have been born and brought up, when things were very different, so any changes have to respect that and them. We don't want to be a seen as a hindrance to the area but an asset.

I decided to go and visit local businesses to create a loyalty scheme specifically for Hyndland House students. So we now have a loyalty discount card called 'Unlock the Neighbourhood.' It's a way to encourage the students to live like locals in an established residential area, adding to the local economy, and increasingly cosmopolitan feel of the

neighbourhood. Sharing this building with a big family run cafe, deli and restaurant like Celino's really helps make the students and local residents feel like we are all neighbours, on a traditional High Street, where I, for one, can go and get my nails done, my shoes mended, a pound of mince and my eyebrows waxed all in one lunch break.

Partick Housing Association are going to host an event called 'Partickfest' and some of our students will join in, cooking dishes from all round the world, using food as a way of people learning about each other's cultures. We also have international film nights with the same idea in mind.

Our wonderful customer service advisor Michelle is born and bred in Orkney, but her Mum is Indonesian. She's got that bilingual cultural awareness, which comes with identifying as dual nationality, so the foreign students really take to her and she really relates to them. We take safety and pastoral care very seriously and the design and layout helps. The positioning of the reception room means we have to interact with the students every day. Some of their parents have invested a lot into this education, so the less confident students can develop a terrible fear of failure. We have to look out for that and help to de-stress them. Our housekeepers are also on the front line and report back if they're worried about anyone.

It's a great location. Glasgow Uni is on the doorstep, you can be in the city centre in ten minutes, with Edinburgh only three quarters of an hour away. If you come from a huge metropolis like Beijing, or even London, you couldn't get to another area in that time, never mind another city, so some of the students treat Edinburgh almost like an extension of Glasgow.

We've had such great bunches of students since we opened and are always fully booked. Last year we had a 43% returner rate, wanting to stay on, which is a real testament to the place. Engaging with the city is designed into the building and affects the way we operate it. We don't want to be like a huge isolated bubble, with every service provided, where the students are all contained inside. If they aren't in accommodation that encourages them to engage with the outside world they miss out on a lot and the community misses out on what they can bring to it.

#### Glasgow - Hyndland House

#### **Luke Fouracre**

From: Stirlingshire

Studies: Joint BA (Hons) in History and Politics. Glasgow Caledonian University

Il come from a small village, though not so isolated that going to Glasgow or Edinburgh is some big crazy thing. I weighed up options in Aberdeen, Dundee and Edinburgh, but always preferred Glasgow, so was pleased to find an excellent course. Glasgow is probably the only metropolis in Scotland that has a real city feel.

I like the subway and the grid system street plan almost gives it the essence of Americana. I also like the attitude - shoot from the hip, but genuinely friendly, if you're not arrogant. It's a very sociable place.

It's also deservedly a Unesco City of Music. I'm a big music lover and it's bursting with live music, from local pubs and cafes all the way up to huge arenas and everything in between. There's stuff happening right here on the doorstep and not just rock. The Three Judges a few doors along do regular live jazz, the Lismore diagonally across the road has loads of folk players. There are numerous festivals and events, but music happens in Glasgow all year round, pretty much anywhere you can set up a band, or pick up a guitar. At the moment I'm into New York No Wave and even some contemporary classical. There's not much you can't find here in some shape or form.

I found Hyndland House on an email list from the University. I've seen a lot of other halls and some do feel a bit like coffin rooms, lost in huge complexes. It's nice and light here, not too big and totally part of Partick and the square. One of my flatmates, Maddie, works in Celino's restaurant. Not much of a commute as it's in the same building.

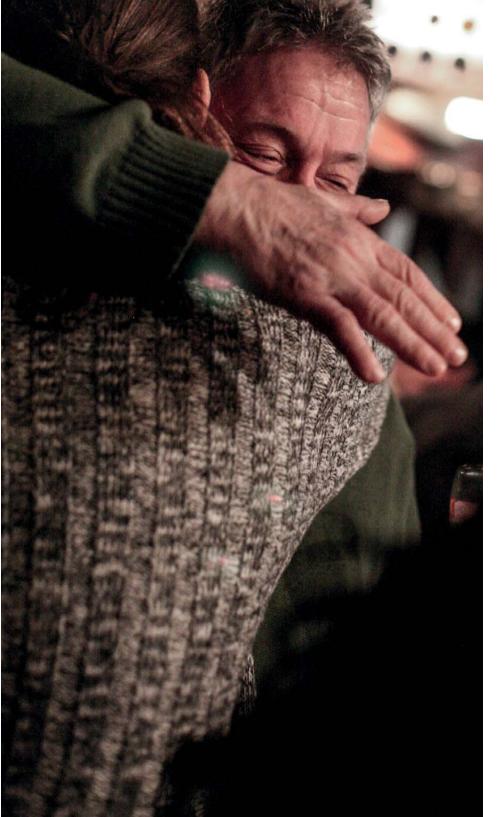
There's a really sociable feeling in our flat. We've a five/four split, female to male, from India, Bangladesh, Finland, China and Greece. We sometimes do a big shared meal and movie nights at the weekend and 'pre's' before going out. It's a great kitchen and living room area. You can sit back, day or night and look down at the world below.

Everyone has their own time slots in our kitchen, like a self managing system. If a bit of a queue occurs, people are happy to watch TV or just wait around, interact and catch up on each other's days.

I've long been fascinated by Social Science, enjoying books about politics, history and all that kind of stuff since childhood, so my degree seems like a natural fit and the environment I'm in is a huge cultural learning curve in itself.

I would like to go into the Civil Service and work in the Scottish Government. I may also do a post grad later on, but think I would like some job experience first.





#### 'Ong' Tayut Tannopparat

From: Thailand

Studies: International Commercial Law

This is the first time I've lived abroad. I wanted to study law in the UK and Glasgow University is internationally high ranking. Hyndland House was recommended to me, as the best quality, location and value for money. I'm under pressure to learn a lot in a short space of time, so student accommodation makes sense, as it allows me to focus on my work when I need to and experience the city when I can, without unnecessary pressures.

When I do get free time, I particularly enjoy socialising in restaurants with friends, where we can eat well and soak up the atmosphere. I'm obviously very familiar with Thai food, but love trying new flavours from anywhere in the world. It certainly doesn't need to be anything fancy, as long as it's tasty. There are lots of great burger places about town and believe me, we've done our research.

I'd never cooked before I came to Glasgow, but after a few weeks I was inspired by my flatmates when sharing the kitchen, so thought I should learn and I've really got into it. As well as the regular supermarkets there are plenty of local independent shops. Good fishmongers (very important for Asian people) butchers, grocers and specialist Asian shops, so I can get everything I need ingredient wise, for any kind of food I want to try and experiment with.

I also find it quite therapeutic to go to the common room and paint. It's quietly sociable, so ideal for when I want to unwind a bit with friends from other flats, like 'Pong.' I painted miniatures back home, so found a shop in Glasgow where I can buy the castings, paints and brushes. I then try to make them live up to the best I've seen. I've had a great experience in Scotland, so decided to stay here for my next degree. After that I plan to settle back in Thailand.

#### Glasgow - Hyndland House

#### **Pablo Arteaga**



From: Tenerife

Studies: BSc, Software Engineering.

I'm from Tenerife, which is such a popular tourist destination that I constantly come across people who seem to know it better than I do and tell me about tiny villages, that I've never even heard of.

I grew up in Santa Cruz, the capital, in the north of the island. Climate wise, it's a massive change coming from where I do. Somehow, even though the climate is different, the open character of Glaswegians is strangely similar to us Spaniards. Of course, here in the West End, it's so cosmopolitan, you start exchanging ideas with people from all backgrounds. You know what they say, 'People Make Glasgow' and it's actually true. My cousin was studying in Scotland before me and I saw that Glasgow University was pretty much at the top of the rankings for my course, so here I came. Another cousin is also here now, so coming to Scotland to study has evolved into a bit of a family thing.

I'd been living in Glasgow, so knew the area around the University. I'd seen Hyndland House on my wanderings and was really drawn to it. I was inspired by its modernity, particularly all the massive corner windows. I wanted to be in those rooms looking back out, so I came here to do a viewing and it lived up to my expectations. It's absolutely stunning when you walk in and see a wall of windows, then the panoramic view of the gothic University tower, the park in the middle of the square and all the old sandstone buildings. You don't feel removed from the world here. It's like you're in the centre of everything.

I actually love Glasgow. There's something about it that just draws you in. I go for walks around the Clyde, past the BBC, the Hydro, under all the bridges, from the West End, to the East, through the city centre.

I really like the West End parks as well. Last winter Northern Europe had particularly cold weather. One day there was so much snow I decided to go for a walk in Kelvingrove Park. In hindsight this was not perhaps the best of ideas, as I came back looking like a snowman. We are also surrounded by breathtakingly beautiful countryside. You go from the biggest city in Scotland and in half an hour all you can see are lochs and mountains.

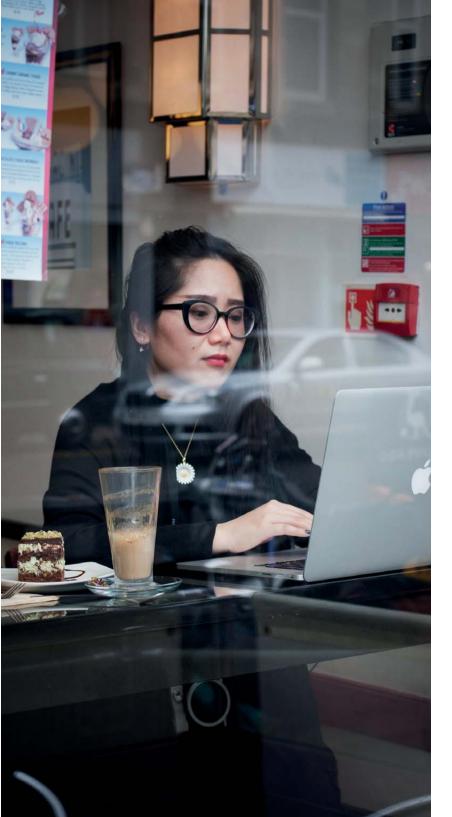
I come from a place that's geographically Africa and is so near the equator there are no real seasons. Experiencing seasons was a bit of a shock at first. Before I moved here, I naively asked in every clothes shop in Santa Cruz for a really warm jacket for cold weather. They said, "Did you notice you're in Tenerife in August?"

I really like to feel the seasons though and the way nature changes. If you want to go out into a beautiful winter wonderland, you just put on the right clothes and you're fine. If it's thirty degrees there's only so much you can take off! I think really hot weather is nice for a month. After that you get fed up of it. I like it when it's cold in the winter and I love walking in the snow. I might be a weird Spanish person.

I'm graduating in June and been offered a job as a software engineer in London. This degree has been very useful to me, though I'll miss living in Glasgow. I knew I wanted to stay in the UK after my experiences here and at least I can easily hop on a train and visit.

Glasgow University has been good to me. I got a lot of support from the academic staff. The staff in Hyndland House are excellent too. I don't know how they do it, but if I tell them when my exams are, they somehow remember and check on how things are going. It really feels like they care. Building wise it speaks for itself. It's got everything I need and more. I'm afraid I'm not much of a cook, but there are loads of good restaurants and cafes around offering good student deals. My friends and I have gone to some of them so often they know us by name.

It's great having Celino's right here. Really good value Italian food, you can taste is all freshly made. Now that it's been really warm and sunny for the last month I've become addicted to their ice cream.



#### Pong (Ekburut Tangmankhongsirikun)



From: Thailand

**Studies:** Coropate and Finance Law..

I'm also taking Law and wanted to study in the UK. A slightly different course to 'Ong,' but still related, so we study one of the four main disciplines together. I plan to eventually become a judge back in Thailand and you have to have at least two masters

degrees to be considered. In the UK it's possible to achieve this in less time, but with good quality education and globally respected qualifications.

I came to Scotland, as I love hiking and Scotland has great mountains and stunning countryside. Funnily enough, I sort of ended up in Glasgow by accident, as I thought I was going to Dundee, but my agent applied for Glasgow without me realising; as it was rated better for my course.

It's all worked out very well though. As well as hiking, my other big passion is music, especially indie rock. I just love what's been coming out of British cities and Glasgow has some really good bands and a great scene. It's so welcoming too. The audiences are wonderful and really mixed. At last year's TRNSMT Festival I found myself standing beside a couple who must have been over seventy and they were still jumping around. In Thailand most people stop taking an interest in rock music after they hit thirty but here people in their sixties and seventies are still jumping. That's inspirational.

The last time I went to the ABC in Sauchiehall Street I was the only foreign person in a crowd of local fans. We didn't know each other at all, but when the music started we were all jumping together, hugging and smiling, like a big family. I felt so welcomed I was really moved. That's something I'll always remember about Glasgow. That warm welcome.

It's also quick and easy to take a train to other cities around the UK and see bands. I have to study hard but soak up as much music as I can. I love the culture here in general and enjoy Hyndland House, though everyone in my flat seems to be such a keen cook it sometimes takes a little while for me to get enough space to make my dinner. It's ok though as I can socialise while I wait. I found Hyndland House through just wandering around the West End. I saw it and I liked the look and feel of it.

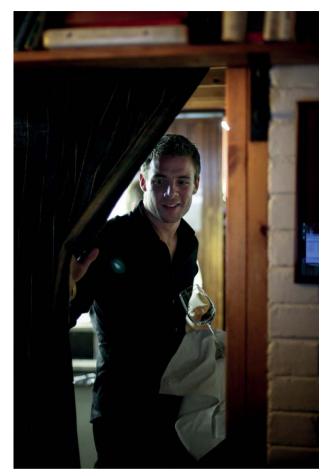
As far as the hiking is concerned, I particularly like going up to Glencoe, with a group of hiker friends, who I've met here but come from all sorts of places. For a local hike I just take the local train from Partick out to Balloch and start hiking from Loch Lomond.

#### Glasgow - Hyndland House



















**Project** New build and renovation of listed building to café

and yoga studio

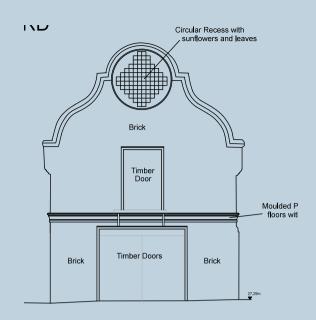
**Location** All Saints Green, Norwich

**Architects** Carson & Partners

**Completed** 2015 for Norwich University of the Arts











# lain Carson Architect. Norwich - All Saints Green

The University of the Arts, being within the city centre itself, was well placed to have student accommodation adjacent, or within walking distance, to some of the campus buildings and facilities. Reports show having students within the city centre brings a lot to the economy; in this particular case it was calculated that All Saints Green could generate over £1.5 million per annum. It is also well serviced by buses as it is literally next to the main bus station in Norwich, which services the whole of the region.

It was a significant site in an underused part of central Norwich that had been empty for decades - having been blighted by the Second World War and never recovered - which still had patches of undeveloped wasteland. The Council realised that there was an opportunity to bring accommodation into the area. It had been one of the principal gateways to the city centre called Brazen Gate. So there was an opportunity to bring life and culture, in terms of bringing people back into the city centre, in an area which is pretty much dormant at night apart from the buses going in and out of the station. There was also an opportunity to actually bring something of significance and quality. A new statement that paves the way and helps encourage new development - maybe puts a benchmark into the quality of new development within and around the city centre.

Every project we do is referenced to not only its immediate surroundings but to a wider context. The centre of Norwich is basically built on a hill, which is unusual in Norfolk, but there were good reasons, with the wall and the river forming their own defence around the city centre. What's interesting about the topography of Norwich is that it informs the way a lot of the buildings nestle next to one another; you get long terraces of varying heights and widths of buildings. So you have residential next to retail, residential above retail, and also commercial, all nestling side-byside.

This new gateway to the city centre is mainly used by people coming from all over the region and beyond on buses. So we saw an opportunity to create a building which celebrated arrival to Norwich itself. Rather than actually have the highest point at the corner of the building we decided to move it somewhat down the hill towards the bus station. Then, within the bus station looking toward the building, one can see the entrance which is actually crowned by a lighthouse.

There is a funny story about how the lighthouse came about. One of my local pubs is called The Myddleton Arms, which is named after a

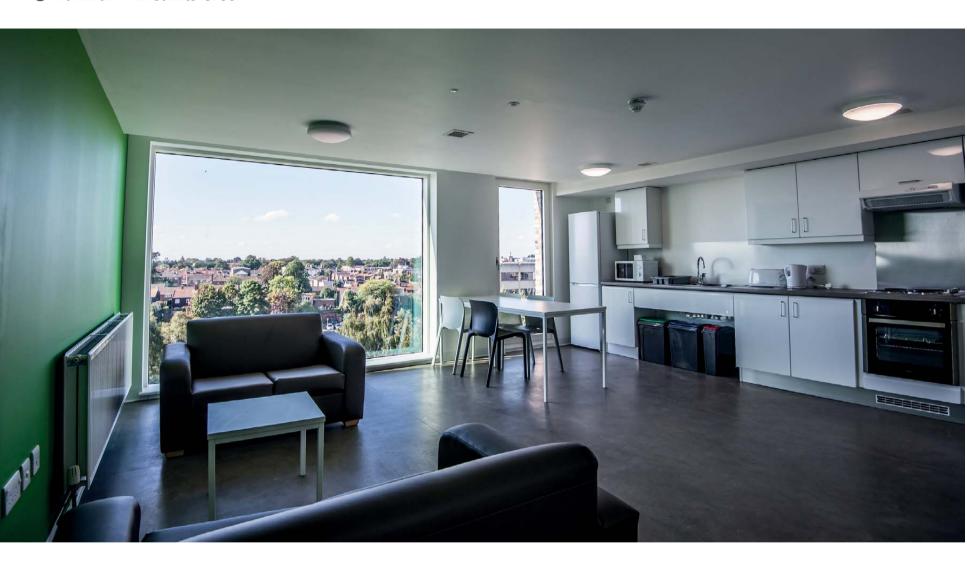
guy called Hugh Myddleton who actually built London's first private water supply after the plague. The new pub landlords found this out and announced (on the very night that Alumno gave us the All Saints Green job to look at) that they were starting Islington's first Yacht Club, and were going to have a regatta on a two-metre-wide bit of water, with radio-controlled boats. I was sitting to one side, with my sketch book, and inspired by all this talk I decided to create Norwich's first lighthouse. So the highest point is actually crowned with a glass box which glows at night as a beacon and magnet to the centre of activity - at the foot of which is the entrance to the student accommodation. The lighthouse is the main point of focus but also from it you get 360 degree views. It's an addition to the cityscape and its skyline, which was quite important to us – to have something that added to the skyline, as do the church spires and any civic buildings like the town hall.

For the form of the building we started off with an L-shaped block, just forming a corner. We then stepped the block down towards the YMCA, the lower building toward the east - toward the city. Behind the building we have an oasis, a hidden garden, which is used by the students and has a good amount of light at all times of the day. We worked closely with Clarke Associates and Conisbee - the engineers - to create basically a SuDS (Sustainable Drainage System) system for rain collection.

All these decisions were made in conjunction with Alumno. The green roofs are a reflection of what Alumno wanted us to pursue in terms of a green - 'eco' - building. When looking down on the step roofs we didn't really want to see lots of plant – in terms of mechanical plant – and it is far nicer to look at organic material growing on the roofs.

Rather than keeping it aligned throughout we decided to step the facade. This is predominately reflecting the kind of urban feel you get when walking down the streets, certainly in the older parts of Norwich, where the buildings step in and out, and even cantilever over the street. It helped to break down the overall form of the building which, predominately in functional aspect, is lateral - in terms of the way that the rooms are set out. What we wanted to emphasise was more the verticality, and break down the scale as well. In doing that we looked at the window types and, rather than stacking the common rooms, it was better to have them at varying places throughout the whole facade. Though guite abstract, it was a definite take on the flint walls you get in Norwich, Norfolk and beyond, where the sun actually catches – when it's out – the





glint of the flint randomly across the walls. One of the things we wanted to do with these 'random windows' was have a hierarchy in terms of the window structure. The small slotted windows are the more intimate spaces but the larger windows, or the square windows, are the common rooms.

People don't really look at a building straight on; they look at it from an angle at all times. So we made the glass of the larger windows flush with the facade of the building itself – so when you look at the building from various angles you see the light catching the reflection of these elements, so it enhances the 'flint effect.'

We went through several hundred types of bricks with an enthusiastic conservation officer. He was very keen – as we were too – to find a brick which suited the character of the area. So within Norwich you get the greys, the reds, and the kind of blonde sandstone. We looked at getting a colour palette which helped to combine all of those into one brick.

Similarly to Glasgow, and Aberdeen, we've taken the older structures and worked hard to find a material that would be sympathetic to the original materials with which the cities were traditionally built. We sourced a brick which reflects not only buildings of the past but is sympathetic to some of the ones in the immediate context, which are more modern. It's been successful and the feedback from the Council, and The Norwich Society, has been that people really warm to the brick.

The interior feel is also very important. It should be welcoming, but also encourage the students to look beyond. Martin Gray was commissioned to work on a series of photographs, and decided to make a 'day in the life' series reflecting the surrounding area, then integrated the artwork within the building. One of the most successful places was in the gallery, as you enter in, and you look up and there are these bold colour images. The images within the entrance foyer space lead the eye through to the oasis, or the landscape behind. The integration of quality refurbished Danish furniture to the common area, as well as curated quality original artwork, successfully completes the interior space and becomes an intrinsic part of the overall design. It feels right, doesn't shout too loud, but has warmth, humour, and inspiration.

There was a lot of consultation between Alumno and the University of the Arts as to their requirements throughout the building. In addition there was consultation with local councillors, the public, Planning Committee and the planners, conservationists, and The Norwich Society. Norwich BID - which is the business organisation within the city – were interested too, and encouraged by the fact that the students were going to come in and spend their money within the local area. John Lewis as well and the people there were also consulted and, interestingly enough, I was

asked by one member of John Lewis whether having these large windows would require blinds or curtains etc. I responded that we'd heard that the Bedding department would do well and if maybe you're from the Blinds department, I can assure you that maybe you also will benefit from the building of this building.

Alumno struck up an interesting relationship with Brompton Bike Hire to create a Brompton 'Dock' point where you can rent bicycles. It's not just for the students, it's also for locals and people arriving in the city centre, and is located next to the bus station.

What has become the café, gallery, and yoga studio was all part of the site that was owned by the city council. Alumno could have just taken the corner site, but they fell in love with this particular building and saw an opportunity to restore it. It used to be an old dairy and, in its time, was also a dance studio where famous dancers trained. Water had managed to get in and the interiors of the building had been quite badly damaged.

The opportunity was here to restore a building that would create a sense of community, and also enhance the setting and entry from All Saints Green. When walking down All Saints Green, the pavement felt very narrow – you wanted to run past it because of the cars screeching up and down. Here was a chance to do some placemaking. To create a space which not only gave the hidden building an enhanced setting, but actually created a bit of relief as you walked along the All Saints Green – a public open space where, in summer, people could sit out and have a sandwich or read a book.

The yoga studio fell in love with the building and saw an opportunity - which was quite in tune with the previous use - to create a space of contemplation for yoga, but also a community café. The café has become very well used by locals and visitors alike, and students too. It is a place where local artists and students can exhibit some of their artwork. So it's encouraging people to mix and is giving something to an area which was a forgotten part of central Norwich; it was on the Buildings At Risk register. The work Alumno, and ourselves, did was acknowledged by The Norwich Society with an award for renovation of an existing building.

### Graheme Sheeran City Manager



I'm originally from London but came here in 2000. I've fallen in love with Norwich and want to pass that on. I say to the students that it's one of the UK's best kept secrets. All Saints Green is less multinational and multicultural than some halls, so even though there is a multinational element, many of the students are from other parts of the UK. I can help them to settle and give them the benefit of my knowledge about the community.

Once you've got the Norfolk bug that's it, it will get you. What is guite nice is that everyone kind of knows everyone and everything, but not so it's too in your pocket, if that makes sense? It's a very welcoming city with a guirky character. When people found out about All Saints Green being built there was a lot of buzz about it. If I meet people that don't really know me and they say, 'What do I do?' and I say, 'I manage the student accommodation down by the bus station.' They know it and smile.

Alumno have also restored the beautiful but derelict old building behind, which has also played a big part in regenerating this area. There's a cafe which sells really good healthy food, a gallery space and a yoga studio up top. There's nothing else like it in Norwich and it's really popular. They've actually brought people to a part of Norwich where people wouldn't have previously come. It was sort of a dead bit of the city centre. As I said, the thing about Norwich is that everyone kind of knows each other. So if things are good you'll be respected and popular, but if you get something wrong the word will travel fast.

We are the official Norwich University of the Arts accommodation for their first years. So we've got a really good working relationship with the University and direct links regarding how the students are doing.

Some students prefer smaller flat clusters, some prefer larger ones - but they're all very well lit, nice and spacious. The corridors are nice and open too. I've been to some student accommodation that is really narrow but they've been really generous with the width of them.

When it comes towards exam time the common rooms get particularly busy. The lighthouse common room at the top is a great space with the high ceiling, panoramic views and the little library. The library is actually created from the staff here. We've got a few family members that work in the local library; when they have their annual regeneration of books we started building from that.

There are big tables and you can just lay things out and have group meetings. There are also beautiful, comfortable, easy chairs and sofas. The artwork also works well. It really helps add to the atmosphere. The photographs draw your eye in. Some students have come and said they can relate to them. Some even recognise specific people, as well as places.

All the students here are first years, but it's not like they're all the same age. For a lot of them though it's their first step from being with their parents. This is kind of learning curve for them; an entry way in.

The staff's ethos is that we are working in their home. When they come and talk to us about any kind of issues, we really try to help. It really does vary, because they've come from different backgrounds and are at different stages in their journey. We've had students that have arrived that haven't known how to use a washing machine or haven't known basic cooking skills. We have to be really mindful of that because it can occasionally cause an issue if you have a student that might say, 'Dave never washes up!' Well, Dave might not have been shown how to wash up before.

Norwich Council is really progressive with encouraging students to live in areas of the city centre that benefit. They are trying to manage student accommodation in a way which improves the life for the whole city, helping to reduce the numbers of students in residential areas - and the very high proportion of absentee landlord HMO properties - and turn them back into balanced communities with more working people and families.

#### **Cerys Wise**



From: Kent

**Studies:** Illustration

I've applied for the Erasmus student exchange programme to study abroad for one academic year and hope to be accepted by the Vilnius Academy of Arts in Lithuania. It has a strong reputation and would allow me to continue

with printmaking, but also experiment with ceramics; an area I'd like to develop. Illustration is anything that conveys a narrative, so you can pretty much do anything as long as you achieve that.

It will be a lot to take on but definitely worth it, as I want to immerse myself in a new culture as well as develop my practice. I'm also interested in history and methodology. Primarily I want to experiment and see where it takes me. Who knows? I might end up making mugs.

I came to All Saints Green straight from living at home and doubt I would have risked going for Erasmus if I hadn't come here and had such a good experience. I like discovering Norwich with friends like Isabelle, from our flat. It's a beautiful historic city, with loads of great independent shops, cafes, parks and gardens.

I'm really interested in horticulture and botanical illustration, and did a lot before this course. Trying to incorporate it into specific briefs is quite difficult, but I enjoy the challenge.

#### **Trudy Turner**



From: Lincolnshire
Studies: Illustration

The feedback I get on this course is excellent, so criticism is very constructive, especially when my work doesn't quite convey what I want it to say. The briefs are usually different to anything I would have given myself; I feel

stretched, inspired and engaged within a collaborative process.

When you're inexperienced and really only seeking opinions from friends, or people you meet randomly online, it can make progress a lot harder. I'm a mature student, so believe me, I've been there. I can already see how I can develop a career in a much less naive and haphazard way than before; when I balanced a job in a café with attempts to build a folio and sell my work online, or at market stalls.

We are also starting to learn more about the wider creative industries. How you can get commissions and how to deal with them if you get them. Developing your craft, then knowing your own worth. I love ink and watercolour, but since coming here I've really got into lino and mono printing.

I live in a flat of eleven students, which has worked out remarkably well. Seven of us are going to rent a big private house together after this academic year, and we're taking on two from the floor below. We're all really close friends now and know what it's like to live with each other, so feel ready for the next adventure.

#### **Charlotte Rudd**

From: Linconshire

Studies: Photograhy BA (Hons)

I'm a country girl, from a village in the middle of nowhere, so I'm more used to horses and dogs than city

I always wanted to go into the army, because my Dad was in the army, but I had to have an operation on my spine so couldn't pass the medical. When I was choosing my A-levels my Mum said, 'Just focus on anything you enjoy.' So I did English Literature, Sports Science, Musical Theatre and Photography. I never thought I would go to university until I took Photography, then I thought, actually I really like this.

I'm particularly interested in travel photography. I lived in Zambia for a couple of months before I came to Uni, which has inspired me to travel as widely as possible, documenting landscapes and cultures. This course covers a wide range of disciplines and the tutors are very good. Every brief includes an essay - contextualising our research and practice.

I live a couple of hours away so I hoped I'd have a good chance of getting into All Saints Green, as it was my first choice. At first they emailed me and said I'd got into my course but not here, but someone dropped out so thankfully I managed to get it. I live in a flat of nine and whenever we go out we all go out together. I was dreading coming to Uni thinking I wouldn't get on with anyone, but I've been really lucky. I also like to go out to the countryside with my camera. It's not quite a faraway land, but it's a start.

#### Rebecca Miller



From: Bedfordshire

Studies: Animation BA (Hons)

I've wanted to do animation for as long as I can remember. I even geared my school subjects in that direction as early as possible, so was thrilled to be accepted on this course, and so far feel it definitely

deserves the high reputation. At the moment I'm working between 2D and 3D, creating environments for film and video games, with an emphasis on collaborative projects and joint presentations.

This is the first time I've lived away from home, and I chose All Saints Green over the other student accommodation as it's just so lovely. Obviously there's private rental as well, but I'd never been to Norwich before. So it's been much easier to meet and befriend a wide variety of people here, than if I'd been in a back room of some landlord's house or even a shared flat in another part of town. I also feel really safe here, which was particularly important when I first arrived. I really like the common areas. They're so open and have a special quality, with a stunning panoramic view over the whole city from the 'lighthouse' one above our flat.

I've been interested in food from when I was really young, so cooked for myself as soon as I arrived, then shared some with my flatmates, which evolved into occasional cook-ups. There's one guy from Hong Kong. He's lovely and makes amazing Chinese food. So we learn from each other, which is really good.

I feel this year has prepared me for future moves - in a safe and comfortable environment - where I've made the friends I plan to share private accommodation with, rather than being thrown into it straight from living at home.

I'm only in first year, so specific plans for the future are still quite loose. I'd like to stay in the UK, but the majority of jobs in TV and film animation are in America. There are, however, already more opportunities here than there used to be, so we'll see how that develops.

#### **Isabelle Murray**



From: Sussex
Studies: Textiles

I did my Art Foundation Course at Brighton School of Art. The Art School has a good reputation, but I wanted to broaden my horizons. Norwich was the perfect city as a first step. It's very contained, and looks gorgeous, with a

nice relaxed pace.

While I was away on my gap year I decided that the one discipline I couldn't stop thinking about was textiles. Everywhere around me I saw pattern, repeats, and was interested in every fabric I came across. I really wanted to do a course that would teach me more about the most traditional forms of design and develop my skills in weaving, knitting, and printing.

Myself and Cerys are flatmates and have become friends. We share with a Californian and a guy from Israel. It's great to have the mixture. We even join in with traditional celebrations, like Thanksgiving and Hanukkah.

#### **Max Andrews**



From: Dorset

Studies: Games Art and Design.

I left school at eighteen, applied to come to Norwich and was accepted. Unfortunately my family circumstances became very difficult; I ended up staying in Dorset and getting a job, to try and help out. I eventually moved out of the family home a number of years later but was

trapped in jobs I didn't like, where my earnings only just covered my living costs. Pretty much all my spare time was spent drawing.

Not many people do this specific course as most focus on the programming side. So I thought, 'I'll get a student loan and re-apply.' Thankfully I was accepted again, ten years later than the first time.

I've known for so long that this is where I want to be, but in some ways I'm better off coming now than I would have been back then, as the technology they're using is much more advanced. People have actually had to relearn so much to keep up with the huge technological leaps over the last decade.

All this time I've wanted to put my creativity to some purpose. All this time I've been creating this artwork, thinking, wouldn't it be great to use it in a game? Now we're learning how. It's really satisfying; I can see my drawings coming to life.

Once a week guest lecturers come from professional practice; a lot of them used to be students here. One of the main reasons I wanted to come is because there's such a high success rate of graduates who got into the industry, and the course has become very highly respected. It's won a lot of awards, and is now regarded as one of the top in Europe.

I chose All Saints Green, as I thought it's going to be secure, till I get a foothold in the city. I was nervous at first about the idea of sharing a flat with five others where everything and everyone is new, but within a few days people are socialising. The staff are great as well. I particularly like relaxing in the downstairs common room, looking onto the garden, or I'll go out and sit on the benches if the weather's good. It's so peaceful, you wouldn't know you were in a city centre with a bus station on the other side of the building. Living here is lovely, but a big change for me as I'm from a really little town; literally just two roads. Norwich is actually quite a small city, but for me it's huge.























# Stratford Aspire Point



Stratford - Aspire Point

**Project** New build on brownfield site including artists studios and

community cafe

**Location** Stratford High Street, East London

**Architects** MJP Architects

**Completed** 2018 for Queen Mary's University, London









# Jeremy Estop Architect, Stratford - Aspire Point

Since the Second World War there has been extensive redevelopment of the area but without a coherent design strategy. It is characterised by buildings of dramatically contrasting scales with a High Street that lacks active frontages or features conducive to a pleasant environment for pedestrians. However it is well located for commuting and close to Stratford transport interchange

Within the building the student accommodation provides a choice of different room types, mostly ensuite, arranged in flats sharing a kitchen/ dining room, along with 'studio' rooms. There is a central core, to enable the outer wall to be composed totally of inhabited accommodation.

To encourage their use, the communal areas are all located in very visible locations serving to animate the building. The advantage of spectacular views over London adds to a very attractive living environment

The building also provides artists' studios, for SPACE Studios, on the first and second floors of the building. There is a choice of six studios, all with plenty of natural light.

#### Design evolution

An early decision was that this building should not be a slab block lost in the array of similar buildings along the High Street, but a design making a significant contribution to the improvement of the townscape.

Various configurations were considered but with the understanding that rectilinear-shaped towers can appear dumpy depending on viewpoint it was felt a triangular form offered an elegant profile from all angles. The shape reduces overlooking and overshadowing issues with surrounding land and structures.

It also offered advantages in the internal planning as it neatly forms three flats of seven student rooms on each floor. While the external form is triangular on plan, the internal planning of the rooms is orthogonal. This has been acknowledged externally in the way that the corners are formed, as an assembly of smaller rectangular towers.

The site-filling plinth supports the tower which is orientated with one side parallel to Stratford High Street to sit comfortably in the line of tall buildings. The 60 degree angle of the structure on the corner of Stratford High Street and Carpenters Road offers dynamic contrast with the succession of square cornered buildings.

The entrance loggia is set back from the road to create space for pedestrians and a generous townscape event at the centre of this stretch of tall buildings

The building is composed to appear as a collection of smaller towers helping to make it look slimmer and taller. It also animates the silhouette and dissipates the form as it merges with the sky.

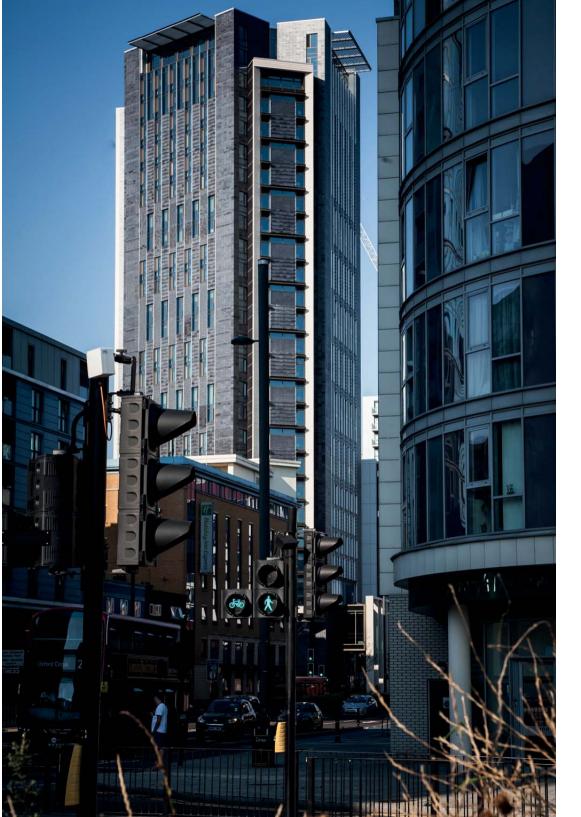
The composition of the fenestration transforms from a finer 'grain' at the lower floors to much larger scaled modules at the top. The design is a 'woven' pattern; vertical strips of masonry appear to weave in and out between the windows.

This works well when viewed from close distance where the scale of the lower floors is similar to some shorter neighbouring buildings and 'foreshortening', caused by the perspective effect, will visually compress the upper floors. From a greater distance the larger scale of the upper storeys gives the building gravitas and legibility.

The primary materials in the elevations are terracotta tiles with a lustrous 'engobe' finish and precast concrete. This gives it a strong, durable, unfussy appearance

# **66 SPACE** provides support and **79** resources to artists to make the great art of our day

Space Studios



We wanted to design
building which would enhance the townscape and create a distinctive landmark on Stratford High Street.

A building which would promote social interaction and create a convivial living environment for students.

# Micheala Olive

Scheme Manager – Derwent Facilities Management



My degree was in Environmental Hazards and Disaster Management, which sounds a bit scary but it's actually not. Predominantly my course was about risk assessment, health and safety and that kind of thing, so it actually ties in quite nicely with facilities management. I've also grown up in and around the hospitality industry, coming from a family who have pubs and restaurants. This job is

the perfect blend. We basically want everyone to feel at home, so it feels more like a proper grown up concierge type place, especially - like here at Aspire - with proper grown up post grad students. We want to give them the best service and, if we can, make sure everything happens safely, quickly and within reason.

Everyone works really well together actually; the University, us at Derwent, Alumno and their team, architects, contractors - the lot! We all come from different standpoints but everyone wants the best and won't settle for anything less.

It's great to see so many people using the common rooms. The study room is such a nice place, the students are using it just like a library and we get a lot of positive feedback. It's a good focused environment that they all feel comfortable in, which is brilliant. The space has a humanity, it's quiet but doesn't feel cold and clinical. You'll find students sitting in the study room then going down one floor, to the equally excellent mezzanine, to have a cup of tea or some lunch before going back to study again. It really works, having study space and the lounge space so close but slightly separate. The university is heavily involved and also organise events that help the students spread across the building and interact with each other. The building is designed with three flats on each floor and the students also see each other in the lift lobby and naturally strike up conversations.

We've got such a range of characters among the students. Predominantly they are nice and so keen to find out about things. This part of Stratford has already changed so much since the Olympics, which is great for East London as a whole. The transport links here are excellent. It's actually amazingly well connected. You've got the super fast trains into Kings Cross, all the overground and underground trains and even Intercity.

With us being so close to the Olympic stadium there are a lot of local sports facilities. You kind of become like an information centre. Space Studios and Brompton bikes share the building, which will encourage the general public to be in and around it, though there is a separate and properly secure entrance for the accommodation. We had a meeting with Brompton about how we get the public to interact with the building and negotiated an introductory offer for students. Because we've got the cycle super highway it's so easily accessible.

We recently had a call from the University after they did an official focus group and there was really good feedback about the building. In fact they had no complaints at all. Aspire is already in such high demand that there are longer and longer waiting lists of students wanting to get in. This is mainly fuelled by students who live here posting about how much they like it and that it's such good value.

Key to this is that we are official university halls, belonging to Queen Mary University of London. Alumno and the University have been working together with the council to ensure that Aspire provides affordable rents in the Borough. I must say, I am genuinely proud to work here. It has its challenges, but it's also very rewarding.





#### Michael Ma



From: China

**Studies:** MSc Financial Computing, Queen Mary University, London.

I'm from Hebei, not too far from Beijing. This is my first time living abroad. I did my first degree in Finance in the south of China.

I wanted to come to the UK for the experience and to study something that really interested me. I really like pure mathematics and science, and using that to develop programming. I want to find a good career using my abilities and interests, so decided to link this to the financial sector. My parents are also quite keen on this approach.

I like the accommodation very much. The common rooms are great. We can meet, eat and drink. The whole look and feel of the place gives a very positive message about culture. It make me feel relaxed about being here and meeting people.

I have become increasingly interested in food and cooking. This has really developed here. I like experimenting with food and cooking from all around the world. Good Chinese food back home is really good, but it's not that easy to find other kinds of food in my home town. I've actually become so enthusiastic about it I post my cooking on Instagram. I travel around the world in my cooking.

You can learn a lot about culture from food. I can easily follow recipes using ingredients I find locally. All this has actually made me quite popular with my flatmates. They call me the "king of cooking". It's really nice to cook for people. Share food with them and you inevitably end up sharing stories.

### Stratford - Aspire Point

### **Ruoxuan Yuan**

From: China

**Studies:** MSc Business Analytics, Queen Many University, London

I am from the Xinjiang region, way out in North Western China, bordering Pakistan and Russia among other countries. Our culture is really quite different from other parts of China, partly because we are so geographically far away and also because the cultures of the countries we are close to have historically affected our own. Almost half the population are Uyghur, of Turkic descent. I'm not Uyghur myself, but can speak the language. There are actually about fifty languages and dialects spoken in Xinjiang, though the official language is Mandarin.

I did a BSc in Logistics Management in the city of Chongqing. This was a very different atmosphere, my first culture shock and a four hour flight from my home town. I would only go home twice a year, so I got used to being away. My home town is actually lovely and quite rural, set in an area of outstanding natural beauty, with huge mountain ranges where the air is so fresh.

Like many students from abroad, I wanted to come to the UK to experience a different culture and have easy access for visiting other European countries. In China 90% of the people are Chinese, with my region actually being unusual in having more of an ethnic mix than usual. My experience over here has been very positive and I feel welcomed wherever I go. Even though London is a very big city, it seems friendly. I'm interested in fashion and like to experiment with clothes. London is a great place to be inspired and develop your own style, from casual street fashion to dressing up for a night out.

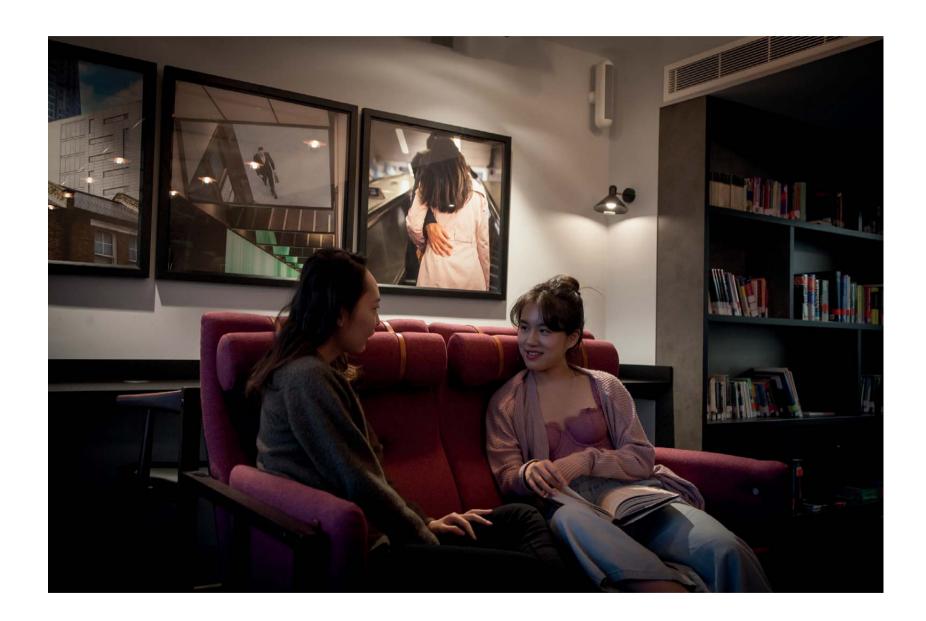
The Masters I am doing here specialises in data analysis, where we primarily utilise programming and maths. We learn how to use pure data to analyse and evidence. I personally find this more interesting than logistics.

I feel so fortunate to have got in to Aspire House. It quickly became very sought after when the word spread among chat groups about how great it is, so there is a lot of competition for places.

It's really well connected and such a lovely place. There are quite a lot of Chinese students, but also enough from other cultures. The most important thing is that the pricing is comparatively very cheap compared with other university halls or private landlords - so great quality at a good price! It looks really cool but is very inviting. It feels special, much much



better than my previous accommodation. I was excited that my portrait has been used as part of the photographic artwork in the building, representing the cultural mix in and around this area. I suppose I am indeed part of that now.



### • Stratford - Aspire Point





### **Kamuran Atalay**



From: Turkey

**Studies:** LLM in Commercial and Corporate Law, Queen Mary University. London

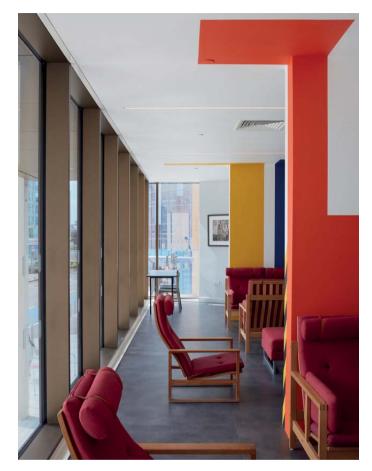
I graduated from Law School in Istanbul then did my internship to become an advocate. There are several reasons why I came to the UK. Firstly, being in the UK was an obvious step in improving my

English conversation and debating skills. I want to get my English legal terminology to the standard where I can work in international law firms, so the better my general command of the language is, the easier that will be. Another reason is that this is a multicultural country and I enjoy making friends from different backgrounds. Before coming here I didn't really have much actual communication with people from other countries. Even through being at Aspire House, I already have a Chinese friend, a French friend and an Iranian friend. I can see at first hand the differences between cultures and also all the things we have in common. It's also a great personal pleasure. I hope this makes me wiser and more broad minded, so I can interpret the work better.

I also specifically chose this course as it's an internationally highly respected qualification and allows me to understand a different legal system that enhances my legal knowledge.

I really like Aspire Point. It is very modern and really well designed. It seems to be far superior to any other accommodation I've seen and also far better value. Also, after some research, I was recommended to be in accommodation with people from the same university, where you can compare notes and use the common rooms as an extension of the study facilities. I also know the winter in the UK gets dark very early in the evening and can be cold and damp. If you're not around people you get along with that can be depressing, so good common areas become even more important for mixing. They feel really good here when it's dark outside. I think the whole space makes your mood better and more energetic. The design, lighting, artwork and furniture all work in sympathy. The furniture itself is very comfortable, particularly on the mezzanine level. The staff are really good as well, helpful and genuinely friendly. Even the security are so nice. I know everyone feels safe and looked after.

I love the cinema room on the top floor. It's a wonderful collective experience to watch a film together, experiencing the space together. Again all the design and artwork works really well and the panoramic view over the city makes you feel like you're on top of the world. Even our flat has great views. There definitely can be something exciting and inspiring about living high up in a great city.



















## The Future - David Campbell

So what next? Well the next few years look like offering up some of our most compelling and challenging projects and building on what we've done to date. We're just starting work on the iconic Park Hill estate in Sheffield, with Urban Splash. It's wonderful for me personally to work with Tom Bloxham and Urban Splash. I think it will undoubtedly take us another step forward, really test our abilities and continue to develop our ideas.

It's the largest listed building in Europe - a project that a lot of people wouldn't have looked at or could see working, but I think that the journey we've been on has prepared us for this and got us to a point where we can see where we can add value, take it on and meet the challenge.

It's working in partnership with local authorities, communities and stakeholders of all shapes and sizes and driving the place making agenda. It's a huge compliment that people can can see how our ideas around Art and cultural place making have really embodied key aspects of successful regeneration. It's very rewarding that we're seen as being capable, and a safe partner that's able to table and take on a brief that's not straightforward.

We are continuing to expand mixed use developments and are planning more projects outside the student accommodation sector. We were awarded the Colchester regeneration project, incorporating more public facing spaces as well as another project with Space Studios, the biggest project of its kind outside London. We're also building a hotel and there's the sense that these are all proper game changing projects.

Again, we wouldn't have been able to be involved in projects like this if we hadn't demonstrated a strong track record and ethos in our approach. It shows how far we've travelled that a student housing company has been asked to get involved in projects that are game changers for our towns and cities. Of the projects coming forward, three or four are with local authorities and all are mixed use. Rather than taking a mono tenure viewpoint, we're continually looking at a wider approach to regeneration, in transitional areas, in challenging parts of towns and cities with student housing often being the catalyst for positive change.

Our work in Norwich has already been very satisfying. We've just opened our third project there. It's great going into a city and really being able to put forward our own ideas and for it to be received so positively. It's very rewarding when we can genuinely see where our work is having a long lasting impact, and we are collaborating fully with the local authorities and their partners. This will leave a legacy in the city for many decades and generations to come. The Pablo Fanque House building embodies everything that Alumno is about, allowing us to weave our own DNA into the project and deliver a tenure blind building. This demonstrates our continuing ambition and commitment regarding the role we can play. A good blueprint for where we want to go and how our projects can continue to make a real, and in some cases unexpected, difference to our towns and cities.

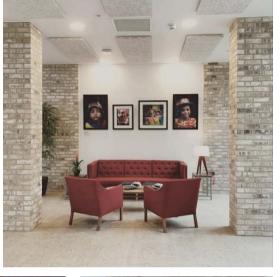
I'm very proud that we've got to this stage because these are developments that will change the landscape for the better for decades to come and it's fantastic if the best in student housing can help to achieve that.

















Pablo Fanque House

### The Future











Painters Yard





Barn Road



# The Art

## **Arts - David Campbell**

I'm not just interested in the Arts, I'm a fanatic about the process of creating art. It's as important to the overall environment as constructing a building is. Inspirational artwork can define people's relationship to the space and locations they find themselves in. It can soften that initial entry point to a building, making time spent there more enjoyable. If a building is bricks and mortar then art is the glue that holds it all together. White walls are no longer institutional, but actually feel like a place that somebody wants to be, somewhere they want to explore and find out about, and all because we've allowed that place, person or building to tell their story. Art connects people and can transform the experience of entering a new building, a new facility, a new city and even a new country.

For me, in terms of what we do, it was the most natural part of the whole process. I'm not from a classic developer-like background and neither are many others who work for Alumno. I think, if anything, that's maybe the difference in terms of our approach. It gives us an edge that we're not just adopting a standard viewpoint about how a building should be delivered and executed. Of course we have to follow certain rules, regulations and parameters, but ultimately it's how we do the finishing touches that make us stand out. It's as much about us bringing our individual tastes and influences to the table and, personally, I'm far more influenced by a great piece of artwork or a great piece of music than I am by another development.

One of the benefits of us doing what we do, and having established ourselves the way that we have, is that it allows us the freedom to bring on board artists and designers who we think can contribute something interesting to the story, who can add to the fabric and heart of a building in a unique way. It can be very rewarding to bring in people that we've worked with from all different backgrounds and disciplines and ask them to contextualise what they do in a way that involves thinking about the interiors and exteriors. It has always been important to me not to get into a position where we're simply rolling out buildings - it's got to be a movable feast! Thinking about a building in the context of its environment is massively important and goes a long way to making that building a success.

Every project is a story in its own right, with its own particular narrative which can lead us in new directions, allowing us to fine tune our capabilities and insight as we overcome the challenges and complexities

of each project. It's incredibly rewarding when you get to work with people like Anthony Frost on a project such as the Terry Frost Space in Leamington, or Ben Kelly, who had been a massive influence on me when I was growing up. With Terry, nobody had tapped into the fact that one of the greatest post war British Abstract artists actually came from Leamington. I doubt any other developer would have explored this, not only because they wouldn't have known how to, but they probably wouldn't have realised how important he was. With Ben Kelly, his work with Factory Records and the Hacienda actually gave me my first exposure to key interior design ideas, and opened up a whole new world for me and many others. If someone can walk into one of our buildings and experience even a small part of the inspiration or wow factor I've felt from looking at these artists' work, then it's all been worthwhile.

In part, our approach is about questioning the status quo and this is the case too with David Tatham and the Modern Warehouse. David has really allowed us to develop, identify and instil our DNA into the projects that goes beyond the common perception of how a student residence should look and function. It sets the ground work for establishing an appreciation of how classic design pieces can enhance the experience of living within an Alumno building. It's not obvious, but there's a subtle juxtaposition in terms of the Danish and other Scandinavian furniture being not what you'd expect, as is the experience of walking into a Ben Kelly interior there. It's mentally more stimulating to play with and challenge people's expectations, to draw on your influences and work as a team in a way that creates something that bit more unique.

Martin Gray's work is also massively important because it contextualises where the building is, but it also makes people think about how you're not just in a building, you close the door to and that's it. You're in an existing community. You're in an environment that's been there for a long time but which welcomes your contribution to it; a wonderful place with a rich and meaningful tapestry around it. Often, it's very culturally driven and, as some of the students may not have prior experience of that community, it's about trying to shine a light on it for them; to inspire them to be more confident and inquisitive about their surroundings. You can walk into a building that's contextualised in such a way that you might be seeing it from a whole other angle but the abstract of that is wonderful. You're not left guessing about where you are, you actually want to search out new things in a town or city you might ordinarily not have thought about.





Multimedia Arts Event, opening East Sands, St Andrew's





Pablo Fanque Day, Norwich



Interiors should also work to create a sense of peace, comfort and calm in a way which all kind of hangs together. Artwork is a crucial part of that, transforming a bare space into somewhere inviting that the students want to be in. Not all students may necessarily look beyond the surface but there are things to find for those that do. There's nothing worse than soulless interiors! Students actively want to be in Alumno buildings and a lot of that is to do with how the art, design and furniture is curated and combined to work together. Instinctively it just feels right. Although we need to work on a surface level to get people in and get people investing, beyond that there's this other level and the artists we commission achieve that. There's more to find beneath the decoration though the decoration itself is important. We've accomplished this extremely well.

Our relationship with Space Studios has been key in allowing us to develop buildings in a way that we couldn't before, often because they were difficult spaces that we wouldn't have been able to fill in a way that added value for the community. This relationship has opened up workshop opportunities and there's been a good crossover with the students.

Matthew Jarratt has also been a great discovery. Sometimes you need a very specific set of skills to manage processes in a way that makes things coherent and Matthew is fantastic at that. He's a bit of a kindred spirit. We share the same point of view about the built environment and what buildings should do. He's interested in what Alumno are doing with artwork and interiors but can appreciate how the surrounding landscape needs to work with it as well. Durham and St Andrews were particularly successful in that regard as Matthew made it all stick together. He made things work, making sense of our ideas and enthusiasm. I've learned that you can't take everything on alone. You need people around you who can articulate a vision, coordinate it and make it coherent. We've been very lucky with the people we've commissioned, and what they've achieved for us, but this then demonstrates why we work with such a tight knit group.

With everyone we commission we first and foremost like their work. We then give them an idea of what we want in the context of our project and they will run with this and come back with results that work. It's about trust and it's about empowering people. We only commission work that's specifically made or curated for us. It's not about buying artwork off the shelf and people that I think can bring something to the table ultimately grow with us and help us to grow. We like artists around us who constantly reinterpret and question their own work. They will think carefully about how their work is curated, framed and displayed. They will also be there on site to physically oversee things before a building opens, making sure it works in context of the whole space and is properly executed. Matthew Jarrett's role is a good example of that and Martin Gray's is too. They have also both helped us to curate multimedia events, involving live performance with projected works. Everyone's a sole practitioner who is finessing their practice for the love of what they do, a genuine energy and excitement about our projects, with a respect for what we do. We all can reap the benefits of that.





Anthony Frost (on behalf of The Estate Of Terry Frost)



## Arts - Ben Kelly

Tom Bloxham first introduced me to David Campbell, describing him as "one of the good guys". David was initially interested in getting me involved with the Park Hill project because of my understanding of the sensitivity of Park Hill social housing, its relationship with Le Corbusier's Unité d'habitation, and Brutalism and also because of my connection with the music industry, because Sheffield has a really strong legacy, so there was potential for a heady of mix of Architecture Art and Music. I collaborate with Brinkworth on bigger projects, so spoke with Kevin Brennan and he was interested. The project has been a collaboration really and that's been a great process.

I'm also working on Alumno projects in collaboration with Iain Carson. I like the way that I can work with Iain. We sit and we talk about it, discuss ideas and I kind of say, "Left a bit, right a bit," and Iain is drawing, and it's a really lovely process. I suggested using Tony Wilson's famous, "This is Manchester. We do things differently here," as a neon sign, just inside the entrance. The Hacienda was recognised as the beginning of the regeneration of Manchester that is on public record. What Factory and Tony Wilson did for Manchester needs to be understood, Maybe I'm a bit of a conduit to tap into that stuff. I can subliminally sow that seed and stitch a few things into some of the architecture in a subtle sort of way.

One day I showed David a little piece of work that I'd done for a private client with a big house in West London that he'd had remodelled, with a column going about 4 or 4.5 metres through two floors of the building. He had been a student in Manchester, went to The Hacienda and was a fan, so asked could I do something, as he was really interested in the idea of referencing it back.

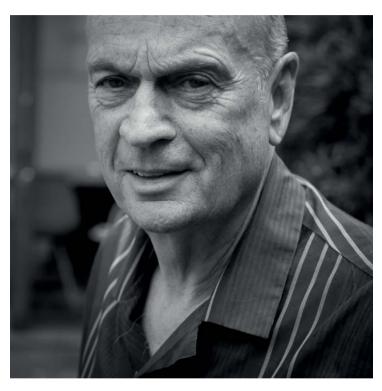
Then a few weeks later I think it had been going round in David's mind, as he had 6 columns across 3 floors in Aspire Point. Maybe I could do something. So I go to Stratford and almost knew immediately, which is this sort of abstract colour composition which I could take onto the ceilings of these three floors. This abstract coloured thing going on the columns which I'd then take onto the ceilings, so it becomes like a three dimensional painting across the three floors – because there's a void in the middle between the ground and the first floor, the mezzanine. When you're stood on the ground floor you can see up to the ceiling of the mezzanine, so you're seeing through two levels and the same looking back down. So you see the scale of the columns and you read the scale of

space. What I've done I think helps to reinforce the drama of the space, it creates interest and there is a kind of reference.

Many years ago, when I was running a medium sized office, we actively went out looking for work to do student accommodation. I thought at that time we could do something worthy that was great, because I felt we understood what students might like to have, what sort of space they would like to occupy. We didn't manage to get work in that field and now I'm quite glad we didn't. I find it very strange now that it's come full circle and, because of David Campbell and Alumno via Tom Bloxham at Urban Splash, I am able to feed into that because of dialogue with David, and the recommendation from Tom. Clearly David's remit is not your typical developer with student accommodation – "Bosh bosh, there you go." The integrity that he brings to the projects, and the thoughtfulness, and his understanding of references to culture, to the music scene, to the art world and the creativity in general. He tries and works very, very hard to embody a layer of culture into the building.

They're not just isolated towers of beds and whatever, but they have to be part of the community, they have to speak to the community, they have to embrace that area. There have to be references, there has to be some kind of dialogue with the community and that is what myself and the other artists and designers can bring to the table. The broader environment, the broader world and the references that bounce backwards and forwards from within – from the outside in and the inside out.

It's not an easy process and that's why it's admirable the way that David and Alumno really care about Art and design as well as Architecture. I can say it's working, because my son attended an event in one Alumno re-developped Town Hall in Camberwell, with his collective group called Soundspace Records. One of them is a DJ, one makes music and my son does all the visuals. They put this gig on in the student accommodation in the top floor common room. The outside world came in, everyone mixed it was very successful. My son actually called me and said what a great space it was, how everything about the space, from the view, to the Architecture, design and Artwork was inspiring.





## Sideways Glance - Martin Gray

A long term Urban Sociology/Art project by Martin Gray and its role in the context of the work commissioned by Alumno Developments

This is just a draft from a small sample of my accompanying research and written work.

The student experience is not only about the chance to get an excellent academic education, but the chance to learn more about the world and society.

Community is at the heart of everything. It's where we live, however long we live there for. In our formative years the experience of that interaction is something we will take forward into our lives and affect the way we deal with people in the future. The British Isles are very diverse, remarkably assimilated and acclimatised to soaking up all kinds of cultures. This is something that many people who come from these islands are very proud of.

I do, however, believe that if you drop a pin on a map anywhere in the world people have a natural human instinct to try and engage and communicate with each other. Perceived barriers and differences are often broken down in public spaces through food, live music, coffee, whatever. The power of shared laughter, or something as simple as a warm smile, should not be underestimated. It unites us all. A little joke with a shopkeeper, or someone in a cafe, or just someone in a queue somewhere seems like a small thing, but actually it's a big thing. It's subliminally saying, 'We might be from different backgrounds, different races, religions, ages and orientations, but we are human beings, connecting with and respecting each other'.

However much access to information we potentially have at our fingertips these days, other parts of the world can still sometimes be reduced to cliché, so suspicions about people whose backgrounds are geographically and/or culturally foreign from ours can still prevail. Reality is, of course, always more complex than cliché. As the old adage goes, when you know very little about something you may think you know a lot, but the more you discover, the more you realise how much you have to learn.

We live in socioeconomic times where mutual understanding and respect is of the utmost importance. When students go back to their home country with warm memories and associations, this new understanding is beneficial, not only on a personal level, but in the increasingly international working environment. We can also learn a lot from those who come and stay in amongst us., who become our neighbours for a period of time. I know people from near and far, who have had their preconceptions about other cultures completely altered.

The power of new media and technology is such that we may begin to wonder how we are engaging with the physical world around us. It's best to take a positive approach and see that many people of all ages still want to engage, and when they do are now also posting what they experience in ways that will be seen, maybe thousands of miles away.

The trick is to soak things up and also think about what we're soaking up. To consider the lives around us, not only in the context of our own life (via the ubiquitous selfie, or selfie stick selfie) but in a wider sense of community. For us all to think about how we can add as well as how we may benefit. If we take a Sideways Glance, rather than a more blinkered view, then the world opens up in front of us and nothing needs to be boring. A walk along a street becomes an adventure, still far and away more three dimensional and interactive than even the most sophisticated computer game. Shyness can be a burden to many of us, but the great thing about looking and listening, smelling and tasting is that we don't have to be the centre of attention. I'm not recommending that we all go around staring at, or sniffing each other. A glance here and there will do as a start. So smartphones down, eyes up and ears open. If we do then decide to record something, we'll have honed our understanding, sharpened our instincts and put more of our hearts and souls into it.







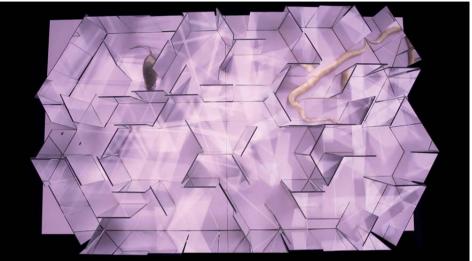














## **Anna Harding**

SPACE is a charity supporting artists with affordable studio space and providing artists professional development, artist commissions and community engagement programmes. 2018 is our 50th year and we currently support 800 artists with studios at 20 sites, in London and Colchester. We have worked in partnership with Alumno on two recent developments.

In Camberwell, South London we now have 12 artists' studios on the ground floor and basement of the old Southwark Town Hall building, and at Stratford we have Ben Jupp Studios, 22 new studios as part of Aspire Point. Both are designed to complement the main offer of student accommodation. We think that artists present in the building adds something interesting for the students who are often new to London. While these are private studios, they are open for visitors, including local residents, on our annual Open Studio days.

It is always a pleasure working with Alumno on development partnerships. They think creatively in devising projects, they value our input, and understand where we are coming from. I feel they are genuinely committed to supporting artists within their projects, which is rare for property developers. Many developers talk about art in a superficial way, whereas Alumno have a deep commitment which runs through their work. They have worked with us to ensure that the studio spaces created are really first class. They are also affordable and long-term, which are considerations that are really important to us as a charity supporting artists by providing affordable studio space.

Alumno are also supporting us to deliver a graduate studio bursary each year, selected from the Goldsmiths BA Fine Art degree show. For 2107 we supported Duncan Loudon and in 2018 Djofray Makumbu . Each sponsored artist has 12-month access to a studio at Havil Street ,old Southwark Town Hall. In addition to the studio, they receive a stipend from Goldsmiths and access to professional development support at SPACE. Again, this is a great partnership as Alumno really take an interest in the artist and they have also bought art work from the Goldsmiths Degree Show.

### **Matthew Jarratt**

One of the fascinating things about developing arts commissions with Alumno is that they have such a strong focus on using contemporary art to communicate the history and context of each site.

Our first project was in St Andrews, where I brought in poet Jacob Polley, who was based at St Andrews University, and with Alumno's backing he produced an epic poem which told the story of how St Andrews was the first town to be documented by photography. We produced the poem across a series of granite seats in a great new public space overlooking the East Sands beach along with commissioned 'lenses' by glass artist Effie Burns.

Our next project in Aberdeen - the Granite City - saw sculptor Fred Watson commissioned to site one of his elegant 'wrapped' granite parcels in the public realm outside of Alumno's new building.

Alumno's Sheraton Park development in Durham is the largest commission we have produced with three international sculptures and a poetry commission produced across a fantastic new sculpture park. Working with Durham University I developed a theme of international pilgrimage and journeys which three artists were asked to respond to. The artists were drawn from three countries which have strong links to Durham University:

- Italian artist Fabio Viale is an incredible marble sculptor who uses
  the finest Carrera marble to produce works which are collected
  internationally. Fabio's sculpture for Sheraton Park was developed
  from the shell symbols of the Saints Trails across Europe from the
  Middle Ages.
- Chinese artist Xiang Yiang produced an amazing journey of his own in 2015 when he sailed a sculptural boat along the Thames which was then moored as a floating sculpture by Tower Bridge in London. Xiang works in wood and cast sculpture and developed a sculptural ship for Durham based on the idea of the Silk Route.
- American artist Bruce Gernand uses 3D scanning, 3D printing and a range of technology in cast iron and ceramic sculptures. For Sheraton Park he developed a cast iron sculpture to convey an idea about a journey across the American landscape.

In Leamington Spa my research was focussed around 'Leamington Lad' Terry Frost, who was born in the town and went on to become one of Britain's finest abstract painters. With Alumno's support we worked in with Terry's son Anthony Frost as an advisor to produce a series of cast iron floor plates based on his paintings and a specially commissioned poem by Bob Devereux. Alumno gained permission to name the new canalside area 'Terry Frost Space', which is a lasting legacy to the artist.

For Norwich, two fantastic, site specific histories came together - Alumno's new building is near to where Pablo Fanque was born – Fanque was an English equestrian performer and circus proprietor, the first non-white British circus owner in Britain. For 30 years, in a period regarded as Circus's golden age, Fanque ran the most popular circus in Victorian Britain.

Since then, Pablo Fanque has been mostly known because he is mentioned in The Beatles song "Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite!" In 1967, the names and phrases of a Fanque travelling circus poster in an antiques shop spoke to John Lennon, and he made one of the first "found poem" songs of the 20th century, conveying the energy of his spectacular life by language alone. By haunting coincidence, five years earlier, The Beatles had played their early and only Norwich gig near to Fanque's birthplace.

We commissioned poet Ira Lightman to write a poem which tells the story of Pablo Fanque's life and the Beatles/Sgt Pepper connection - to the tune of the Beatles song – which was commissioned as a huge poster in the building atrium along with a Victorian zoetrope which shows a performing horse that reflects Pablo's fame as the finest circus equestrian performer. Alumno's commitment saw the building named 'Pablo Fangue House'.

"Alumno are interested in design quality, contemporary art and placemaking – this is a great recipe for creating new spaces that have personality and atmosphere. As a curator who is looking to develop new arts ideas and commissions, I have had great support from Alumno, and together I think we have delivered some really unique and high-quality arts commissions which have created spaces that people enjoy."







### Selected Awards and Recognitions

## **Selected Awards and Recognitions**

#### **Sheraton Park, Durham**

RICS awards North East 2018 – shortlisted

Construction News Awards 2018 – shortlisted

#### **Powis Place Aberdeen**

Saltire Award for Multiple Dwellings 2018 – winner RIAS award 2017 – winner Aberdeen Society of Architects 2017 – award

Alumno - Property Week Student Accommodation Awards 2017 - Highly recommended

#### Former Southwark Town Hall & Theatre Peckham

RIBA London Awards – shortlisted

The Placemaking Award 2017 – shortlisted

Civic Trust Award – shortlisted

#### All Saints Green Norwich

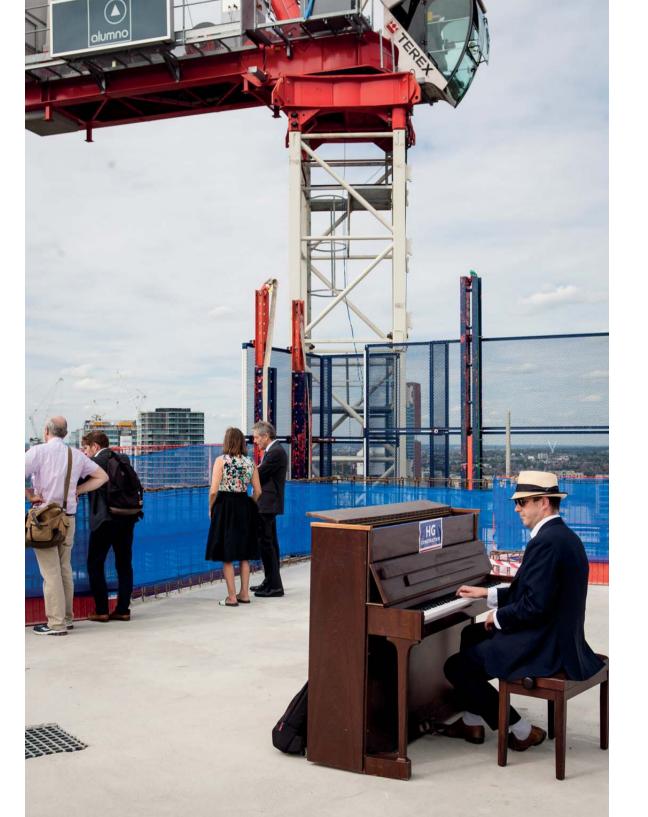
The Norwich Society Residential Grouped award – 2017 Norfolk Association of Architects Craftsmanship Award 2016 – full award The Norwich Society Conservation Award – 50 All Saints Green, Norwich

#### **Dumbarton Road / Hyndland House, Glasgow**

Scottish Design Awards 2016 – commendation GIA Awards 2016 – commendation

#### **East Shore, St Andrews**

Dundee Institute of Architects Best Group Housing Award 2016 - commended



### Acknowledgements

## Acknowledgements

Alumno and Martin Gray would like to thank all the interviewees who gave their time to make this book possible including all the architects, front of house staff and students and everyone else involved. We would also like to thank all the council members, contractors and universities who have helped Alumno grow and build their projects over the years.

Book editor and photography Martin Gray Book design Gorm Ashurst at Bullet Creative Book cover by Will and Alice Beaven at Positive2 Print Think Digital

Additional photography by Keith Hunter, Matt Clayton, Paul Miller and Rob Dodsworth

Thanks to the Alumno team David Campbell, Mevan Alwis, Rebecca Dean, Ron Plunz, Natalie Greig, Richard Syddall and Jenna Dinte.

'Urban Splash have always been interested in great architecture and developing exciting projects. Although we've had many opportunities to get involved with student housing we'd never previously done it, because so many student developments add nothing back to the city. Alumno was like a breath of fresh air. Clearly people interested in architecture, interested in placemaking, interested in art and design and more than happy to embrace challenges. It's been a joy working with David Campbell and his team. Indeed we've enjoyed the experience so much, we're looking for further projects to do together.'

Tom Bloxham OBE, Founder of Urban Splash

'The Union by Alumno provides an excellent fully managed student residence into the heart of the Old Town in Leamington Spa. Not only does it bring the benefit of high quality ensuite accommodation for students, but it has regenerated a former industrial area and added to the Councils drive to improve our much neglected canalside through the town. I enjoyed the nod to a famous local artist that has been incorporated into the communal areas, making them that little bit different to the usual standard design'

Councillor Alan Boad, Liberal Democrat, Leamington Crown Ward

'It has been great to work with David and his team at Alumno to realise the first Durham Business Game. The company understands that place-making is much more than design and construction, but is also about forging a meaningful relationship with the people who will inhabit the space and bring it to life.'

Dr Anne Allen, Major Gifts Officer, Durham University Business School

'Alumno have been sponsoring a year-long studio bursary for one graduating student in financial need since 2014. They provide this generous support at a critical moment of transition from student to professional and always encourage new and experimental work.'

Alison Jones, Lecturer in Art Practice, Department of Art, Goldsmiths, University of London

'From the beginning I was impressed that David Campbell's focus was on changing the perception that developers are putting financial returns ahead of local communities. David and Alumno were highlighting the importance of student communities as part of the wider place-building agenda'

Terry Collins, Chief Executive, Durham County Council

