

Winning housing designs

Lessons from an Anglo-French housing initiative



cabe



Cover: Computer-generated image
of White City scheme
Image credit: B+C Architectes and
Cartwright Pickard Architects

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Introduction

Over recent years, agencies in France and England have been participating in an innovative project that has enabled them to share ideas and work together to deliver affordable housing. This report is based on that project.

The Anglo-French affordable housing initiative was devised by CABE in England and the Direction de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine (DAPA) in France. Its aim was to develop international best practice and raise the architectural and urban design quality of affordable housing. Funded by the Housing Corporation, the project was initiated in 2003. Since then, through running an architectural competition for real projects, two in the UK and four in France, it has offered a unique opportunity to work across national boundaries and make cross-cultural comparisons.



The initiative offered an opportunity to make cross-cultural comparisons
Image credit: CABE



At the outset, the aim was to focus on four proposed affordable housing schemes – two in England and two in France – as test beds for good design, with experts from both sides of the Channel working collaboratively on each site. Anglo-French teams of architects were selected for each project through a competition, after which the clients and winning designers visited benchmark schemes in Paris. They then tracked those projects as they progressed, exchanging ideas through a series of workshops.

Developers who were able to put forward sites and wanted to take part in the initiative were identified earlier in England than in France. This report, therefore, records the outcome for the two London sites: at White City in Hammersmith & Fulham and on the Rayners Lane Estate in Harrow. In France, four sites were eventually chosen and the winning design teams announced in April 2005. Those projects are expected to be on site in 2006.

The White City site lies in a high-density, mixed-use area of the inner city. As a newly created affordable housing project, the prospective residents are not yet known, although most will come from the council's housing waiting list. Rayners Lane has a different character – the surrounding area is one of suburban, low-density residential neighbourhoods dating from the interwar period. The project proposes replacing a formerly council-owned housing estate of unpopular system-built, low-rise flats with new homes. Early phases of the development are under way.

The two English projects have advanced in different ways. While the White City scheme is on site and due for completion in September 2006, the competition scheme on the Rayners Lane Estate has not been taken forward. However, both projects have stimulated the participating housing associations to look again at how, as clients, they approach new projects. They have gained fresh insight

into the process of commissioning new buildings and have raised aspiration within their organisations to achieve inspirational houses and better places to live.

In London, the two sites' clients and designers met for a series of workshops that helped the design development, planning and procurement processes for each project. Questionnaires and interviews captured the participants' own observations and views, the outcomes of which are included in this publication.

But why did CABA and DAPA decide to run this competition for affordable housing design, and why now?

Housing associations in England have gone through rapid change in the past 15 years, and have now replaced local authorities as the main providers of new social housing. They have also taken on huge swathes of former council housing across the country through the large-scale voluntary transfer of homes by local authorities. Over this period, associations have undergone significant cultural change, too, as formerly voluntary agencies have had to adjust to a new business environment and increasing competition for resources.

Associations have always sustained a long-term commitment both to their developments and their residents, through maintenance contracts and resident participation. Many are also at the forefront of innovation in housing design. Housing associations are in a unique position to set new standards for well-designed, innovative housing in the UK, by delivering exemplary projects to the highest standards of design and construction.

This publication examines both the context for affordable design in the UK and abroad, and the processes and design solutions adopted in each of the winning Anglo-French initiative projects. It draws out lessons that can be applied to any housing development and includes some inspirational projects to visit. Well-designed affordable housing can be built with dedicated clients and good designers, and this is shown by the experiences of the participants of the Anglo-French initiative.

Key project partners

CABA

CABA champions the creation of great buildings and public spaces. It is a non-departmental public body set up by the government in 1999. Through public campaigns and giving support to professionals, CABA encourages the development of well-designed homes, streets, parks, offices, schools, hospitals and other public buildings.

DAPA

DAPA (Direction de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine) has a remit to support and promote heritage, conservation and architecture in France.

The Housing Corporation

The Housing Corporation is the government agency responsible for regulating and investing in over 2,000 housing associations in England. It is responsible for protecting that investment to ensure decent homes and services for residents. Through regulation, it aims to promote a viable, properly governed and managed sector.

Octavia Housing and Care

Octavia Housing and Care is a housing association that owns and manages nearly 4,000 properties and has a development programme of around 600 homes. Its properties are concentrated in the core boroughs of Kensington & Chelsea, Westminster, Hammersmith & Fulham and Brent. Octavia provides both general needs housing management and specialist services, including care and support provision for elderly and vulnerable tenants and floating support for those residents who wish to remain in their homes.

Warden Housing

Warden Housing manages around 13,000 rented and shared ownership homes across the South and East of England. It aims to develop up to 4,000 new homes over the next five years. Warden Housing is part of the Home Group.

Summary – conclusions and lessons learnt

Several important lessons can be drawn from the experiences of Octavia Housing and Care and Warden Housing in taking part in the Anglo-French affordable housing initiative. These lessons are applicable to all new housing projects.¹

- Good clients invest enough time and resources in new building projects to exploit the opportunities to full effect
- Design benefits from the input of key stakeholders. They need to be identified early on and their needs must be understood and incorporated from the start
- Much can be learnt from visiting other successful projects. New typologies were developed by drawing on the experience of the French architects and from the case study visit to Paris
- Exploring innovative construction methods, including modern methods of construction, should be considered as a way to achieve lower life-cycle costs, higher standards and higher densities
- The involvement of the local planning authority at an early stage fosters a good working relationship and a smoother planning process

¹ Guidance on being a successful client can be found in *Creating Excellent Buildings: A Guide for Clients* available free from CABE (see Box 1)

- Partnering workshops reinforce a collaborative approach between the client, design team and constructor
- Community consultation is essential even when the new residents are not yet known. At White City, an improvement to the design resulted from concerns raised by consultees
- Using an architectural competition to procure design exposed the housing associations to a wider pool of designers and introduced new and fresh ideas.

Octavia Housing and Care embraced the project wholeheartedly and was prepared to invest in staffing and financial resources to enable the experience to influence its approach to future developments. This culminated in two awards for Octavia. It was nominated as one of CABE's 'festive five' public sector organisations in 2003 for demonstrating forward thinking and motivation to deliver better buildings and public spaces.

The Anglo-French winning scheme was also awarded a Design Project Award by Design for Homes in 2004. The judges said, "With its simple, logical approach to the potential of the site it brings a welcome breath of fresh French air to west London."

Warden has also found the reflective nature of the initiative useful, as it has not only continued pursuing projects with the architects, but is also addressing its internal team's skills, raising awareness of the importance of design. The initiative was a catalyst for the association to examine its processes and it has recently completed a series of internal training seminars.

“Following the completion of the seminars, we are now addressing a number of areas internally to ensure we build on what we have learnt. These are:

- Training of development staff – particularly in the assessment of design quality***
- Review of processes to ensure, for example, sufficient time is allowed for design***
- Review of approved list of architects to focus on design-led practices.***

Work is progressing well in all of these and we have recently launched an internal policy statement, ‘Championing Design Quality’, to emphasise the importance of design to the group.”

Sue Belk, development director, Warden Housing



Much can be learnt from visiting other successful projects such as this study trip to Paris
Image credit: Kent Architecture Centre



Box 1: **Creating excellent buildings**

CABE's publication, *Creating Excellent Buildings: A Guide for Clients* provides guidance for clients commissioning new building projects and outlines ten key ways to be a successful client:

- 1 Provide strong client leadership
- 2 Give enough time at the right time
- 3 Learn from your own and other successful projects
- 4 Develop and communicate a clear brief
- 5 Make a realistic financial commitment from the outset
- 6 Adopt integrated processes
- 7 Find the right people for the job
- 8 Respond and contribute to the context
- 9 Commit to sustainability
- 10 Sign off all key stages.

Opportunities for housing associations

The Anglo-French initiative focused on the provision of new affordable housing because this sector is experiencing increasing pressure and yet, at the same time, has the opportunity to lead the way in innovative housing design. The extreme pressures facing affordable housing development in London – chiefly land scarcity, high development costs and high property values – are increasingly being experienced elsewhere in England, particularly in the midlands and the south east, as well as in areas in and around some other major UK conurbations. The spread of these social and economic experiences across the UK suggests that the innovative approaches taken in pursuit of the Anglo-French initiative and by other associations in London should be transferable to other parts of the UK.

Owing to the demand for affordable housing, housing associations have a unique opportunity to improve the quality of the housing landscape in the UK, by building more attractive and innovative affordable homes, at high density and for mixed tenure. Survey work undertaken for CABA shows that this is what people want: they wish to live in well-designed, well-managed and better-connected places.

→
Homes for Change, Hulme
Architect: MBLC Ltd
(Phase One)
Build for Change +
Harrison Ince (Phase Two)
Image credit: Sabine
Engelhardt



→
Seedley and Langworthy
project, Salford
Image credit: Urban Splash

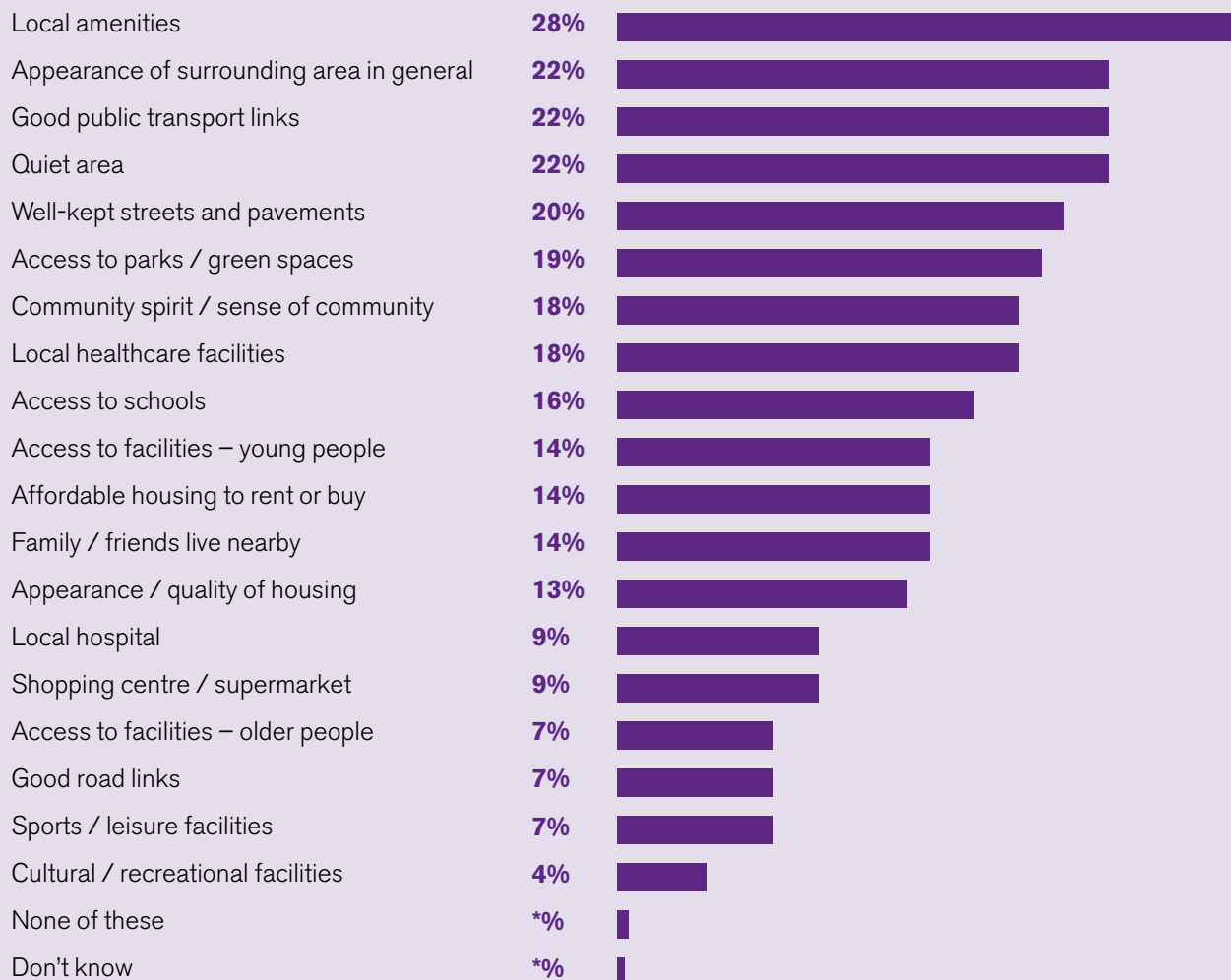


→
Dale Mill, Wardleworth &
Hamer, Rochdale
Architect & image credit:
Proctor and Matthews
Architects



Box 2: Research by MORI for CABE on the public's attitudes to architecture and public space has shown that local amenities, appearance of the area, well-kept streets and access to green spaces are among the most important factors in making an area a pleasant place to live

Question: Thinking specifically about each of the things on this list, which two or three, if any of these in your opinion, are most important in making an area a pleasant place to live?



Base: Adults aged 16+ in England (1,017) Fieldwork 22 September – 19 October 2004

* less than 1%

Some housing associations have taken the lead to improve the design quality of their new developments.

→
Ujima Housing Association,
Bloomfield Road, Woolwich
Architect & image credit: Walter
Menteth Architects

↓
Peabody Trust,
Beaufort Court, Fulham
Architect & image credit:
Feilden Clegg Bradley Architects



Housing associations can lead the way in raising the quality of how affordable housing is designed and delivered, but this may require an internal review of the culture within the organisation. For example, Warden Housing found that looking at the procurement process for selecting design teams and contractors and training staff has helped them raise standards.

Achieving higher densities demands innovative design solutions and the right team in place to deliver them. Achieving long-term solutions in a competitive funding market increases the need for innovation. Some housing associations have taken the lead to improve the design quality of their new developments and there are several good schemes that are worth visiting.



Housing associations have a long-term management and maintenance responsibility for their housing stock. Addressing maintenance issues at the design stage can allow them to build in life-cycle costs at the earliest opportunity. On a wider scale, housing associations also have an incentive to ensure that they nurture residents' welfare and quality of life and should extend their management skills to public spaces and neighbourhoods.



Irwell Valley Housing Association,
Chorlton Park, Manchester
Architect: Stephenson Bell Architects
Image credit: David Millington
Photography Limited



“It is essential to achieve a sustainable scheme both in social and physical terms. Resident groups and management and maintenance matters have very much informed the design process. Issues include collaborative lettings and sales plans with the local authority; implications of reduced levels of car parking; security arrangements and [a] feeling of security through design of common spaces and “home zones”; cost-effective upkeep of the scheme to Octavia; economic service costs to residents; and integrating the new community with the existing one.”

John Nixon, development manager,
Octavia Housing and Care

“In achieving the very best design quality we may be faced with making decisions on materials and components that could increase the initial capital costs on a scheme but in the long term will reduce life-cycle costs. Registered social landlords need to be able to “quantify” these advantages at an early stage and indeed involve maintenance teams in the initial design stages.”

Sue Belk, development
director, Warden Housing

Lessons from abroad

As the participants in the Anglo-French initiative found, English housing associations can learn useful lessons by turning to international best practice, as housing quality has not always been the priority here that it is elsewhere in Europe.

France, Germany, the Netherlands and Scandinavian countries have a wide range of housing models that exemplify issues such as community participation and ecological design. Here we highlight three examples, but there are many more. The building for life website, www.buildingforlife.org, contains international best practice case studies, as well as showcasing the best housing schemes in the UK.

↓
New housing typologies in
Borneo Sporenburg, Amsterdam
Image credit: CABE



Borneo Sporenburg, Amsterdam – new typologies

The key feature of Borneo Sporenburg is the reinterpretation of the traditional house. The masterplan stipulated that 30 to 50 per cent of each dwelling should be void, eliminating the need for private gardens, front and back.

This new house type allowed the development of a simple rectilinear street pattern, reflecting the traditional Amsterdam canal houses. Large sculptural apartment blocks give an urban scale and presence to the development. The combination of terraces and apartment blocks creates a mixed community of residents.

The masterplan prohibited on-street parking and instead parking is incorporated within the volume of the dwelling. This allows the streets to have a minimum width, maximising efficiency. By eliminating the semi-public zones of front gardens and parking spaces, the house is brought into a very direct relationship with the street, which is appropriate for this housing type.

The Borneo model used a select group of architects to ensure high-quality, thoughtful design, while limiting costs by the use of common floor-to-ceiling heights, structural frames and a limited palette of materials.



Public event in Hoogvliet, Rotterdam
Image credit: Fat



Home zone in Vauban, Freiburg
Image credit: CABE

WiMBY, Rotterdam – working in partnership

The 1950s satellite town of Hoogvliet has been the subject of large-scale redevelopment, involving the replacement of 8,000 houses and building new homes. The WiMBY initiative has established an approach to the initial stages of various regeneration projects in and around Hoogvliet. Its aim is to encourage interaction and collaboration between different parties, to create projects with greater life-expectancy.

Examples of WiMBY projects were a summer festival held in an area undergoing redevelopment, which was attended by 4,000 residents, and 'The Big Fix-Up', an exhibition and publication on the redevelopment of other Dutch new towns.

The WiMBY initiative has devised a 10-year programme of exhibitions, installations and education projects. It places the creative and sustained engagement of residents and stakeholders at the core of Hoogvliet's large-scale development plans.

Vauban, Freiburg – environmental regeneration on a former military barracks

The Vauban development in Freiburg was built on small land plots by private builders and Baugruppen (co-housing groups), with each group relatively free to design as it wished. Encouraging ecological design across the development stimulated car-free and parking-free environments. The common goal was to create a sustainable and flourishing neighbourhood.

In Vauban there are over 50 houses which meet passive housing standards and at least 100 with 'plus energy' standard (houses which produce more energy than they need). Vauban is one of the largest 'solar districts' in Europe. Solar panels and photovoltaic cells are common ornaments on rooftops across all parts of the development. Together with the solar panels, a co-generation plant, operating with wood chips and natural gas, provides hot water and 65 per cent of the electricity for the district. A water management system has been set up to increase rainwater infiltration and reduce run-off.

English housing
associations
can learn useful
lessons by turning
to international
best practice.

The Anglo-French competition process in the UK

Box 3: English competition timetable

December 2000

- Anglo-French initiative concept agreed between CABE and DAPA
- Inaugural workshop held in Paris looking at exemplary models of social housing

2002

- DAPA produces a publication: *Recent innovative social housing architecture in France and the United Kingdom* (copies available from CABE)

January 2003

- Architectural competition brief set
- Housing associations invited to put forward competition sites

March 2003

- Two English sites selected – White City and Rayners Lane Estate

May 2003

- Notice published in the *Official Journal of the European Union*
- Dedicated website launched for the initiative
- 34 entries – shortlist of seven go forward to second stage

June / July 2003

- Shortlist interviews
- English winners announced

August 2003

- First project development workshop – parameters set for research and best practice

September 2003

- Case study visit to Paris
- Second workshop – update on new issues arising on projects

March 2004

- Third workshop – research summarised to date and a discussion of lessons learnt.

Explanation of key stages

Site selection

(January – March 2003):

Before the competition was launched, housing associations were invited to put forward sites and to make a commitment to work with the winning teams to deliver well-designed and innovative affordable housing. Warden Housing and Octavia Housing and Care were selected as they had available and appropriate sites and were prepared to make this commitment to delivery.

Winning team selection

(May – July 2003):

The project website provided an opportunity for architectural practices to advertise for French or English partners. In practice, most teams were formed on the basis of previous working relationships or established mutual respect for each other's work. The standard of first-stage entries was very high. The strongest submissions demonstrated what the form of partnering would be and how the teams proposed working together. Each shortlisted team demonstrated a strong commitment to genuine collaboration with their overseas partners.

The judges were looking both for evidence of innovative thinking and experience in social housing. With the aim of the initiative being to share best practice, a good knowledge of the opportunities and limitations of each country's housing policy and practice was felt to be essential.

At interview, the shortlisted teams presented concept sketches for the sites and were required to demonstrate relevant experience, commitment to improving quality of life through design, recognition of the site constraints and opportunities, approaches to designing the site and a willingness to work closely with the client.

The judges were looking both for evidence of innovative thinking and experience in social housing.

Judging panel

Ian Ritchie, chair and CABE
emeritus commissioner

Alex Ely, CABE

Serge Renaudie and Olivier
Mourareau, representing DAPA

John Nixon and Mazhar Ali,
Octavia Housing and Care

Phil Griffiths, Warden Housing

Barbara Woda, London borough
of Hammersmith & Fulham

Norman Bell, Rayners Lane
Estate residents' association.

The sites

White City

Site and context

This is a complex site and forms part of an Opportunity Area in West London, as defined by the Greater London Authority's 2004 London Plan. As such, it is recognised as an area with the potential to provide significant numbers of new homes and jobs. Developments in opportunity areas are expected to contain a mix of land uses and maximise residential and non-residential densities.

The competition site is adjacent to a 34,000 square metre commercial development proposal comprising significant employment, leisure, retail and residential uses, including the redevelopment of White City tube station, a new cinema and library. A masterplan shows how the £700 million development relates to the competition site and the surrounding streets of traditional terraced housing. A network of pedestrian streets and squares is proposed across the scheme, connecting it to the new bus, mainline and London Underground interchange through a covered public square.

The local authority granted planning permission in October 1999, with a section 106 Agreement stipulating the provision of affordable housing. This provided the site for the Anglo-French initiative.



The site lies between terraced streets and new commercial development
Image credit: Cartwright Pickard Architects and B+C Architectes



The adjoining streets of terraces
Image credit: Cartwright Pickard Architects

The L-shaped site, to be developed by Octavia Housing and Care, connects the rear of the commercial development to the existing streets of Victorian terraces, giving rise to a number of issues that the architects had to tackle. Octavia is also developing key worker housing and additional affordable rented apartments on another part of the wider development site.



Rayners Lane Estate

Site and context

Rayners Lane Estate is the largest housing estate in the London borough of Harrow, with a well-established resident community. The 1960s-built estate was owned previously by the council, which transferred it to Warden Housing in November 2002. It is located seven miles north of White City, but within a very different environment – surrounded by low-density, post-war, suburban housing. A wider masterplan has been prepared, proposing the rehousing of all the existing residents over a period of eight years, in a mix of 735 units of houses and flats. The site to be developed as part of the Anglo-French initiative comprised phases 3 and 4 of the masterplan, made up of 35 and 95 units respectively. It proposed the construction of 40 units for sale, the remainder to rent, with an overall mix for the whole development of 70 per cent affordable housing.



↑
1960s-built Rayners Lane Estate
Image credit: Warden Housing

Rayners Lane Estate is the largest housing estate in the London borough of Harrow, with a well-established resident community.

The winning ideas

White City site, London

Winners: Cartwright Pickard Architects with B+C Architectes →

At White City the judges were impressed by the way B+C had planned the site to contend with the contrasting scale of the shopping centre and surrounding terrace housing. By orientating apartment blocks perpendicular to the street, shared garden spaces were created between the buildings. The collaborative approach was evident. UK best practice would tend to suggest a solution where buildings follow street lines and this was seen in a number of the submissions. However, the judges were convinced of the benefits of this alternative solution. Combined with Cartwright Pickard's knowledge of modern methods of construction (MMC) the judges felt that the scheme illustrated well a combination of French urban design thinking and UK procurement best practice.



Runners-up: Lab architecture and Atelier Seraji →

Highly commended: Featherstone Associates and Bernard Buhler →→



Rayners Lane Estate site, London

Winners: Proctor and Matthews
with Michel Kagan →

The judges were principally interested in how the winning team of Proctor and Matthews and Michel Kagan had explored a range of housing typologies that could be developed over the site. The urban design offered a sensible and well thought through approach with new streets linking to the surrounding street pattern, a public 'hub' with a marker building and landscaped space around which housing was accommodated in a block pattern. The team had placed particular focus on the design of terrace and courtyard houses with a high degree of internal flexibility. Their consideration of privacy and their treatment of external spaces were good. The internal layout of the homes was felt to be a lot more flexible than would be expected from UK social housing. The judges also felt that the team had already worked particularly closely and would be a good example of the collaborative Anglo-French approach.



Runners-up: Piercy Conner with DZö →



The design process – White City

Project details

Client: Octavia Housing and Care

Architects: Cartwright Pickard Architects and B+C Architectes

Landscape architect: Grant Associates

Structural engineer: Campbell Reith

Environmental engineer: atelier ten

Constructor: Como Group

Project manager and cost consultant: MDA

Local authority: London borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Site area: 0.81ha

Units: 78

Budget: £10.5 million (excluding land costs, professional fees, finance costs and VAT)

Construction date: March 2005 – September 2006

Tenure: Mixture of affordable rented accommodation and shared ownership (some of which are for key workers).

Mission statement

- For the new housing and external spaces to establish a real sense of place and wellbeing for its residents
- To achieve the successful integration of new housing with a world-class commercial development and to facilitate the transition from the older buildings and communities of the existing neighbourhoods to the new commercial development
- To achieve high-quality imaginative design of homes and public realm, incorporating innovative building technologies that can be built to high standards and will delight residents and those passing through the neighbourhood

Client

“Octavia’s driving vision is to deliver the highest quality holistic and sustainable development. White City is for us a unique opportunity to demonstrate our belief, commitment and ability to achieve the best for everyone.”

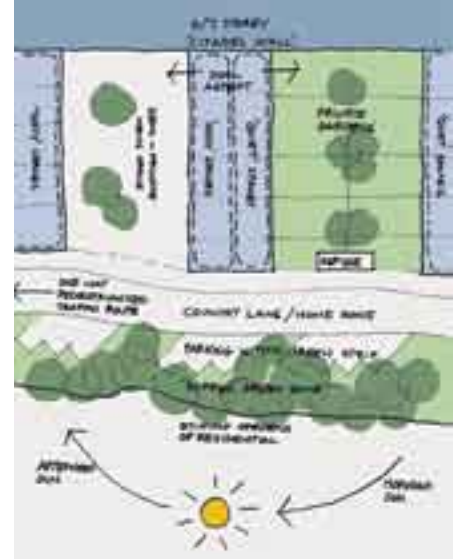
Grahame Hindes, chief executive,
Octavia Housing and Care

Octavia Housing and Care seized the opportunities presented by the initiative to inform future developments. They have embraced the project wholeheartedly and have invested significant staffing and financial resources in it. Octavia wanted to work in partnership with all stakeholders. They invited the local authority planners and the project’s design and conservation team to participate in the initiative workshops, and held partnering workshops with the design team and constructor.

Design

The proposed design is for 78 units of rented and shared ownership accommodation. The design team did not use the traditional British terrace as a model, but was heavily influenced by French urban housing models. Four- to five-storey blocks sit perpendicular to the boundary wall formed by the commercial development. The elevations to the blocks, or 'fingers', are broken up by generous balconies, while the roof line is broken up by small garden terraces allowing each block of housing to take on its own character. The end elevations are cut back at

ground and first-floor level, forming a double-height, fully glazed entrance to the first-floor flats. The 32 maisonettes on the ground floors are accessed individually. Timber composite panels are proposed for the external cladding. All flats are dual aspect and the spaces between the buildings are to be landscaped alternately as entrance courts and private gardens. The concept behind the design of the external spaces is to 'build within a landscape', creating many types of private and public green spaces, from private gardens to a public 'wild garden' and areas for unrestricted play.



↑
The spaces between blocks are landscaped as entrance courts and gardens
Image credit: Cartwright Pickard Architects & B+C Architectes



↑
Double-height, fully glazed entrance to the first-floor flats
Image credit: Cartwright Pickard Architects & B+C Architectes

←
The elevations are broken up by generous balconies
Image credit: Cartwright Pickard Architects & B+C Architectes

Modern methods of construction

Octavia has been keen to reduce the impact of construction on the surrounding neighbourhood, as the existing grain is high density with relatively narrow streets. The association is exploring off-site manufacture (OSM) and other modern methods of construction (MMC) to achieve this. There is the added incentive of central government encouragement for new developments using these approaches. The designers were asked to use tried and tested products in new ways. For example, in response to the proposed cladding, which is relatively unusual in this country, Octavia researched the application of this and other cladding systems in Holland and Austria.

Planning

The local authority, the London borough of Hammersmith & Fulham, has given great support to the White City scheme and has responded positively to Octavia's commitment to developing an exemplary affordable housing project. Local plan standards have been considered carefully in light of the designs proposed and the knowledge gained of successful French projects. For example, this scheme has a narrower distance between residential windows than is usual in UK practice. The local authority was convinced that this was an appropriate approach on this site. As B+C Architectes' Dino Coursaris said, '[The UK] shouldn't be afraid to do this [as] streets have benefited because of increased intimacy.'

The local authority granted planning approval for the White City scheme in April 2004.



Blocks sit perpendicular to the boundary wall of the commercial development
Image credit: aerial photo courtesy of Ian Ritchie Associates, scheme image by Cartwright Pickard Architects & B+C Architectes



The architects explored landscaping treatments allowing each block to take on its own character
Image credit: Cartwright Pickard Architects & B+C Architectes



Practice

B+C Architectes have maintained their influence on the design as it has developed.

Partnering workshops were set up to engender a collaborative and integrated approach between the client and the design and construction teams from the outset. A 'value framework' was agreed for the scheme – a set of principles against which decisions would be engineered. Octavia accepts that this process could be improved for future projects, to achieve better design decisions and greater value for money. Incentives were considered so that the project team would share in the achievement and be rewarded for hitting financial targets.

Community consultation

Octavia held public meetings to advise residents from the surrounding neighbourhood of progress on the scheme and to seek their views towards refining the early designs. The housing association did not yet know the identities of the prospective tenants, so held a series of meetings with people from local tenant forums, including the Hammersmith & Fulham tenant representative group, to get their response to the design so far.

They were positive about the bold design but concerned that overhangs would be places for teenagers to congregate. This led to a change in the design of these areas, incorporating double-height glazed entrances to increase lighting and natural surveillance.

Procurement

This initiative has engaged Octavia in two new key areas: how it chooses a design team and who it partners to construct the designs. Where Octavia would normally have selected a team from the usual panel of architects, it has now been exposed to an alternative method of procuring design from a wider pool of designers using an architectural competition.

Octavia is partnering with a new contractor, Como Group, which was selected because of its ability to make valuable contributions in the design and pre-construction period and its willingness to sign up to the overall aims and objectives of the project.

The housing association is committing up to £1.5 million of its reserves to the White City scheme (including the additional affordable and key worker housing in the second phase, not forming part of the competition). It is investing £45,000 from the Community Fund, to form links into employment training and childcare initiatives, which it sees as crucial in settling and integrating families into the area. Its experienced support team will link with local schools and nurseries.



↑
Perspective view from street
Image credit: Cartwright Pickard Architects & B+C Architectes

↓
Meetings were held with local tenant representatives
Image credit: Cartwright Pickard





Through the use of an architectural competition to procure design, the initiative has exposed Octavia to a wider pool of designers.

↑
The design at planning approval stage
Image credit: Cartwright Pickard Architects & B+C Architectes

Key lessons

- Good clients invest the time and resources in new building projects necessary to exploit the opportunities offered to full effect
- Better designs are achieved with the input of key stakeholders. They must be identified early on, and their needs understood and incorporated from the start
- Much can be learnt from visiting other successful projects. New typologies were developed by drawing on the experience of the French architect and from the case-study visit to Paris
- Exploring innovative techniques, including modern methods of construction, should be considered early on as a way to achieve lower life-cycle costs, higher standards and higher densities
- Involving the local planning authority at an early stage fosters a good working relationship and a smoother planning process
- Partnering workshops reinforce a collaborative approach between the client, design team and constructor
- Community consultation is essential even when the new residents are not yet known. In this case, an improvement to the design resulted from concerns raised by consultees
- Through the use of an architectural competition to procure design, the initiative has exposed Octavia to a wider pool of designers.

The design process – Rayners Lane Estate

Project details

Client: Warden Housing

Architects: Proctor and Matthews with Michel Kagan

Local authority: London borough of Harrow

Units: Development of phases 3 and 4 of the masterplan, comprising approximately 35 and 95 units respectively, as part of a phased development of 735 units (phase 1 is under construction)

Budget: £11 million (excluding land costs, professional fees, finance costs and VAT)

Tenure: Mostly to rent, with 40 units for sale.



↑
It is important to engage with residents early in the process
Image credit: Warden Housing

Mission statement

Working with local residents to create a new living environment that will delight them.

Client

Warden viewed the Anglo-French initiative as the perfect opportunity for the residents to work with architects to raise their aspirations for the proposed housing in phases 3 and 4 of the redevelopment programme for the Rayners Lane Estate. The housing association selected the team including Proctor and Matthews because of their previous inventive use of traditional materials and their experience of working closely with multicultural residents. Warden encouraged the residents' association to participate early in the competition process and invited a resident to sit on the judging panel for the design competition.

There were several hurdles for the architects and the residents to overcome. Influenced by the poor quality of their existing system-built houses and flats, the residents had deep-seated concerns regarding innovation and modern methods of construction (MMC). In fact, their views had been enshrined in a document stipulating traditional methods of construction using brick and block, adopted by Warden as part of the stock transfer. The stock transfer also included a requirement for the residents to be participants in an 'elevations competition', during the design stage of each phase of housing, to select the external style of development from a series of options.

The residents expressed a strong desire to work again with the original design-and-build team for the first redevelopment phase of the site, as they felt they had already built up a good working relationship with them.

A valuable lesson learnt is that it is vital to check what design restrictions have been placed on a site and to communicate these clearly to the architects in the project briefing. In this case, a fantastic opportunity for collaborative resident and architect working was missed. The requirement for an elevations competition, in particular, placed a restriction on the architects' creativity and their ability to work with the residents to develop appropriate buildings for the site. Warden has learnt a lot from the experience, which has resulted in a comprehensive review of the association's internal policies and procedures and has put it in a much stronger client leadership position for future projects.

Although the winning scheme will not be built on the Rayners Lane Estate, it is worth exploring the ideas and concepts that the architects proposed for the site. Warden Housing is committed to working with the winning team to develop proposals for another site and a new neighbourhood should still result from the competition, albeit later than originally intended.

→

The architects explored courtyard housing models
 Image credit: Proctor and Matthews Architects & Michel Kagan

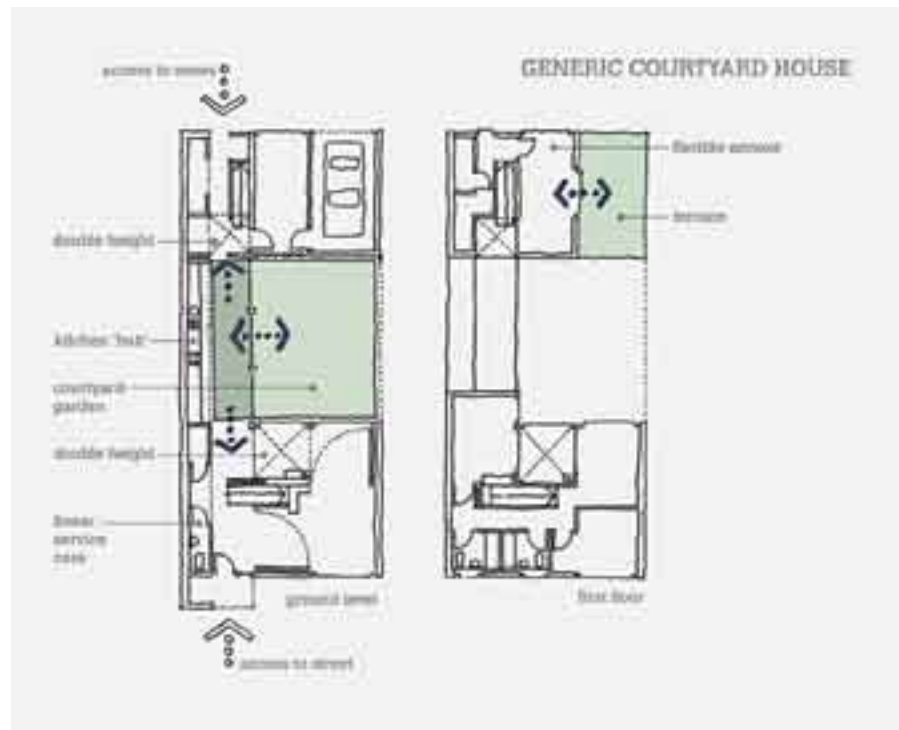
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Proctor and Matthews were selected because of prior innovative uses of traditional materials at Abode, Newhall, Harlow
 Architect: Proctor and Matthews Architects
 Image credit: Countryside Properties



↓

The winning team showed a commitment to joint working
 Image credit: Proctor and Matthews Architects

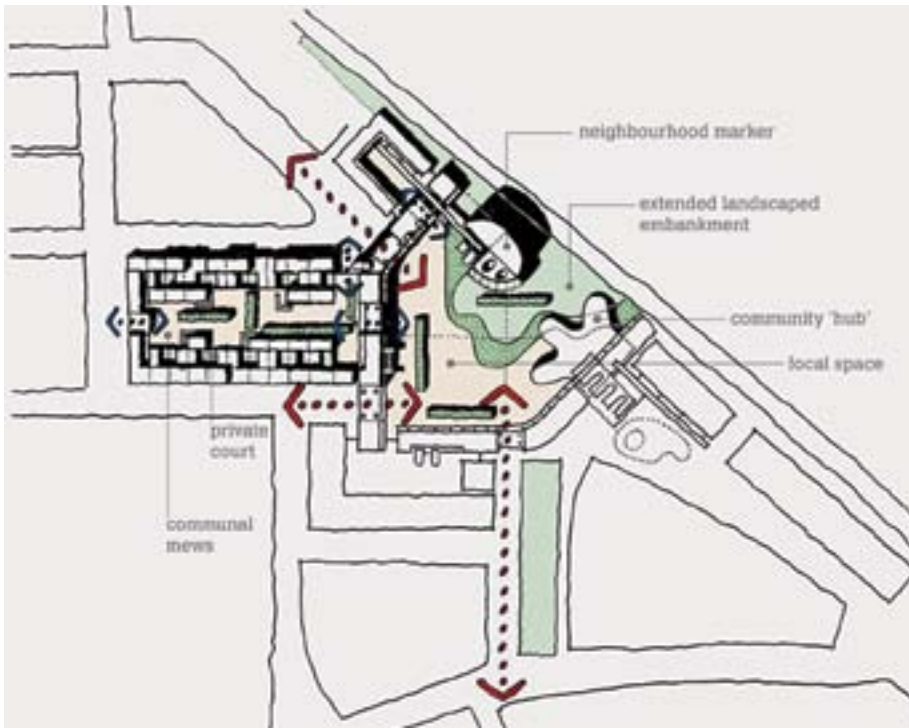


Design

The existing masterplan did not meet government density requirements, lacked opportunities for achieving a sense of place and did not have a mix of accommodation types. The design team wanted to work with residents to alter the masterplan and help create an identity for the new phases, as at present nothing distinguishes them. The architects considered that the traditional typology of the front and back garden terrace was limited, as the houses would all have the same footprint irrespective of the requirements of individual residents. The design team wished to create a housing typology that would be adaptable to changes in the lifestyle of the residents over time.

Preliminary ideas explored courtyard and mews housing models inspired by London mews to address the need for higher densities and replace problematic Radburn layouts on the estate. In an attempt to push the boundaries of the residents' stipulation for traditional materials, the design team was keen to explore alternatives offered by MMC to achieve greater flexibility of internal space and more options for different patterns of occupancy. MMC also allowed alternative building volumes and layouts, including opportunities for courtyard type development, for example, through a 'bande active', literally translated as a band of activity, of living area and kitchen.

The design team wanted to work with residents to alter the masterplan and help create an identity for the new phases



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A mews and courtyard approach
Image credit: Proctor and Matthews
Architects & Michel Kagan



←
Early ideas
Image credit: Proctor and
Matthews Architects &
Michel Kagan

The design team wanted to engage residents in a different way through starting with designing the insides of the building rather than becoming fixated on external materials and appearances at the outset. At the resident meeting in October 2003, some participants showed considerable enthusiasm for this proposal, particularly after seeing some of the work of Michel Kagan and the possibility that they might live in similarly designed homes.



↓
Some of the residents were
enthusiastic about Michel Kagan's
work: Rue de L'Amiral Mouchez, Paris
Image credit: Michel Kagan

The design team wanted to engage residents in a different way through starting with designing the insides of the building rather than becoming fixated on external materials and appearances at the outset.





←
 Designing from the inside out
 Image credit: Proctor and Matthews
 Architects & Michel Kagan



Key lessons

- It is essential to consult with existing residents early on in the process and to take on board their ideas
- The design team raised interesting ideas about using MMC to provide flexible layouts that would allow different patterns of occupancy
- The proposed method of designing from the inside first, rather than becoming fixated with external style, enthused some of the residents.



←
 Bathroom pods constructed in a
 factory. An example of modern
 methods of construction.
 Image credit: Proctor and
 Matthews Architects

Case study visits



The participants benefited from study trips to Paris
Image credit: CABE

There is a great deal to be gained by actually visiting newly created housing projects, seeing the day-to-day workings and understanding the practical issues involved. Study tours are also extremely useful in providing ideal opportunities to exchange information and bring questions to the surface. Theoretical knowledge gains new meaning when people have firsthand experience of development in other countries, especially where contacts are made with other industry professionals. This exposure offers not only practical information, but also a more thorough appreciation of different lifestyles and environments.



Initiative participants view the model for Paris Rive Gauche
Image credit: Kent Architecture Centre



Overall observations from the Paris case study visit

- Floor-to-ceiling heights are more generous in France: France 2.5 metres and UK 2.3 to 2.4 metres
- There is greater use of balconies as private garden space
- Flexible space offered by thoughtful construction allows individuals to exercise choice in layout
- Kitchens and bathrooms are generally smaller than UK standards
- There is more storage space
- All the visited housing had a concierge and clean, well-kept public areas
- Management of housing is very intensive – the concierge is a natural part of the building and doubles as a caretaker
- It is assumed that tenants will have good neighbour skills and the ability to manage conventional security systems and communal areas.

Note: When the French projects progress, we would hope to make a comparison of costs between the English and French projects.

Projects visited

Rue de L'Amiral Mouchez, Paris 14

Architect: Michel Kagan

Rue Gobert et Richard Lenoir, Paris 11

Architect: Arnaud Delloye (formely of B+C Architectes)

Rue Emile Durkheim, Paris 13

Architect: Francis Soler.

The visit to Paris in September 2003 included site visits to urban housing projects designed by both French practices involved in the Anglo-French initiative. All the participants appreciated the benefits of learning from abroad.

Planning lessons

The exposure to French projects had very significant impacts on the White City scheme as it encouraged the local authority to apply local plan standards flexibly for this scheme, for instance reducing the minimum acceptable distance between habitable rooms from 18 metres to 15 metres.

Design lessons

The visit also allowed the two teams of clients and architects to talk to each other in a spirit of greater openness, as well as to residents living in the case-study schemes. There were clear differences in space standards between French and UK housing but the inventiveness of spaces internally and externally was much more prevalent in the French projects. The quality of materials and shared spaces was generally good.

Balconies and roof terraces provided external private spaces for each apartment; otherwise, all other outdoor spaces were shared. The architects at White City have drawn on these influences and each dwelling has its own private outdoor space in the form of a balcony, terrace or garden.

In general, in Paris, the most common model of accommodation was the apartment rather than the house.

“Some of the use of space internally was good within the French projects... we have made use of the double-height living rooms where possible. Height of rooms seems generally better in France. Some of us found the French schemes attractive and innovative but also more quirky, idiosyncratic and individual but not [always] very practical. For example, some top rooms on one scheme had high windows in habitable rooms to allow light in but it was not possible to see outside through them. One scheme had interesting finishes for internal common parts. External landscaping was attractive and the French are much happier with using hard surfaces in simple and attractive ways. None of the schemes seen in Paris catered well for people with wheelchairs. Access was seemingly less good than in the UK.”

John Nixon, development manager,
Octavia Housing and Care

Rue de L'Amiral Mouchez, Paris 14

Michel Kagan

- 70 units on four or five floors
- Completed in January 2000
- Construction: chiefly in-situ concrete, prefabrication.

Michel Kagan approaches the design of his buildings on the basis of three key points:

- Views from the new building and how to create and use them
- Interiors and how to live in them
- Semi-public/semi-private spaces, where preparation is made for leaving behind the street space and entering the private space of the development.

Special efforts have been made to provide for the privacy of ground-floor duplexes by using small exterior thresholds. For flats, the natural site gradient has been optimised to elevate floor levels of the flats a little above ground level.

→ Image credit: CABE



Where flats are located on the street, a patio has been included in the heart of the building, making it possible to keep street noise out while at the same time being able to open some windows and enjoy quiet private outdoor space.

→ Image credit: Kent Architecture Centre



↓ Image credit: Michel Kagan



Distinctive internal features include a double-height living space, spiral staircase, good internal light from clerestory windows and external private balcony space. Units have two bathrooms, one on each floor.

↓ Image credit: Kent Architecture Centre



The apartments have small private ground-floor gardens – most outdoor use is anticipated to be on private balconies or in the communal areas.

↓ Image credit: Kent Architecture Centre



There is a trade-off to be made between quality of space and maintenance and management needs. One resident did complain that she was unable to clean the glass in the high windows in the living space. Spiral stairs are not suitable for families with small children or the elderly and so a tenant selection policy is used.

← Image credit: Michel Kagan

Rue Gobert et Richard Lenoir, Paris 11

Arnaud Delloye

- Units: 63 apartments, with five artists' live/work studios
- Completed in 2003
- Construction: concrete structure with brick cladding.

The local authority had planned to demolish the whole site for redevelopment; however, squatters were able to stop wholesale clearance. The development now sits between and links with adjacent 19th-century housing which has gradually been refurbished as part of the wider area improvements.

↓ Image credit: Arnaud Delloye



The building incorporates some provision for artists on the third floor, with triple-height studio spaces and access to a gantry to move work in and out of the flats.

↓ Image credit: Kent Architecture Centre





The design of the ground-floor apartments has considered the needs of disabled residents.

↑ Image credit: Arnaud Delloye

The building form is developed around an internal courtyard with links to the wider site beyond.

← Image credit: Kent Architecture Centre

↓ Image credit: Arnaud Delloye



Rue Emile Durkheim, Paris 13

Francis Soler

- 93 units plus crèche and underground car park
- Neighbourhood garden
- Completed in 1997
- Construction: in-situ concrete floor slabs, perimeter columns and a central spine where vertical service runs, common stairs and lifts are located. Dry-mounted partitions and party walls.

The ground floor incorporates commercial and amenity uses, including shops, car park, nursery and restaurants.

↓ Image credit: Francis Soler



This project is part of an exemplar development adjacent to the national library and the wider redevelopment of 'Paris Rive Gauche'.

↑ Image credit: Francis Soler





Key internal features include high-quality spaces, lots of storage space, private and usable internal balconies, generous floor-to-ceiling heights and a generally spacious feel.

← Image credit: Francis Soler



The glazed elevations are printed with a different motif on each floor to increase privacy and to give the floors their own identities. The building is constructed with few structural walls and the floor slabs are made of concrete to help dissipate noise transmission.

↑ Image credit: Francis Soler



The double-skin glazing has external shutters that reduce solar gain in summer and heat loss in winter.

← Landscaped communal gardens
Image credit: CABE

Acknowledgments

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