

September 2018

Specification Today

Materials Library

Henley Halebrown

Workplace

Your Space by Gensler Keppie council offices in Dumbarton

Specifiers Choice

Newground Architects at Rehearsal Rooms, west London

Brick

Buildings by AHMM and Francis Terry

My Object of Desire

by Andrew Henriques



Overground Underground

Newground Architects' affordable housing project refines everyday materials to special effect

Photos

Steven Cholerton, Jack Hobhouse,

Newground Architects' Rehearsal Rooms, a high-density, mixed-use development, is one of the first purpose-designed for the Build-to-Rent (BTR) sector in London. As part of an emerging neighbourhood centred around the North Acton underground station and public square, the project's ambition is to create a community designed around residents' real needs. Newground Architects' approach was to demonstrate that a contemporary, contextual, urban living environment can be achieved with a modest budget through considered design and specification.

An initial planning consent, dating from 2014, was for a scheme of 152 flats within a modulated mass comprising a 17-storey tower to the west and an 11-storey tower to the east, connected by a four-storey link block. Another planning consent in 2016, approved while the building was under construction, allowed three additional levels on the east tower, increasing the provision to 173 flats.

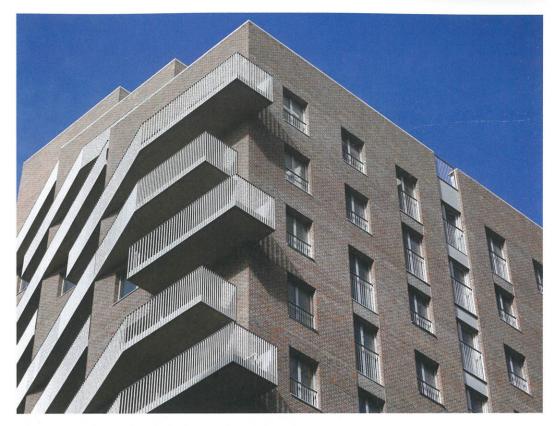


Brick facade

The richly coloured brick is selected for its hand-made appearance and warm mix of red, purple and orange hues, as well as for its technical properties of resistance to moisture and frost. Thanks to the lively variety of colours, the brick appears surprisingly different under different daylight conditions, adding visual and tactile interest to the architectural form and massing. A limited palette of robust materials and a strong sense of relief is accentuated by the full brick reveal to evoke solidity and permanence.



Repeated openings, balconies and railings constitute a spare vocabulary of carefullyresolved details. Sliding doors, which provide access to the balconies from all living rooms, maximise the use of uninterrupted space. Views through openplan layouts further reinforce a connection from the inside out. The fenestration is comparatively generous in extent to ensure plenty of natural light while preventing overheating and ensuring high levels of acoustic comfort, despite the proximity to busy roads and open tube tracks. Windows have appropriately sized inward-opening casements for easy cleaning from inside and to minimise intrusion into the internal space. Low window cill heights, protected by unobtrusive external railings allow expansive views from all rooms.



The concrete balconies and metal

balustrades are integral to the architecture, their geometry and detailing providing articulation, rhythm and interest as well as privacy and views. The balustrade uses 42mm steel tubes for visual substance, in contrast with the 15mm railings to windows, which seem to disappear in a large building. Using plastic tubing mockups in the architect's studio, the size and spacing of the tubes was explored for transparency and enclosure. Despite the varying spacing, the balustrade is composed of only three standardised sections for easy fabrication. The smooth factory colour-coating was specified to complement the texture of the brickwork and concrete soffit.







30 | ST4

A logical plan of a few well-resolved repeated parts underpins the efficiency of the scheme at all levels, from maximising the use of space to simplifying structural, servicing and detailing solutions. This rational approach is expressed in the use of a small range of materials in well-considered combinations. Large sheltered balconies in the open-plan flats extend the useable private space while social interaction is encouraged by a range of strategically located communal spaces and

Project team

Architect
Newground Architects,
Clients
Hub Residential, M&G
Real Estate
Engineer
Price & Myers (1-3),
Manhire Assocs (4-5)
Contractor
Hemry Construction
Landscape architect
BD Landscape Architects
M&E consultant
Scotch Partners (client),
Beechfield Consulting
(contractor)
Sustainability
Scotch Partners
Planning consultant

Costs, project manager Faithful & Gould

Acoustic consultant

Selected suppliers & subcontractors

Bricks
Michelmersh Freshfield
Lane First Quality Multi
(primary) and Selected
Dark (link block,
window panels)
Balustrades
Architectural Metalwork
Installations
Frameless doorsets
Selo Arriva, Quadra
(common areas)
Floor tiles
Nicholts & Clarke
Nicobond Studio Range
Landscape furniture
Streetlife (standard and
customised) Mobile
Green Isles, Shrubtubs
Square CorTen planters,
Rough & Ready Benches,







Frameless full-height doors

The metal frame to the internal doors also acts as the plaster bead and does away with the need for architraves. In combination with full-height timber door leaves, the flow of space and feeling of light is maximised. The specification at Rehearsal Rooms was the first large-scale application of the system in the country. The product was researched for practicalities of installation in the architect's own offices and for wear and tear by visiting a smaller five-year-old development.



Ceramic tiles and resin-bonded stone countertops

The use of large-format porcelain tiles throughout the living spaces further enhances the flow and apparent dimensions of the spaces. Coordinated with the standard 600mm module of the kitchen fittings and appliances, this is also a practical solution for durability and maintenance in the pet-friendly development. Classic 100mm square mattglazed white tiles are used for the kitchen splashbacks and full-height in the bathrooms. There are only five kitchen and three bathroom types in the entire development. The replication of bathrooms and kitchens led to economy of scale and allowed the sourcing of highquality fittings and finishes, which include resin-bonded countertops, at a reasonable price.

Landscape and outdoor furniture

The Rehearsal Rooms occupies almost the entire footprint of its site, so the use of roofs as terraces and gardens plays a major part in providing external amenity space, which is mostly shared. These spaces are strategically located and attractively landscaped to encourage use, giving residents access to fresh air, natural light and green space as well as the opportunity for social interaction. Landscape furniture including planters for trees, flowers and allotment gardening, seating and barbecues are standard products customised to great effect.



ST4 | 33