



**Offices**

Parry in Cambridge

**Forum**

Wendy Perring, Jo McCafferty,  
Patrick O'Keeffe, Carl Galiato

**Works**

Thomas Randall-Page and  
Benedetta Rogers, Simpson  
Haugh, Featherstone Young,  
Cottrell & Vermeulen

**Focus**

Sustainability: Architype

**Event**

Kitchen in the Workplace

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

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.

## Fenestration

Repeated openings, balconies and railings constitute a spare vocabulary of carefully-resolved details. Sliding doors, which provide access to the balconies from all living rooms, maximise the use of uninterrupted space. Views through open-plan 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.



## Balconies

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.





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**  
Henry Construction  
**Landscape architect**  
BD Landscape Architects  
**M&E consultant**  
Scotch Partners (client),  
Beechfield Consulting  
(contractor)  
**Sustainability**  
Scotch Partners  
**Planning consultant**  
Savills  
**Costs, project  
manager**  
Faithful & Gould  
**Acoustic consultant**  
Adnitt Acoustics

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**  
Nicholls & Clarke  
Nicobond Studio Range  
**Landscape furniture**  
Streetlife (standard and  
customised) Mobile  
Green Isles, Shrubtubs  
Square CorTen planters,  
Rough & Ready Benches,  
Giant Flowerpots



**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 matt-glazed 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 high-quality 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.

