

At home.

40 years of Pollard Thomas Edwards





Timeline. 40 years of PTE



WOODBRIDGE ESTATE
Islington, 1977



FITZJOHNS AVENUE
Camden, 1980



ELDON GROVE
Camden, 1981



CHERRYWOOD CLOSE
Tower Hamlets, 1997



TERRACOTTA COURT
Southwark, 2000



FISH ISLAND
Tower Hamlets, 2005



CONNAUGHT GARDENS
Haringey, 2009



PAGE ROAD
Hounslow, 2011



THAMES VIEW EAST
Barking & Dagenham, 2014



AYLESBURY ESTATE
Southwark, current



ST LUKES MUSWELL HILL
Haringey, current



WING
Cambridge, current



ALMA ESTATE
Enfield, current



LEYBOURNE STREET
Camden, 1979



TOWER & YORK HOUSES
Westminster, 1984



OLD ROYAL FREE SQUARE
Islington, 1993



LINGHAM COURT
Lambeth, 2005



ANGEL WATERSIDE
Islington, 2008



TIDEMILL ACADEMY
Lewisham, 2011



MICAWBER STREET
Islington, 2014



ONE WOOLWICH
Greenwich, current



ONE PENTONVILLE ROAD
Islington, current

1974

1984

1994

2004

2014

COLEBROOKE ROW OFFICE
Islington, 1976



FRESTON ROAD
Kensington, 1985



LITHOS ROAD
Camden, 1996



CHILLINGWORTH ROAD
Islington, 2001



ARUNDEL SQUARE
Islington, 2010



PACKINGTON ESTATE PHASE 1
Islington, 2012



RODEN COURT
Haringey, 2012



THE AVENUE
Uttlesford, 2014



BLACKHORSE LANE
Waltham Forest, current



CENTRAL CHELMSFORD
Chelmsford, current



NORLAND ROAD
Shepherd's Bush, 1976



NEW CONCORDIA WHARF
Southwark, 1984



ANCHOR BREWHOUSE
Southwark, 1989



HAVERSTOCK HILL
Camden, 1995



CRYSTAL WHARF
Islington, 2003



ELLESMERE HOUSE
Kensington & Chelsea, 2007



BARNSBURY PLACE
Islington, 2012



HIGHBURY QUADRANT
Islington, 2012



CB1 CERES
Cambridge, 2014



NEW NORTH ROAD
Islington, current



CHOBHAM FARM
Newham, current



WALTHAMSTOW TOWN CENTRE
Waltham Forest, current



QUAD
Cambridge, current





I value my relationship with Pollard Thomas Edwards because I value London, and so do they. Like master tailors cherishing the fabric of the great city we share, their work is elegant, elemental, economical, always cut and stitched with an assured élan, eschewing the flashy in favour of the fitting, predicated on the idea of getting the right solution to complex urban problems. And, what's more, PTE makes homes, not statements or landmarks, but dwellings for Londoners, places for people and hubs for communities.

They also make working with them a pleasure. At their light and graceful canal-side home there is joy in the air and pride in the large map which graces the entrance. This shows the numerous schemes and projects PTE has contributed to our patchwork city, an impressive cluster of dots, each of them representing the PTE ethos at work. And they also know how to have fun. PTE parties are every bit as good as their buildings.

Robert Elms
writer and broadcaster

The virtues of evolution: 40 years of Pollard Thomas Edwards by Paul Finch

Take a walk around the London Borough of Islington, along Upper Street to the tube station at Highbury Corner, then up the Holloway Road. With minor detours from these main arteries, you will discover a short history of contemporary London housing design. What you might not realise, looking at half a dozen or so projects, is that they are all designed by the same architect: Pollard Thomas Edwards.

The projects in this slice of London demonstrate the significant incremental change PTE has led. Making the most of an often magnificent Victorian heritage has and continues to be a feature of its approach – from the restoration of a redundant hospital, the Old Royal Free Square in Islington, and a burnt-out factory at Drapers Place in the early 1990s, to the construction of the missing fourth side of Arundel Square in 2010 and a new urban quarter within the Barnsbury

conservation area. A project from 1998 on Chillingworth Road then gives clues as to how the practice likes to operate in the new urban condition. It created a joint venture with a private housebuilder and housing association to produce a mixed-tenure scheme and forerunner of the new London vernacular.

This is the sort of outcome that might be described, to use a PTE phrase, as ‘visible mending’, where the fabric of the city is enhanced by design based on diagrammatic proposition in respect of site and programme, rather than by the generic or wilful imposition of a set style. How do you know the work is by PTE? You don’t, but one of its arguments about the city is that good architecture can be modest without being dull. This is not a ‘look at me’ attitude.

It is not easy to convey to younger architects how different the world was in 1974, when Roger Pollard, Bill Thomas and



John Edwards founded PTE. We were in the middle of an economic and political crisis triggered by the Middle East war and subsequent huge increases in oil prices; much of the architectural profession was still employed by the public sector in its many guises, and housing was very much the province of that public sector in the form of local authorities, housing associations and New Towns. There was a working assumption that ‘predict and provide’ would inform the supply of housing and that the private sector would go about its business without necessarily dominating the market.

Top-down public provision – an echo of the command economy that continued after the end of World War II – was regarded as normal, rather than an exception. This was a world where you could not take more than £50 abroad with you unless you wanted to risk breaching currency regulations. The idea that ‘the man in Whitehall knows best’ was alive and well. Conservative-controlled councils, such as Westminster, were still proud of their home-building programmes and used architectural competitions to procure good designers.

And yet, question marks were already beginning to be asked about the consequences of the mass housing estate programmes that had defined the public supply-side for three decades. The scandal of incompetent system building – typified by the collapse of the 22-storey Ronan Point tower block in London’s East End in 1968 – had highlighted the extent to which the ideals of local authority architect departments had started to crumble.

While the Greater London Council continued to produce good work as the result of committed architects, this activity was taking place in the context of a distrust of cities by organisations such as the Town & Country Planning Association, which took the view that garden cities beat the old industrial conurbations when it came to building quality – and quality of life.

It is hard to credit now, but public money was lavished on marketing campaigns encouraging employers to leave the capital and take their workers with them to expanding overspill and New Towns. London was depopulating, leaving huge areas to be

Bottom left

Old Royal Free Square (1993). The restoration and conversion of Islington’s redundant Victorian hospital created a new London Square

Below

Arundel Square (2010) completes the missing fourth side of a historic Islington square and transforms a public park

regenerated – again at public expense – decades later.

Architecturally, the public housing sector appeared to be running out of steam. The GLC had abandoned tower blocks as an ideal (a decision taken in 1960, though the tail of approved proposals took years to complete). Thamesmead housing estate had become best known as a film set for Stanley Kubrick’s film, *A Clockwork Orange*, and hence associated with a violent dystopia, rather than a viable way forward for housing design.

What was going to happen next?

PTE was part of the answer, one of a small number of practices interested in finding precedent for ‘good ordinary’ housing rather than novel propositions that may or may not work in practice.

It was interested in re-use of the existing where that made sense, and in the idea of street-based communities, which were vanishing under the weight of mega-structure developments such as the Aylesbury Estate in Southwark – where PTE is currently on site with the latest phase of redevelopment, reconnecting the estate with its pre-war surroundings.

Even when clients were public sector, the PTE proposition was based on what it might feel like to be a resident living in that development, rather than what the impersonal

client might be thinking. At the time, architects – particularly those that worked for local authorities – were being criticised by influential journalists such as Ian Nairn for designing experimental homes that paid homage to Modernist ideals, while quietly going home to ‘ordinary’ terraced houses built by the Georgians, Victorians and Edwardians, doubtless with modernised kitchens. This was too true to be good. PTE was suggesting that it would be possible to create contemporary versions of traditional street houses and mansion blocks, which would work equally well for people across the income spectrum.

The work examined in the following pages has a direct relationship to those original PTE ideas. Indeed, the attitudes from which they sprang have become mantras for the succession of architects who have worked, or now work, for the 130-strong practice. Direct development has long been part of PTE’s practice armoury, explaining one of its mantras, that ‘the only building material is money’.

From its Islington base at Diespeker Wharf, PTE continues to plough a housing furrow, though these days it also undertakes schools, offices, shops and town centre masterplans. Much of the work is for existing clients – 80 per cent in fact, an extraordinarily high figure for an expanding practice. Growth

has demonstrably been accompanied by an increase in awards and determination to maintain and improve quality. Arundel Square has scooped nine awards, including the 2011 Housing Design Award and 2012 New London Award: Public Space. The expanding canvas of building types continues to prompt fresh design ideas.

The repopulating of central London, allied to growth in households and increasing longevity, has contributed to PTE’s growth, producing fresh challenges that have as much to do with delivery policies as detailed design. Much of the practice’s work is focused on London and related growth areas, from relatively small projects to significant urban masterplans. PTE’s research on ‘third age’ housing innovation, with the Homes & Communities Agency, has prompted fresh thinking across the sector.

So when a PTE director questions the role of residential towers in ‘solving’ the housing shortage, you pay attention: this is not about aesthetic preference or political posturing, it is the view of an organisation that has designed thousands of homes over the past 40 years, and is fully engaged with the life of the capital and beyond. The practice view is that there remains huge scope to create more and better homes through a version of the established street architecture of London without replicating it, and to make the most of the buildings and public spaces that have survived, by upgrading and infilling as necessary.

PTE’s recent and current work, as demonstrated in this publication, finds its roots in the attitudes of the founding partners, who were sceptical about the virtues of system-built towers, Modernist estate planning as had been developed in London, and neglect of the street as a potential catalyst for social integration.

The succeeding generation of directors, Andrew Beharrell, Teresa Borsuk and Stephen Fisher, took the helm 15 years ago. They have expanded the field of operations without sacrificing the ideals on which PTE was founded, and are now cultivating PTE’s third generation. The practice is in this respect an example of what it preaches: the virtues of evolution.

*Paul Finch, editorial director,
The Architects’ Journal*



More Homes, Better Homes: Ways to create successful residential and mixed-use neighbourhoods

London and the South-East face a well-publicised housing shortage. The capital's population, which stands at 8.3 million, is forecast to reach 10 million by the end of the decade and the Mayor of London's office has set a target for the construction of at least 42,000 new homes a year over the period 2015-18 and beyond.

Yet the city's residential pipeline equates to an average of just 28,500 new homes a year and recent annual construction levels in the capital have been around the 20,000 mark.

In 2012 the AJ launched its More Homes, Better Homes campaign, calling for the urgent construction of well-designed, quality homes. Pollard Thomas Edwards has stepped up to the challenge. With such issues of supply, PTE is finding creative ways of delivering more homes without compromising on quality – while engaging with new funding models and the increasing prominence of

international investment in UK property. The practice questions the simplistic assumption that London must 'grow up or grow out' and demonstrates that there is huge scope to build homes and community infrastructure on brownfield land and without indulging in a frenzy of tower-building.

Its portfolio features residential-led regeneration schemes in designated housing 'opportunity areas', including Barnet, Deptford and the Upper Lea Valley, and complete new communities in Cambridge and Chelmsford. Projects range from intricate urban infill to large-scale masterplans. This section shows some of the things PTE is doing to help create more, and better, homes.

The work is presented as five broad themes – Land, Typologies, Money, Engagement and Time – and is peppered with quotations from the practice's Brand Book, encapsulating the PTE approach.

Land: Treat land and space as precious commodities – don't waste them

Establish new urban quarters around transport hubs

Below
Located next to Cambridge Station, 'Ceres' (2014) sets four new apartment blocks and a converted historic mill within the CB1 masterplan for a new urban quarter

The idea of concentrating higher density new development in the most accessible places is a central plank of planning policy, but too often the result is generic, bulky buildings that make little effort to engage with their surroundings. Several current PTE projects increase the traditional density of their very well-connected locations, while focussing

on placemaking and respect for context.

At Ceres, CB1, in Cambridge (*below*), a new quarter containing offices and homes is emerging around the railway station. PTE has designed four apartment blocks around a new park and is restoring the historic Foster's Mill.

At City Park West in central Chelmsford the practice has masterplanned a 600-home

mixed-use site next to rail and bus stations and is now building out the first phase, which includes 200 apartments, shops, offices and an extra-care sheltered housing facility.

Meanwhile, in Tottenham, the practice has designed a complete urban block above Seven Sisters underground station, containing new shops and 200 apartments.





The Deptford Lounge (2011) creates a new civic heart for the town centre with school and library entrances fronting the market place

Land

Revive the high street

Town centres are struggling with the decline of traditional retail and require a complex mix of uses to bring them back to life.

At Walthamstow Arcade (*below*) PTE is rejuvenating an important town centre site and boosting its evening economy by building 121 homes above a multiplex cinema, shops and restaurants, all fronting onto a new public square.

Lewisham Council has made a bold investment in Deptford town centre by

creating a new civic heart on the High Street (*left*). Tidemill School, the Deptford Lounge and Resolution Studios are combined into a single shared complex containing a public library, primary academy, community centre, market square, artists' studios and low-cost homes. PTE says 'by mixing up this heady cocktail' and joining together different funding sources, each user benefits from better facilities than they could have afforded on their own.

Below
Walthamstow Arcade (2014) provides a new cinema, restaurants and shops with homes above facing the town square



Transform post-industrial sites into mixed-use neighbourhoods

Traditional industries have been disappearing from urban areas for decades, but there are still underused or vacant and dilapidated sites in London, many of them located on the canal network. They present several challenges: the high cost of land assembly, site contamination, 'bad neighbour' issues and restrictive planning policies. A sensitive approach, combining modern workspaces with new homes and

public realm, can unlock their potential. At Angel Waterside (*below*), PTE opened up City Road Basin to the public and freed up the site as a resource in an area of the capital that has very little public open space. PTE created a waterside park by pulling the building back towards the street and increasing height by adding highly modelled penthouse duplexes. The project is one of

PTE's joint-venture developments. At Blackhorse Lane (*below right*), an industrial estate is being transformed into a new neighbourhood with about 490 homes, more than 500 student rooms and new commercial space, all linked to Walthamstow Wetlands, London's largest nature reserve. The refurbished Art Deco Gnome House will become a café and arts centre.

Below
Angel Waterside (2008) creates mixed-tenure apartments, workspace and a public park on City Road Basin. It prefigures much of the advice in the Mayor's London Housing Design Guide



PTE's latest joint venture development with its long-term partner Groveworld is set in Hackney Wick on the threshold of the Queen Elizabeth Park and former Olympic Village. Dilapidated warehouses have been successfully colonised by the cultural and creative industries, and the challenge here is to insert permanent new studios and homes, while maintaining the area's bohemian character and opening up a network of public lanes and yards.

Below
At Blackhorse Lane the restored Art Deco Gnome House will form part of a new mixed-use neighbourhood on former industrial land

Right
At Wallis Road in Hackney Wick new artists' studios are proposed as part of the transformation of the area from old industrial uses to the creative arts and media



Build new settlements and urban extensions

The government's proposal to build new 'garden cities' has been well publicised and, according to a poll run by the Wolfson Economics Prize, 70 per cent of the public think it's a good way to meet UK housing need. Although best known for urban regeneration, PTE also believes well-conceived new settlements can contribute to meeting housing demand and limited release of greenfield sites can be justified. The two projects featured here include substantial employment space, village centre facilities and creative ideas on transport. They also offer a semi-rural lifestyle amid generous parkland.

Wing (*above right*) is a 180-acre site on the edge of Cambridge, which will provide 1,300 new homes, a primary school and 50 acres of country park, with links to Cambridge Airport and the client's engineering businesses.

PTE's masterplan for Dunsfold Park (*below right*) would transform a former World War II aerodrome into a 2,600-home eco-village set within 350 acres of countryside, integrated with a thriving business park. The airfield's main runway will be preserved as a linear park, with an ornamental canal running along it.



Below

Wing is a 1,300-home urban extension linked to Cambridge Airport

Bottom

Dunsfold Park is a proposed eco-village on the Surrey aerodrome, which is currently home to the BBC's 'Top Gear'

Time: Don't confuse innovation with novelty

Don't replace it if you can mend it

Clockwise from left
Hornsey Road (2009) combines new homes, offices, a children's centre and youth theatre into a network of new streets and squares, which also provide the setting for retained historic structures; the historic Mill at CB1 in Cambridge is being converted into apartments and shops; Barnsbury Place (2011) weaves new homes into a complex of converted Victorian school buildings



PTE has a strong track record of mending and converting. It pioneered approaches to urban regeneration that are now established best practice.

At Hornsey Road Baths (*above*), the existing buildings on the site included the listed gatehouse, with its much-loved 'Diving Lady' sign and 24m-high chimney, which serviced the former laundry and pools. PTE's design not only retains and restores these

structures, but uses them as key landmarks, providing clarity and character to the new neighbourhood. The chimney now forms the centrepiece of a five-storey glazed atrium, which connects the new apartment blocks.

Likewise Barnsbury Place, a new urban quarter within the Barnsbury Conservation Area, seamlessly combines old and new. Three imposing Victorian school buildings form the nucleus of an intricate series of

landscaped courtyards, formed by new apartments and town houses.

The latest example of this approach to heritage-based schemes, which juxtaposes old and new, is the renovation of the Mill at CB1 in Cambridge. The essence here is to re-establish the simple form, solidity and integrity of the original building by removing the newer appendages and alterations to create outstanding apartments and a new retail space.

Allow style to evolve from context

PTE has been credited – not least in Paul Finch’s introduction to this book – with reinventing the London vernacular with a well-mannered respect for context. It does not believe in imposing generic solutions, and instead seeks to tackle the unique challenges each scheme presents and create distinctive new places.

The Avenue (*right*), a 76-home development in Saffron Walden, shows PTE’s approach evolving in the context of a rural market town. Most of the homes are large family houses for sale. The design responds sensitively to its context within a Conservation Area and next to a listed water tower (*below*), creating a series of character areas reflecting the pattern of the neighbouring townscape.

As Richard McCarthy, former director-general of the Department for Communities and Local Government says: ‘Saffron Walden is one of England’s most beautiful market towns and the design of The Avenue uses this existing context to brilliant effect. This is exactly the kind of scheme that challenges identikit houses by showing how to do something more contextual.’



Below and left
The Avenue in Saffron Walden (2014) inserts contemporary family houses into the setting of a historic market town

Build over infrastructure corridors

Below
Arundel Square (2010) decks over a railway cutting to complete a fragmented public space and create a site for 160 new apartments



One of PTE's strengths is seeing the opportunity in unloved, inaccessible or blighted sites. The directors used to joke that 'they would only take on a site if it had a high-voltage cable, operational gas main or electricity cable running through it'. At Arundel Square in Islington (*above and left*), PTE decked over a railway cutting to create an extra acre of land that would provide a valuable site for 160 new homes. At the same time, the scheme creates the missing fourth side of the original Victorian square that was never completed, transforms a public park and restores period building facades.

Encourage overseas investors to fund new council homes

Below
Thames View East (2014) in Barking creates a new neighbourhood of homes for affordable rent funded by overseas investors



Foreign buyers are being blamed for making London unaffordable for Londoners. But the city's attraction as a safe place for investment can also be part of the solution.

PTE has worked with innovative funding propositions to deliver new homes without reliance on cross-subsidy or grant. At Thames View East in Barking (*above and right*), 276 new council houses have replaced post-war tower blocks. The development is entirely paid for by overseas investors through a secure private equity model whereby investors fund new homes for council tenants on council-owned land.

Once the rental income has paid off the development costs and investors' margin, ownership reverts to the local authority.



Integrate social housing with high-value homes for sale

With the erosion of grant funding, increasing demands have been made through the planning system to require private housing to cross-subsidise affordable homes. The challenge for designers (and housing managers) is how to accommodate on one site the very different, and sometimes conflicting, lifestyles of different income groups. This has hit the news recently with the controversy around 'poor doors'.

Several of the projects shown here illustrate PTE's abiding interest in the medium-rise apartment block: Arundel Square (page 16), Angel Waterside (page 10) and Zenith (page 22), to name just three. Long before the London Housing Design Guide declared war on flat blocks arranged around long internal corridors, PTE was championing developments with a small number of apartments clustered around compact stair and lift cores and with streets animated by a series of entrances to adjoining blocks.

Micawber Street (pictured) is the latest example of the 'modern mansion block'. Here PTE has delivered 108 new apartments and houses, creating a new mixed-tenure development on a complete urban block near the Regent's Canal in Hackney. Six adjoining blocks with their own street entrances look identical, but contain everything from lavish penthouses to homes for affordable rent and shared ownership. A mews of large family houses is similarly mixed.



Below
Micawber Street (2014) in Hackney addresses the dilemma of 'poor doors' in a series of 'modern mansion blocks' containing apartments for people across the income spectrum

Mix it up

PTE has used its development expertise and familiarity with cross-subsidy to create a model to fund social infrastructure through the development of homes for sale.

Over the past 10 years the practice has delivered a series of new London schools funded by building apartments above. This not only uses residential development profit to fund cash-strapped education projects, but also makes more intensive use of school sites, which are often inefficiently planned and occupied.

St Thomas' Primary School (below) in Kensal Town replaces a post-war single-storey building with a brand new and much larger facility. It was entirely funded by developing mixed-tenure apartments on top of the school, which retains the entire ground area with the exception of two discreet residential entrances. The school foyer, surmounted by a double-height community hall, is the most prominent feature.

The latest in the series is the Netley Primary School Campus scheme (right), which has created 70 new homes for sale near Euston Station, while paying for affordable family houses, the refurbishment of a local primary school and the creation of a new community hub.



Bottom
St Thomas's Primary School (2009) in North Kensington acquired complete new premises funded by the development of 69 apartments above the school

Below
Netley Campus (2014) in Euston is the latest in a series of completed PTE projects combining new homes with schools and other community infrastructure

Typologies: Never forget that every unit will be someone's home

Reinvent the terraced town house



An established London street is a good model to adapt for social integration, and PTE has been creating and converting street houses for 40 years. During the 1970s the practice restored hundreds of Victorian and Georgian houses for housing associations, transforming slum-dwellings in Notting Hill and Barnsbury into comfortable and elegant homes.

The town house remains PTE's preferred

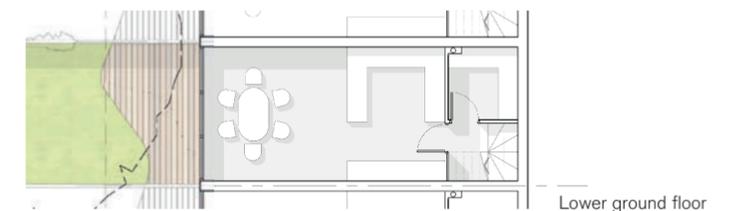
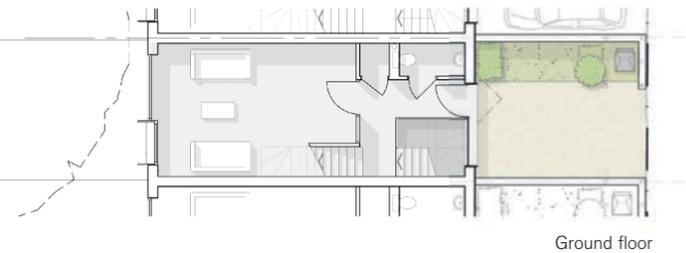
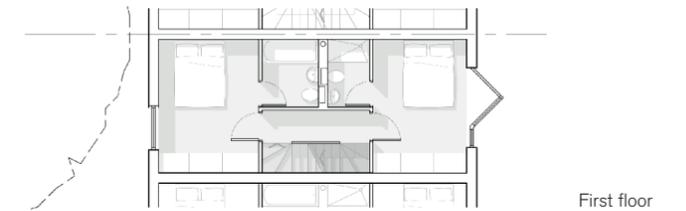
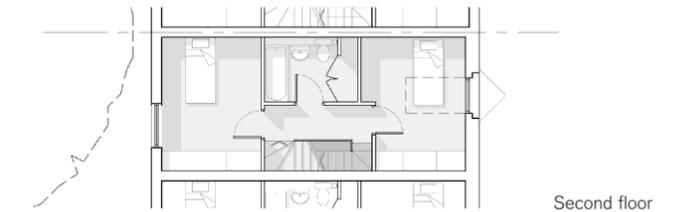
way to provide family homes at urban densities. Connaught Gardens (*pictured*) is another of PTE's developments. It comprises seven family houses on a steep, wooded site in Muswell Hill, north London. Each house offers two large living rooms, four bedrooms and a secret roof terrace within a frontage of only 4m. The section and slope are cleverly manipulated to reduce the apparent height.



Below
Connaught Gardens (2009) in Muswell Hill reconfigures the terraced townhouse for modern family living and uses to its advantage a complex sloping site



Right
House section and plans showing five levels. Connaught Gardens won the Housing Design Graham Pye Award in 2010 for the perfect home plan



Combine houses, duplexes and apartments to create new neighbourhoods

It is a common misconception that high density requires high-rise and precludes traditional patterns of living.

Page 18 shows how PTE has reinvented the mansion block to create medium-rise urban quarters. The practice has shown that such arrangements can create better homes and neighbourhoods at remarkably high densities and are more cost-effective than other solutions.

Towers can also make a successful contribution, but only where they are combined with open space and community infrastructure to support the intensity of use – and they should be integrated with lower rise typologies to create ground level family homes and human-scaled public realm.

The 310-home *Zenith* development (*below and right*) occupies a prominent corner site on the Edgware Road in Barnet, north London. PTE was tasked with creating a high-density residential neighbourhood in a low-density area of suburban houses and ‘big-box’ retail.

The scheme comprises a landmark tower complemented by six-storey mansion blocks wrapped around a large, shared garden. Mews houses form a low-rise boundary to neighbouring Metroland, each with an entrance courtyard and roof terrace instead of a conventional garden.

At Frederick Mews (*opposite*), an eight-home development for Acorn Homes, PTE transformed a redundant backland site in the Crouch End Conservation Area into a mixed-use development combining commercial studios and courtyard houses.

The next best thing to a house is a duplex with its own front door and garden. PTE has rethought the duplex as a solution for meeting today’s aspirations for individual front doors on streets with ample space for bicycles, buggies and bins.

At the *Quads* development in Cambridge, duplexes are arranged around shared courtyards, and car parking is discreetly integrated with covered entryways.



Bottom left and below

Zenith (2014) in Colindale combines mansion blocks, mews houses and a tower to integrate human-scaled streets, a garden square and family homes into high-density development

Below

Frederick Mews (2008) inserts courtyard houses into an intricate backland site in Crouch End



Below

Quads in Cambridge proposes interlocking duplexes set around landscaped courtyards



House our ageing population at the heart of mixed communities

Below
Roden Court (2012) integrates homes for all ages and incomes on the same high-value site near Crouch End



Local authorities are struggling to find a viable future for post-war old people's homes, which fall way short of today's needs but often occupy attractive sites. PTE is working on several projects to replace these buildings with new extra-care facilities coupled with general needs affordable housing and private housing for sale.

One example is Roden Court in Haringey (*pictured*), a redevelopment of 1960s YWCA studio flats on a wooded Crouch End site with wonderful views over London. Combined on one site are an extra-care complex, affordable family homes, private sale apartments and accommodation for the former residents.

Meanwhile, at the 160-home St Luke's development in Muswell Hill, wealthy downsizers will live alongside older affordable housing tenants, high-value family houses and a co-ownership scheme for the over-55s. The project includes the restoration of historic buildings and gardens from the former mental health hospital that occupied the site.

Help people to form new communities through co-ownership and custom build



Below
PTE engaged with 25 individual clients to design new homes for the Older Women's Co-Housing group in High Barnet

New housing should seek to improve social engagement and inclusion. One way of 'seeding' new communities is by including an element of co-housing or custom-build, which tends to attract socially engaged people who are prepared to invest their time and money in the process of community building.

The Older Women's Co-Housing project in Barnet (*below*) will provide 30 self-contained apartments and a 'co-house' with shared kitchen and library, all arranged around a secret garden.



Below
Residents of the former Packington Estate in Islington wanted houses with gardens and apartments with canal views to replace their failing post-war blocks – all part of an 800-home phased regeneration

Replace failed post-war estates with connected urban neighbourhoods



Since the early 1990s PTE has worked to create whole new neighbourhoods to replace big council estates that have become hard to manage, let and maintain and whose residential towers had become a symbol of failure.

Although these estates often look big and forbidding, they are actually quite low-density, due to parking and amorphous open space. It is possible to match or increase the density with a traditional, compact streetscape.

Packington Neighbourhood (*pictured*) is an ambitious scheme to transform a 1970s housing estate in Islington into 800 mixed-tenure homes.

Residents demanded radical change. PTE's solution replaces unpopular deck-access blocks with family houses and contemporary apartments while reconnecting with the surrounding Victorian street pattern.

Learn by listening

Below
PTE went back to Priory Road (2011) to film residents in their new homes and record feedback on the design and process

PTE helped pioneer 'community architecture' in the 1970s, and understanding what people want from their homes and neighbourhoods remains intrinsic to its approach. With the rise of localism and mass digital communication, local influence over development has become the norm. The challenge used to be helping people find a voice; today it is about managing multiple voices and reaching a consensus – without confusing consultation with design-by-committee.

At Priory Road in West Hampstead (*pictured*), PTE replaced a dilapidated 1970s block with 56 new affordable flats and houses. They met with residents throughout the design and construction process to discuss everything from layout of individual homes to management of the shared garden, and to help people prepare for the move. After completion, PTE visited people in their new homes to find out how they were getting on and made a film about it, featured in the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, in which one resident said: 'We can't believe it – we feel like we're on holiday and squatting in someone else's house!'



At Home with Pollard Thomas Edwards

PTE's canal-side studio in Islington embodies the practice's ethos, combining the historic with the radically new

Pollard Thomas Edwards' canal-side HQ in Islington, London, is buzzing with energy. On the lower ground floor of the studio, final touches are being made to today's office lunch: Tandoori chicken and kabli channa with home-made biscuits.

Every Thursday one of the staff or directors takes it in turn to cook lunch for the whole practice and any guests who happen to be there for meetings that day. It is a tradition that has been in place since PTE was established in 1974, when the team was small enough to fit around a single table. Today, there are 130 people and the designated chef has their work cut out.

The effort that has gone into preparing the meal is evident. Employees are encouraged to lavish the same care and attention to detail on office lunch as they do on architectural projects: to observe the project management concept of 'time-cost-quality' when cooking and ask themselves 'Is this the very best I can do?' before plating up. It is the dedication of a practice that has spent 40 years at the

forefront of socially responsible design and property development and has a profound understanding of how to make our towns and cities better places to live.

The studio is a visible expression of the practice's ethos. PTE acquired the Victorian former timber mill from British Waterways in the mid-1990s and converted it into its headquarters.

Working environment

The practice is spread over three floors with a modern extension for meetings and conferences. The café area downstairs is lined on one side with a magnetic steel sheet, dubbed the 'Sounding Wall', where presentations and design reviews take place. Director Carl Vann says: 'We test every design at the Sounding Wall – sometimes several times before it is ready to be submitted for planning. This is to ensure we have the best solution as well as being a forum for younger staff to learn.'

The building provides a lively and sociable

working environment and is a demonstration of PTE's strengths. Along with neighbouring developments by PTE along the City Road Basin, it shows how a well-considered mix of restored historic buildings and radical new ones can stimulate social, environmental and economic regeneration. As evidenced by many of its projects, PTE aims to treat land and space as precious commodities that should not go to waste.

A crucial element of PTE's approach is imagining what it would be like to occupy the places it designs before embarking on a project and understanding that, where regeneration is concerned, evolution is usually better than revolution. At Diespeker Wharf, many features of the historic mill have been retained, including the courtyard and embedded steel tracks on which goods were transported across the site. But the building has been creatively adapted: mezzanine levels have been inserted between the original trusses, the pyramidal foundations were excavated to double up the



Below
PTE's headquarters provide a lively and sociable working environment



Bottom
PTE directors, from left to right clockwise: Carl Vann, Tricia Patel, Roger Holdsworth, Kaye Stout, Patrick Devlin, Dominique Oliver, Stephen Fisher, Teresa Borsuk and Andrew Beharrell



floor space and an extension and frameless sliding glass doors were added to enhance natural light. Diespeker Wharf has provided inspiration for other heritage-led schemes by PTE, including new offices for one its clients (see case study, page 33).

As befits a practice with a strong sense of social responsibility, PTE works hard to support the local community. It organises events for the Angel Canal Festival and Little Angel Theatre and hosts waterside community sculpture exhibitions. It provides education, work experience and mentoring to disadvantaged young people and participates in Open-City's Accelerate into University! and Junior Open House mentoring schemes, aimed at encouraging Year 12 students to pursue a career in the built environment.

Community spirit

The practice has sought to foster the same community spirit among its employees – an approach inherited from the founding directors, who set up practice in an old townhouse and created a 'family' feel. The homely vibe extends beyond the office lunch to a staff choir and extensive staff sporting activities, including table tennis, football, softball, yoga and cricket, and a regular fishing trip to Walthamstow Marshes.

For its 40th anniversary party this year, PTE worked alongside a pop-up opera company to provide an in-situ performance, using Diespeker Wharf as a theatre set with music spilling from the many courtyard windows onto the garden and cobbled courtyard below. PTE likes to welcome others to enjoy the picturesque location on a quiet bend of the Regent's canal and often hosts events for related organisations. Tom Dollard, head of sustainable design, and communications manager Tim Metcalfe organise well-attended monthly seminars for the Green Register, Good Homes Alliance and Future of London.

Crucially, the firm insists on providing a tailored service to clients without promoting a burn-out 'work all hours' culture. Staff are encouraged to lead balanced lives, supported by family-friendly policies and generous benefits including private medical care and office study tours abroad, most recently to Madrid. It is little surprise, then, that the

firm attracts people from a broad range of places and backgrounds. It prides itself on inclusivity – staff speak a total of 22 different languages – and is one of the few large architectural practices to maintain a 50:50 gender balance. Director Tricia Patel, who has been at PTE for 23 years, recalls that at the first three practices she worked she was the only female architect in a macho and competitive environment. 'It is much more balanced at PTE,' she says. Having women at director level is particularly helpful, adds Eva Taherzadeh, a Part 2 architectural assistant. 'It levels the playing field of a male dominated industry and gives younger women at PTE inspiring role models to learn from.'

Director Teresa Borsuk explains that a healthy gender balance is just one aspect of a practice that seeks to mimic and represent the diversity of the outside world. 'The balance determines the working culture and has a positive effect on employees. Women should not have to be put on a podium to influence colleagues and clients – at PTE they are valued without it being a big deal. Further, the more women you have in your practice, the more women you will attract: balance begets balance,' she says.

Senior technician Simon Whitley says when searching for a new job he was told by many in the industry that PTE was renowned as a rewarding place to work. In particular, the Thursday lunch is 'one of the best group bonding activities a firm could offer,' adds his colleague, architect Peter Watkins. 'It brings people together to discuss ideas and seek advice.' At lunch there is a strong sense of camaraderie. Once the food has been eaten and plates cleared away, staff pull up chairs to take part in weekly presentations of a project or specialist subject matter. PTE believes that in an industry where policy, technology and construction practices evolve at speed, finding clear ways to communicate them is vital.

The directors describe PTE as a 'learning environment – we are always improving and refining what we do and our staff value this. We ensure all staff are informed on the drivers for a particular project and believe this helps them to stay committed and motivated.' The entire project team attends

Below
Son et lumière client event at Diespeker Wharf



Bottom
Pop-up opera event celebrating PTE's 40th anniversary



Below
PTE's studios at
Diespeker Wharf viewed
from the Regent's
Canal towpath



community consultations, the intention being to foster a sense of responsibility. Says Whitley: 'There's a personal element. You have a direct connection with future occupiers and realise this isn't just another project; you're designing someone's home.'

There is also a mentoring scheme for junior employees. Laura Spence, a Part 1 architectural assistant who has been at PTE for 18 months, says senior staff are approachable and friendly. 'I never feel that because I'm not qualified my opinions aren't valued or I can't ask for help and support,' she says.

Diespeker Wharf and its working culture demonstrate PTE's long-held beliefs and objectives. Yet the firm has evolved over the past 40 years and continues to do so. Approaches to residential and mixed-use regeneration have shifted dramatically in recent decades, along with the political and economic context, and an architectural practice with a focus on place-making must take these into account.

Core values

Director Andrew Beharrell says: 'An anniversary is a pertinent time to reflect on the relationship between past, present and future; on the extraordinary changes we've been through and on the values we hope to sustain over the next 40 years.' The constants are the core values established by the founding directors: respect for the client, a commercial instinct, sharp design profile and commitment to social and environmental improvement. 'As an architect, it's important to avoid falling into that trap of thinking it's all about you,' says director Stephen Fisher.

This is one of the characteristics that keeps clients happy. At least 80 per cent of PTE's work is repeat business, from a range of developers, local authorities and housing associations. Steve Rawlings, land director at Notting Hill Housing Group, has worked on projects with PTE since the mid-1970s. 'PTE is a pleasure to work with, their homes are always economical and well designed and they answer the brief without being afraid to push the boundaries of convention,' he says.

Alan Conisbee, director of structural engineering firm Conisbee, has also worked with PTE for 40 years. 'Pretty much

Below
The Gunpowder Mill,
Waltham Abbey, Essex.
Restored by PTE in
2009 to create the
headquarters for Hill

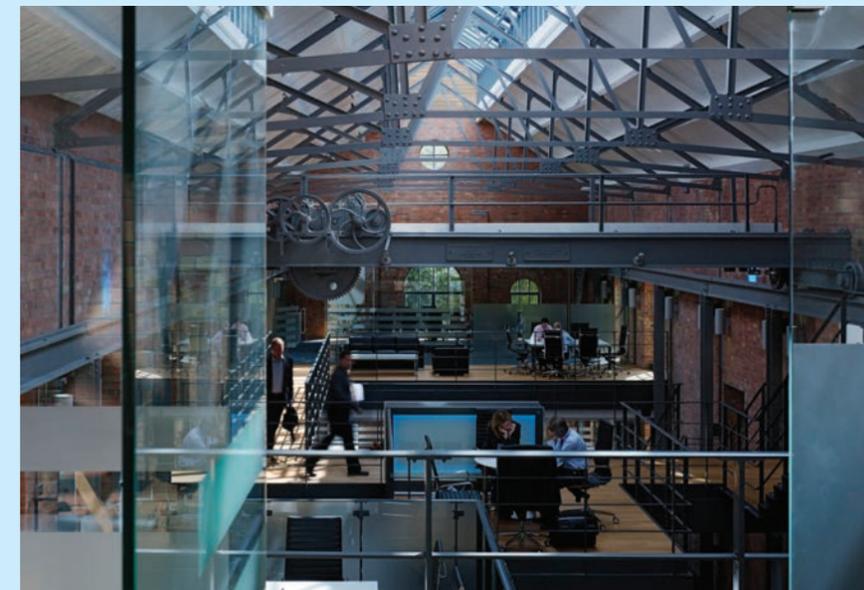


**Diespeker Wharf as inspiration
Hill's Gunpowder Mill**

PTE restored the Royal Gunpowder Mills' power house in Essex to create our new headquarters in 2009. In the 18th century the site housed the largest gunpowder works in Britain. I knew in a nanosecond I wanted to buy it. I'd been looking for a new office because Hill was growing fast and we needed to move out of our former base in Enfield. It was a very emotional purchase and I instinctively wanted PTE – with whom I'd worked since the mid-1980s while at Willmott Dixon and whose Islington headquarters I admired – to refurbish the

property. Like Diespeker Wharf, Gunpowder Mill involved the sensitive conversion of derelict historic buildings and I trusted them to do it well.

The new premises have had a positive impact on team working and the building is naturally ventilated, so is healthy and uplifting. The industry has taken us more seriously since we moved here and has higher expectations of the quality of homes we build, thanks to PTE and the design integrity of its architects. They are unique and professional and I am delighted to have had such a close working relationship with them. Long may it continue.
Andy Hill, chief executive, Hill



Bottom
Interior view of The
Gunpowder Mill

everything I've learned about housing I've learned from PTE,' he says. 'They are a rare blend of developer and architect whose projects strike a balance between aspirational and practical. They take pride in their work, forge lasting relationships with clients and create buildings that genuinely contribute to society. They are also good, common-sense architects who make a budget work. Those are magical qualities.'

PTE's unusual role of developer-architect means it is just as exposed to the financial risk that comes with development and can therefore instil confidence in the client, notes David Birkbeck, chief executive of Design for Homes, which aims to champion good design in the housing industry. 'It also means PTE is better placed than many architects to shape the development process.'

The main challenge facing PTE in future is scale. Firstly, the practice has grown steadily since the current generation took over. It is now 22nd in the AJ100 but is determined to combine the resources and expertise of a large practice with the personal service of a small one. 'The key to this is a business structure that enables the directors to continue being directly involved with clients and projects, and a culture that encourages every member, however junior, to think of themselves as an ambassador for the practice,' says Borsuk.

Secondly, the UK requires scale to counter an acute housing shortage, and the size and number of PTE's projects is increasing. This is an exciting challenge but, as Beharrell notes, 'being prolific is only a good thing if quality is maintained. Architects are operating in an increasingly pressurised business environment. We must be smart in combining intelligent replication of tried and tested solutions with creative thinking, so every design is a special response to the place and brief.'

As staff help themselves to the mouth-watering spread and the sound of laughter and clinking plates fills the room, it is easy to see why the practice has retained a loyal client base and growing family of employees.

PTE's 40th anniversary is a celebration of its projects and successes, attributed to a wealth of expertise, hard work and commitment from the people it has worked with over the past four decades.

Sarah Townsend

PROJECTS

Alma Estate Countryside Properties
Anchor Brewhouse Clarke London
Angel Waterside City Wharf Development Company (a joint venture between PTE Property and Groveworld)
Arundel Square Bill Thomas, Londonewcastle/United House Developments/Family Mosaic
Aylesbury Estate L&Q
The Avenue Hill
Barnsbury Place Grainger and Guinness Trust (development completed by Mount Anvil)
Blackhorse Lane MacDonald Egan
Central Chelmsford Genesis
Ceres, CB1 Hill
Cherrywood Close Tower Hamlets Housing Action Trust
Chillingworth Road Galliard Homes, the Guinness Trust, Islington and Shoreditch Housing Association
Chobham Farm East Thames Housing Group and London & Continental Railways
Colebrooke Row Offices Pollard Thomas Edwards
Connaught Gardens Connaught House Developments (a PTE Property and Guild Developments joint venture)
Crystal Wharf Harris Wharf Development Company (a joint venture between PTE Services and Groveworld)
Diespeker Wharf Diespeker Holdings
Dunsfold Park Dunsfold Park
Eldon Grove a joint venture between Pollard Thomas Edwards and Sprasson and Babb
Ellesmere House Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea
Fitzjohns Avenue London Borough of Camden
Fish Island LondonGreen Developments
Fosters Mill, CB1 Hill
Frederick Mews Acorn Homes
Freston Road Notting Hill Housing Trust
Gunpowder Mill Hill
Haverstock Hill Circle 33, ASRA Housing Association
Highbury Quadrant Family Mosaic
Hornsey Road Grainger
Leybourne Street London Borough of Camden
Lingham Court Metropolitan Housing Trust
Lithos Road Notting Hill Housing Trust, Circle 33, West Hampstead Housing Association, Odu Dua Housing Association
Micawber Street Notting Hill Housing
Netley Campus London Borough of Camden
New Concordia Wharf Andrew Wadsworth
New North Road Taylor Wimpey
Norland Road Notting Hill Housing Trust
Old Royal Free Square Circle 33 Housing Trust and New Islington & Hackney Housing Association
Older Women's CoHousing Hanover Housing Association
One Woolwich Lovell
Packington Estate Regeneration Hyde and Rydon
Page Road Catalyst Housing Group, Willmott Dixon

Pentonville Road Groveworld
Priory Road Octavia Housing
Quad Hill
Roden Court One Housing Group
St Thomas' CE Primary School and apartments London Diocesan Board for Schools and Places for People Developments
St Luke's Muswell Hill Hanover Group
Thames View East London Borough of Barking & Dagenham, Explore Investments (a Laing O'Rourke Company), Jerram Falkus Construction
Terracotta Court Roof
Tidemill Academy and Deptford Lounge London Borough of Lewisham
Tower & York Houses Community Housing Association
Wallis Road East London Regeneration (a joint venture between PTE Property and Groveworld)
Walthamstow Arcade Islington and Shoreditch Housing Association and Hill
Wing Marshall of Cambridge Airport Properties
Woodbridge Estate London Borough of Islington
Zenith House Genesis

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Issued with The Architects' Journal
For reprints call James MacLeod 020 7728 4582

ISBN 978-0-9567877-9-8

Published September 2014 by Emap, powered by Top Right Group

