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Press Release

Fairmule House, 23-35 Waterson St, Shoreditch, London E2 8HE.

On final completion Fairmule House will be the biggest solid timber building in the UK. Instead of employing steel or concrete for its superstructure this project uses solid timber laminated panels for its walls, roof and floors. It is currently nearing completion.

Background

Multi disciplinary design practice Quay 2c were approached in February 2004 to project manage the construction of 11 flats and 4 business units that a developer client had bought with planning permission. The 23.5 x 12-14.5 metre deep plot, in a connecting street between Hackney Rd and Kingsland Rd, was a classic brownfield site being used for car parking, south facing to the narrow street and with some mature trees in a small park to the rear. Being design based, Quay 2c were unhappy with the look and layout of the existing scheme, which included 3 double bed flats and 8 singles. All these were single aspect, served by a lift and a dark, unventilated corridor in the middle of the building.

Planning

The private developer client asked Quay 2c to look at alternative layouts that were supported by Hackney Planners, provided the same "envelope" of development as the previous part 4 storey, part 5 storey scheme was kept. An application was duly made and approved on delegated powers for 11 double aspect cross ventilated flats (6 double beds and 5 single beds, all but one with balconies or terraces). Bedrooms were positioned to the rear and living spaces to the street, all accessed from two naturally lit common staircases encouraging horizontal circulation in the social realm of the street rather than in the dark corridor of the previous scheme. To the Ground and First floor seven varying sizes of business units were introduced, (most of which are double aspect) encouraging a greater diversity of uses to compliment the flats above.

The Thomas Fairchild Story.

As with all their projects Quay2c looked closely at the grain and history of the area and found that the park to the rear was an overspill graveyard from the main church on Shoreditch High St. One of the few graves left there is that of Thomas Fairchild. He was one of the many market gardeners in the area supplying the new urban gentry of the City and Bloomsbury in the late 17th and early 18th century. The building of the amazing Columbia Rd market hall, now demolished, in the mid nineteenth century and the current flower market nearby are remnants of this history. Fairchild was famous for being the first man to genetically modify plants combining a sweet william and a carnation to manufacture his famous "Fairchild mule" hybrid.

Fairmule House.

As a consequence, the new building has been named Fairmule House. Quay 2c, who have an artist director, have used the theme of gardens and hybrids to think through the design of the building.

Solid Timber Structure

The Thomas Fairchild theme to this project concurs well with Quay 2c's long standing interest in sustainable issues and their aesthetic. That the natural world could be the source for the superstructure of the building was supported by Eurban a new design and build company to the UK specialising in Solid Timber construction. They use sustainable laminated softwood panels to construct walls, (115mm thick) floors (170mm) and roof (170mm). The first panel to be craned onto site was 2.7m wide by 14m long by 115mm thick!

Architects Registration Board (A.R.B.) No. 061219G RIBA Membership No.9171156

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Quay workers;

Helen Dowling (BA Honours Fine Art), François Girardin (Dplg Architect) , Kabage Karanja (BA arch Hons), Julia Manheim (Dip. A.D. Artist), Ken Taylor (Dip Arch. Architect), Mark Taylor (Bsc, Dip Arch), Andrew Wood (Bsc, Dip Arch).

The advantages of the Solid Timber Structure system are: -

- 1) Speed of erection. 6 week contract period.
- 2) Carbon neutral sustainability.
- 3) Super tolerances on highly engineered panels.
- 4) A solid feel and good on acoustics.
- 5) Very good on heat losses through relatively thin walls.
- 6) Government "Modern Methods of Construction" (MMC) agenda well served.

Street side

Light is a magic ingredient for all things to grow, and so there was a strong desire to have lots of glass to the southern, street side of the project. A matrix of galvanised steel panels, recalling garden watering cans and containers, complimented by green window frames animates the front facade. As carnations are the more tightly structured of the two plants Fairchild cross-bred these were appropriated to the urban side of the building. At street level glass signage panels will incorporate microscopic images of carnations along with black species plaques found in botanical gardens. A digital cross breed between carnations and sweet williams will occupy two upper areas of glazing to give a flowering of light when the sun shines into the two common staircases.

Garden side

The back elevation is clad in western red cedar shingles with recessed balconies to enjoy the view. The glass balustrades will have abstracted images of the more open structured sweet williams laminated into them.

Between

The top storey on all sides and the western party wall uses a fibrous cement weatherboard, imprinted with fake wood grain as a fire resistant finish.

Windows & Roof

The roof is a green blanket of sedum with tapered insulation below sitting on the solid timber roof. The windows are double glazed with super low "e" glass from Denmark. They are a composite hybrid of low maintenance recycled aluminium to the outside and warm laminated softwood to the inside.

To view the site and for further project details contact:

Ken Taylor @ Quay 2c Architects on 0207 771 1600 or email studio@quay2c.com

Notes to Editors: -

Programme

01/2005	Foundations and concrete ground slab works start on site.
16/05/2005	Eurban start on site erecting solid timber structure.
30/06/2005	Solid Timber structure fully installed. Fit out contract begins.
24/01/06	Scaffold taken down
April 2006	Full internal fit out completion.

Area

The building is 1067m2 part 5 storey, part 4 storey with one lift serving all business units.

Cost

The overall building cost is estimated to be around £1.5 million. The solid timber structure with its fast site times was viewed by the client to be competitive with a steel or concrete structure.

Team

Client; Aqua Properties, London.

Architects & Designers; Quay 2c, London. www.quay2c.com

Structural Engineer; Anders Associates, Sutton, Surrey.

Mechanical & Electrical Eng.; Brinson Staniland Partnership, Bromley, Kent. www.bspce.com

Planning Supervision Health & Safety; Safetrack Associates, Bristol.

Groundworks Contractor; Westwood Ltd, Loughton, Essex.

Solid Timber Structure Design and Build Contractor; Eurban, London. www.solidtimber.co.uk

Main Contractor Fit Out Works; L.I. Construction, Ilford, Essex.