

This is Student Living



Apt



At Apt we have developed strong experience in the student accommodation sector, designing and delivering exemplar buildings for our clients.

Students demand and want more; from environmentally sustainable buildings to spaces that resonate with students and supports their wellbeing.

Apt designs student accommodation to help establish successful communities that socialise, collaborate, and foster innovation together through well considered design.

Students are attracted by cutting-edge environmental credentials and inspiring amenity spaces which create a true sense of community.

The days of anonymous, uninspiring, poorly conceived student housing are numbered.

As architects and thinkers, we can play our part in reducing CO2 emissions and addressing global warming through high-quality design. Generally viewed as long-term assets, student accommodation offers an ideal opportunity to minimise lifetime energy usage and improve occupant experience through a holistic, sustainable design approach. Student buildings host the future generations of innovators, pioneers, and leaders who will inherit the built environment we create today.



External Gardens create more sustainable, biodiverse and pleasant environments on Apt's 2 Trafalgar Way project.

60%

of students identified climate change and environmental issues as one of the top three urgent priorities for world leaders to tackle today.

(source: Unite Group)



50%

of students have considered leaving their course because of their mental health

(source: Randstad)

75%

of prospective students would be influenced by sustainability credentials when choosing their place to study

(source: Shakespeare Martineau)



560k

There were 560,000 acceptances for UCAS applicants in 2022 – the second-highest number on record

(source: Knight Frank)



What is the future of student accommodation?

Mark Williams-Jones,
Project Leader, Apt

'Apt want to shake up the perception that design quality is a low priority when it comes to student accommodation.'

Higher Education is now a business, and students see themselves as 'consumers' – with annual course fees up at £9,250+ students are very aware of the experience they are getting, the amount of contact time and resource they receive. They are asking the question, 'am I getting value for money? Equally, universities are very aware of the cost per m2 of their campus space that each student represents, and it is not looking good for those space hungry disciplines which need studios, performance space, workshops, or labs. They have had to find ways to use their spaces more efficiently.

In part this is addressed by a shift in higher education to a more hybrid approach, allowing better utilisation of their facilities – echoing the change we have witnessed in the way we work in the office. In both cases it is clear that there is no substitute for meeting in person – the collaboration, the cross pollination of ideas, the serendipitous meeting of like-minded individuals, and the learning by osmosis which happens when people share the same spaces. This is everything we have been considering when we talk about the future of the office, but it is probably even more pertinent to student life.

University isn't simply about furthering knowledge in a specific field – it is about widening your world view, having your beliefs challenged and forming friendships and contacts which often shape your career. This key part of the university experience, these lasting connections are often created outside of the lecture hall, and is influenced by where you choose to live, especially if students are spending more time hybrid working 'off-campus'.

Historically student accommodation has always been viewed as the bottom of the ladder when it comes to design quality. This is down to a variety of factors; rogue landlords, insecure tenancies, quick turnaround of tenants, lack of care by the students for these properties, all of which has created a 'we don't really care' attitude to the design and maintenance of student accommodation. A bed, a shower, a kitchen - that is all they need. Short termism has been the approach.



Students are increasingly savvy consumers – they are expecting more of their university experience. This is a generation where ownership isn't a priority – but experience is. Your student accommodation is a lifestyle choice – it says something about who you are. You want amenity spaces, shared experiences and to be plugged into a wider community of like-minded individuals.

The reality is that this accommodation still needs to remain cost effective – the rooms aren't necessarily going to get any bigger – and they probably don't need to. Perhaps a bed, a shower, a kitchen is actually all students need... for their own space. Especially if the focus will instead be on improving the amenity spaces, giving room for hybrid learning, better shared facilities, and looking after the wellness of occupants.

What is also important is access to outside space – and varied communal facilities. Each student accommodation scheme could become a small village in its own right. With the very likely possibility of hybrid learning, communal spaces for remote working are likely to become more important – effectively co-working spaces / incubator offices for students.

Taking a slightly wider urban view, student accommodation and the associated amenity has traditionally been viewed as a 'closed shop' – gated communities for students, so that these buildings don't contribute to the wider communities they sit within. But the idea that students aren't part of that community seems ever more perverse.

We are witnessing a 'blurring of boundaries' between working, living and leisure in our cities, I expect we will see student accommodation – and wider university campuses – become part of this multi discipline, multi-use world.

In our cities and towns – those areas which many universities (and therefore students) inhabit, space is valuable. But these great facilities could work harder. Already many student halls are used for conference accommodation outside of term time, helping generate additional income. But this could be applied to the shared amenity spaces in student accommodation. Why not open the doors of the study space to local professionals who are looking for a co-working space for 2 days a week? Why not open gym facilities to the paying public or provide refectory space as a 'village hall' outside of teaching hours? All of this could help subsidise these critical 'amenity' spaces without necessarily passing the cost on to students, but also help these student communities knit into the wider community.

We have progressively 'siloed' groups within society and given them their own accommodation class. Students have 'student accommodation', young professionals have 'PRS', and the aging population 'Assisted living'. We also have affordable housing for many who don't fall into any of these other groups. All of these are striving to create broadly the same thing – a home and a place to live safely and comfortably within a neighbourhood.

At Apt we see this as a great opportunity to rethink the current approach to community and student housing.



Student Experience



Our Experience

At heart we are designers, creative thinkers and problem solvers. We sketch, we model, we test the brief and people's preconceptions. We believe this is the only way to drive real value out of sites for our clients and continue to deliver exceptional buildings.

However, we are also realists; we take pride in our ability to deliver our buildings, and we understand what it takes to see these creative designs through to completion. Ultimately, we want to design buildings which are occupied, well used, and enjoyed.

Consented
6.2 Million sq.ft.

We have over 6 Million sq.ft. of consented projects. No two projects are the same, in fact each one is distinct in its approach and final design, demonstrating our commitment to finding unique solutions.

Built
3 Million sq.ft.

Apt strongly believe that providing a 'Golden Thread' of design continuity throughout the process ultimately delivers a better building. It ensures the big ideas are preserved. We also enjoy seeing our ideas come to life, and the lessons learnt filter through into new projects, so we are constantly improving.

Local Planning Authorities
25

We have had experience with over 25 Local Planning Authorities, including significant workplace consents in several London Boroughs including Westminster, Islington, Camden, City of London and Hammersmith and Fulham. Each borough has its own unique challenges, but we believe our flexible and responsive design approach allows us to navigate these idiosyncrasies and ultimately deliver great consents for our clients.



Case Studies





Communal amenity at the top of the building to enjoy fantastic views of the city



Parkside Infinity

A high-quality, 504 room student housing development located in the heart of Coventry's university district. Designed to address the protected heritage views, the scheme creates a new landmark building for this important gateway site into the city.

The designs work in harmony with the city by respecting and framing its historic sites including the listed church spires.

The completed scheme provides generous high-quality living and social spaces as well as a gym, cinema room, karaoke room and is organised around a central courtyard with glazed link bridges, opened at ground floor to a secluded landscaped garden.

The student bedrooms are traditionally built with an emphasis on a high standard of finishes and a modern colour palette.



Added Value

The new buildings increase in height to 10 and then 20 storeys for the tallest element, which has at its top a panoramic, communal, flexible room with a peripheral terrace to enjoy views of the city as well as being a lit beacon during the evening. This enables the scheme to provide the city with an urban feature that contributes positively to Coventry's changing city centre skyline.

Each cluster comprises between five and nine generous, en-suite bedrooms, a communal lounge and kitchen and a connecting corridor. Each en-suite and the studios have at least one generous window providing views of the city and central courtyard.

The choice of materials, textures and colours for the façade has been taken inside up to the selection of the furniture to achieve a high-quality feel while being cost effective.

Achievements

- The purchase of 2 houses adjacent to the site increased the number of student rooms from 300 to 500
- Planning approval by delegated powers for Coventry's tallest building
- Practical completion 12 months after achieving planning consent

Creating a sense of community

Circulation routes coalescing around a landscaped central courtyard

The shape and layout of the building has been designed to encourage people to meet. The elongated “donut” layout is organised around a central landscaped courtyard and provides bridge link access to the two cores. This layout encourages the residents to connect and meet as they circulate, creating a real sense of community.

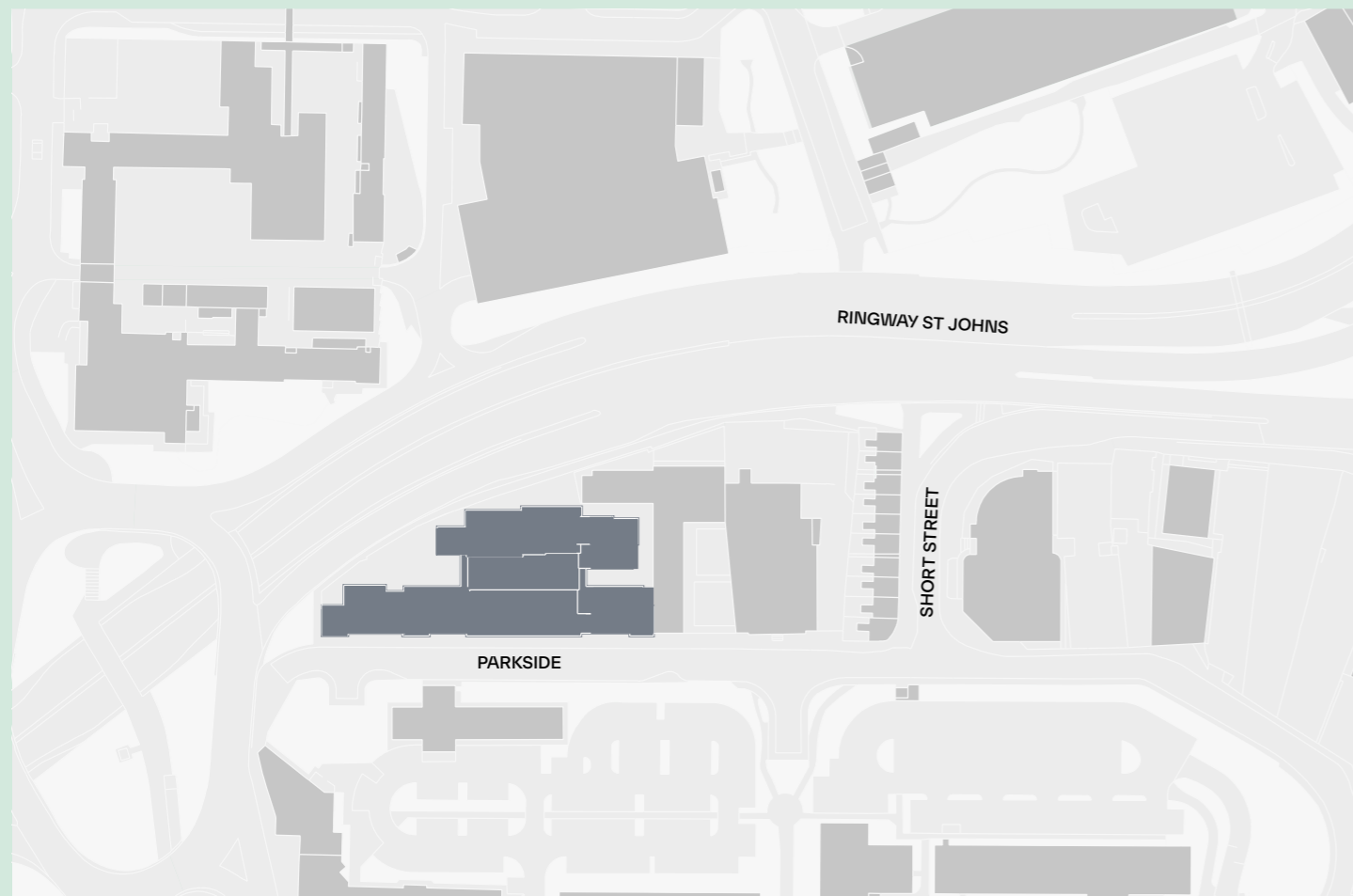
The internal courtyard creates a secluded outdoor space that feels airy and open, whilst remaining visually connected to the street beyond via full height glazing on both sides of ground floor space.

Parkside has the benefit of two major locations for amenity spaces: The first one is ground and lower ground to create visual animation from inside to outside and to connect to the courtyard and garden. The main access is via a bridge a over the lower ground amenity spaces to create interest, visual connection and drama to the entry sequence

The second amenity area is the lounge at the top of the 21 storey building, benefiting from being the tallest building in Coventry to offer spectacular 360 degree views.



Typical Floor Plan



Site Plan



Ground Floor Plan



Winner of the 2022 City Building of the Year, Urbanest City is a distinctive, mixed-use building in the heart of the City of London.



Urbanest City

The building provides 656-beds of high-quality student housing featuring clean, contemporary interiors, alongside substantial, and varying amenity space.

At the top of the building, two common rooms provide spectacular views of the City, which accommodate a range of activities and include study booths, group working settings, games areas, chill out zones and a giant screen with bleacher seating for screening sports and movies.

The accommodation includes studios and clusters with en-suites, non-en suites and twin rooms, as well as spacious kitchen and dining areas. Each room includes generous floor to ceiling glazing providing an abundance of natural light.

The distinctive silhouette of the building features inset terraces, sheltered by the oversailing barrel vault roof.



Added Value

The building design innovates by using different construction methodologies. The existing basement is retained to optimise resource use and a lightweight superstructure allowed the re-use of existing foundations. The student accommodation is supported by a 1.8m deep steel transfer structure spanning 17m to maximise column free space in the exhibition space.

Prefabrication was prioritised during the specification process for the benefits it brings for quality management and speed of installation. Prefabricated elements included façades, services, bathrooms and joinery.

A methodical approach to working through the scheme's unique features has added significant value to the scheme for the client, including the provision of additional beds, a simplified envelope, enhanced buildability and future adaptability.

Achievements

- WCCA City Building of the Year 2022
- BREEAM Excellent and WiredScore Platinum
- 100% Renewable Energy & EPC Rating: B

Responding to the historic context

A rich mix of complementary uses, planned to create a fantastic student experience.

Urbanest City takes advantage of the site's history and position, with generous amenity spaces occupying the majority of the ground floor and the entire top floor.

The ground floor amenity space includes open study space and bookable meeting rooms that enjoy views out to the pedestrianised and landscaped public realm. These spaces are connected to the cafe and exhibition space, creating a platform for interaction and collaboration with the wider users of the development. This relationship is reinforced by the student's daily journey where the lift lobby enjoys views across the triple height exhibition space.

The high level amenity spaces take advantage of the spectacular views north to the City Cluster and south to Tower Bridge and includes more active social spaces with a large screen and table football area as well as an informal chill out area with reconfigurable cushion seating.

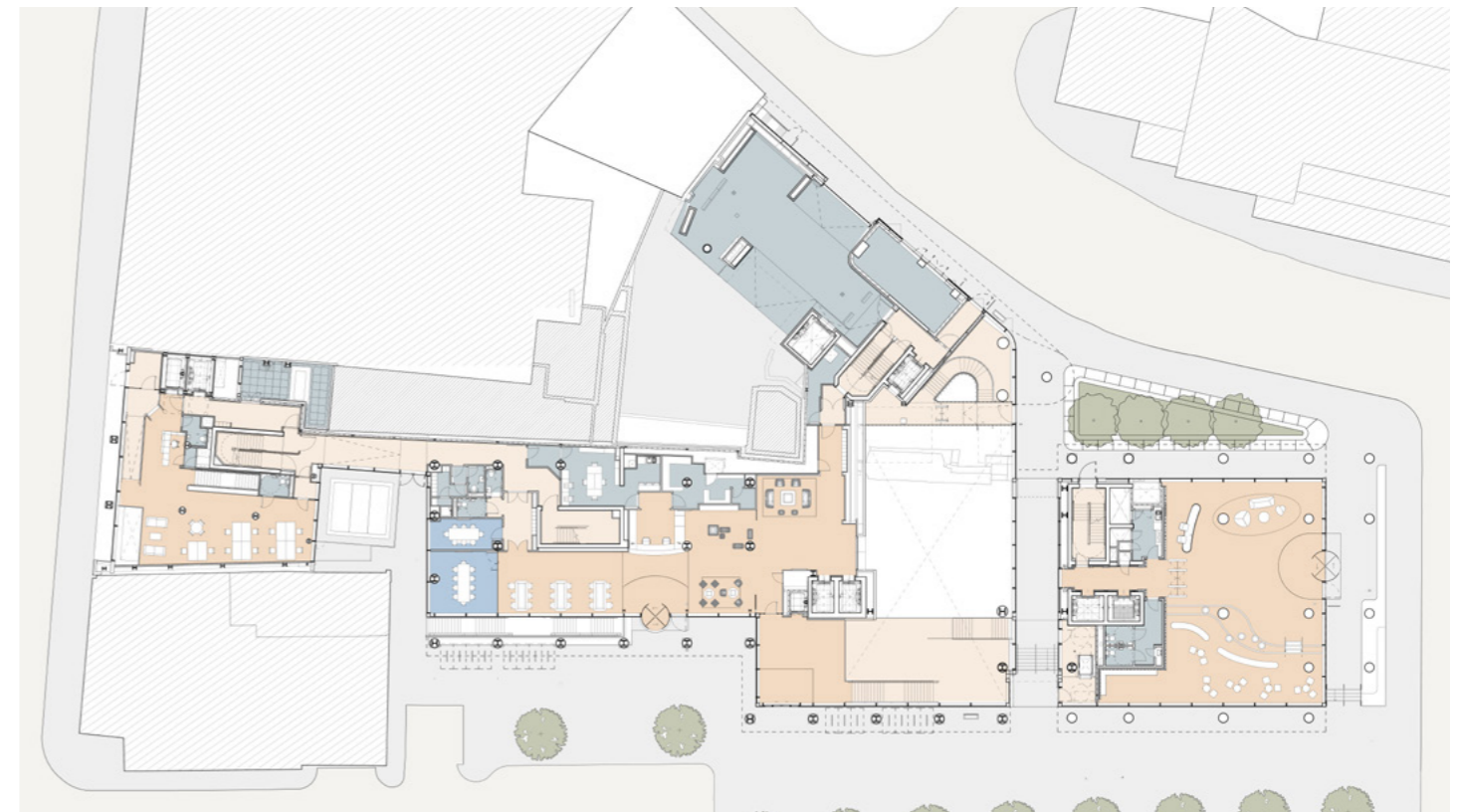
A range of room types responds to the demand for choice. These include clusters with either en-suite or shared bathrooms as well as self-contained en-suite studios. Twin rooms are provided for those who wish to share. The clusters include types with a separate kitchen and dining area to maximise the social experience or more efficient kitchen areas that form part of the common circulation space.



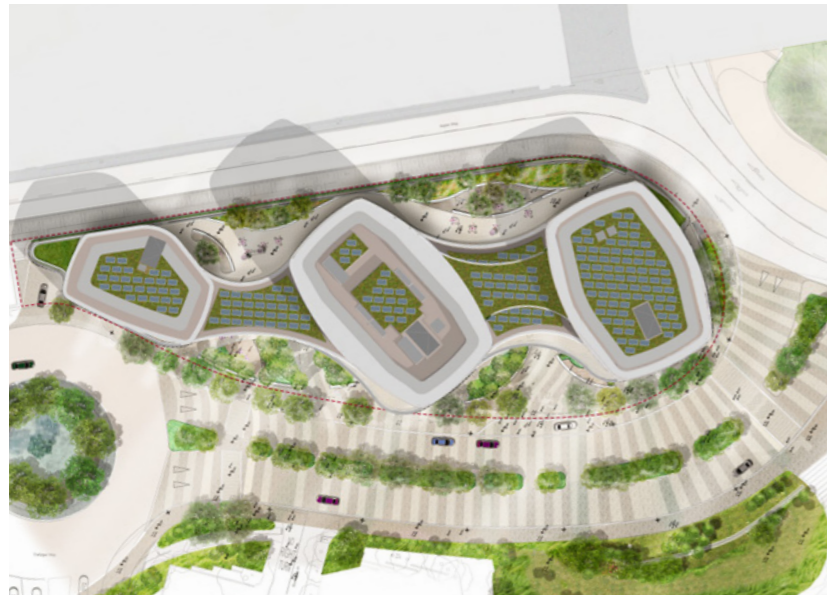
Site Plan



First Floor Plan



Ground Floor Plan



Set to be the largest Passivhaus development in Europe, if not globally.



Trafalgar Way

Designed to be the tallest Passivhaus residential scheme in Europe with three towers of 28, 36 and 46 storeys providing 1,672 student beds and 80 residential apartments. A four-storey podium will include 43,000 sq.ft. commercial office space, including workspace for local business start-ups.

The rotation of each building footprint has an axial relationship with three historic church spires in the Borough which creates visual permeability between the forms when viewed from distance.

The two tallest buildings are also joined at Level 10 by a skybridge, which will provide student amenity spaces.

The proposals also focus on improved public realm and sustainable transport, with better connections to the local cycle network, ensuring that the site becomes more integrated and accessible to local communities.



Added Value

In addition to providing high-quality accommodation, the project is set to achieve exemplar sustainability credentials, and is on target to achieve BREEAM Outstanding and Passivhaus certification.

Within each student cluster on every floor, the kitchen & dining spaces all benefit from natural daylight and are provided with visual amenity, overlooking the vertical Sky Gardens that adorn the building façades and support an ambitious approach to urban greening. It is envisaged that these will also contribute to student well-being.

The development will deliver a significant economic and social boost for the borough and local community, with hundreds of new jobs created and an estimated £10.5m spent in the borough each year by students, residents and staff.

Achievements

- Targeting BREEAM Outstanding
- Passivhaus design stage certification
- Unanimous planning consent with the London Borough of Tower Hamlets
- Redevelopment of a site vacant for 10 years, to provide high-quality housing and public realm improvements

Creating a vertical campus.

Spectacular amenity spaces within a breathtaking skybridge

Three towers sit upon a 4 storey podium which accommodates a mix of commercial office, drive through restaurant and retail uses. The podium drive through and undercroft servicing is pushed back to the north of the site to provide shelter from the noise of Aspen Way, which frees up the southern edge of the site to create quieter south facing public realm with seating areas, planting and a space for small markets or events opening up to the existing residential communities on Trafalgar Way.

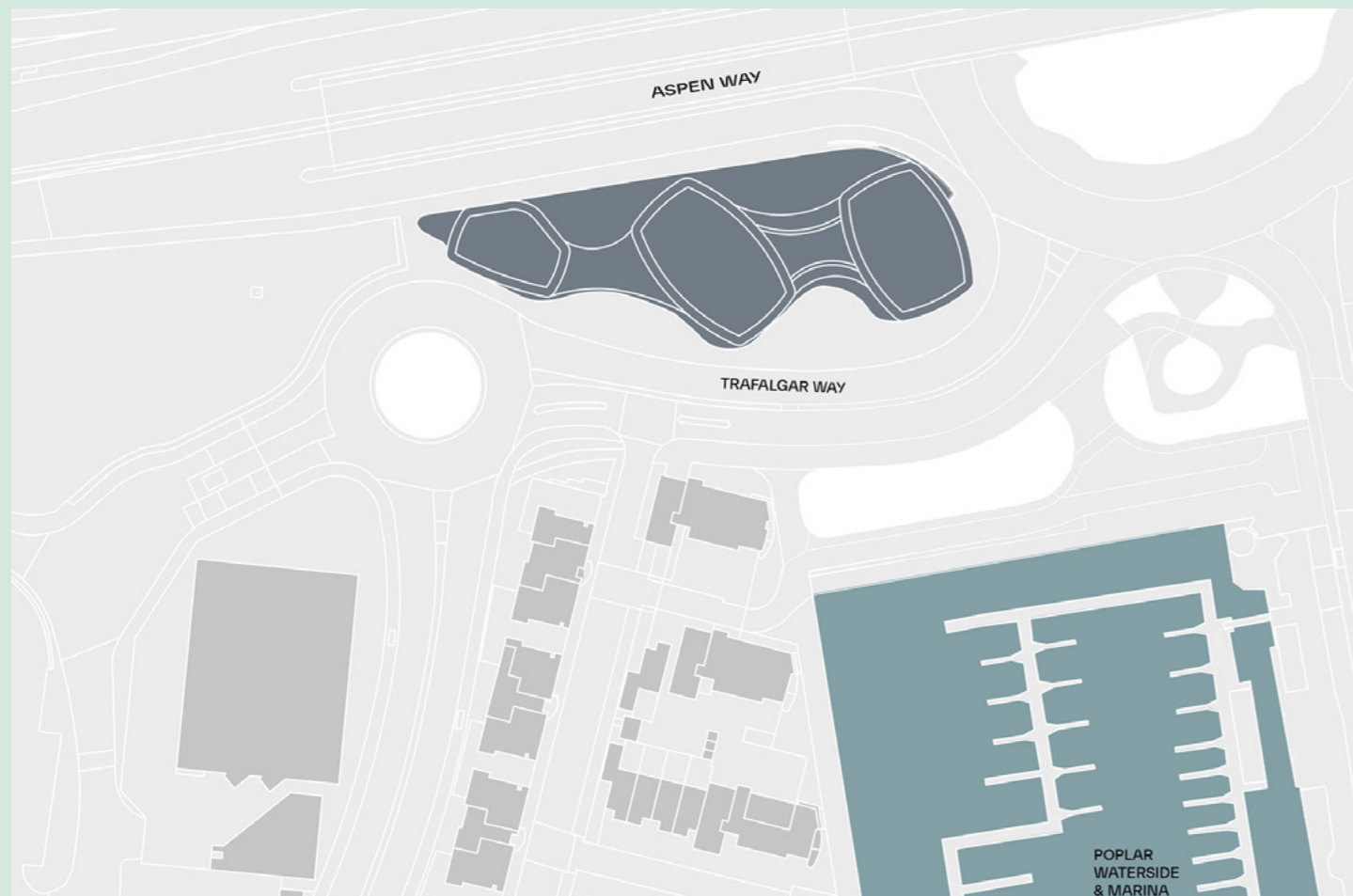
At ground floor a double height student entrance lobby is overlooked by the incubator office space above, and provides a series of small lounge spaces for meeting friends overlooking the public realm.

Students have access to a gym and yoga studio, tv rooms, and a lounge with games area, as well as a range of individual and group study rooms, all positioned on a double height skybridge which links the two student towers between levels 10 and 12. This allows easy access for residents of each building, while full height wraparound glazing takes advantage of spectacular views out to Poplar in the north and across Blackwall Basin and the River Thames to Greenwich in the south.

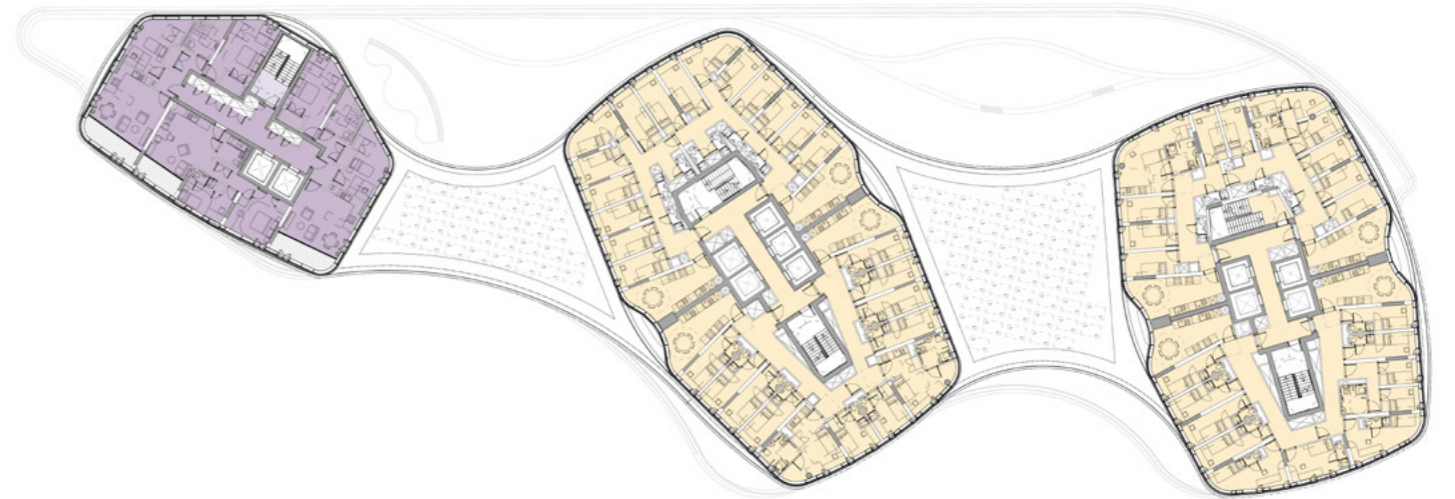
Student rooms are arranged in clusters of various sizes, each containing a mix of ensuite, standard, studio and twin rooms. Each cluster has its own communal kitchen and dining room, and these are grouped at the centre of each floorplate looking out over planted skygardens which run the full height of the towers and contribute to an ambitious programme of urban greening.



Ground Floor plan



Site Plan



Level Four Podium Plan

Exploring Opportunities



Exploring Opportunities

At Apt, we understand that not every opportunity is right or that every concept will see the light of day. We have many clients come to us for early input on schemes – our advice can often help them decide whether a site is worth further exploration.

This can range from an initial 2-week feasibility to more in-depth studies developing a variety of design solutions to help support bids, financial appraisals, or a first pre-application meeting with the planners to test the waters on a proposal.

We draw on our wide range of experience to give the best advice possible. We're not afraid to challenge a brief or client if we feel it is unachievable; bad news is better than bad advice.



01 Initial Consultation

A low commitment way to quickly test the viability of an opportunity.

An initial high-level exercise to test massing on a site to generate indicative GEAs based on an assumed use class. This will include investigating the opportunity to retain and reuse any existing buildings on site.

Duration: 2 weeks

Deliverables:

- GEA Area schedule
- Initial height bulk and massing
- Simple 3D chalk models in context (subject to availability of information)
- Identify possible 3rd party risks which may affect the site's potential

02 Initial Feasibility

Testing a variety of approaches to a site, enabling an initial brief to be set for financial appraisals or bids.

A detailed exercise to test a variety of approaches and generate areas, floorplans and some initial architectural responses to a site.

Duration: 4-6 weeks

Deliverables:

- As Option 01 +
- Indicative typical floorplans.
- Accommodation schedule
- Additional iterations of design massing to refine the proposal.
- Investigation into site history, planning context, and site constraints
- Illustrative material to explain the main architectural concepts and principles of the scheme

03 In Depth Feasibility

Developing an initial brief to a point where the principles can be discussed with the Local Planning Authority.

An in depth review of a potential site to test a variety of approaches and refine a solution which could represent the first step towards a planning application.

Duration: 4-8 weeks

Deliverables:

- As Option 02 +
- Design development sufficient for initial pre-application with the Local Authority
- Attendance at initial pre-app meeting
- Sketch models of context and proposal
- Sketch perspectives / in house renders showing the scheme in context.
- Initial GA drawings

04 Existing Consent Review

Review an existing consent and discuss ways it could be optimised or improved to suit your brief.

Review of an existing scheme and identification of any potential improvements, or test alternative uses within the same footprint.

Duration: 2-6 weeks

Deliverables:

- Alternative scheme with indicative typical floorplans
- GEA and accommodation schedule
- Identify possible 3rd party risks which may affect the site's potential

**We create architecture that
inspires through great design,
innovation & craftsmanship.**

This is Apt.

At Apt we are always interested in working with like-minded, motivated, and progressive people who want to deliver great buildings.

We believe our studio approach allows us to robustly test briefs and challenge preconceptions, ultimately helping our clients find the best solution to any given opportunity. We enjoy working collaboratively and believe this is why we build long lasting relationships with many of our clients.

Let's create the unexpected.

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