Sean Griffiths

Output 4:
Riverside One, Middlesbrough, 2011

Abstract

Riverside One is an apartment block in Middlesbrough built as part of the regeneration of the former industrial Middlehaven Docks. The brief for the building was to deliver a highly sustainable, landmark housing project exceeding Eco Homes Excellent', in line with ‘One Planet Living’ sustainability goals. The building addresses the following research questions: How can a memorable building challenge the flatness of generic urban planning within the framework of market driven regeneration? How can the communicative surface perform architecturally? How can environmental principles be incorporated into an art based architecture practice? The design of Riverside One was driven by contextual concerns involving detailed fieldwork and a close reading of the site to discover the narratives of place and the specifics of its history. Found models were then reworked through collagist / dada-ist methods to create a new assemblage that carried with it old associations and meanings and created new ones. Methods used to reorganise existing information into a new constellation were the appropriation of images, references, history and values; collage, juxtaposition and humour. At the same time as this visual, aesthetic research, Riverside One required considerable environmental and technical research to meet its sustainability standards. This involved participation in numerous sustainability workshops and in depth, detail design of the building's external façade to ensure water and airtightness. Riverside One is a contentious building that has been widely disseminated and debated in the architectural and public media. This includes articles in dezeen, Building Design, Architects Journal and The Guardian. Built at a time of financial plenty and when there was a great deal of optimism about urban regeneration, it is seen as both representative of that optimism and all that was unreal about it. As such, it is an important building in Griffiths and FAT’s polemical oeuvre.

Key Words

Sustainability, market driven, regeneration, landmark, housing
General Description

Designed for a joint venture client, the charity BioRegional and developer Quintain, the brief for this building was to deliver a highly sustainable, landmark housing project exceeding Eco Homes ‘Excellent’ (approximately Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4). Known as ‘Community In A Cube’ (CIAC), the 82-unit scheme develops its narrative from the brief and aspirations of the client to provide a mix of unit types and occupiers within a volume prescribed by Alsop’s master plan. The necessity of slicing up and excavating this volume created courtyards, shared amenities, garden space and helped derive the character of a building where different housing typologies are juxtaposed (fig.23).

The northern elevation was punched open to bring light into the square plan (fig.13, 22). This exposed the main circulation core and cleaved the building open into two wings to the south lined by balconies and decks (fig.15, 24). The entrance to the building is under a parapet of cloud motifs and the letters CIAC (standing for ‘Community in a Cube’) (fig.28), reminiscent of Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown’s Guild House of 1964. From here, a theatrical sequence activates the building’s figural section, taking one up a single flight of stairs to the first floor terrace (fig.07, 36). A spiral staircase then winds up to the main access corridor on the second floor (fig.37). This sequence was designed

Context

Riverside One, otherwise known as ‘Community in a Cube’, is an apartment block in Middlesbrough (fig.21), designed for a joint venture client, the charity BioRegional and developer Quintain, as part of the redevelopment of the former industrial Middlehaven Docks. Development was to have proceeded according to a master plan designed by Will Alsop in 2005 that included a series of apartment blocks leading from the city centre to the waterside (fig.01, 02). These were to have been designed by Alsop himself, Feilden Clegg Bradley, Branson Coates, FAT and Grimshaw, but BioRegional Quintain was wound up in 2010. As a result, only Middlesbrough College (2008), a public square and FAT’s Riverside One (2011) were realised. FAT’s building proceeded despite the downturn due to bespoke HCA funding.

Sean Griffiths was FAT’s lead architect on the project. He is well known as one of the most talented, polemical and lively architects operating in the fields of housing and urban design today. He is highly respected amongst his peers and is a prolific contributor to architectural debate through lectures, symposia and papers. He and his partners link research into the nature of contemporary visual communication and fabrication techniques with the creation of socially meaningful, economically and, in this case, environmentally sustainable environments. This both continued in a deliberate fashion the work of post-modernism, with its interest in visual communication, signage and historical and popular reference, and applied it in a market driven environment with sustainable values and goals.
to encourage exercise and social interaction, in support of One Planet Living goals of health and happiness (fig.06). Surmounting this lively ensemble is a surreal street of blue clapboard New Urbanist ‘sky homes’ resting on the roof of the block (fig.31-33) accessed by decks that include oversized Eternit-clad trusses (fig.34). The eastern corner of the block appears to rest on a timber chalet (fig.14, 29, 30).

The building addresses its surrounding public square though specific characterful elements that help form the streetscape (fig.24, 25), while the higher levels of the building address the city (fig.35). Its interior court develops its own character, its wood panelled surface inscribed with a cross-cross pattern (fig.38, 39). Materially, the building uses a pallet of tough brick to its exterior, responding to the industrial landscape of the old docks (fig.27). Its interior court is lined with a softer, warmer timber to which decorative motifs and planting are used to add to its character (fig.37). Planting around the inner courtyard is irrigated by recycled rainwater. Circulation links this shared, upper level garden space with the public square though planted terracing, encouraging a strong yet defined link between public, semi public and private space. The ground floor integrates commercial units, a community centre and the corner pub (fig.02, 08).

Flats (studio, one- and two- bedroomed) are market driven, i.e. small in plan, but with 2.7m floor to ceiling heights and large windows that take advantage of views over the water. Two thirds of the flats have water views and are dual aspect (fig.11). They are accessed by a single core and a circulation strategy that achieves 82% net to gross.

The building’s structure is a post-tensioned concrete frame with 100 per cent recycled aggregate and 50 per cent cement substitute; the concrete is exposed internally for thermal mass. External walls, about 400mm thick, are made of FSc-certified timber infill panelling heavily insulated with wood fibre insulation and brick cladding (fig.19). This achieved a high thermal performance for the external envelope of less that 0.21 W/m²degC. Much of the know-how for this was imported from One Brighton, a previous building by the same developer.

A plant room located to the rear ground floor of the building houses a woodchip biomass boiler of sufficient capacity to serve the first three residential blocks (fig.08). They would have met these three block’s entire heating and hot water demand, which together comprise about 50 per cent of the site’s total energy requirements. The remaining 50 per cent electrical load would have been supplied via a private network, a single renewable electricity provider locked into the scheme.
Research Questions

The following primary research questions were addressed by the project:

1) How can a memorable building challenge the flatness of generic urban planning within the framework of market driven regeneration?
2) How can the communicative surface be used to perform architecturally?
3) How can environmental principles be incorporated into an art based architecture practice?

Aims and Objectives

1) To use the narratives of place and the specifics of its history to make a memorable, visually stimulating building that challenges the flatness of generic urban planning within the context of market driven development.

Riverside One extended Griffith’s research into the design of memorable buildings that challenge the flatness of generic architecture and urban planning, within the framework of market driven development. Its key constraints were given by the Alsop masterplan adopted by Tees Valley Regeneration that specified that the buildings along the southern edge of the quay were to operate within pre-defined parameters such as a 30 x 30 m footprint, lightness of tone and emphasis on cubic form (fig.01). These characteristics were determined at masterplan stage in relation to the provision of office buildings, and presented issues of daylighting and plan depth that the design had to address. The necessity of slicing up and excavating this volume created courtyards, shared amenities, garden space and helped derive the character of a building where different housing typologies were juxtaposed. (fig.03-07).

The design assembled disparate, culturally significant elements into a collage to express the characteristics of the local community (fig.03, 04). Riverside One is the only apartment building in Middlesbrough. By incorporating familiar building typologies and lifestyle references into the design, it was coded with the meanings associated with these building types and spaces. It was something new, yet at the same time strangely familiar. Clear as a billboard, Riverside One’s three key components – Swiss chalet pub, apartment block, and rooftop townhouses – were stacked in a surreal domestic triptych, perhaps no better put than by Griffiths’ almost Dadaist description: “It’s just a straightforward modernist apartment block, resting on a chalet, with a little street of suburban homes on the roof!” (fig.04) <http://www.bdonline.co.uk/buildings/community-in-a-cube-middlehaven-by-fat-architects/5035535.article>.

FAT was asked to design a building that not only created demand for quality and exciting waterside living, but did so within an acceptable risk and satisfactory return. This
was achieved within the parameters set by
the developer. It was built for £11 million.
Planning consent for the building was obtained
on 23 July 2007, construction started on 07
January 2010 and completion was reached
on 27 March 2012.

2) To use the communicative surface to perform
architecturally.

As in others of his buildings, Riverside One
extended Griffiths’ research into the use
of the communicative surface to perform
architecturally. The purplish bricks used on
the external façade make reference to the
dockland warehouses that used to stand on
the site (fig.26); the untreated larch lining the
inner courtyard and serving as a rain screen
(fig.37) was intended to smell and resemble
a lumberyard. Griffiths speaks of this as a
sober jacket with a flashy lining. Its surface
is criss-crossed with black diagonal lines
applied by scorching in-situ, producing what
Griffiths refers to as “flame grilled Burger King”
(fig.39). Apertures were created in this façade
with a pattern of triangular, circular and square
perforations (fig.37). The main service core
rising through the courtyard was treated as a
strong architectural element and painted with a
geometric harlequin pattern in pink, green and
blue (fig.21,40). This deployment of FAT’s folk
pop library of signs and symbols and clashing
cultural icons both expressed their interest
in staging clashes between working class
inner city taste and architectural sensibilities,
and was expressive of wider processes of
demolition and construction, urban decay and
regeneration, labour and time.

3) To incorporate ‘One Planet Living’
objectives into an art based practice.

The vision for Middlehaven was to create a
truly sustainable community development that
acted as an exemplar scheme integrating
principles of sustainability, community and
excellent design. In FAT’s building, Griffiths
linked research into the nature of visual
communication and the creation of socially
meaningful environments with sustainability
goals. The building espoused the ten goals
of BioRegional Quintain’s ‘One Planet
Living.’ These tenets, also at the heart of
London’s Olympic bid, encompassed built
environment and lifestyle issues, including
principles of: energy efficiency; the use of
renewable technologies and locally sourced
materials with low embodied energy; zero
waste; encouraging low carbon modes
of transport; using water more efficiently;
restoring biodiversity; promoting local food;
reviving local identity and wisdom; creating
bioregional economies; encouraging active,
sociable, meaningful lives to promote good
health and well being (see <http://www.
oneplanetliving.net/>).

The strategies deployed at Riverside One to
meet these goals included (P06): a ground
floor woodchip biomass boiler of 250kW
capacity to meet the building’s entire heating
and hot water demand (fig.08); bicycle store
and recycling room; power points for electric
cars; the recycling of roof water to water
the courtyard garden; planters around the
walkways giving access into flats and walk
up gardens, providing an alternative vertical
access to the elevator (fig.06, 07); external
facades built of face brick, with the courtyard lined with untreated larch from renewable resources; emphasis on natural ventilation - of the ten flats per floor, eight have corner aspects (fig.11), which, along with their higher than usual 2.7 m floor to ceiling height, contributed to air circulation; use of exposed concrete soffits for thermal mass; effective insulation of exterior walls (fig.17). The construction of the building was undertaken by local contractors to create economic activity in the region.

The result was a striking visual composition that challenged the aesthetic usually associated with sustainable design. Managing director Pete Halsall, who led BioRegional Quintain’s five-strong sustainability team stated: “This is a radical design. Middlesbrough is a house town where personality looms large. This building has personality and uniqueness that mirrors the town – old and new. The more conventional a building looks, people don’t believe its green, but characterful design can be congruent with sustainability” (<http://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/buildings/residential/low-carbon-fat/8608540.article>).
Research Methods

Riverside One was driven by contextual concerns involving detailed fieldwork and a close reading of the site to discover the narratives of place and the specifics of its history. Found models were then reworked through collagist / dada-ist methods to create a new assemblage that carried with it old associations and meanings and created new ones. Methods used to reorganise existing information into a new constellation were the appropriation of images, references, history and values, collage, juxtaposition and humour. These tactics are the foundation of cultural practice in the age of the internet, appropriated here as methods of architectural design.

At the same time as this visual, aesthetic research, Riverside One required considerable environmental and technical research to meet sustainability standards. This was guided by the 10 ‘One Planet Living’ goals: zero carbon, zero waste, sustainable transport, local and sustainable materials, local and sustainable food, sustainable water, natural habitats and wildlife, culture and heritage, equity and fair trade, health and happiness. Certain of these could only be met at a masterplan level, e.g. sustainable transport, equity and fair trade, local and sustainable food, but wherever possible the building was designed to meet sustainability goals. To address the zero carbon objective, the CHP biomass boiler, with sufficient capacity to heat and power five buildings, was included within the building’s envelope at the architect’s suggestion (fig.08). Research into the thermal performance, fire rating and cost of natural materials such as wool, newspaper and rope for use as insulation was undertaken. Detail design of the building’s external façade aimed at water- and airtightness (fig.17-20). The goal of zero waste was addressed through using standard modular dimension for building components to reduce waste and including waste recycling as part of the building contract. The provision of planter boxes in public spaces was a decision to facilitate food cultivation and encourage biodiversity. Water sustainability was addressed through the specification of low usage taps and toilets, and, even though it was ultimately rejected for cost reasons, the reuse of rainwater for watering planter boxes was investigated. As described above, the preservation of local culture and heritage was a primary driver in the design of the building. Health and happiness led to the development of dual aspect, large windowed, high ceilinged apartments, and the decision to make upper floors walkable through well-located stairs (fig.12). The architect continues to participate in post occupancy research being undertaken by Leeds Metropolitan University and University College London into the building’s environmental performance, in partnership with Good Homes Alliance.
Dissemination / Impact

Riverside One was nominated for a 2013 RIBA Regional Award. It has been widely disseminated and debated in the architectural and public media. Built at a time of financial plenty and when there was a great deal of optimism for urban regeneration, it is seen as both representative of that optimism and all that was unreal about it. Stranded in an otherwise empty landscape, it is at once a didactic sign and a parody of the vision it stood for.

Reviews of Riverside One in the architectural media include:

‘Community in a Cube by FAT.’ dezeen, 27 February 2013


<http://www.bdonline.co.uk/buildings/community-in-a-cube-middlehaven-by-fat-architects/5035535.article>

Parnell, S. ‘FAT’s ‘Alone in Riverside One.’ Architects Journal, 26 April 2012, cover, pp. 54-57 (P02).

<http://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/buildings/residential/low-carbon-fat/8608540.article>


Reviews in the popular media include:

‘Dreamscape becomes a reality.’ North East Times, 01 September 2008, pp. 09 (P04).

Evidence

Images and Drawings

Fig. 01 Middlehaven Phase 1 Masterplan
Fig. 02 Middlehaven Phase 1 Masterplan Model Detail
Fig. 03 Conceptual Diagram 1
Fig. 04 Conceptual Diagram 2
Fig. 05 Conceptual Section 1
Fig. 06 Conceptual Section 2
Fig. 07 Cutaway Section
Fig. 08 Ground Floor Plan
Fig. 09 First Floor Plan
Fig. 10 Second Floor Plan
Fig. 11 Typical Floor Plan
Fig. 12 Sky Homes Level Plan
Fig. 13 North Elevation
Fig. 14 North Elevation
Fig. 15 South Elevation
Fig. 16 Cross Section through courtyard
Fig. 17 Typical Window and Infill Panel Head and Cill Sections
Fig. 18 External Wall to Courtyard and Window to Courtyard Sections
Fig. 19 External Wall Plan Details
Fig. 20 Soffit Details
Fig. 21 North Elevation, photograph Rob Parrish
Fig. 22 North Elevation from broad-walk, photograph Rob Parrish
Fig. 23 Building from the South East, photograph Rob Parrish
Fig. 24 South Elevation from road, photograph Rob Parrish
Fig. 25 South Elevation from parking, photograph Charles Hosea
Fig. 26 East Elevation, photograph Rob Parish
Fig. 27 West Elevation, photograph Charles Hosea
Fig. 28 Entrance, photograph Rob Parrish
Fig. 29 North West Corner, photograph Rob Parrish
Fig. 30 North West Corner 2, photograph Rob Parrish
Fig. 31 View of sky homes, photograph Charles Hosea
Fig. 32 Sky homes detail, photograph Charles Hosea
Fig. 33 Sky homes detail 2, photograph Charles Hosea
Fig. 34 Sky homes access walkway, photograph Charles Hosea
Fig. 35 Typical floor, corner balconies, photograph Charles Hosea
Fig. 36 Entrance courtyard, first floor, photograph Rob Parrish
Fig. 37 Walkways, timber cladding, photograph Charles Hosea
Fig. 38 Timber cladding detail 1, photograph Charles Hosea
Fig. 39 Timber cladding detail 2, photograph Charles Hosea
Fig. 40 Timber cladding detail 3, photograph Rob Parrish
Fig. 41 Walkways, timber cladding, photograph Charles Hosea
Fig. 42 Walkways, timber cladding, photograph Charles Hosea
Press

P.01  Wainwright, O. ‘Homes Alone.’ Building Design, 27 April 2012, pp. 10-13
P.02  Parnell, S. ‘FAT’s ‘Alone in Riverside One.’ Architects Journal, 26 April 2012, cover, pp. 54-57
P.03  Waite, R. ‘Middlehaven Runs to Fat.’ Architects Journal, 12 July 2007, pp. 14, 15
P.04  ‘Dreamscape becomes a reality.’ North East Times, 01 September 2008, pp. 09
P.05  Breen, J. ‘On the Waterfront.’ Living, 08 July 2008, pp. 23-27
P.06  RIBA awards programme: Sustainability Statement
Fig. 07 Cutaway Section
Fig. 11 Typical Floor Plan
Fig. 12 Sky Homes Level Plan
Fig. 13 North Elevation
Fig. 17 Typical Window and Infill Panel Head and Cill Sections

Fig. 18 External Wall to Courtyard and Window to Courtyard
Fig. 21 North Elevation, photograph Rob Parrish

Fig. 22 North Elevation from broadwalk, photograph Rob Parrish
Fig. 25 South Elevation from parking, photograph Charles Hosea
Fig. 31 View of sky homes, photograph Charles Hosea

Fig. 32 Sky homes detail, photograph Charles Hosea
Fig. 34 Sky homes access walkway, photograph Charles Hosea
Fig 3.5 Typical floor, corner balconies, photograph Charles
Fig. 36 Entrance courtyard, first floor, photograph Rob Parrish
Fig. 37 Walkways, timber cladding, photograph Charles Hosea
Fig. 39 Timber cladding detail 2, photograph Charles Hosea
HOMES ALONE

While Alcoa’s psychedelic nostrils of Middlesbrough do incline us to rethink of Middlesbrough’s housing block is the only recognisable part of a masterplan that had once promised to reinvent the dockland’s image, and a wacky new apartment building way much out on its own, writes Oliver Wainwright

Homes Alone

At the time of writing, 10 of the higher-income demographic of a biomass boiler — although thick walls and the incorporation of Marge Simpson’s hair — apparently all part of the strategic framework was rising from the central chimney, brightening it into two slabs, connected by railway tracks and an A-road, surfacing as a path of reclaimed sets. Surmounting this lively ensemble, rising from the central chimney, brightening it into two slabs, connected by railway tracks and an A-road, surfacing as a path of reclaimed sets. Surmounting this lively ensemble, rising from the central chimney, brightening it into two slabs, connected by railway tracks and an A-road, surfacing as a path of reclaimed sets.

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The central core painted in a colourful harlequin costume, like the jazzy king of a stage-set flimsiness that belies its real dangers of Alsop masterclass. This is the promotional animation for Middlehaven. A 106haa sweate of post-industrial docklands in Middlesbrough, as reimagined by Alsop into a psychedelic dreamscape.

Commissioned by a Blairish alliance of regeneration agencies, the strategic framework was launched in the wake of Alsop's publicity-friendly plans to flood the centre of Bradford and bestow Barnsley with a halo, as well as similarly outlandish schemes for Halifax, Walsall and Stoke. Middlehaven was to be the apotheosis of his unique brand of toy-based urban planning, the denouement of a decade that had seen northern emperors queuing up to try on his new clothes.

The scheme followed the usual formula of novelty object-buildings strewn at random across the site, like the aftermath of an incident in the soft-play area. At one end a giant teddy bear sat next to an office block in the shape of Marge Simpson's hair; at the other, a “Gucci glove” by Nigel Coates, as if the region’s lost hotel modelled on the marble game Kerplunk. A line of “sugar cube” housing blocks marched down the edge of the site, while mixed-use “Prada skirt” towers lined the blockfront, each with its own concrete planter.

“There was a huge amount of optimism about regeneration at the time,” says Sean Griffiths, director of Fat, whose £10 million Community in a Cube housing block is the only recognisable element of the vision to have been built. “It was a golden age for architects.”

From this angle the “Community in a Cube” concept is immediately legible. Clear as a billboard, its three key components are stacked in a surreal domestic triptych, perhaps no better put than by Griffiths’ almost Dada description: “It’s just a straightforward modernist townhouse, really. The building is connected to a chalet, with a little street of suburban houses on the roof.”

It has several clunky, explosive overtones, perhaps a parody of everything the vision stood for. The principal elevations are of a generic kind that could have been lifted from any number of canalside regeneration schemes, grids of purplish engineering brick and ubiquitous timber panelling. But this restrained wrapping is soon disrupted. To the north, a vast five-storey block has been punched through to reveal the main circulation core painted in a colourful harlequin costume, like the jazzy king of a stage-set flimsiness that belies its real dangers of Alsop masterclass. This is the promotional animation for Middlehaven. A 106haa sweate of post-industrial docklands in Middlesbrough, as reimagined by Alsop into a psychedelic dreamscape.

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Since then, reality has bitten and the development company — a brave marriage between green charity BioRegional and the self-styled “thinking man’s developer” Quintain — has been dissolved, leaving its cube stranded in a lonely landscape. Its only neighbour, resting on a field of empty plots, is the gleaming hull of Archial’s £70 million TheMills College. A 250m-long cliff face of shimmering metallic panels tacked on to a boxy shed, it proves that the real dangers of Alspop masterclass are when his wacky one-liners are interpreted by lesser architects.

Remains of the vision
At the other side of the dock are two more remains of the vision: a three-storey prefab office block, optimistically titled “Manhattan Gate”, and the taut wavy frame of Temenos, the first fatefully connecting of Anish Kapoor and Cecil Balmond and the only one of the planned “Tees Valley Giants” to make it off the drawing board. In light of what this couple has since spurned in east London, it is a comparatively graceful thing; although next to the next to the most industrial monuments, the need for a gestural steel sculpture seems questionable.

Fat’s building would have stood in the middle of a row of nine other cubes in the masterplan, refined by Studio Egret West in 2006 — including a stack of Jenga blocks by Feilden Clegg Bradley and a glassy box by Grimshaw — its footprint twisted 45 degrees to peek out of the building line and frame adocker side square. The effect can be imagined, as a path of reclaimed sets and a rank of tilted lampposts, part of Grant Associates’ public realm, now delineate the long march of the phantom cubes. But cubic blocks bring you to the building off-axis from the north-west.

A giant teddy bear sat next to offices in the shape of Marge Simpson’s hair

This may seem glib, but Griffiths claims otherwise. “We’ve always been interested in working-class, inner-city taste,” he says, “and how it connects with architects’ aspirations.” Whether Fat’s work champions, or caricatures, such taste has always been a moot point; but here, as at New Islington, the ambition is sympathetic. Although quite where the working-class fit in remains to be seen, given that the mayor, Ray Mallon, has declared he wants this to be the “unaffordable” side of Middlesbrough, luxury one to two-bed flats aimed at luring a higher-income demographic.

At the time of writing, 10 of the 80 units had sold.

Dramatic view
Entering the building is a delightfully theatrical sequence, conceived as a route through the multiple layers of the facade, a procession through the “figural section”. A grand, double-backing staircase, profiled with cloud motifs, takes you to a first-floor deck, from which the studio flats are accessed. From here, a spiral stair rises to the top of a glazed lantern, which brings light down into the lift lobby, providing access to the second-floor deck. From then on it’s straightforward — right or stairs, which at each floor give on to a external access deck and a dramatic view of what could one day be the hanging gardens of Middlehaven — if the communal window boxes are planted and maintained. The flats themselves are “market-driven” (that is, small) in plan, but relieved by unusually airy 2.7m ceiling heights, while the skyhomes enjoy spectacular double-height volumes with pitched ceilings and quirky attic-like spaces. Vast picture windows provide triple-aspect views over the docks, and views between the facing wings give a literal sense of neighbourly streets in the sky.

Encouraging residents to walk up to their flat through the building's stepped section, as well as the generous ceiling heights, is apparently all part of BioRegional’s One Planet Living philosophy of health and happiness. The scheme is designed to the (now superseded) EcoHomes Excellent standard, with 500mm-thick walls and the incorporation of a biomass boiler — although the petllet storage shed has been bizarrely tacked on to the side of the building as an afterthought. The other OPL principles, such as locally sourced, recycled materials and rainwater harvesting, were either ignored or value-engineered out, and were conspicuously absent from the wider plan. As Cabe commented at the time: “It is curious that the approach to sustainability does not appear to be manifest in the layout of the masterplan and the proposed built form.” Curious indeed for a developer dedicated to eco-evangelism.

For all its ambition and carefully crafted moments, the building is the product of the fundamentally flawed idea that a residential block should take the form of a 30x30m cube. By slicing it into two slabs, connected by a core, Fat has achieved the most efficient layout and highest net-to-gross possible, although still four rooms per floor look out 3m onto a blank wall, in a north-facing undercroft. It is telling that

The neighbouring Alsop cube, planned to Stage E, was in fact no such thing, slimmed to more of a tower form with a central core and awkwardly laid over flat plans to avoid the 15m single-aspect depth.

Since the developer disbandsed and the land was hauled back to the HCA earlier this year, there is hope that the plan might be adjusted, designed less with the arm’s-length sales pitch in mind and more with an idea of making Middlehaven a good place to live. Urban Initiatives has been commissioned to reassess the masterplan, with a focus on improving access to the site — currently severed from the town by railway tracks and an A-road, with only one point of access — and reimagining with the former street pattern. Practice director Kelvin Campbell talks of a “finer grain of family housing”, of “buildings edging streets” and of the “location of front doors” — all welcome words to a place born in the blind euphoria of noughties regeneration, high on the marketing potentials of object architecture.

As we leave, Adrian Wyatt, the founding chief executive of Quintain, arrives, hotly pursued by a stern-faced Mayor Mallon. He explains that, in the current climate, his business is moving out of the regions to consolidate interests in London.

“This project is not commercially viable, make no mistake. But the question is: is this a loss for us, or a loss leader?” asks Wyatt, in a theatrical turn of rhetorical developerspeak. “We’ve put a stake in the ground — and God loves a trier.”

PROJECT TEAM
Client BioRegional Quintain
Architect Fat
Executive architect Devereux Architects
Masterplan architect SMC Alsop / Studio Egret West
Structural engineer Martin Stockey Associates
M&E engineer Buro Four
Landscape architect Grant Associates
Project manager QS Davis Langdon

FRIDAY 27/04/2012
www.bdonline.co.uk
Alone in Riverside One

FAT’s ‘Community in a Cube’ exists despite the viability of sustainable schemes in the current climate, writes Steve Parnell. Photography by Charles Hawes.
Alone in Riverside One

FAT’s ‘Community in a Cube’ casts doubt on the viability of sustainable schemes in the current climate, writes Steve Parnell. Photography by Charles Hoxea.

Middlesbrough is a town fashioned in two by the railway and the Tees. To the south lies the Garden City square that forms today’s town, but on the wrong side of the tracks, over the border, as it famously known, is Stockton. This was the site of the original market square and where the docks traditionally lived.

Riverside One, a part of the Inlookes development on the site of the old railway sidings that fed the docks, and in an identifiably ‘New Abber’ designed manner, was commissioned by the now-defunct Tees Valley Regeneration (TVR) development agency.

The plan followed the early-nineteenth-century model for regeneration of individually named buildings by signature architects, allowed across a large-scale across a semi-urban boundary.

Verley, who lived in a house near where the apartments were to be, said: ‘I like the idea of having a communal building with a communal garden and a communal pool.’

Middlesbrough is a development of the Broadleaf idea of housing a whole community in a single building. The idea is that a floor Smith says he would not design to a park. He was there to read the ground and the story differently to those in between.

FAT have achieved this with CIAC by subdividing six floors of regular apartments between the necessary New Urbanism triad of the cube’s ground and penthouse floors, which frame the memorable after-image of the building.

The two-storey pitched roof blue weatherboard house on top of the Cornerstone of the Middlesbrough’s first original, but belies its low status.

CIAC is clearly a development of the Broadleaf idea of housing a whole community in a single building. The idea is that a floor Smith says he would not design to a park. He was there to read the ground and the story differently to those in between.

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AGENDA

MIDDLEHAVEN RUNS TO FAT

By Richard Waite

London-based Post-Modernist practice FAT has been given the go-ahead for this residential cube – part of the ambitious Will Alsop/Studio Egret West-designed Middlehaven masterplan in Middlesbrough, North Yorkshire.

The practice’s Community In A Cube (CIAC) building and SMC Alsop’s neighbouring Krusty housing block are the first two projects on the massive waterfront plot to be approved by the Middlesbrough Council.

Backed by developer BioRegional Quintain and Tees Valley Regeneration, the £7.5 million FAT scheme will create 80 apartments over eight floors.

The flats will sit above a new pub which will be built on the north side of the site. The south side will feature an ‘Italianate’ stepped garden, nestled between the U-shaped residential blocks.

On the top of the development will be a series of ‘dinky’ skyhomes, described by FAT co-founder Sean Griffiths as ‘streets in the sky with the look of New England or New Urbanist houses.’ According to Griffiths, the two rooftop levels of housing will be clad in an ‘imitation wood’ cement fibreboard for ease of maintenance.

Comparing CIAC to the firm’s other recent work, Griffiths said: ‘The scheme is slightly different from our others in that there is not so much emphasis on the facade – unlike our other projects which played that card.

‘This is a much more sculptural project. There is a sense of grandeur.’ He laughed: ‘It’s almost heroic’.

The FAT scheme will also house a biomass boiler which will serve another seven similar sized 30m³ cubes which have yet to be designed.

Work on CIAC is expected to start on site in December this year and complete before the end of 2008.
3. The main block will have a brick-dressed concrete frame, with patterned wood cladding around the courtyard.
Dreamscape becomes a reality

One thing’s for sure - Middlesbrough’s new RiversideOne has made a bold statement from day one. It’s heralded as the UK’s largest zero carbon development, but what exactly does this mean for the old Middlesbrough dockside? Karen Southon finds out more.

Within a decade, the empty wasteland lying between the Riverside Stadium and the Transporter Bridge will be radically transformed into a vibrant new waterfront community with a distinctly futuristic look.

In setting a new bar for urban regeneration, RiversideOne is heavily focused on energy-efficiency and sustainability - and these aren’t just empty buzzwords, according to developer BioRegional Quayside, which has linked up with Tees Valley Regeneration (TVR) to sell this unique £200m million dream.

The London-based company - which also has projects on the go in the capital and in Brighton - has put its money where its mouth is by investing in a host of renewable energy sources, including a highly innovative hydrogen fuel cell.

The cell, currently being hailed in RiversideOne’s marketing suite, is a European first. Pete Hallsall, managing director, explained: “The concept was invented in Britain 160 years ago, but hadn’t been progressed until recently.

“We now have the technology to improve on the fuel cell and the technology will get progressively cleaner. We thought it would be an ideal solution as there is a proven hydrogen industry and storage facilities here in the Tees Valley.”

There are other energy and water efficient technologies being utilised in the development as it is gradually rolled out over the next seven to 10 years; these include a biomass boiler; use of recycled materials such as granite slabs and crushed glass in the landscaping; thermal efficient windows; natural render; and central heating with a fresh air ventilation and heat recovery system to reduce costs.

And in line with the principle of sourcing local skills, resources and contractors, Durham-based Hall Construction has started the first phase of the public realm works on site, which boast distinctive lighting and street furniture, and integration use of greenery and planted pergolas.

The scheme has attracted international acclaim, being highlighted as an example of best practice in new sustainable waterfront development at last year’s Expo in Portugal.

At the time, Mr Hallatt commented: “We’re creating the world’s first ever major zero carbon development, and all the projects on show at the Expo, if it comes to pass, could be the only one taking sustainability to the extent we aim.”

Work has already started on roads and landscaping for the 100,000 sq m development, and the first residential phase should begin at the end of the year.

Artists’ impressions show a range of visually striking, radically different architectural designs, ‘including 750 homes and a host of leisure, education and office facilities.

Apartments in the first residential ‘cube’ (nominated CIAC - Community in a Dubai lane already been released for sale, with four more to follow at prices starting just under £350,000.

Twenty apartment types are available in CIAC, each named after a pioneering modern artist such as Rodin, Hepworth and Popova.

At ground level, there is an area of open space containing a shelter building and a central courtyard framed by two wings.

And as well as a riverside site, residents will also enjoy stunning views of planned megasculpure, Temenos, part of the world’s largest public arts initiative. Set to reach 110m in length and almost 50m in height, it will be the first in the Tees Valley Giants project, with others to follow in Stockton, Hartlepool, Darlington, and Redcar and Cleveland.

Joe Cosgrove, chief executive of TVR, added: “RiversideOne is a great example of what Middlesbrough and the regeneration of the Tees Valley has to offer.

“It is about the future - the way we will live tomorrow, and creating truly sustainable projects like RiversideOne to secure the resources of the planet for future generations.

“Tees Valley Regeneration’s mission is to attract the interest of groundbreaking companies such as BioRegional Quayside and the CF, which helped in the development of the fuel cell, and spread the word that the Tees Valley is a great place to live and do business.”

For more information, visit www.riverside-one.com.

What’s the story?

This unique £200 million scheme will include:

- 750 homes
- State-of-the-art leisure, education and commercial facilities
- World-class public art installations
- Sustainable living principles
- Innovative alternative energy sources

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F04 “Dreamscape becomes a reality.” North East Times, 01 September 2008, pp. 09
ONCE crowded with cranes, trains and sheds, with dockers loading 16-stone sacks in all weathers, Middlehaven Dock was a noisy, dirty, industrial hub until its closure in 1980.

It became a redundant wasteland, the shining outline of Middlesbrough FC’s Riverside Stadium, an oasis in a brownfield desert.

But across the dock basin from the football ground, a vision of the future is coming to fruition.

In ten years, futuristic apartment blocks, offices and a hotel will stand on this site, next to the Middlesbrough College campus, which opens in September. Not only are these buildings different because they are designed by award-winning architects, they are also carbon-neutral. They will be powered by a combination of biomass boilers, wind and, possibly, hydrogen fuel cell technology in the UK’s largest carbon-neutral development to date.

The vision of RiversideOne is ambitious. Sailing boats will glide across the dock basin and there are plans for a water sport zone and moorings for boats. There are even plans to import sand to create a beach. The carbon-neutral apartment blocks, offices, and a hotel will overlook the waterfront.
flanked by some of Middlesbrough's best-known landmarks – the stadium, the old clock tower, and the Transporter Bridge.

Pete Halsall, managing director of developers BioRegionalQuintain, says: "This will effectively create a new and vibrant quarter of Middlesbrough.

"Waterfront living is very popular. There is a huge market for people who want to live in a Venetian way, with the water just outside their window. It creates a very tranquil environment. But it isn’t just going to be somewhere to live. It will be a community, and somewhere for people to visit."

The development will eventually provide more than 750 homes by the waterfront – and some apartments will even be built on two floating piers in the dock basin, based on Dutch technology.

The college will provide amenities for residents, including a restaurant, creche, internet cafe, gym and, of course, night school and adult education classes.

The ground floor of most of the buildings will be taken up with shops, pubs or restaurants, the idea being that the development will provide a whole community. There will also be a full cultural programme, including open air music festivals and art exhibitions.

An outdoor events square will host farmers’ markets and other attractions, and an entertainments building will provide a cinema, bowling alley, bars and restaurants.

On-site allotments are also being provided next to the second building to continue the sustainable food theme, and there will also be a food box delivery scheme for residents.

The first two buildings, CIAC (which stands for Community in a Cube) and Qube, are the first to be built and, along with the events square, will be complete by the end of next year. Studios and one and two-bedroom apartments are for sale in CIAC now. The on-site show apartment gives some idea of how they might look, but as all the apartments are different shapes and sizes, it is difficult to be specific.

The apartment’s bathroom and
en-suite come with high-spec fixtures and fittings and the kitchen includes a fridge, oven, and in the two-bedroom apartments, a dishwasher – all triple A rated for energy efficiency. The heat will come from a biomass boiler in the basement of the building which is guaranteed by BioRegionalQuintain to be the same price or cheaper than current energy costs – a pressing concern for many people.

CIAC, the first building, will have a south-facing terraced garden courtyard in the centre of the cube. The whole building is designed around trying to bring people together to meet their neighbours, helped of course, by the pub which will be on the ground floor and an atmospheric lobby, complete with a giant chandelier. Mr Halsall says: “The idea is to create a community there, even before the whole development is complete. The communal garden areas, the pub and the events square will all contribute to this.”

Looking at the model showing the whole RiversideOne development is like looking at a prediction of not 21st, but 22nd Century living. The buildings are so futuristic, so colourful, like nothing that has been designed before.

Many predicted that the original masterplan of Middlehaven, designed by architect Will Alsop, would be watered down. But the individual buildings are as ambitious as ever.

Prices for a studio apartment in CIAC start at £89,000 and the larger two-bedroom apartments, with balconies and waterfront views, go up to £139,500. There is also a first-time buyer scheme for key workers and those who work nearby. For more information, phone 0808-172-2430.

Win gym membership at the Quality Living Leisure Club

Whether it’s for exercise or pure relaxation, you will find all that you want in a health club at the Quality Living Leisure Club at Scotch Corner.

The club has superb modern equipment, a large range of facilities and friendly and experienced staff who can write tailor-made exercise programmes to help you achieve your goals. Leisure facilities include a sauna, spa, swimming pool and steam room, as well as a fast tan sunbed. The club also offers water-based activities such as aqua aerobics and swimming lessons.

All-round fitness is a combination of strength, stamina, flexibility and a good cardiovascular system. The gyms at Scotch Corner are all designed around this fundamental principle and you can choose from cardiovascular exercise machines, resistance equipment, traditional free weights and floor exercises.

The Scotch Corner Hotel is giving away a one-year membership for two people, plus a six-month membership for one runner-up. To enter, just tell us the name of the leisure club at Scotch Corner.

Answers on a postcard with your name, address and telephone number, to be received by the end of August, to Scotch Corner Gym Membership, Living Magazine, Features, The Northern Echo, Priestgate, Darlington DL1 1NF.

Quality Living Leisure Club – Scotch Corner, near Darlington DL10 6NR; email scotchcorner@quality-living.com; phone 01325-208695; Fax 01748-850475. Open: Monday to Friday 7am to 10pm; Saturday and Sunday, 8am to 10pm. Off peak hours are Monday to Friday 9am-5pm.

Terms and conditions: Sunbed sessions, beauty treatments, time in the hair salon and any food and beverages purchased are not included in the membership and will incur an additional cost. The prize is subject to availability.

WINNER: The winner of the June competition, a night away at the Grey Street Hotel, Newcastle, is Mrs P Edwards, of Northallerton. Congratulations!
The intent of the developer, Bioregional Quintain in 2006, was that the development was to follow the “One Planet Living” principles developed by Bioregional Development Group and WWF to promote the concepts of sustainable living and ecological footprinting.

Building on their experience from the New England Quarter in Brighton, BRQ prepared a sustainability action plan which set out their vision for creating a truly sustainable community on the site of the regeneration of Middlehaven docks.

This document was the reference point for all decision making in the design and construction of the buildings and the public realm. A ten point action plan is set out that addresses carbon emissions, recycling, transport, materials, opportunities for on-site food production, water consumption, biodiversity, sustainable community structure, and access to pleasant outdoor space.

Sustainability was a cornerstone of the development principles and all members of the team were inducted into the one planet living principles and the action plan for the project.

The design team worked together to develop designs for the building and structure that reduced the demand on resources and will assist the residents to live a sustainable lifestyle. Design features included:

- High thermal performance for the external envelope of less than 0.21 W/m²K
- Community heating installation with Heat Interface units in each flat serving the flat heating and the domestic hot water storage cylinder.
- Balanced whole house ventilation
- Low energy light fittings
- Low flow taps, showers and WC cisterns
- Drying spaces to avoid the need for tumble dryers
- Natural lighting to circulation areas to reduce electrical energy consumption
- Provision for waste segregation for recycling and composting
- Roof top irrigated mini allotments for local food production
- Rainwater harvesting for irrigation

In order to meet the aspiration of net zero carbon the heating and hot water is generated by a wood chip biomass boiler which meets 100% of the demand and it is intended that electricity is purchased through a certified off site renewable energy generator.

The contractor was set and achieved the target of recycling 80% of the construction waste.

All of this contributed to an EcoHomes rating of “Excellent”.

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### RIBA awards programme: Sustainability Statement

The RIBA is committed to meeting the challenge of climate change and raising the understanding of sustainability within the profession. This document is to provide where possible quantitative and qualitative data on the sustainability credentials of buildings submitted for awards. There may be buildings where it is not possible to produce quantifiable data either because of their size, or because they do not provide climatic enclosure, in which case only the written statement needs to be included.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gross Floor Area</th>
<th>Treated floor area (where energy use can be measured)</th>
<th>m²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6,000 m²</td>
<td>5,200 m²</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual energy/CO₂ consumption for space and water heating (excluding any contributions from onsite renewables which should be noted below)</th>
<th>Zero – 100% biomass heating and hot water</th>
<th>kWhrs</th>
<th>kgCO₂/m²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annual energy/CO₂ consumption for electrical usage (excluding any contributions from onsite renewables which should be noted below)</td>
<td>74,000 kWhrs</td>
<td>38,200 *kgCO₂/m²</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Annual CO₂ emissions/m² treated floor area: 38,200 *kgCO₂/m²

What EPC rating was achieved by the Building on completion: Details Unavailable

Give the basis of calculations/software / measured data used to achieve the above data.

Give details of any benchmarking evaluation system that has been completed for the building (e.g. BREEAM, SAP, CSH, LEED EPC ratings etc)

Where appropriate provide the name of the engineer or engineering consultancy that has validated the above figures.

Give brief details of any renewable energy systems that are incorporated into the design. A biomass boiler plant of 250kW capacity provides 100% of the heating and hot water demand which reduces the carbon emissions for heating and hot water to 5,100

The RIBA considers building handover & client feedback to be important in assessing the success the buildings design. Please confirm if you have commenced RIBA Stage L2 and intend to undertake stage L3.

*For calculations of carbon emissions please use the following conversion factors:

- Natural Gas: 198 kgCO₂/kWh
- Grid Electricity: 0.517 kgCO₂/kWh (Divide by seasonal COP for Heat Pumps)
- Fuel Oil: 0.297 kgCO₂/kWh
- Biomass: 0.013 kgCO₂/kWh
- Biogas: 0.018 kgCO₂/kWh