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MOORE STREET

*A courtyard community for Glasgow's east end
by Elder and Cannon, JM Architects, Page Park
and Richard Murphy Architects – page 26*

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Moore Street, Glasgow, by Elder and Cannon,
JM Architects, Page\Park and Richard Murphy Architects

EAST END ENCLAVES

Richard Murphy Architects' innovative masterplan for Moore Street pioneers a new courtyard model for social housing in Glasgow, but the result is strangely fragmented, says *Miles Glendinning*. Photography by *Andrew Lee* >>

The east end is an 'old' urban zone that, contrary to stereotype, never had a golden age

The international story of the architecture and planning of urban housing in the 20th century has been a tale of sharp swings – between Modernist and anti-Modernist patterns, high and low density, and so forth. In Britain, these swings have been accentuated not only by our particularly violent fluctuations in housing tenure, from private to public and back again, but also by the longstanding 'Pugin tradition' of fierce architectural polemic between competing utopian visions.

One of the more esoteric and longest-running issues of contention in these housing wars has been the conflict between 'open' and 'closed' planning models. This was first provoked by CIAM's (International Congress of Modern Architecture) insistence on a striking, separate newness, with clearly geometrical blocks in continuous flowing space, laid out 'democratically' with no hierarchy, no front and back. The approach was exemplified by the *zeilenbau* pattern of rigidly parallel slabs, arranged to maximise sunlight orientation 'for all', without any regard for existing urban contexts. This pattern was realised on a vast scale in Glasgow's Sighthill development (1961–8), with its array of parallel 20-storey towers. Over the second half of the 20th century, the pendulum swung gradually back from this extreme, with efforts to restore enclosure and public/private differentiation – a trend that began with the 1960s rejection of isolated, high towers in favour of complex 'low-rise, high-density' layouts, and culminated in the Post-Modern years' championing of the 'traditional street'. Now, however, the pendulum is returning to greater openness, as shown strikingly in the Moore Street project, the second phase of the Graham Square development in Glasgow.

Built by the Molendin Park Housing Association (MPHA) – one of the most innovative of the community housing organisations that sprang up in the city during the 'tenement rehab' years of the 1970s – Graham Square is an enclave of careful regeneration in the vast, alienated expanse of Glasgow's east end. This swathe of the city is a palimpsest of jumbled fragments of survival and redevelopment, randomly and at times brutally juxtaposed, as in the trenches of an archaeological 'dig'. The east end is an 'old' urban zone that, contrary to stereotype, never had a golden age. Scramply semi-industrial in the 19th and early 20th centuries, it was

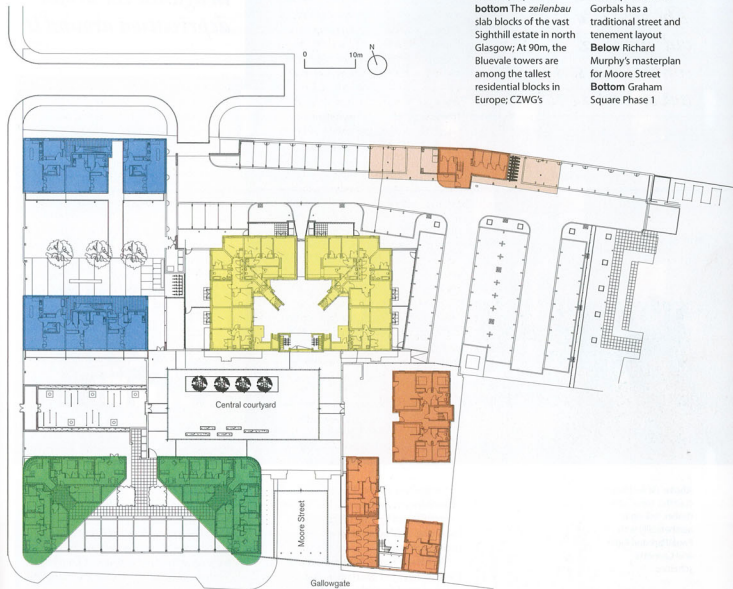
subjected to the most invasive of Glasgow's vast clearances in the 1960s and 70s. This bureaucratic juggernaut of destruction was only just underway when Modernist tower blocks fell from fashion, and was still in full swing when the first efforts at environmental repair and population stabilisation began in 1976, in the form of the 1,620ha, multi-agency GEAR (Glasgow Eastern Area Renewal) project.

By the late 1980s, the resulting landscape was an atomised mosaic of wide roads and almost invisible low-rise, brick, 'vernacular' housing, sanitised by greenery and dotted randomly with the stumps of 19th-century tenements. Of the occasional Modernist public-housing schemes, the most spectacular is the 31-storey, twin-towered outcrop of the Bluevale Street project (1963–6), half a mile east of Graham Square. This landmark will hopefully be retained in any regeneration scheme, rather than wastefully demolished.

In Glasgow, as in most other western European cities, the 'return to the street' reached its climax in the Post-Modern years of the late 1980s and early '90s. A campaign to save and rehabilitate 19th-century tenements elided smoothly into a drive to bulldoze Modernist open-plan areas of redundant council housing, substituting them with mixed-tenure 'new traditional' tenements lining 'reconstructed traditional streets'. The most notable example of this is the Crown Street project in the Gorbals, ongoing from 1992. So when the first phase of Graham Square – a redevelopment of a redundant meat market with mixed-tenure housing – was built in 1998–9, it took the form of an unambiguously Post-Modern piece of urbanism.

The project grouped blocks by three architectural practices – Richard Murphy, PagePark and McKeown Alexander (now part of JM Architects) – around a 'traditional street', partly fronted by freestanding preserved sections of the classical market facades. Much of this phase was actually designed in an overtly Modernist 'style' – one of Glasgow's harbingers of a wider loosening-up of urban design, which rejects sharply divided front-back planning for a more fluid spatial approach, allowing deeper plots to be exploited without wasteful empty space in the middle.

Under the direction of Rob Joiner, a longstanding Maccenas of progressive, locally



rooted regeneration in Glasgow, MPHA has consistently attempted to keep pace with the latest developments in housing architecture and urban design. So when, in 2005, it finally embarked on the second phase of Graham Square at Moore Street, it was little surprise that MPHA rejected proposals for a 'street'-based layout repeating the Phase 1 formula. Instead, through a limited masterplan competition involving all three Phase 1 architects, plus Elder and Cannon Architects, it chose a more spatially innovative concept by

Richard Murphy Architects.

The competition arrangements provided that the 93-dwelling development would be divided between all four firms, working to the winning masterplan. Murphy's concept for Moore Street was intended to deliver a decisive riposte to the lingering appeal of the 'traditional street and tenement' ideal in Glasgow. It pioneers a new pattern of semi-private courtyard development, breaking down the sharp facade separation of front and back. This approach was foreshadowed in 1999 >>

Far left, top to bottom The *zeilenbau* slab blocks of the vast Sighthill estate in north Glasgow; At 90m, the Bluevale towers are among the tallest residential blocks in Europe; CZWG's

masterplan for the Gorbals has a traditional street and tenement layout Below Richard Murphy's masterplan for Moore Street Bottom Graham Square Phase 1





Above JM Architects clad this block with timber, linking it aesthetically with Page\Park and Elder and Cannon's schemes

by the multi-architect Homes for the Future demonstration project in Glasgow Green, masterplanned by Page\Park, with its loose ring of Modernist blocks around an inner courtyard.

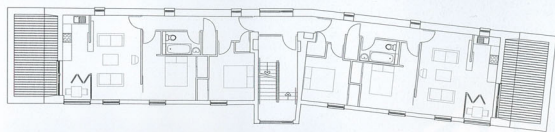
At Moore Street, Murphy envisaged a loose hierarchy of courtyards. A main central space, entered from the city's Gallowgate area through a preserved market archway, is ringed by four distinct sub-developments, each with its own semi-private courtyard space. This strategy of breaking open the Post-Modern, 'traditional' street block and establishing a hybrid, less rigid relationship between private and public space is not, of course, unique to Scotland or Glasgow, but forms part of a broad international movement in the urban design of social housing. The Netherlands, for example, resembles Scotland in its vast expanses of older, four-storey tenements on shallow perimeter-block layouts. Here, a protracted urban-design vogue for the

Moore Street is defensively walled in against the urban deprivation around it

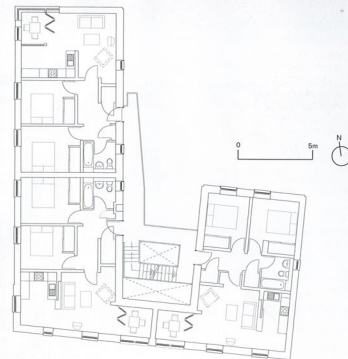


'traditional street' has been followed recently by a sharp reaction towards deeper, more freely planned layouts, as in the 60m-deep, multi-functional blocks of the new IJburg housing zone of Amsterdam, or the more radically opened-up network of Dutch firm Venhoeven CS' Rietland development in the same city.

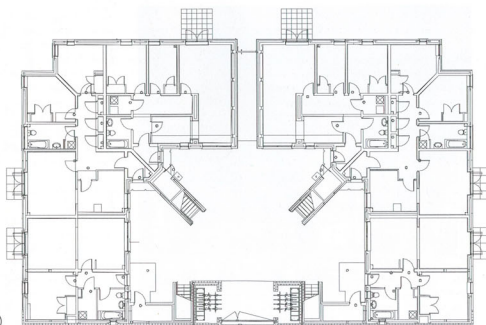
But the Dutch experiments enjoy the benefits of a proactive planning system that encourages a unity of concept and a wider integration with context that is unthinkable in Britain, with its reactive planning machinery and its aggressively individualistic culture of urban design. Here, far from aspiring to co-ordinate the design of entire city zones, the most architects can hope for is to build isolated demonstration projects, islands of care and excellence rather like city planner Patrick Geddes' turn-of-century 'conservative surgery' enclaves in the slums of Edinburgh's old town. Moore Street is necessarily planned as a >>



Left and below JM Architects' elevated block at the rear of the site
Bottom left The firm's scheme on the Gallowgate



There is an unsettling tension between Richard Murphy's project and the other architects' schemes



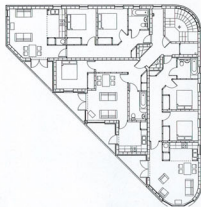
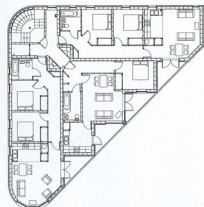
This page Richard Murphy's scheme combines 'bold sculptural force' with an Arts and Crafts 'house style'

cul-de-sac – a jewel in a wasteland, defensively walled in against the urban deprivation around it, and separated from Phase 1 of Graham Square by a dilapidated Victorian workshop yard that could not be brought into the project.

This more individualistic framework also reached into the site itself, and conditioned the design and layout of Moore Street's various blocks. Each is strongly effective in its own right, yet they are disjointed as an ensemble, despite the unifying effect of the bold, blue-brick walling at ground-floor level that runs around and throughout the site. The overall practical aim of maximising south-facing living-room exposure, as well as the utopian aspiration of 'creating community', is actually the same as in the *zeilenbau* slabs of Sighthill, but here each block sets about it in different and sometimes conflicting ways.

Murphy's block is axially located on the prime plot and contains MPHA rental flats. It embraces the sun through an expansive U-shaped plan, embedded with complex >>

This page
The curved bay
windows of Page/
Park's scheme recalls
Glasgow's 'cult
of the tenement'



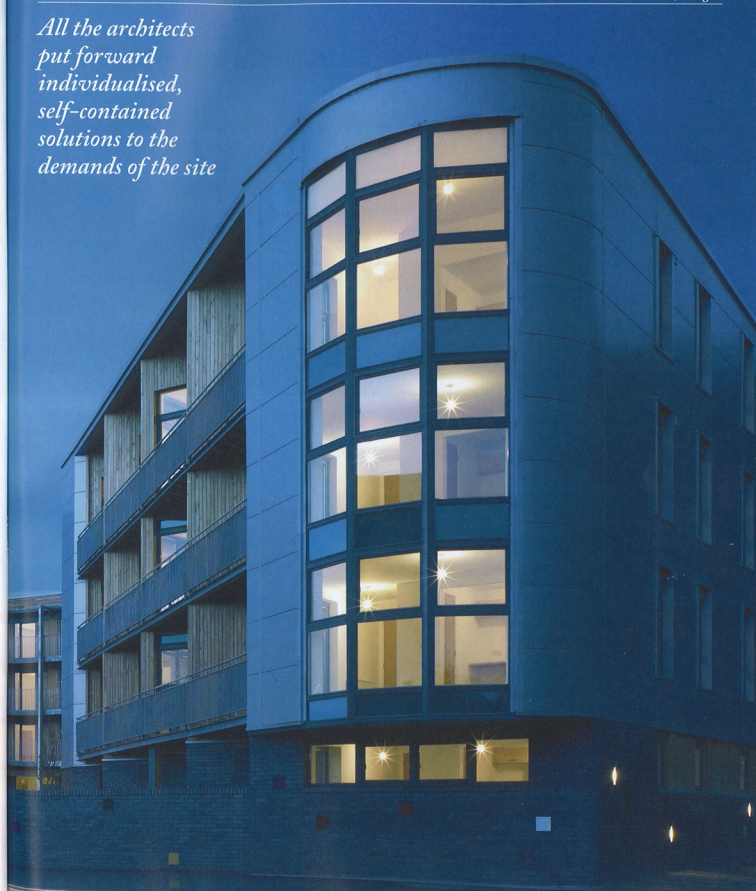
external staircases and interlaced with small, private open spaces designed to facilitate casual social interaction. The whole composition combines bold sculptural force with the inventive, slightly Arts and Crafts intricacy of Murphy's distinctive 'house style'.

However, the side and rear facades of his block are very different: plain, massive, even utilitarian. This sharp difference between 'facade' and 'back' – an almost Post-Modernist approach – sets up an unsettling tension between Murphy's project and the other architects' schemes. Their blocks, for a mixture of rental and sale properties, all adopt a sleek and, in some ways, more conventional Modernist style, with much use of timber cladding. Yet despite this superficial resemblance, they too put forward individualised, self-contained solutions to the demands of the site.

Page/Park's scheme turns its back on the central space with a splayed, south-facing main 'facade' to Gallowgate, elegantly framing its own courtyard with flanking, curved bay windows (residually recalling the cult of the tenement). On the other side, though, is a utilitarian 'back wall', faced in a stark, almost commercial-style cladding that confronts the refined, timber-faced facades of Elder and Cannon's blocks. This restrained pair of simple *zeilenbau* slabs align east-west and feature spectacular, continuous south-facing balconies. These also feature the same disparity between richly elegant front and severely plain rear facades – a segregated approach that 1930s Modernist pioneers thought they had consigned to history, along with all the other relics of Victorian capitalism. Even in >>

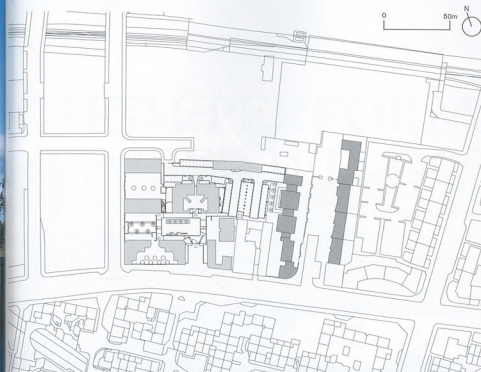
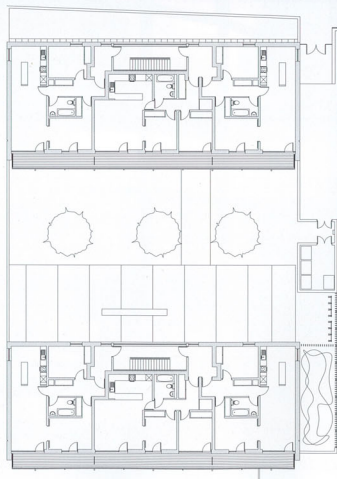


*All the architects
put forward
individualised,
self-contained
solutions to the
demands of the site*





This page The elevations of Elder and Cannon's blocks contrast sharply in their materiality
Top right Moore Street sits alongside Graham Square Phase 1 in Glasgow's 'atomised' east end



JM Architects' more intricate layout, the dark cladding of the Gallowgate frontage contrasts with the softer timber facing to the rear. The firm's two southern blocks enclose an intimate courtyard, whereas its northern block, commissioned directly by a group of local residents, seems marooned in an expanse of car parking at the north end of the site.

Internally, all the flats, whether for sale or social rental, have the same level of finish, and are comparable spatially to Parker Morris space standards. Some of Moore Street's more adventurous spaces are in Murphy's scheme, in particular the rooms in the upper-floor rental homes. Their chunky forms project aggressively beyond the roofline, but internally the glazed corners and low sills increase the sense of space.

What, if any, are the wider implications of this innovative, yet fragmentary project? Perhaps this: if today's economic crisis has brought an end to the laissez-faire bullishness of the private housing market – including the aggressively 'iconic' apartment outcrops that have recently disfigured most British cities, such as the Glasgow Harbour development – the time might now be ripe to elaborate our planning system. A more proactive and creative system might allow the individual qualities of projects such as Moore Street to connect with, and benefit from, a wider context. ■ Miles Glendinning is director of the Scottish Centre for Conservation Studies and reader in architecture at Edinburgh College of Art

Start on site date April 2007
Contract duration 18 months
Gross external floor area 7,640m²
Form of contract SBCC Standard Building Contract for Use in Scotland (Revised May 2006) with Contractors Design Portion (UCT 2005)
Total cost £11.6 million
Works cost per flat Elder and Cannon \$93,180; JM Architects £112,467; Page+Park \$99,342; Richard Murphy Architects \$96,716
Client Molendinar Park Housing Association
Masterplanner Richard Murphy Architects
Architect Elder and Cannon; JM Architects; Page+Park; Richard Murphy Architects
Structural engineer SKM Anthony Hunts
Services engineer Fulcrum Consulting
Quantity surveyor and planning supervisor Brown + Wallace
Main contractor CCG
Annual CO₂ emissions Not calculated

