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Spring 2017

For everyone at Willmott Dixon's
family of companies

How our cookstoves project is sparking
the fuel good factor in Uganda **P11**

Fortem's future: Mick Williamson
on what next for our merged repairs
and energy business **P16**

GOING UP!

HOW WE ARE
HELPING CLIENTS
ACROSS THE
COUNTRY HIT
THE HOUSING
HEIGHTS



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RESIDENTIAL PRIMED FOR BIG TIME

Residential has shuffled its pack and made important new hires as it sets its sights on becoming the best known developer in the South East.

The switch sees development teams now responsible for sites rather than aligned to Prime Place or Be:here, providing a better use of complementary skill sets.

Each team will be led by an MD charged with driving maximum value from their chosen developments.

It means that joining Brian Brady and Matthew Pullen as an MD is Vinny Bhanderi, who has been promoted, while Matt Townend is arriving from Battersea Power Station, where he added

“It is a more effective use of our specialist skills to consider all residential uses on every land asset we have”

Nic Simpkin, Residential chief executive

significant value as head of residential over the past three years after spending 11 years at Berkeley.

To underline the growth, Willmott Residential is moving from its Hanover Square office to bigger premises in Grafton Street, which will allow our London-based teams to be arranged in line with



A well-deserved promotion to MD for Vinny Bhanderi, left, while Tim Treadwell joins as director, transactions, at Be:here

the new structure.

Chief executive Nic Simpkin says, “Our new operating teams give us a scalable structure to respond to market cycles. It is a more effective use of our specialist skills to consider all residential uses, such as private rent or sale, on every land asset we have.



Each team is empowered to take decisions autonomously to drive maximum value balanced against market risk.”

Alongside Vinny’s promotion and the arrival of Matt, the company has been attracting other top property people. Tim Treadwell has joined from Knight Frank as director of transactions and Alex Isaac arrives as design director from Morpheus London, a boutique development and design consultancy. Also, Dave Taylor joins as head of health & safety from Berkeley Homes.

With another big promotion in the form of Simon Taylor becoming head of planning, deputy chief executive Andrew Telfer adds, “The new appointments and promotions are the hallmark of a business set to grow substantially; our development team is projected to grow from seven in 2009 to around 110 by the end of 2017. We have an exciting future with excellent land assets in contract and a substantial land pipeline.”

GOING FOR GOLD!



Our Interiors team in the Farringdon office show their delight at gaining Investors in People gold!

Investors in People (IIP) is the benchmark for how a company nurtures and develops its people and Interiors has joined Construction, Fortem and Partnership Homes in gaining the highest possible IIP accolade.

Our team of fit-out specialists celebrated when they landed the gold standard, marking it as an outperforming place to work, devoted to making a high level of investment in people.

IIP gold comes as Interiors celebrates a flurry of new projects, including a new London

campus for Coventry University in Dagenham. It also continues our company-wide commitment that there is ‘no better place to work’ – a fact borne out by being declared Construction Enquirer’s ‘best major contractor to work for’ in October last year.

Interiors’ IIP gold comes a month after Partnership Homes achieved the accolade for the first time. It was a fitting way for Partnership Homes’ head of HR Liz Matthews to cap her career with our company when she retired at the end of last year.

RICK LEADS DIVERSITY AGENDA

A gathering of top executives heard chief human resources officer Rick Lee outline our approach to encouraging more women into construction. Rick was the main speaker at Westminster Briefing’s Supporting Women in the Workplace conference and used the opportunity to address how Willmott Dixon and the construction industry is tackling the under-representation of women.

The speaking slot follows Rick’s role on the Government’s Women’s Business Council and comes as our company launches a focus group chaired by Julia Barrett to develop ideas to encourage more women into construction.

Rick said: “This topic is becoming a big issue for clients and I used the platform to speak about our role driving improvement in gender balance within construction to help address the skills gap.”



“I used the platform to speak about our role driving improvement in gender balance within construction”

Rick Lee, chief human resources officer

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Fortemisation has started!

Teams across the country are rebranding from Partnerships and Energy Services to Fortem as the next big name in FM starts to emerge. The new name and branding has been well received by staff and clients alike. You can read more on pages 16-17 in an exclusive interview with MD Mick Williamson.

15 NEWS

FOUNDATION STARS!

Each year our trainees exceed expectations in the Foundation challenge, where they are tasked to deliver a project of huge social importance within their local company region.

It was Manchester's Kristian Kerr who walked away with the Foundation challenge for his transformation work with colleagues on Middlesbrough children's hospice, Zoë's Place.

This facility provides respite and end of life care to babies and infants up to five years old, suffering from life-limiting or life-threatening conditions. Kristian's team built the hospice a new summer house, demolished a boundary wall and refurbished the surrounding nature garden area. It provided a lovely place for children and their families to spend precious time and also gave work experience to 17 young people.

However, all the projects achieved brilliant outcomes thanks to the determination and enthusiasm of the teams. What better way to celebrate than this montage of pictures showing some of our teams?

Clockwise from top left:
Elliott Walker (sixth from left) led the Prime Place Foundation challenge at Cheshunt School; trainees jump for success on the Wales and the West challenge, led by Aaron Jenkins; Andrew Stevenson (right) plots a new wildlife habitat for his challenge; Foundation challenge winner Kristian Kerr, left, with the other LCO challengers; Tom Arkley from Interiors worked with Jack Gunning's team refitting the Bermondsey Construction Training Centre



15 NEWS

CANDIDATES VIE FOR 'OSCARS'

Partnership Homes senior building manager Hazel Martin is one of 14 candidates nominated by their LCO managing directors to compete at this year's Construction Manager of the Year awards.

Hazel did a great job managing the team delivering much-needed new homes for Thurrock Council, and she's now in line to follow in the footsteps of Mark Pitman and Mike Walmsley, who walked off with gold medals last year for their categories.

These prestigious awards in September recognise the very best in project management across the industry and are treated as our industry's equivalent to the Oscars. Willmott Dixon people have won more gold medals than any other company over the past ten years, reflecting the focus on training and people development given within the business.

Before the actual awards night, candidates have to prepare a



Hazel Martin at Bracelet Close, Thurrock

detailed entry and then attend a site visit with judges in the summer, followed by a gruelling one-hour interview with the judging panel.

Good luck to our 2017 candidates going for gold, who are:

Construction Manager of the Year 2017

Candidate	Project
Paul Smith	BioSciences
Mark Elliott	Whitehouse Primary School
Marc Turner	Boole Science Park
Lewis Hepburn	Design Museum
Kristian Cartwright	Met Office supercomputer
Jarrad Owen	1 Capital Square
Luke Page	Gatwick Diamond
Jamie Hawkins	Oasis Academy
Hazel Martin	Bracelet Close
Andy Beale	Bolton Town Hall
Chris Baker	Aigburth High School
Wayne Bramley	Barnsley Custody Suite
Richard Abrams	Teesside University Tower Central
Christian Bohlin	May Place

TEN YEAR CELEBRATION

It's not long before our annual Ten Year Club dinner at the Landmark Hotel, attended by colleagues with more than 10 years of continuous service.

The dinner is a chance to welcome new arrivals to the club, like those in 2016, as well as celebrate other milestones of service.

This year's dinner is on Thursday 11 May, and while we can't promise

any unexpected appearances like Gary Lineker last year, it will be another chance for colleagues across our company to catch up.

Entrants to the Willmott Dixon Ten Year Club at last year's dinner with chief executive Rick Willmott (centre)



NEW HIRES SHOW AMBITION

Our ability to attract some of the best talent in the market to support our growth was highlighted with three key recent appointments



RIC BLAKEWAY

Ric Blakeway is a former housing advisor to David Cameron and was deputy mayor for housing at the Greater London Authority for eight years. When Ric left No 10 in the summer of 2016 his expertise was in huge demand.

Willmott Residential was the first company he turned to, signing up as a special advisor to work at high level with Nic Simpkin and Andrew Telfer in unlocking their 7,500 pipeline of homes in London.

Ric's key strategic advice is important as large schemes go through planning and also helps the company develop new joint venture opportunities with land owners.

At the time of his appointment Ric said: "I've been impressed with so many things about Residential, especially how Be:here has raised the bar for build-for-rent. I'm keen to be on this journey of substantial growth."

"Ric's key strategic advice is important as large schemes go through planning and also helps the company develop new joint venture opportunities with land owners"



DYLAN SKELHORN

We have one of the best safety records in the industry, with accident frequency rate statistics for 2016 showing a 50 per cent reduction from the previous year. Of the 50 projects completed in 2016, 89 per cent were completed with a zero AFR!

However, we don't get complacent, and while the All Safe initiative has seen some impressive results, progress is about continual movement and that includes welcoming renowned health and safety campaigner Dylan Skelhorn as All Safe ambassador.

Dylan suffered life-changing injuries in June 2011 when he fell 33 feet due to a collapsing chimney stack. He will bring his powerful and emotive message to every project to tell his personal story and challenge everyone's behaviour to ensure they don't compromise on safe working practices irrespective of deadlines or pressures they are working under.

"Dylan will tell his personal story and challenge everyone's behaviour to ensure they don't compromise on safe working practices irrespective of deadlines or pressures they are working under"



RICK LAWRENCE

With public sector bodies looking at working with private sector companies such as ours to unlock multiple housing projects, we've appointed one of the most experienced people in building joint ventures in property.

Rick Lawrence joins from Telereal Trillium where he secured and delivered joint ventures with central and local government organisations, including the MOD and NHS, plus Central Bedfordshire Council's 10-year partnership to plan and dispose of a surplus 168-acre site at Arlesley to provide 1,000 homes.

As new partnerships director for Partnership Homes, Rick's strategic bid experience will also give us extra fire power to bid for opportunities to work long-term with public bodies to realise their ambitious land programmes for delivery of new housing.

"As new partnerships director for Partnership Homes, Rick's strategic bid experience will also give us extra fire power to bid for opportunities to work long-term with public bodies"

SKY HIGH AMBITIONS

As buildings in London and other cities get taller, the spotlight has never shone more brightly on our ability to create tall buildings. Here we look at three projects taking shape on the skyline!



High-rise apartment blocks are one key way to solve the housing crisis, and Willmott Partnership Homes is behind a number that will provide more than 500 homes over the next 12 months.

Music Box

One is the Music Box project in Southwark, a 15-storey tower that is edging towards completion in early 2017. Like most modern developments, its construction is part of a growing trend to do away with traditional trades, with unitised panels from the fifth floor upwards.

As operations director Steve Mullins explains: "The beauty is that it's not traditional brickwork and windows on a scaffold. As long as the erectors get the setting-out right, the job's complete with only one trade."

Music to the ears

The Music Box is being built for Taylor Wimpey Central London on a former site of the London College of Contemporary Music. With just two-thirds of an acre to house a 15-storey building, a site office and a goods yard, getting on with the neighbours has been essential.

Steve Mullins continues: "Building something huge on a small footprint is about building relationships with the local community. Without that, we'd have been really struggling as we'd have been a lot further away from the site."

Joe McNamara led the community relations and though he has since moved to another project, low turnover of staff in the site team has also helped.

During a 38-week programme sinking secant and bearing piles and building a two-storey basement, the team also had

to carry out a value engineering exercise and shaved off £3 million to get the cost down to £30 million.

Challenging

Once the project was out of the ground, a reinforced concrete frame was erected and the panels began to be attached. On such a tiny site, storing the panels, which were manufactured by Austrian firm Gig, was impossible. A just-in-time delivery system was used – this was also a logistical challenge!

"Getting the panels from Eastern Europe on a lorry just in time takes a lot of thought," says Steve. "Even

backing a lorry into the site is complicated." Once on site, each nine-metre square panel was hauled into place by a tower crane over a four-month period starting in February 2016.

On completion, the Music Box will include half a dozen floors for the college plus 55 flats with 41 for private sale and 14 social homes. The private sale units range from £750,000 for a one-bed to £2 million for a top floor duplex, not usual for this part of London.

Residents do not get a balcony and cannot open a window but instead have air conditioning. ▶

Above: Room with a view – our Partnership Homes team enjoy spectacular views of London from the top of the Music Box

Onsite: Music Box

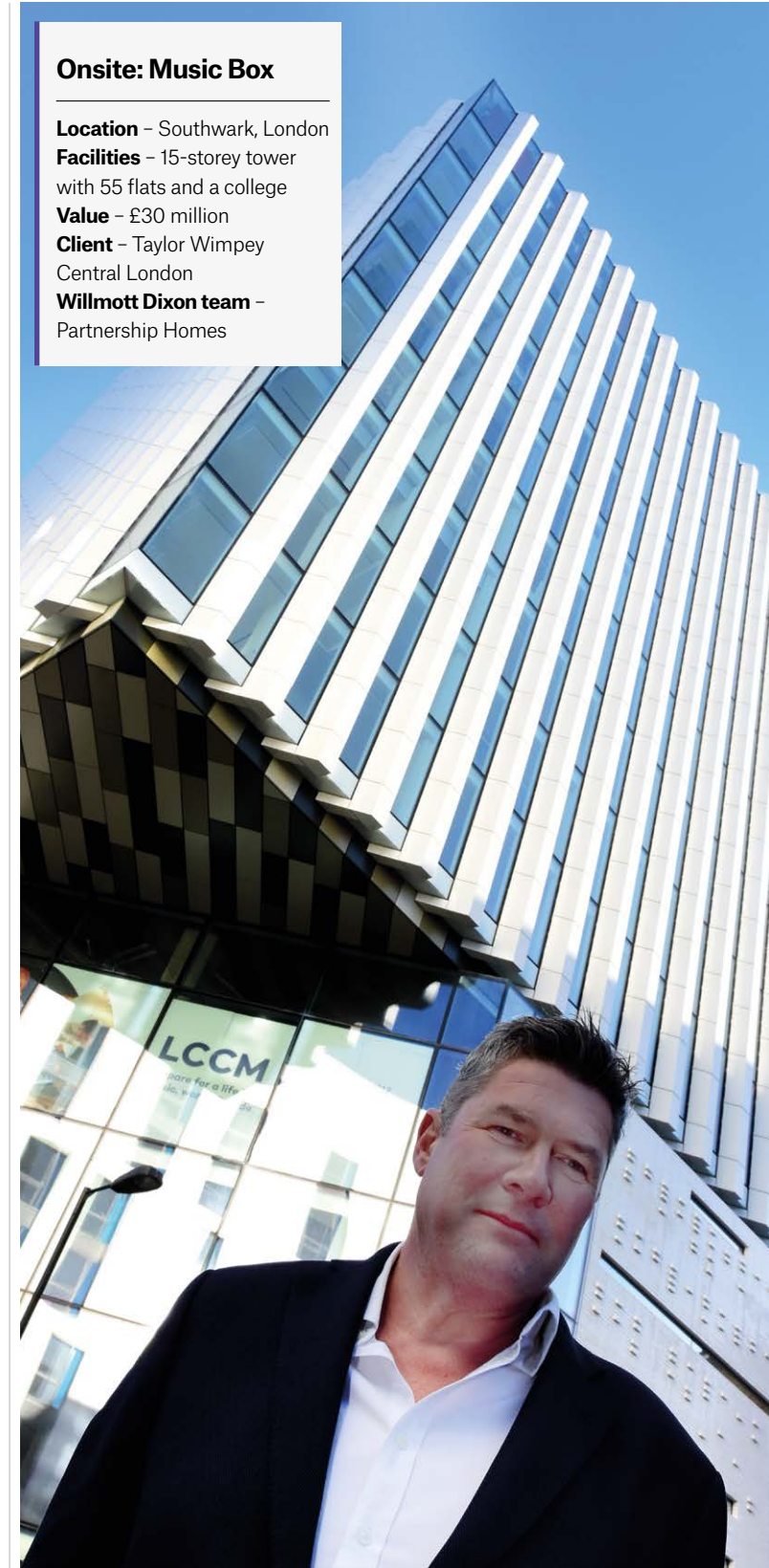
Location – Southwark, London

Facilities – 15-storey tower with 55 flats and a college

Value – £30 million

Client – Taylor Wimpey Central London

Willmott Dixon team – Partnership Homes



"Building something huge on a small footprint is about building relationships with the local community"

Steve Mullins, operations director, pictured outside the Music Box

“The biggest challenge is the logistics and working from a tight city centre site. Getting materials on site is like feeding a beast!”

Gerry Canavan, operations manager

► The unitised panels feature a small panel door that half opens to let in fresh air.

Dudley House

Across town in Westminster, Construction has teamed up with Partnership Homes for the 22-storey Dudley House, which is just starting now. The scheme will provide more than 190 homes for local people as well as a new home for Marylebone Boys’ School, which is currently in a temporary home in Brent.

Building this also saw a departure from traditional building methods. Design manager Trish Lippyatt explains: “We wanted a lightweight method and proposed brick cladding, but the planners wanted an even more lightweight one, so we went for terracotta cladding.”

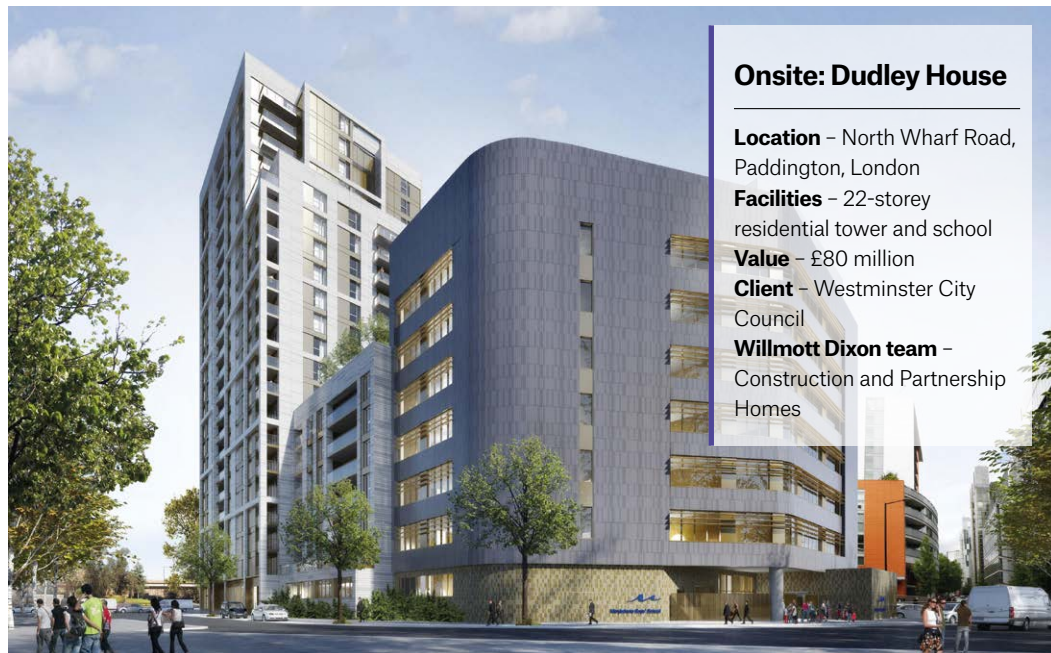
The enabling works, piling and reinforced concrete frame were built as part of the first phase, and the second stage started in December. Operations manager Gerry Canavan says: “From our point of view, the biggest challenge is the logistics and working from a tight city centre site. Getting materials on site is like feeding a beast!”

“For the exterior, we are using a mast system, which means no scaffold. There are virtually no wet trades apart from some screeding.”

Marwood Tower

Our recent work in Europe’s city of culture, Liverpool, is not just about schools and police stations. Partnership Homes is a key partner behind the city’s plans for 1,500 new homes and has made a start with the 15-storey Marwood Tower.

The £8 million contract to transform the block into 81 elderly care flats for Liverpool Mutual Homes recently completed and puts the company firmly



Onsite: Dudley House

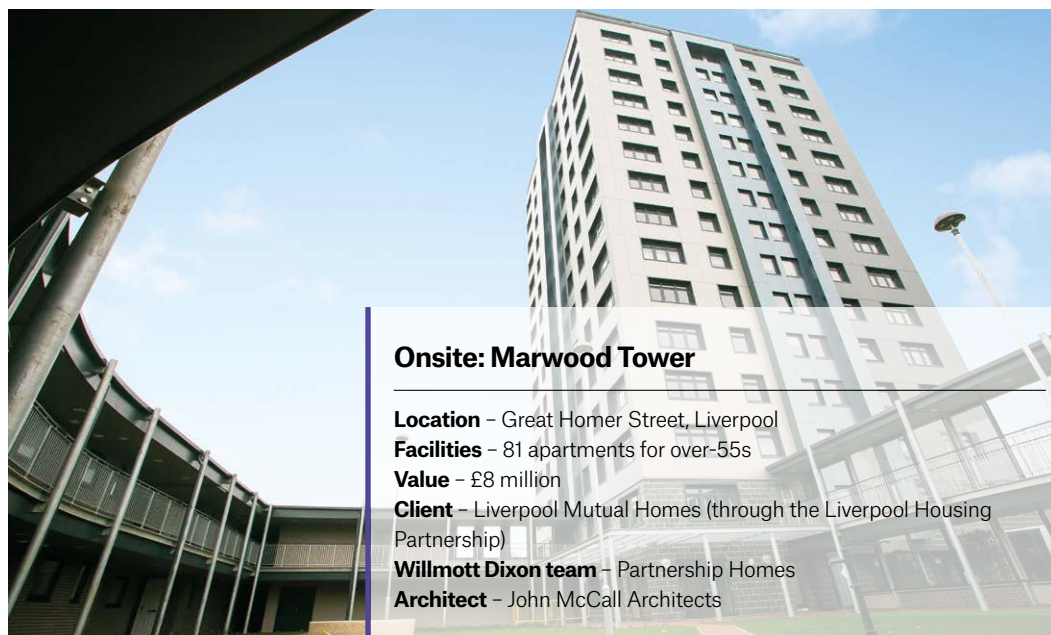
Location – North Wharf Road, Paddington, London

Facilities – 22-storey residential tower and school

Value – £80 million

Client – Westminster City Council

Willmott Dixon team – Construction and Partnership Homes



Onsite: Marwood Tower

Location – Great Homer Street, Liverpool

Facilities – 81 apartments for over-55s

Value – £8 million

Client – Liverpool Mutual Homes (through the Liverpool Housing Partnership)

Willmott Dixon team – Partnership Homes

Architect – John McCall Architects

Top: CGI of the 22-storey Dudley House in Paddington, which has just started on site.

Above: Marwood Tower, Liverpool

on the city’s map.

Again during work to transform the block, the obstacle was space, including a single point of entry to the site. Siobhan Ryder, new business & marketing manager, explains: “You can’t go out because we are on the corner of two main roads and we can’t go back because there’s a residential community behind us and they needed access to use the roads, which we needed to keep clean.”

The access issue was made more complicated as the site shared the road with construction

traffic from a St Modwen retail scheme nearby. That was challenge enough until the team was forced to move its entire compound midway through the job.

“It put a strain on the team,” admits Siobhan. In Liverpool, as with our high-rise projects in London, this was overcome with good grace as flexibility, innovation and a talent for external relations helps to overcome the obstacles of working on high-rise buildings.

What next? How about the 34-storey block in Woking – but that’s for another edition.

A REVELATION IN AFRICA

Our sustainability champion Melissa Corser went to Uganda to see for herself how our carbon offsetting scheme is benefiting the locals

For our Partnership Homes environmental manager Melissa Corser, 2016 was a year she won't forget in a hurry.

In May she was crowned our sustainability champion for her work promoting best practice across projects in the Midlands, and her prize was a trip to Uganda to see how our support for an initiative there was transforming lives.

"It exceeded expectations!" says Melissa after she swapped her office in Coleshill for the Ugandan capital to see first-hand how our investment in a carbon offsetting project there is paying off. "I was a little apprehensive about visiting Uganda but it was not what I imagined. The people were so friendly and welcoming and they have the biggest smiles!"

We are helping to reduce carbon emissions by subsidising fuel-efficient "cookstoves", which are small cooking appliances used to heat food and water in many Ugandan households and businesses. They help people switch from dirty, high-emissions cookstoves to cleaner, more

Below: Melissa inspecting the cookstoves on her trip to Uganda to see our investment in the project



efficient ones and is one way we are able to say we are a carbon neutral company.

Melissa's visit took in the cookstove factories, retailers and many households benefiting from the improved stoves. "One house was just a concrete room with no paint on the walls, no light, and one bed which was for the mother and four children," she says. "They had no washing or toilet facilities and for clean water they had to walk to the local spring, carry the water back, boil it for 20 minutes, then wait for it to cool. It was a bit of a shock. There are just no resources."

Environmental benefits aside, this lack of resources is why the

improved cookstoves are so badly needed. They require less charcoal than traditional stoves and are cheaper to run. "One householder said she was so pleased with the stove she'd told her friends and neighbours about it and that it was good because of the cost savings. It leaves them more money to buy food," says Melissa.

Now back in the UK, what did Melissa make of her experience? "I certainly appreciate the lifestyle here a lot more. I am now using information I learnt during the visit in the training I deliver to colleagues. The trip also re-emphasised why it is I do the job that I do!"

"One householder said she was so pleased with the stove she'd told her friends and neighbours about it and that it was good because of the cost savings"

Melissa Corser



MAKING THE GRADE

There's been a huge rise in landmark grade two listed projects being brought back to their former glory, and no company is doing more to breathe new life into historic buildings than us

Working on listed buildings requires sensitivity – especially when they are world famous like Alexandra Palace in north London.

Known as 'Ally Pally', much of the home of the first BBC television broadcasts had fallen into a sorry state. That's all changing thanks to lottery funding to restore the old East Wing and revive a theatre that has not been used since before World War Two.

"Almost half of Alexandra Palace is still inaccessible to the public," says Louise Stewart, chief executive of Alexandra Park and Palace. "When we're finished, its eclectic history will finally come

alive. It will be about Britain's innovators and pioneers, about cinema, comedy, opera, plays – a true family day out – as well as the music, award-winning parkland, views and ice skating we're famous for today."

Getting it there requires the best expertise, which is why Willmott Dixon's name featured at the top of the list of contractors.

Hitchin operations director Tony Dowling says such a project must be approached with care. "There are friends of the BBC and friends of the theatre. Everyone has their view. Being grade two listed we are trying to save as much of the building as possible and keep the character. It applies more to the theatre as it's Victorian, but we are trying to preserve as much as possible."

The original Alexandra Palace burnt down a fortnight after opening in the 1870s and was rebuilt with the theatre. Projectors were added but then the building, which includes a vast decorative

Left: Ally Pally all stars – the Hitchin team working at the iconic grade two listed heritage site

Below: The East Wing is set to become a major tourist destination when updated

"When we're finished, its eclectic history will finally come alive. It will be about Britain's innovators and pioneers, about cinema, comedy, opera, plays"

Louise Stewart, chief executive, Alexandra Park and Palace

ceiling, fell into disuse and became a BBC storage area.

History brought back to life

Hitchin's work covers two areas. In addition to restoring the ceiling, we are lifting up the entire floor, which is being levelled and then all of the 1,200 original floorboards are being relaid.

"We're numbering them, it's a massive jigsaw," smiles Tony. There were no seats in the building that Tony's team inherited, but there was a balcony – built at the wrong angle. That is being saved with new seating added above and retractable seating below.

"The conservation officers say that unless it's in danger of falling off anything we do has to be reversible," explains Tony.

The East Wing overlooks a huge swathe of central London, but the BBC's construction team bricked up the windows inside the arches in the 1930s to

improve the sound levels. Now, these bricks are being removed from the two parallel sets of arches and columns on the East Wing to restore the stunning views of the capital.

Around 2,000 of the bricks will be reclaimed and used elsewhere on the job as part of a recycling exercise. While removing the bricks is relatively simple, restoring the columns will be more of a challenge.

Columns key

"That's where it gets complicated," says Tony. "You think you can just knock the bricks off but that will damage the columns."

Like the rest of the project, a careful approach is vital and Tony has pinned a notice on the wall of the theatre reading: 'The Theatre is 150 years old. Treat it with respect'. He explains: "People think because it looks wrecked they can just leave stuff leaning against the walls."

By 2018, the Palace's world-famous former BBC Studios will become an immersive birthplace-of-TV experience. The Victorian theatre will come back to life as a performance venue for 21st-century audiences, and the East Court entrance hall will recreate the sense of its original 1870s grandeur. ▶





► Darlington Civic Theatre

Like Tony, Sean McNicholas – operations manager on another major listed project in Darlington – is also very aware of both the building he is working on and local feeling.

“There are so many stakeholders that it feels like you are working for thousands of people,” says Sean.

Darlington Civic Theatre was built in 1907 by Signor Rino Pepo and opened as the New Hippodrome & Palace of Varieties. A century later, the theatre was still going strong but needed an upgrade and Darlington Borough Council’s decision to spend £13 million on the work has inevitably attracted a lot of local attention.

Sean adds: “This is the first theatre I’ve worked on and it’s a big challenge. Once you start to peel back the fabric, you can see the timeline for the various modifications. There are stairways that lead to nowhere and don’t make sense.

“There’s a brand new steel frame

“Bricks and sticks are the easy bit. Where the difficulty lies is managing the unexpected”

Sean McNicholas,
operations manager

that will be the new back of house with a green room, administration offices and the Get-In, which is how they bring in new equipment and props.

However, the modern materials are not the challenge says Sean. “Bricks and sticks are the easy bit. Where the difficulty lies is managing the unexpected. When you peel back the fabric and what’s there isn’t what we thought there would be. This happened with the foundations and we have had to do some major underpinning.”

Fire station

Sean adds: “Alongside the theatre building and two restaurants we



have a fire station. In the old days, fire stations were positioned close to a theatre as there was such a fire risk. So we’ve got to renovate six or seven buildings in addition to the theatre. That’s the challenge. One week we had 20 old electricity junctions that met 20 new ones!”

The biggest listed area is the external façade which involves delicate restorations. The team

Top: Arch to success – assistant building manager Russell Dyton inspects work with freelance QS Fiona Macormacin the basement of Alexandra Palace peeling back more than 100 years of history

Below: In expansive mood, Tony Dowling talking about the challenges of upgrading the East Wing of Alexandra Palace



are not changing it, but bringing it back to life.

Sean explains: “What you learn from a grade two listed building is you bring it back to tell the story of where the theatre’s been. In the demolition, we came across some structural elements that the drawings said remove and demolish. We paused and asked ‘do we need to remove this timber carcass, is it the right thing to do?’ Sometimes you have to work around these things as it’s the right thing to do.”

Over the years, the theatre has hosted big names from Tommy Copper to Darcy Bussell, and draws particularly big crowds at Christmas for the pantomime season.

“It’s going from 850 seats up to 1,000, which is the key number to get the big shows,” says Sean. “If we don’t get that, they won’t come to town. We need to be ready for panto season in 2017, so any change means we miss panto season and that is two



thirds of the theatre’s income for the year.”

Design Museum

One of the most high profile listed buildings we completed before Christmas was the Design Museum on High Street Kensington, west London.

Interiors had to turn the

inside of the old Commonwealth Building into a space for the Design Museum’s own team to carry out the third phase and install the exhibits.

Graham Shaw, deputy MD at Interiors, says: “Only the roof was listed and there were some planning limitations. The size of the atrium was specific as a few

Above and left: Darlington Civic Theatre is getting the biggest overhaul in more than 100 years; Sean McNicholas, second from right, and our team revamping Darlington Theatre on the big stage

elements had to go back in, such as the stained glass windows.

Interiors had to accurately stake out the exterior of the atrium to the exact measurements provided by architects John Pawson and OMA, whose design features a 300-metre glass balustrade with a timber handrail fitted with LED lights. “It had to match exactly the old atrium that was there,” adds Graham. “Although there was quite a lead-in time for the balustrade, we had to make sure it was set out correctly early on.”

Just as in Darlington and Alexandra Palace, our listed building expertise is successfully meeting the challenge of combining old with new to help save parts of the nation’s heritage.

FOUNDING FORTEM

Willmott Dixon's repairs and energy businesses have come together to form Fortem. New managing director **Mick Williamson** sets out his plans for the business – and reveals the story behind the name



It directly employs a team of 1,400 engineers who undertake more than 400,000 repairs each year. It also provides planned cyclical work to support programmes of estate renewal and property asset investment.

The rebranding and merger is part of a wider restructuring across the Willmott Dixon Group, which saw it organised into three distinct companies delivering contracting, residential and support services. Under the new structure, Fortem's senior management team has been given greater operational autonomy to grow the company outside its core social housing market.

Mick Williamson, who has worked for Willmott Dixon Partnerships since 2002, has become Fortem's new managing director based at its HQ in Hitchin. He talks us through his plans for the future.

Q So why the name Fortem?

A It was suggested by one of the team after we asked for ideas. Fortem is a Latin word for strength and prudence, which we felt underlined Willmott Dixon Partnerships' existing brand values. The new logo and branding is designed to be a welcoming and reassuring presence in the community.

Q What's the rationale for bringing the repairs and maintenance business together with the energy side?

"We both have the same customer base, so it makes a great deal of sense for us to come together to provide one visit and 'one offering'"

Mick Williamson, managing director, Fortem

A The businesses had a great deal of synergy and stood slightly apart from Willmott Dixon, which is more focused on new build. Both Partnerships and Energy Services are service providers. We can build, but we primarily offer a service around energy efficiency improvements and refurbishment, or repair and maintenance mostly in social housing. And both operate in people's homes. That's a very different working environment to a building site and it involves different and more personal skills, and different health and safety regimes.

Also, we both have the same customer base, and to date our offering to them hasn't been very joined up. So it makes a great deal of sense for us to come together to provide one visit and 'one offering'. For example, this way we could do the insulation work at the time of the repair.

Q What has the restructure process been like for staff?

A It's not been an easy time for staff. Originally the Partnerships

Customers of Willmott Dixon Partnership's property repairs and maintenance business might have noticed a few changes in recent weeks. Out has gone the familiar yellow and black livery. In has come a fleet of new vans and uniforms decked in smart blue and grey.

It's part of a full-scale rebranding of the firm to Fortem. Willmott Dixon's Energy Services has also been brought onboard,

so Fortem can deliver beefed-up support across repairs and energy efficiency improvements.

Fortem is responsible for repairs, maintenance and cyclical work on more than 110,000 homes, working as a key partner for local authorities including Birmingham City Council and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, plus the housing associations Midland Heart, Metropolitan, Orbit, Paragon, and many others.



and the Energy businesses were put up for sale, and there were a number of people interested but the cultural fit was not right. The idea of merging the two businesses made perfect sense within the context of Willmott Dixon.

Q How has the rebranding gone down with clients?

They like the fact that we've taken ourselves away from the construction side – I'm not sure they've ever been comfortable with the term 'contractor'. And they like our new name – which they see as really modern. Our new strapline 'People who care' has gone down particularly well.

Q How is Fortem different?

A Under our new structure we have a wider skills set which differentiates us. We self-deliver 70 per cent of what we do rather than sub-contract out our work. We invested heavily three to four years ago in building a skills training academy in Birmingham. Altogether 5,000 people have gone through it. We've been taking on more apprentices and upskilling our



trades people and engineers so we're ready to go now that the market has picked up. We've invested a great deal in training because it's so hard finding the right people. A lot of skilled people left the industry during the recession and never came back. Fortunately, we have very loyal staff with less than 10 per cent turnover per year.



Top: Operatives with newly branded van

Above: Fortem's 4 life Academy team

Left: Fortem's national community manager Leigh Garbutt displays the new flag

Q What growth plans do you have and how do you see Brexit affecting these?

A We see ourselves as a 'property solutions provider' rather than a contractor. We currently have a turnover of £125 million and we hope to see that double within five years. We think 20 per cent year-on-year growth is manageable and controllable.

We've been fortunate in the recession not to have been put under pressure to get involved with a race to the bottom, which has seen a number of competitors in repairs and maintenance no longer in business. As a property services provider, we'd aim to grow outside our core social housing market and expand into corporate, education, and the police and fire services. We've recently won our first contracts, for example, to refit police stations in Derbyshire, and are negotiating contracts with groups of schools in Birmingham and Yorkshire.

Right now, I would say business is buoyant and we're not overly concerned by Brexit.

MIGHTY SEVENOAKS

We've delivered more than £60 million of projects in Sevenoaks in recent years, and we are now building the UK's first grammar project in a generation in the leafy Kent commuter town



Our Cobham team has had a front-row seat in the classroom of the nation's educational debate while building two secondary schools in Sevenoaks.

When the then education secretary Nicky Morgan gave the go-ahead in October 2015 for a new grammar school in Sevenoaks it was a historic moment for the UK, and the start of more work for us.

The annexe to Tonbridge's Weald of Kent secondary school is the first new grammar school in 50 years. It is also adjacent to Trinity School, a 830-pupil, state-funded, Christian secondary free school and sixth-form college we have just completed.

In the spotlight

The decision to proceed was a moment of quiet celebration. Two years earlier our Cobham team won the contract to design and

build both schools simultaneously on the same campus occupied by a struggling secondary school, the Wildernesse, only to see Morgan's predecessor, Michael Gove, put paid to that by blocking the grammar school application from Kent County Council.

That had been a real blow to Roger Forsdyke's team who were expecting the go-ahead. Having tendered for both schools as a package under the Scape framework with Kent, the team could no longer enjoy the synergies and speed of dual-building and were forced to rethink supply-chain plans and focus solely on the £22 million Trinity School.

Grammar green light

Now, two years later, things have changed in Westminster and the 450-pupil grammar school project is back on. Almost all the original supply chain has been re-engaged

Left: Adam (sixth from left) with our team behind Trinity who moved effortlessly onto the adjacent grammar school site

Above: The annexe is adjacent to the new Trinity school

and we have until August 2017 to build the new school, at a cost of £16 million.

Director Adam Worrall says: "When the news of the annexe came through, we were well on track with the Trinity School, having successfully clawed back time lost to the complicated politics of education.

"Under construction manager Chris Evans, we'd demolished the Wildernesse school, built a temporary school for 360 children who would be Trinity's first pupils, carried out extensive site ▶



Prime Place for new homes

While the main action is schools, our Prime Place team has quietly been converting two towering office blocks near the station into 95 high-quality one and two-bedroom apartments.

The location is perfect for commuters to London, with the City of London 26 minutes away and Charing Cross just a further five minutes' journey. Gatwick is an easy motorway-drive away, and residents can enjoy stunning views of the beautiful surrounding North Downs countryside.

Jim Brunt, Prime Place land director, says the development – which has been christened Prime Place Sevenoaks – came about through the company's dealings with the then owner, Development Securities, on sites in Greenwich and Hayes. "We were offered the opportunity to take over the office blocks and it was such a fantastic location, we grabbed it."

That was in February 2015, and the company immediately set about obtaining the necessary permissions to convert commercial space to residential. As the government encourages this policy, approval swiftly followed.

"Our housing developments are normally done by Willmott Dixon's building division," says Jim. "But because it was to be a refurbishment, we'd decided we'd go outside the Group and appointed an experienced refurb specialist."

As well as luxury specifications, there apartments have high-end features such as a concierge (the first and, to date, only concierge in Sevenoaks), a hotel-style foyer and drop-off point, a business suite, split-level gardens at the rear and private parking spaces for 120 cars. The project is being completed in two phases – the first flats will be ready for occupation in April 2017, the rest by the middle of April. Prices range from £350,000 to £540,000. Already, half have been snapped up and the company is confident they'll be fully sold by spring.

Above: Willmott Residential's office to resi conversion in Sevenoaks

Above right: Adam, right, talks grammar tactics with Rob Clasby, left, and Philip Alden, centre

"We've worked with Willmott Dixon on schools in Kent for many years, and they know their stuff. It was clear they wanted to do a great job here"

Esther Lerner, Kent Council



► works and put up the new school's concrete frame and the smaller steel frame for the sports hall."

Along the way, Adam and the team had to overcome major water run-off problems by building a dry lagoon on part of the huge expanse of playing fields.

Chris picks up the story: "The local sewers couldn't cope with the demands and we decided against a large attenuation tank as they silt up and are expensive to maintain. The dry lagoon helps the rain water percolate away."

He adds: "A knock-on effect was that this added to the spoil that had to be taken off site. Our solution was to reduce this by raising the building by 300mm. We had to agree this with neighbours and go back for planning permission, but it ended up saving us 920 lorry journeys!"

No half measures for Trinity and grammar annexe

The approach to both schools taken by the Cobham team has been governed by the company-wide substantiation process. Adam says: "At pre-contract stage, our bid team had the operational team working alongside, discussing the project and how best to tackle

it. It meant the project manager wouldn't just get given a folder at the start of site work and get on with things as best they can.

"No 'full and final' offer is ever made to the client these days until this process is concluded. And it helps with build speed too: it's always best to look for ways to make up time at the start rather than the end."

Trinity completed first

The school's long, low-slung three-storey design was produced by the architects Bond Bryan and follows the Education Funding Agency's Finger-block guidelines. The steel frame supports curtain walling and cladding panels and its front presents an imposing façade that overlooks a sloping landscape towards the large car park. The Trinity School name stands out proudly in large letters on the side of the sports hall.

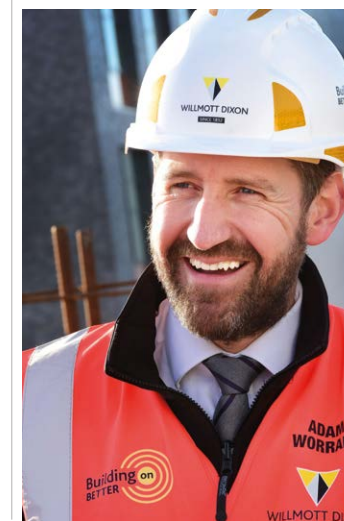
Inside are state of the art classrooms, specialist science rooms, technology spaces and a large performance hall. The multi-use sports hall is the size of four badminton courts, and extensive all-weather sports facilities sit close by in the grounds.

Trinity relies on natural

Above right: On a roll – assistant surveyor Iain Watson shares his thoughts with senior project surveyor Jannis Reid

"Thanks to the lessons we've learned on Trinity, we should be able to build this school five weeks quicker"

Adam Worrall, director



ventilation for its heating – there's no air conditioning except in a few specialist rooms. In the summer months, the school's concrete frame acts like a radiator, collecting the lower temperatures at night and releasing cool air slowly throughout the day. In the winter, radiators and under-floor heaters come into play.

Originally, the building was to have cross ventilation but early on Chris and his team decided to change to single-sided ventilation, which saved money by simplifying the M&E work and provided better acoustics.

Automatic window-opening systems are an integral part of the building's ventilation, and are controlled by a building management system. There's also a CO2 monitor in every classroom, which guards against drowsiness among pupils by automatically opening window vents when CO2 levels rise. No excuses for nodding off in geography here!

A change during construction to brick slips, rather than traditional brickwork, gave a major weather advantage to Chris and his team, allowing them to lay bricks in all weathers and ditch scaffolding in favour of mobile scissor platforms.

It helped the team give the client partial possession on 50 per cent of the buildings three weeks early, and the entire building one week early – despite that stuttering start.

Focus switches to grammar

With Trinity complete, attention is now on the annexe, says Adam: "Thanks to the lessons we've learned on Trinity, we should be able to build this school five weeks quicker."

That's great news for Kent County Council. Esther Lerner, Kent's project manager on the schools, who regularly worked in the on-site offices, is full of praise for the efforts of the Cobham team.

"We've worked with Willmott Dixon on schools in Kent for many years, and they know their stuff," she says. "From the start it was clear they wanted to do a great job here – they've been determined to please me. Adam and Chris have run a good team. There's been good man management, good commitment and a strong work ethic."

As school reports go, the company couldn't have asked for better, they'll want to convert the good mid-term report into fantastic final one!



TRAINING FOR THE FUTURE

HighSpeed 2 is the biggest infrastructure project in a generation, and we have a prime role building two engineering colleges crucial to its success

The new £55.7 billion High Speed 2 (HS2) rail link will require 25,000 people to build it, with 2,000 apprenticeships generated. As a result of this high demand for engineers, the need for training facilities was imperative – and not just on one site. That's where we come in.

Our teams in Birmingham and Doncaster are building two National Colleges for High Speed Rail (NCHSR). These are bespoke facilities where thousands of engineers will learn how to be world leaders in high-speed rail.

A key aspect is that, although they have different clients in different parts of the country, these two projects must look the same.

Joined-up thinking

"There is a lot of uniformity in look and feel," says Peter Gleave, operations director in Doncaster. "Things like the entrance areas, plus doors and carpet tiles have to be the same."

He adds: "We are creating a 'wow' factor and both buildings will have the same corporate identity as befits one of the world's

biggest and most important infrastructure projects."

Our Birmingham team have already built a headquarters for the HS2 team in the Snow Hill area of the city, so work on the two NCHSR projects was a natural extension. One came through the Constructing West Midlands framework, the other via the Scape framework.

Big ambitions

HS2 will link London, Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds in an attempt to draw the country's

"We are creating a 'wow' factor and both buildings will have the same corporate identity as befits one of the world's biggest and most important infrastructure projects"

Peter Gleave, operations director

economic focus away from the capital (see box, right).

The training facilities are a key part of preparation for work to start in a couple of years, providing specialist rail equipment such as 150 metres of external track to train on. They aim to provide a 'real work environment' to prepare engineers for work on high-speed rail infrastructure.

While the local authorities in Birmingham and Doncaster are the clients, behind both projects is a core value of

Left: Proud – Roger Morton, arms folded, with our team outside the HS2 college being built in Doncaster

Below: Work at Birmingham's HS2 college; it opens in September 2017, like its sister college in Doncaster



'one college, two sites'.

"We've got a book of commonalities so we've got commonality of specification," adds Peter. This is backed up by having the same architect, Bond Bryan, on both schemes to create a common corporate identity.

Thinking local

Work started on both projects in spring 2016 with completion on track for late summer this year.

Local spend is important for us and the client. For example, in Doncaster, procured via Scape, 40 per cent of spending will go to companies in the supply chain which must be within a 20-mile radius of the site at Carolina Way.

Our Doncaster team is being led by Roger Morton, while operations director Chris Hufford is overseeing the Birmingham project, supported by Andy Bell.

HS2: in numbers

£55.7
billion investment

25,000
construction workers

2,000
apprentices

400-metre
trains running at up to **250mph**

330
miles of track

2026
first phase to Birmingham open

Another factor is the use of Building Information Modelling (BIM), as Peter explains: "We've deployed BIM Level 2 and it's made a big difference, particularly on clash detection such as stopping steelwork coming into contact with the services. In the past, we had to work that out further down the line; now we can see how it all fits together in 3D beforehand."

In Birmingham, the project is located in Birmingham's Learning Quarter, and is just one of several major schemes we are building in the city.

Others include a new extension for Birmingham City University and refurbishing a 1920s retail store.

Both colleges will admit their first students in September 2017, heralding an important milestone for HS2, one that we are delighted to have helped make possible.

MUSIC TO THE EARS OF LONDON RENTERS

There is a buzz in the London rental market at the old EMI vinyl factory in Hayes, and Be:here is taking centre stage

On the site of EMI's former vinyl factory, which for nearly 80 years produced the records of some of the world's greatest musicians including The Beatles and David Bowie, Be:here has provided 119 homes for London's often hard-pressed renters.

Raising the bar for renting

While many of the capital's renters live in a small bedsit with an unresponsive landlord, Be:here is ripping up the rental rule book. Those opting to rent at the Gatefold Building are not just getting a purpose-built, high-quality home; they're becoming part of a community enjoying a host of centrally provided services.

Want something dry cleaned? We'll take care of that for you. Have a package being delivered while you're at work? We'll look after that. Fancy socialising with neighbours this weekend? We're hosting a party on the rooftop terrace – do drop by!

The Be:here experience is raising the bar for London's growing generation of people who prefer to rent.

All mod cons

The list of facilities renters benefit from at Gatefold is impressive. CCTV and door entry systems create a safe and secure



Left Paul Boulter outside Be:here's Gatefold development

"The scheme looks fantastic, internally and externally, and the service we're offering is something you just don't get with ordinary renting"

Paul Boulter, development director at Be:here

environment; 20mb broadband comes as standard, as does a free phone line with unlimited calls to any UK landline and a freesat set top box. There's also parking for all, while any maintenance or repair issues are dealt with quickly by the Be:here team with minimal disruption.

"What we're doing here is a completely different approach to the rented market," says Paul Boulter, development director at Be:here. "The scheme looks fantastic, internally and externally, and the service we're offering is something you just don't get with ordinary renting."

Designed for today's needs

Before Be:here was launched in 2013, and with the aim of developing and operating rented

apartments, the team carried out extensive research into exactly what renters wanted. The centrally provided facilities described above flowed from that study. And so did many other insights, not least how important it was that no renter who was sharing a property should have a bigger room than their co-renter.

Looking round the apartments, it's evident just how much careful thought has gone into every aspect of their design. All are open plan and filled with light. Shared spaces such as the kitchens and living rooms are spacious. The bedrooms have en-suite bathrooms wherever possible, and built-in wardrobes. Sound insulation is excellent. And all units are fully furnished with Habitat fixtures and fittings. The energy for utilities comes from an on-site combined heat and power system.

Forty-four of the 119 properties at Gatefold are one-bedroom, 70 are two-bedroom and there are five three-bedroom apartments. In addition, 14 units have gone to a local housing association, Network Homes. There are also six commercial units, a café and a pioneering research and design hub, the UK's first full-service incubator for manufacturing entrepreneurs.

Of the private rental properties, some are duplex style; many have gardens at the rear; and they all ▶

Left Paul Boulter joins some of the Be:here team ready for the first renters. From left: Layla Kausar, Thomas Atkinson, Stella Yip, Boulter and Hayley Wills

Onsite: Gatefold

Location – Old Vinyl Factory, Hayes, London

Facilities – 119 build-to-rent properties

Client – Be:here

Willmott Dixon team – Be:here and Partnership Homes

Architect – Frank Reynolds Architects



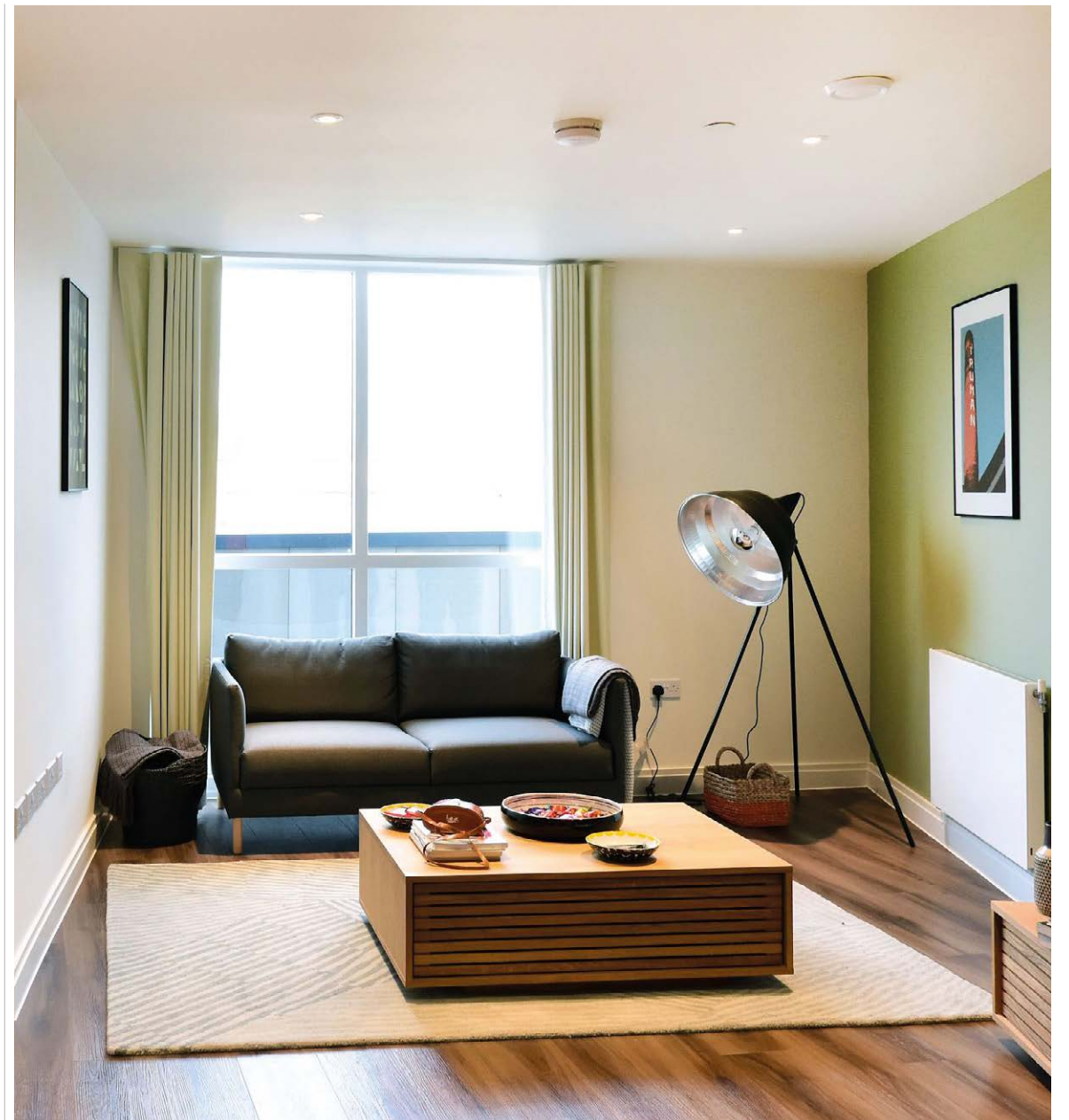
▷ have a balcony or other private outside space as well as access to the shared roof garden. The whole complex has been built by Partnership Homes.

Key step

Be:here inherited an already designed set of apartments at Gatefold when it bought the site from the Cathedral Group in 2013 – and had to adapt them to comply with its own standards. Paul and the team worked with original architect, Frank Reynolds, to achieve the remodelling. Normally, Be:here would aim to create its own designs – as it's done, for example at Barking in a new 600-unit development in east London that will be available for rent in 2018, and in Aberfeldy Village in Tower Hamlets, which is all rented.



Clockwise from top left Inspecting the good work – the project was delivered to an exceptional standard by our Partnership Homes team; bright spacious rooms for 21st century renting; the construction team



Be:here has a 15-year contract to operate and maintain the site on behalf of the a local authority fund, taking a fee out of the gross rents.

Big ideas

Cathedral had a grand vision for the old EMI factory, which saw the Gatefold building as the spearhead of a new place-making regeneration drive that would transform this once sleepy part of west London. That vision is being rolled out by the developer U+I, which came into being when Cathedral merged with Development Securities in 2014.

“What we’re doing here is a completely different approach to the rented market”

Paul Boulter, development director at Be:here

U+I’s masterplan envisages a £250 million scheme that takes the full 17 acres of the Old Vinyl Factory site and creates 642 homes, 750,000 sq ft of commercial space, 60,000 sq ft of creative office space plus a nine-screen cinema, landscaped streets and squares,

cafés and restaurants. It’s also created the Global Academy, a college specialising in music and media studies for ages 14-18.

Underpinning the regeneration is the arrival in 2019 of Crossrail services, which will run through Hayes and Harlington Station and bring The Old Vinyl Factory within 20 minutes of the West End of London.

It was here that EMI developed techniques that revolutionised music and brought both popular and classical music to almost every home in Britain and across the world.

The words ‘Hayes, Middlesex’ appear on so many millions of LPs and singles sold throughout the 20th century. At its peak, more than 20,000 people worked on the site, the foundation stones of which were laid by Dame Nellie Melba in 1907.

The Gatefold’s first renters will be warmly welcomed by Hayley Wills, area manager at Be:here. They’ll have the satisfaction of knowing they’re in very good hands, in a development that sets a quality benchmark for London’s rental market. That surely must be music to everyone’s ears.



SCARBOROUGH

How our Manchester team is building three projects on a tight site to deliver the biggest regeneration in Scarborough's recent history

STARS

Scarborough is Yorkshire's most famous seaside resort, a destination for holiday-makers for more than hundred years.

Yet, the town is also undergoing major change, and our team is at the heart of it with a trio of projects to bring sporting glory and educational benefit to thousands in the town.

The work is centred on the former Weaponness Park industrial site on the outskirts of the town, which is seeing huge investment pour in to create a university technical college (UTC), university campus, leisure village and football stadium.

Instead of working with multiple contractors, the canny council team choose just one, and in our view, the best!

Wasteland

Until the summer of 2015, Weaponness Park was a derelict and barren area with burned-out cars and nothing much else. That changed when our team arrived, led by construction manager Simon Atkinson. Charged with delivering a new community

leisure centre and stadium for local football team Scarborough Athletic, a new UTC and new satellite campus for Coventry University, our team was about to transform the area.

Simon says: "Scarborough was in desperate need of new sports and leisure facilities. As well as the new 25-metre swimming and nursery pool, there are squash courts, a gym and a 4G football pitch.

"Importantly, after many years out of town, we're bringing Scarborough FC back with a new 2,000-spectator football stadium. The supporters are so excited – they are treating us like football stars!"

A centre of learning

One interesting consequence of our work is that it's enabling Scarborough to become a regional powerhouse for learning. The new UTC we've just built, backed by the University of Hull and local businesses, combines the national curriculum in English and maths with study in more vocational, ▶

Left A shiny new UTC now stands where the car (right) once did!

Right The site in 2015 before we arrived!



Right The team on the terrace, and aerial views of the Scarborough site

► technical and engineering subjects.

On the adjacent site, Coventry University Scarborough Campus (CUSC) offers a range of academic qualifications including foundation years, Higher National Certificates, Higher National Diplomas and degrees. Both were completed and opened to students in the summer of 2016, with the new stadium and leisure facility following in 2017.

All these concurrent projects saw a team descend on Scarborough, led by Simon and including Alan Neal, construction manager, Neil Tyler, our senior build manager for the UTC project and Gavin Redfern, senior build manager on the CUSC scheme.

Logistics

The logistical benefits of using one contractor are evident – it would have been much trickier for a multi-contractor approach. There is a single access road to serve the projects and 30,000sq m of material being moved across site, much of it across the footprint of the leisure village.

"We opted to use precast concrete to aid our fast-track programme across the projects," says Simon. "As well as speeding up installation we were able to reduce the amount of work at height, making the whole operation safer," he adds.

Juggling deliveries and plant movement between the three schemes has been testing, admits Gavin. "At times it has been busy. Between us we have all had to make sure we plan deliveries and plant movements. There is only one way in and one way out. It is difficult when you are sharing a single site access," he says.

Despite sharing access, the projects have been run as



"Our legacy in the town is confirmed – football is coming home for the fans, courtesy of our very own stars!"

Alan Neal, construction manager

individual schemes as far as possible. Pooling of information and the prioritisation of access time has been the main focus of cooperation, with the opportunity to 'borrow' staff from one site to another.

"Collaboration helped speed up the programme, as we worked together to allocate a schedule for deliveries and plant movements," says Simon.

With Alan Neal's team finishing off the stadium and leisure centre this spring, there is a sense of excitement in the town, with Scarborough FC set to play its first game in its new stadium this summer.

Talking about the final leg, Alan says: "Our legacy in the town is confirmed – football is coming home for the fans, courtesy of our very own stars!"

SPOTLIGHT ON THE FUTURE!

We are proud to have 140 trainees and celebrated their achievements at a glittering awards ceremony in London

A key Willmott Dixon goal is to nurture, develop and produce leaders of the future, and that's why the trainee scheme is important, with a record 140 trainees currently working towards their qualifications. In Construction and Partnerships Homes alone, nearly one in 10 is a trainee, while most directors are also products of our award-winning scheme.

Every year the contribution of our trainees is recognised by the Trainee of the Year award, where the best from each LCO are pitted against each other to see who is crowned the winner.

This year, at a ceremony held in London at the St Pancras Renaissance Hotel, Partnership Homes' assistant health and safety manager Andrew Stevenson scooped the prestigious prize. It was a huge achievement for Andrew, who joined two years ago after 15 years in our armed forces, latterly commanding an IED (Improvised Explosive Device) search team in Afghanistan, where he was responsible for finding and neutralising IEDs.

Also joining Andrew in taking the plaudits were Jack Gunning from Interiors and Elise Mell from Fortem, who were highly commended.

However, it was a chance for all trainees to shine and for the business to show its huge appreciation for the impact they make each day.



Top Trainee of the year winner Andrew Stevenson takes centre stage with the other finalists

Left Our trainees outside St Pancras Renaissance Hotel – who will become our future leaders?

GO WEST

Our Wales and West team has made a splash with its push into the West Country, securing two flagship regional projects – more should soon follow



John Boughton heads up our team in the recently opened Exeter office and the Wales and West deputy managing director has big plans to grow Willmott Dixon's business in Devon, Somerset and Cornwall. John and his colleagues are already celebrating the move by being selected to work on one of the South West's landmark developments.

The Plymouth History Centre will see our team transform the City Museum and Art Gallery, Central Library and St Luke's Church into an iconic development that will help celebrate the city's maritime past and its important role in the development of the New World. Work has just begun on the scheme that will be completed in time for the city's 2020 celebration of the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower Pilgrims' voyage (see box, overleaf).

It's just the latest high-profile building the Exeter team has been involved in.

Making the UK a meteorology world leader

The recent delivery of the Met Office's iconic latest £97 million 'supercomputer' development at Exeter Science Park has really turned heads and established

"There's no doubt about it, being seen to be involved in the region's two most important schemes is a massive calling card"

John Boughton, Wales and West deputy managing director

our company as a major player in the region.

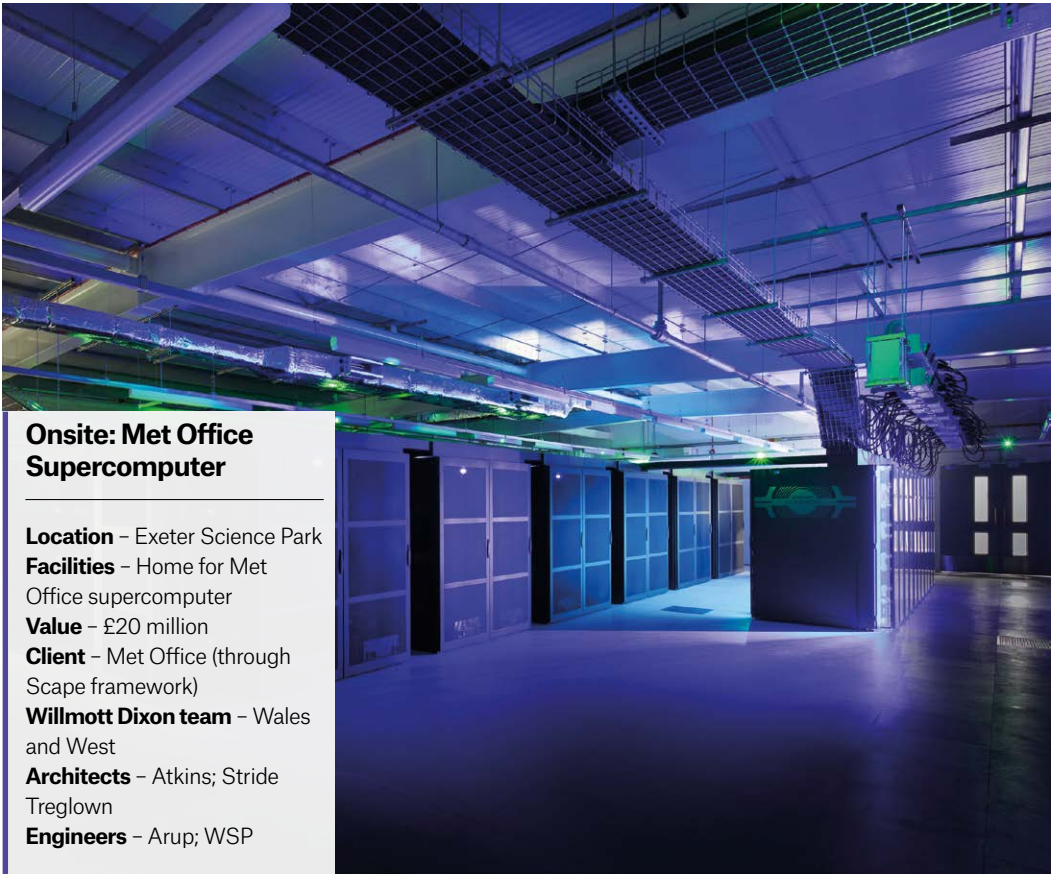
"There's no doubt about it," says John, "being seen to be involved in the region's two most important schemes is a massive calling card. The business community is taking real notice of us and we want to become a permanent fixture in the market across the West Country."

The process works on the back of a well-trying formula, explains John, one of anchoring a presence by winning a large, landmark deal within an area and then securing more work around it.

John says: "This approach has worked for us before. When we first made the move across from Cardiff into Bristol we had various smaller contracts but anchored the move ▶



Left: Making the UK a world leader for meteorology – the new home for the Met Office's supercomputer; Met fab four (above) – Kristian Cartwright, left, with Stephen Ford, Steve Killer and Dylan Gilbery



Onsite: Met Office Supercomputer

Location – Exeter Science Park
Facilities – Home for Met Office supercomputer
Value – £20 million
Client – Met Office (through Scape framework)
Willmott Dixon team – Wales and West
Architects – Atkins; Stride Treglown
Engineers – Arup; WSP

Creating history in Plymouth

Many of those involved in the Met Office Supercomputer project will be making the switch from Exeter to Devon’s biggest city Plymouth, as we look to build on our success and deliver the equally complicated Plymouth History Centre.

Under the scheme the City Museum and Art Gallery, Central Library and St Luke’s Church buildings will be transformed into a cutting-edge, interactive history centre and art centre that it is hoped will attract thousands of visitors a year.

Our work will see the buildings, some of which are listed, refurbished and remodelled with a large new-build section providing more exhibition space at the rear of the Edwardian Baroque façade of the City Museum and Art Gallery building.

Steve Killer is the assistant building manager on the Met Office scheme and is transferring to Plymouth alongside Kristian, technical apprentice Dylan Gilbery and project surveyor Stephen Forde.

“That will be a completely different challenge,” says Steve. “There will be complete new build as well as restoration and refurbishment work. We have experience in those areas, but some of those buildings are listed while others will be almost completely cleared. With these sorts of projects you don’t know exactly what you are up against until you begin work.”

Local lad Dylan will be starting a Construction Technical and Professional course at Exeter College in February and is excited that he will have a chance to hone his new-found skills by working on such an iconic development within his home city.

“It’s such a good opportunity for me. Projects like this don’t come along too often and I’m really glad to be part of it,” he says.

One of the world’s fastest computers is now housed at our Exeter facility for the Met Office

“Everything about the Met Office project has been challenging in one way or another, but that is what has made it so interesting to work on”
Kristian Cartwright,
building manager

▶ with the Colston Hall Foyer – a major project in the centre of the city. “It set us up to secure more and more projects in and around Bristol. Now we’ll do the same again by bringing our expertise to bear on projects in and around Plymouth and Exeter and across Devon, Somerset and Cornwall.”

Met Office forecasts fine for Exeter

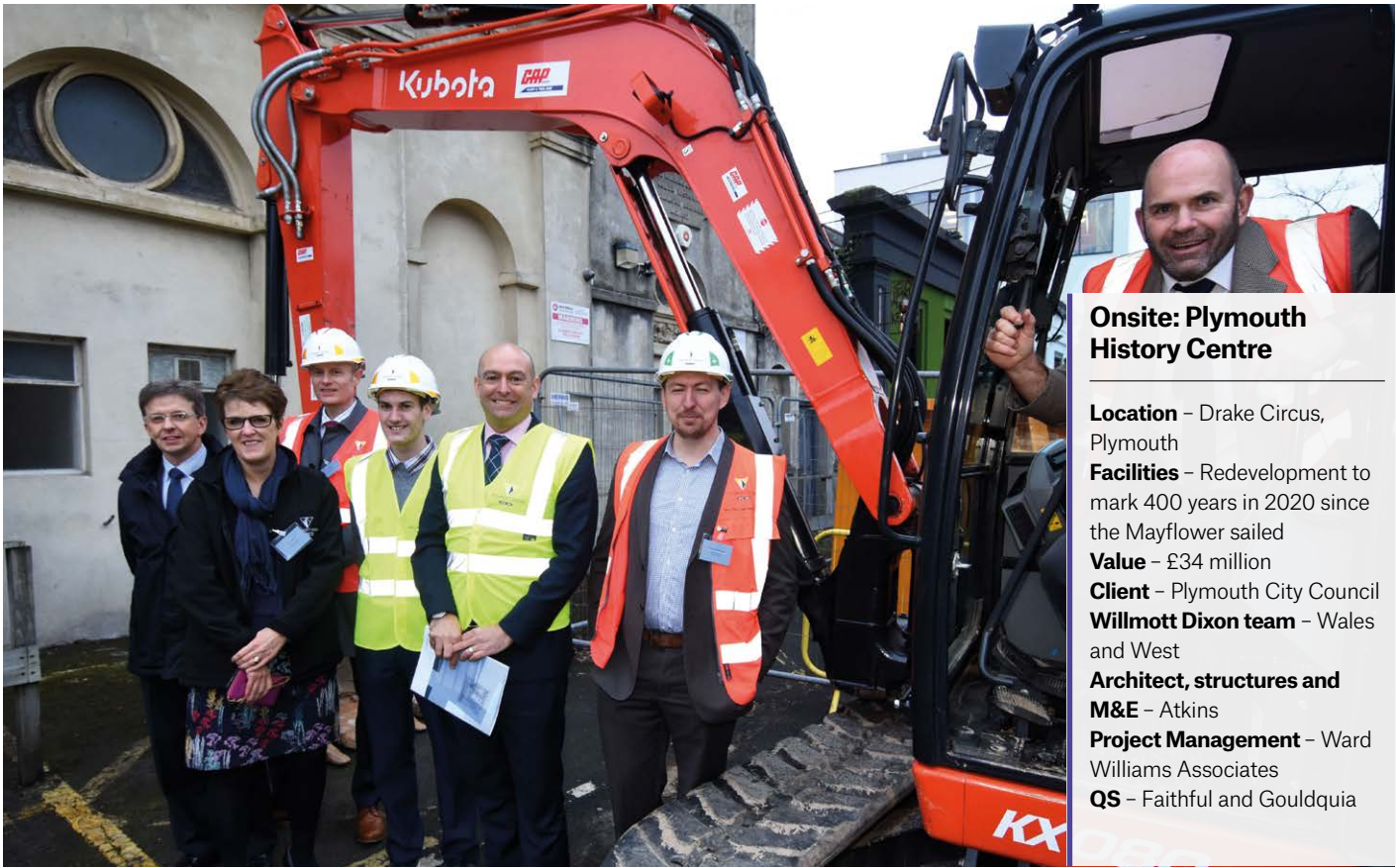
“It has been an extremely demanding scheme to build,” admits former trainee of the year and building manager Kristian Cartwright, of the home for the Met Office’s latest supercomputer on the outskirts of Exeter.

“Everything about it has been challenging in one way or another, but that is what has made it such an interesting project to work on.”

We have fielded a strong, experienced team at the project with Kristian being joined on site by Chris Graham, Robin Pike, Steve Killer, Simon Whittingham, Adam Williams and Ifan Thomas. They have been on the scheme since we began work on site in July 2015.

The new centre is focused around two buildings and is now home to one of the 25 most powerful computers in the world. It also provides office accommodation for Met Office clients keen to lease space and work with the supercomputer.

The IT Hall is a steel and concrete block building with a reinforced concrete floor slab. A raised access floor conceals the network of M&E services and equipment that feed and supply the banks of server modules that make up the supercomputer.



Onsite: Plymouth History Centre

Location – Drake Circus, Plymouth
Facilities – Redevelopment to mark 400 years in 2020 since the Mayflower sailed
Value – £34 million
Client – Plymouth City Council
Willmott Dixon team – Wales and West
Architect, structures and M&E – Atkins
Project Management – Ward Williams Associates
QS – Faithful and Gouldquia

“Our M&E partner NG Bailey has worked through the installation of these services. It is a really complicated layout, not helped by the fact that the computer is American and the measurements for it are in imperial, while the pipes for the cooling and gas suppression system are metric,” smiles Kristian.

To counter this problem American computer manufacturer Cray sent a series of full-size stencil diagrams which the team laid out, enabling them to cut the correct-sized holes through the

floor in the correct positions.

The IT Hall will remain largely unmanned throughout its working life, accessed only by maintenance and security personnel. If the IT Hall is the engine room for the scheme, it is the Collaboration Building that sits alongside which provides the glamour.

The oddly shaped building is a celebration of metal, glass and timber as it sits angled and askew to the rest of the site. It looks like it has been difficult to build and it was.

“It is hexagonal and the façades lean at a 60-degree angle. It

Visualisations of what Plymouth History Centre will look like, with the current City Museum and Art Gallery’s Edwardian façade preserved; and our team start work on site, from left, Nigel Gregory, Julie King, Ed Wilson, Dylan Gilbery, John Boughton, Kristian Cartwright and Simon Whittingham

was a really complicated build, particularly where the curtain walling had to come up and meet the roof soffit,” admits Steve Killer.

“There is no access to the soffit once the cladding has gone in. We had to finish fitting the cedar soffit before it was clad.”

Built around a central reinforced concrete frame with a steel superstructure supporting the roof and elevations the building itself has BREEAM ‘Excellent’ certification and will prove to be just as excellent an addition to the Exeter skyline.

GET SET FOR OPEN DOORS!

Don't miss out on a chance to see what our teams are up to
when we open many of our sites to visits from the public this spring

Our industry is again showcasing itself to the wider world as hundreds of projects literally declare 'open doors' to the public between Monday 27 March and Saturday 1 April.

Last year's Open Doors saw thousands of people descend on sites for a glimpse behind the scenes, with our projects leading the way both in quantity and popularity.

Once again our Hitchin team have the honour of launching the week, with VIPs and celebrities gathering at our Alexandra Palace site to kick-start the event. It followed last year's launch at Summit House, with a flurry of 'selfies' and TV interviews proving a hit on social media.

Open Doors aims to highlight our industry as a great place to work for a new generation and this year we are again fielding great projects for the public to visit. If you want to get involved, or visit any, **contact Hannah Fuller at our Spirella 2 office for more information.**



Clockwise from top Selfie fun at last year's Open Doors – at London's Dorsett City Hotel; our Hitchin team at Summit House; our Interiors team at the University of Brighton; and our Biosciences team



Our sites confirmed for Open Doors 2017

Interiors

39 Victoria Street for the Department of Health
Think at Earls Court
Coventry University London at Dagenham Civic Centre

Construction Birmingham

Lincoln Transport Hub
Kents Hill Campus
National College High Speed Rail in Birmingham

Construction Hitchin

Wixams Sunesis school
Alexandra Palace East Wing
Romford Leisure Centre and Ice Rink

Construction Cobham

Village Hotel, Portsmouth
Hoe Valley
Wilderness Grammar, Sevenoaks
Dreadnought Building,
University of Greenwich

Wales & The West

Eastern High School, Cardiff
Primrose Lane Primary School, Yeovil
Bower Ashton Campus,
University of the West of England (UWE) Bristol

Construction Manchester

National College for High Speed Rail in Doncaster
Darlington Civic Theatre
Horwich Leisure Centre
West Lancashire Constabulary HQ
Menai Science Park

