



FIRST LOOK

White Arkitekter completes 52-home affordable housing scheme in Barking

12 DECEMBER 2022 *BY FRAN WILLIAMS. PHOTOGRAPHY BY PAUL RIDDLE



Arbor Court provides 52 tenure-blind, 100 per cent affordable homes as part of Gascoigne East Phase 2, one of London's largest estate regeneration projects

The scheme consists of family apartments and townhouses arranged around a central courtyard, which is shared by the wider community. It is the first development to emerge from Gascoigne East Phase 2, at the centre of one of London's largest estate regeneration projects.

Responding to its context, the linear block defines the streetscape to the east with living accommodation overlooking the new 0.5ha public park – to be developed in a later phase. The project's massing steps down in height with the townhouses, scaling down to the lower context of the existing housing stock to the west.

New buildings are clad in buff brick from ground to fifth floor with vertical metal rain-screen cladding to the sixth and seventh floors.

Most of the 52 homes are within a five to seven-storey linear block, defining the easterly edge of the courtyard garden. Three sculpted metal crowns containing larger family apartments offer city views.



The north and south of the site are defined by four three-bed townhouses, introducing another typology to the development.

The courtyard garden is based on a sharing economy principle, accessible for shared use by neighbours, providing a shared community asset for socialising and play.

Roof-mounted PV panels and connection to the district heating network help contribute to energy savings, exceeding 40 per cent of operational CO₂ emissions against Building Regulations at the time of planning in 2019. The scheme also includes 102 cycle parking spaces.

The scheme was originally designed to be constructed out of CLT but following the post-Grenfell change in fire regulations, a traditional reinforced concrete frame was adopted instead. Rational layouts adhere to a strict grid with a modular approach to help reduce the use of concrete and minimise waste during the build process.

White Arkitekter submitted plans for Arbor Court along with 149 additional homes [as part of the whole estate regeneration project in August 2019](#). The overall scheme, masterplanned by Fraser Brown Mackenna Architects, demolishes the existing estate, replacing it with 850 new homes as well as a small amount of flexible commercial or community space.



Architect's view

The design ethos is based on our Scandinavian approach of creating places for growing communities – residential developments founded through well-designed external spaces for social interaction and play.

We were appointed for both architecture and landscape, which gave us an opportunity to think holistically about the buildings and public realm and create an inclusive community promoting healthy and sustainable lifestyles. With a courtyard open to the surrounding retained buildings, Arbor Court itself acts as a good neighbour.

The mix of two-storey townhouses and a taller sculpted linear block clad in light buff brick introduces variety to the otherwise homogenous brown brick context. The care of detail, external brickwork, and quality of the brick itself projects Arbor Court into a future where affordable homes do not look austere.

All homes are double or triple-aspect, offering cross ventilation and ample daylight. Carefully designed layouts make the most of the space provided, and even the smaller one-bed apartments offer opportunities to circulate internally.

First reactions from the existing community indicate that the scheme has been well received. We look forward to revisiting Arbor Court when residents have settled in, to learn how it affects their day-to-day life and the wider community.

Lukas Thiel, architect and partner, White Arkitekter

Client's view

Arbor Court is one of a series of high-quality developments Be First has delivered in 2022, representing the first wave of buildings to be completed since established in 2017. The building is the product of an ambitious client brief to work with our residents, push design quality and prioritise sustainability.

It is exciting to see high-quality Council-led housing for affordable rent that has such a positive and lasting impact for our residents. Fronting the soon-to-be-complete new park, the building occupies pride of place in the latest phase of the Gascoigne's regeneration. The high-quality design of Arbor Court sets the benchmark for future phases.

Jacob Willson, head of design, Be First Regeneration



Axonometric View

white

Project data

Start on site March 2020

Completion date Summer 2022

Gross internal floor area 4,233m²

Gross (internal + external) floor area 5,130m²

Form of contract or procurement route JCT Design and Build 2

Construction cost £15 million

Construction cost per m² £3,544

Architect White Arkitekter

Executive architect White Arkitekter

Client London Borough of Barking and Dagenham / Be First Regeneration

Structural engineer Civic Engineers

M&E consultant Skelly & Couch, Kane Group

Quantity surveyor Stace

Landscape consultant White Arkitekter / Turkington Martin

Acoustic consultant Sandy Brown / MACH Group

Project manager Plan A Consultants

Principal designer White Arkitekter / Plan A Consultants

CDM co-ordinator White Arkitekter / Plan A Consultants

Approved building inspector MLM

Main contractor Willmott Dixon Construction

CAD software used Revit, AutoCAD, Rhino

Environmental performance data

Annual mains water consumption 38.3 m³/occupant (predicted)

Airtightness at 50Pa 3 m³/h.m²

Heating and hot water load 4.66 kWh/m²/yr (heating), 30.75 kWh/m²/yr (hot water)

Overall area-weighted U-value 0.17 W/m²K

Design life 50 years

Embodied / whole-life carbon 732 kgCO₂eq/m²

Annual CO₂ emissions 6.96 kgCO₂eq/m²