MJP ARE LEADERS IN THE DESIGN OF STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

Our clients include universities and colleges, charities and private providers. They have budgets ranging from low to high, and sites ranging from conservation areas to urban regeneration areas.

The common features in all of them are:
— using good design to derive maximum value and quality, within the budget whether low or high,
— enhancement of the student experience.

Over 30 years, we have developed many typologies to suit different circumstances. The range of room types has expanded and includes ensuite rooms, paired rooms, studio rooms, microflats, cluster flats, within numerous configurations responding to different briefs and sites. With property so expensive to buy in London, some projects are now aimed at young working people as well as students.

The market to attract new students is increasingly competitive with student fees rising steeply. Through good design, we can help to give clients an edge by offering students ‘value for rent’, as well as delivering ‘value for money’ in design and construction.
The Times Higher Education Student Experience survey in 2011 shows just how important social and environmental aspects can be in a student’s choice of university.

To be successful, the design of student accommodation needs not only to provide the right environment for living and studying, but also to promote social and academic interaction. It needs to project a life-style and foster a community in which new students feel they belong, as well as reflecting the ethos of the university or institution. For this, the quality of spaces around the buildings, the circulation and communal spaces, are as important as the quality of the student rooms and the organisation needs to be clearly legible.

At Friendship House for LHA London, within a limited budget, our design has given a distinctive identity and an attractive living environment which have contributed to a constant demand for rooms. The Garden Quad at St John’s College is in heavy demand from conference organisers as well as students, and was voted the most popular Oxford building of the past 75 years in a poll conducted by the Oxford Times.
“People are very happy here. It is such a calm building in such a busy place.”

TONY PERKINS
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
LHA LONDON

DR A J BOYCE,
BURSAR
ST JOHN'S COLLEGE OXFORD

MJP ARCHITECTS
LHA LONDON,
FRIENDSHIP HOUSE,
SOUTHWARK
Through the quality of our architecture we have been able to develop good relations with town planning departments around the country. New development is heavily regulated. Most sites come under the control of a range of planning policies and directives from other statutory bodies. Careful design and negotiation are required to achieve advantageous planning consents. Our extensive experience brings this advantage.

In historic and prominent locations, applications come under greater scrutiny. We have successfully delivered many student accommodation projects in historic towns including Oxford and Cambridge, and other building types on landmark sites in London, Durham, Ludlow and the historic dockyard in Portsmouth, amongst others. Some are next to, and some are conversions of, listed buildings. We have a very good relationship with English Heritage through negotiations on these projects and EH held their annual conference in one of them; Boathouse 6 in Portsmouth.
“MJP have produced three wonderful buildings for St John’s College, Oxford.”

DR A BOYCE
BURSAR
ST JOHN’S COLLEGE, OXFORD
“As architect and contract administrator, MJP reached outstanding levels of client confidence and communication that ensured a well managed project.”

TONY PERKINS, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, LHALONDON
“MJP always generate highly appropriate design solutions to the most challenging of briefs and constraints.”

JULIAN DUDLEY SMITH, PROJECT MANAGER, BROOKGATE (DEVELOPER FOR CB1)

EXPLOITING TECHNOLOGY

Student accommodation is naturally repetitive and lends itself to off-site fabrication and ‘modern methods of construction’ which can reduce construction time and cost. Some of our projects exploit these technologies within architectural solutions which respond to, and are appropriate to, their settings.

A site within the CB1 development in Cambridge was sandwiched between a railway and a new guided bus lane, leaving little room for a construction site. Our design was therefore organised to enable volumetric modular construction, in which a crane would start stacking modules at one end and move towards the other. The architectural composition was modulated to respond to the townscape and subsume the modularity of the building method.

At Torquay House, for LHA London, the external envelope is pre-assembled off site, shower rooms, kitchenettes, stairs and furniture are all factory built, and all vertical elements of the structural frame are precast in concrete.

The aims are to increase speed and quality of construction without increasing cost.
MJP pursued sustainability for many years before it became de rigueur. As well as conserving the environment, it can also bring many advantages to clients by reducing energy consumption and cutting running costs. It is a principle rooted in all our designs.

Where clients wish to pursue this topic, we develop a sustainability agenda with them to suit their preferences. Usually the priority is to minimise energy consumption through passive design controls, and then to supply the remaining energy requirement, as far as possible, from renewable sources.

The Kendrew Quadrangle at St John's College won the David Steel Sustainable Buildings Award 2012. It achieved a rating of 11 out of a maximum 12 on the Natural Resource Impact Assessment.
Running costs can be greatly reduced by minimising maintenance and using efficient maintenance regimes. These objectives need to be achieved in the design process. We have built up knowledge of materials, products and systems and their suitability for student accommodation. Some of our design aims are:

— Choice of self-finished materials which do not require re-decoration
— Control of rainwater run-off to minimise staining of the outer walls and, where possible, protection from the rain.
— Use of durable materials, commensurate with their use and exposure
— External wall details which are robust and have two lines of defence.
— Ease of access

An example is the Jowett Walk Buildings for Balliol College in Oxford. The Architects’ Journal carried out a ‘Building in Use’ study after three years and found it to be very popular with students, durable and weathering well.
We often work with clients at an early stage to assess the potential of prospective sites through quick capacity studies or feasibility studies. We can assess the potential of different site assembly options and assist clients in their negotiations with adjoining owners. Also in programming and planning the project in response to land acquisition dates and phasing requirements.

Quality is subjective; there is not a standard measuring system for it! Different projects and uses bring different priorities, budgets and conceptions of quality. Within the constraints of the budget we assist clients to decide on appropriate quality levels offering best value. When we discuss quality, we look for built examples to ensure we have a common understanding. Visiting buildings to see how products and materials have performed in practice is a way of underpinning the process.
MJP Architects are also working in these other sectors.