

A decade of HTA Planning: embracing 'Good Growth'

Riëtte Oosthuizen sees design as an interdisciplinary process, and values the potential of small sites after winning the Planning Award for Planning Consultancy of the Year 2017

Whilst lecturing on the impossibly wide subject of 'Planning' recently - conveying how we tend to work as planning consultants integral to the design process - an architectural student expressed surprise that I could think that planners could be actively engaged in the design process through conversation and continual review.

Having worked in a multi-disciplinary practice for ten years after being enticed to join HTA by Brian Waters, the challenge of interdisciplinary design is not to be underestimated but when it works well, it is a truly rewarding experience. The delivery of Hanham Hall, Bristol, a zero carbon community remains one of the best examples where the final outcome on site was very much informed through a very iterative process of reviewing what we wanted to achieve as a practice, thorough team work amongst the disciplines of architecture, landscape design, sustainability and planning and working with closely with local residents and Council officials.

Sadiq Khan's Good Growth agenda for design is all about inclusivity, balance, contextuality, partnership and resilience. Good growth also happens through appropriate and celebrated interdisciplinary working, and a proactive and professional attitude. Planners are integral to this process.

It is a very exciting time to be in the midst of housing delivery within London. Change is on the horizon and there is the opportunity to explore as planning professionals how to do things differently. I get the sense that for the first time there is the opportunity to be slightly more future focussed; not stuck

in a reactive rut. We would all need to be a lot more creative. Sadiq Khan is significantly pushing out the housing agenda with a focus on good design quality, safety, sustainability and affordability. We have been shocked this year by events such as Grenfell and it has brought with it renewed focus on the value of social housing. Wider affordability for normal working people in London, however, remains a problem as is working successfully with communities so that they do not relentlessly oppose development.

HTA's planning team were delighted to have been awarded The Planning Award for Planning Consultancy of the Year 2017. It is a great way to celebrate our one decade birthday. As a relatively small planning consultancy set within a large multi-disciplinary practice, this type of recognition is great for our profile, in particular when we regularly need to convince clients of the value we can add by working closely with architects within the same practice. Interdisciplinarity is becoming more of a buzz word in the industry - I believe good interdisciplinary working is absolutely key to good design outcomes.

In order to get the Award we had to demonstrate how our planning work has helped clients to have a positive impact on the physical or environmental quality of a place or places and/or the economic or social well-being of a community or communities. HTA's planning team supports a range of clients and local organisations through the planning process, resolving planning issues at strategic and detailed level as well as producing research on innovative housing solutions to stimulate

RIGHT:
Hanham Hall, Bristol: HTA Design LLP for Barratt Homes



Riëtte Oosthuizen is planning partner at HTA Design LLP



RIGHT:
Infill Development at
Dover Court Estate,
Islington, HTA Planning
with PTE Architects

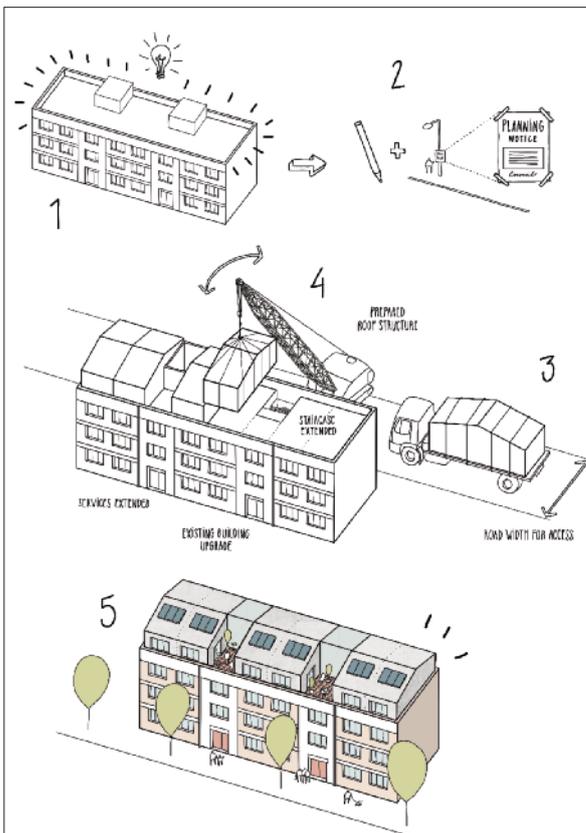


debate.

As well as working with clients from the public sector, private sector and housing associations, HTA have developed research projects to explore how to deliver additional housing in London. Projects include a research study in 2016 on behalf of Apex Airspace Development testing London's rooftop capacity to deliver new homes. HTA also continues to develop the concept of intensifying the suburbs through 'Supurbia', exploring how planning can facilitate innovative housing solutions to increase the supply of new homes by increasing densities in London's outer boroughs through careful design coding, setting up new work, play and living spaces that are attractive and sustainable and facilitating future growth.

As part of the Awards process, the Judges commented on our work as follows:

"Consultancy HTA Design focuses much of its work on supporting London boroughs with their housing delivery programmes and regeneration projects. However, it was the company's "commitment to community" that caught the eye of the judges - and its willingness to take on non-fee earning community projects". These include securing permission for a play struc-



ture and performance space at an adventure playground in Haringey, north London, and for an arts facility in a listed building in Lewisham, in the south of the capital. Judges said HTA "consistently included a strong community approach" and "demonstrated clearly how they brought value" to the range of projects they worked on.

HTA secured the necessary planning consents to enable young people in Haringey to design and construct an external structure in the Somerford Grove Adventure Playground, named by those involved as 'The Whaler'. As one of HTA's Priority Research and Innovation Projects, the team also secured the use Louise House as a community arts facility for V22, with support from Heritage and Landscape Disciplines at HTA on a pro-bono basis.

As specialists in the housing sector, the challenges of the housing sector are many. With a new London Plan taking shape, it would be interesting to see to what extent it will facilitate

ABOVE:
BELOW:
Supurbia: how Outer London can transform around transport nodes, HTA Design LLP

LEFT:
HTA's planning team research for Apex Airspace on the capacity of London's rooftops to deliver additional homes

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>>> more innovation in housing delivery: I am particularly pleased and encouraged to see the strong focus on small sites. These sites are some of the most difficult to get through the planning process; yet they have immense potential. Through our Supurbia work, we have demonstrated that there is latent potential for more than 360,000 additional homes in the Outer London Boroughs in the proximity of stations with PTAL ratings of 3 and above, not located in Town Centres. It is great to see the emphasis on a presumption in favour of small sites in the new London Plan. We have been campaigning for this for some time.

We work with a number of boroughs on their small sites and regeneration sites. It is not uncommon for these small sites to take as long to get planning approval as tall towers. This does not make sense, in particular when these schemes are often very well designed and aim to deliver large amounts of affordable housing. Exciting times lie ahead. We certainly look forward to continue exploring interesting ways in which London's smaller sites can contribute to housing need and more affordable forms of housing for all. ■



FROM THE TOP:
Transformation of Louise House, Forest Hill, HTA Design LLP for V22

The Whaler and Sandpit, Haringey, HTA Design with local young people

My colleagues Simon Owen and Sarah Eley receiving The Planning Award for Planning Consultancy of the Year 2017

Infill development at Newstead, Enfield, HTA Planning with Peter Barber Architects

