DAVID BANKS

# THE HACKNEY PHENOMENON

**Rod Hackney's pioneering community architecture work helping residents to improve their homes is well documented and much acclaimed. What is less well known is that he has recently become one of the profession's most ambitious developers, now owning three development and building companies involved in speculative development. Nick Wates reports on Hackney's justification for these moves and describes four current projects: an inner city regeneration scheme at North Evington, Leicester; the rejuvenation of the Weaver's Triangle industrial area of Burnley, Lancashire, where Hackney is operating as both architect and developer; a speculative development of 32 houses in his home base of Macclesfield, Cheshire, where he is operating as community architect, developer and builder; and a self-build housing scheme for first-time buyers from the council waiting list in Stirling, where Hackney is acting as both architect and clerk of works.**

KIEREN PHELPS

Critics will greet this news of Rod Hackney the developer and builder with amazement and scepticism. Surely speculative development must be the antithesis of community architecture? But Hackney's current projects are both extending the scope of his earlier community architecture approach and pioneering a style of property development that employs many of the same principles and techniques. Whether or not it is 'community architecture' will be debated—a watertight definition has never been attempted and, like most other labels (Post-Modernism, Brutalism and so on), it defines a broad area of activity with imprecise and constantly shifting boundaries.

What is clear, however, is that Hackney has a unique architectural philosophy which he both practises and preaches with equal force and which is at odds with that of most architects in this country. But now, when the profession is seeking a more popular role for itself, it has great potency. It addresses itself to the most serious issue facing those concerned with the built environment—how to regenerate run-down areas. It is optimistic and confident, and it appears to work and be popular with all those involved.

There are six basic principles underlying Hackney's approach.

**A total environmental service**

Hackney's starting point is that architects should not restrict their role to designing buildings for isolated clients who are wealthy enough to afford the fees, but should set out to solve any and all of the environmental problems facing everyone. This should be done using such means as are available, which will vary in each case.

Most of Hackney's early work, for instance, came from appeals for help from residents' groups facing demolition threats from local authorities. 'The exact nature of the job might not have been identified before the architect is invited in but the architect helps identify the problem,' he says. 'It can be rehabilitation or stabilisation, it can be repair, new-build or self-build. Or it can be a combination of these. There is no formula.' It may also involve campaigning, political lobbying and obtaining finance as well as designing—indeed a complete package of urban management.

Hackney recognises that at present it is often impossible to obtain payment for providing such a service, which is why, since 1978, he has been campaigning through the RIBA for a government community aid fund. In the meantime he sees it as the architect's responsibility to take the lead and create successful precedents. 'An architect is able to see, more than anyone else, the potential for property—because the architect has vision. But that vision must be matched by commitment. You must show the way by practical example. I'm not going around giving good

**'Community architects serve everyone—not just those who can pay the fees'**

**'The community architect on site should be available seven days a week'**

advice and then running away. I'm staying with it. I've no time for people with fantastic ideas who say, "Well, I can't do it, I'm only the architect; but if *you* do it I'll come back in five years and see what you've done." That's just a cop-out.

'From this standpoint it is only a small transition to setting up development companies to provide a more complete and effective service to the client. The architect's job is to identify areas of expansion, to use his skill as interpreter of planning law and his vision. And if you can't attract finance, then there's no reason why architects shouldn't purchase buildings, or, for that matter, building companies so as to do away with the builder's profit gain even more control over the total process and provide a more effective service to user-clients.'

**The necessity of a local office**

One of Hackney's most essential principles is that architects must live and work within the area where they are providing a service. This again applies whether the work involves rehabilitation, a speculative estate or rejuvenating a decaying industrial area. For every job involving more than a few properties, Hackney has set up an office in the street and staffed it with architects who preferably live there as well.

'What makes the community architect different from the traditional architect is that he's available, he's there—seven days a week, 24 hours a day—to feel the vibration and pulse of the community. He doesn't go away.

'And neither does the office go away. We stay in the area after we've finished the work. Most architects think that's the end of the job when they sign the practical completion certificate. But that's just the start for us. We've done the building and improvement part. Then comes the difficult bit of people accepting what's been built or renewed, maybe learning to live together for the first time, understanding the rules and not being exploited. I believe that once you set up an office in an area you need never leave because there will always be enough work to keep you going. And setting up an office is no big deal. When I get a scheme in a place, within a week I've got an office.'

Being constantly on site is also the only way to control the building process, Hackney argues, citing the following example. 'Elderly residents in our Leicester scheme are very worried about the backyard doors being replaced without a cat door. Those cats are very important to them. They will come back the very day you hang a new door and if there's no hole they might well run away. How can you control things like that if you are removed from the site? Controlling the small things is very important—they determine whether a scheme works.

'It's going back to almost a master builder relationship. We're the first to know if anything goes wrong. You walk up and down the street and if you've made a blunder everybody knows about it. That keeps you on your toes and keeps you doing the right thing. A lot of architects only know they've done something wrong when they get a writ through the door. We know immediately.

'The architect's presence on site is essential. That very presence is wealth—not just for the architect but for the whole community. People say, "If the architect is daft enough to set up an office in that area then maybe we'll invest in it too." '

**The architect as enabler/organiser**

Hackney sees the architect's role as that of an enabler using professional skills to help the users achieve their ambitions, rather than imposing solutions on them. Wherever possible, he addresses himself to the users and treats them as clients, even if they are not actually paying the bills.

His reasons for this are practical

rather than ideological. Housing rehabilitation or, indeed, any other form of development or renewal, is not so much a design problem, he says, as one of organisation, management and financing. Involving people in decision-making and even building helps create goodwill and trust between all the parties, thereby making the process simpler and more efficient economically. It also leads to greater user satisfaction, which apart from being worthwhile in its own right also makes economic sense because it generates pride in, and therefore care of, the environment.

'Development values are affected by whether you allow people to participate in improving their environment or whether you allow them to become outcasts. And we've seen with the riots what happens when you allow the latter to happen. Community architecture is simply the community generating wealth, with the architect acting as catalyst.'

He cites the example of Highfield Hall, Bolton—a derelict farm converted to a community centre—where a community architect helped a residents' association produce a capital product worth £150 000 for a £40 000 investment. 'If you can do that through elements of involvement and self-help, just think what you can do if the architect takes the major lead, actually acquires property and makes it work. There is tremendous potential.'

**The importance of self-help**

Self-help plays a vital part in many of Hackney's schemes. To a large extent this is simply a means for using the users' energy and labour to bridge the gap between the money obtained and the money needed. For example, this reduced the cost of a new home from £28 000 to £19 000 in a scheme in Stirling and achieved environmental improvements worth £28 000 for £8500 at Black Road, Macclesfield. But Hackney also sees it as a way to strengthen the community and boost confidence and skills. 'Community architecture is as much about the development of people as property,' he says, claiming that many unemployed residents have embarked on new careers as a direct result of being involved in building their own homes.

'The building process, at least in housing, is not anything mystical. Most people know they can do things, but the education system hasn't allowed them to exercise their skills. This is human blight. Teaching people that they can break through their inhibition barriers to do their own thing is part of the development process. The architect is teaching confidence.'

Hackney also sees self-help and user involvement as a way of matching people's hopes and aspirations with the resources available, itself a key to creating well-being. 'One of the biggest problems we have in the UK is that people's aspirations are so unrealistic. That's why you have people who are upset. They never attain their

**'The architect as enabler involves people in decisions and creates goodwill'**

**'Self-help teaches people that they can break through their inhibitions'**

expectation level. They've gone through an education system which says, "You will get it, this is your right," but when it comes to the test the goodies aren't there and so you have a disappointed society.'

Although self-help is so far mostly confined to residents doing up and managing their own homes, Hackney also hopes, in Burnley for instance, to apply self-help principles to the unemployed finding new jobs. 'Most people see the unemployed as a threat. I see them as a resource. Architects can offer them a new role in life as part of a scheme and give them a new interest in life. It isn't just new-build or conservation, it's a whole new way of life. The only thing you can promise them is that it will be hard work, but in the end it will probably be worth it.'

**Political confrontation**

Hackney is essentially neutral in party political terms. He has worked for and against Labour and Conservative councils and, in Belfast, for Protestant and Catholic community groups. And yet taking sides and engaging in political confrontation is the very core of his approach. Most of his work involves disputes with bureaucrats and politicians, and these are always taken head on. Hackney thrives on controversy—in contrast to most architects, who shy away from it—using a combination of logical argument, professional and academic status (he has a PhD), the political muscle of his clients and, above all, the media to bludgeon his opponents into submission.

These tactics have led to physical attacks on him and his staff and to his offices being fire-bombed more than once. But he has rarely lost a battle, and his reputation for taking on all-comers in the interest of his user clients has attracted many new ones. 'The architect has got to put his reputation on the line every time,' he says. 'We always go for broke.'

He estimates that 90 per cent of his office's work is in persuading others—often through confrontation—to interpret rules liberally or simply to allow clients to do something for themselves. 'Some bureaucrats are still pretty rigid and this simply means more of a challenge to our style of working, a challenge which we always take up.'

**Hierarchical office structure**

Finally Hackney is an unashamed advocate of hierarchy and leadership. Although the practice is called Rod Hackney & Associates there are no associates and Hackney has total ownership of all his offices as well as his building and development companies.

This has always been criticised by others in the community architecture field, many of whom believe that community architecture should be publicly accountable and that co-operatives or other forms of democratic office structure are more appropriate for dealing with voluntary organisations.

It is also a simmering source of resentment for some of his staff, who see it as double standards—preaching co-operation and participation to clients while maintaining dictatorial control over his own staff. All staff—whether architects or builders—negotiate their pay and conditions directly with Hackney, and no form of collective bargaining or unionisation is tolerated. Hours are long and often arduous, pay—at least until recently—low and there is little job security. On the other hand, staff invariably find the work uniquely exciting and invigorating, and any criticism of Hackney's methods appears to be matched by loyalty to, and pride in, the work they are involved in.

Whether hierarchical structures are necessary for such work in the long term remains to be disproved. But there is little doubt that, combined with Hackney's talent for leadership, it

has been a key element in enabling him to achieve so much in hitherto uncharted fields. It may also explain why so few others seem to have followed in his footsteps. 'I believe in hierarchy and leadership,' he says. 'You've got to have bosses—not in the old Victorian way, but people that others will look up to and follow without misgivings. If you have a flat structure, you waste so much time arguing that no decisions are made and everything falls apart around you.'

**More architects, not fewer**

Taken individually, none of the above principles—total environmental service, local office, enabling, self-help, political confrontation, hierarchical structure—is unique or revolutionary. As a package, however, they have proved extremely powerful, as indicated by Hackney's phenomenal growth. His practice has probably grown faster than any other in the country. In just over 10 years he has expanded from a one-man band operating from his front room to a large concern with 12 offices employing a total of 70 staff—22 of them are architects and half the rest are assistants. He has completed £42 million worth of work and owns several properties, as well as building plant (including bulldozers, mechanical shovels, Hymacs, trucks and four-wheel drive vehicles) and a specially converted six-wheel drive Range Rover capable of carrying loads of 2 tonnes. He claims to have three new jobs coming in each week, ranging from barn extensions to neighbourhood strategies. 'The more schemes we get finished, the more work appears on the horizon; that is, the more we do, the more we find needs to be done.'

It is this realisation of the vast amount of work to be done, combined with his confidence in having found a way to do it, that gives Hackney a vision of the architectural profession that is totally at odds with the architectural Establishment which he dismisses as 'a whole generation of people producing the wrong product'.

Whereas both RIBA and ARCUK policy is to reduce the number of architects entering the profession, Hackney believes that more are necessary. 'There aren't enough architects to solve the inner city problems. If we had twice as many, we'd still have difficulty making inroads. We need more, not fewer architects, and it's a crime to try and limit the numbers simply to preserve the limited club of architects doing a limited role.' In housing alone, he estimates that another 10 000 architects are needed to bring the stock up to an acceptable standard. This figure is based on the Government's 1981 survey on English housing conditions, which identified 1·75 million slum dwellings and a further 4·5 million needing repair, and the assumption—based on his own experience—that one architect can

**'Academic status and political muscle are used to bludgeon opponents'**

**Rod Hackney is an unashamed advocate of hierarchy and leadership**

improve or build 30 dwellings a year. 'There should be an architect on every street corner for life, offering a cheap service like doctors to anyone living in run-down communities.'

But such an expansion would have to be accompanied by a drastic redefinition of the architect's role and of the skills now taught in architecture schools. 'Architecture isn't about Post-Modernism, conservationism or eclecticism, it's about solving people's problems in the environment. Yet none of the schools begins to teach people how to do that.'

**A new training**

Like many others in the community architecture field, he finds it hard to find staff with the necessary skills and is seriously thinking of setting up his own training programme. This would involve people working in his offices and on site for 20 hr a week then having 20 hr a week formal teaching.

He believes that a certificate stating that people had undertaken such a programme with him for three years would be more useful than a degree from an architecture school. 'I can't wait for the schools to come round,' he says.

Hackney believes the profession must go in his direction if it is to survive. 'We must get to grips with what has become an environmental nightmare—the decline of the inner cities. We're out on a limb if we keep to the specialist role of the pursuit of excellence, waiting for middle- and upper-class clients—it won't work. Architects must go back to having a missionary role, going in where it hurts, getting their hands dirty and sticking with it even if it is a bit of a killer. Unless we do so, we will become increasingly irrelevant and our reputation will remain rock-bottom.

'In the past the code has always been an excuse for architects not doing anything. Now it's been relaxed there is no excuse. There is no reason why anyone can't do it except that they're scared, they haven't got it in them, they're too old or set in their ways or they're not hungry enough.'

**Leap-frogging over the Establishment**

'In the next 10 years we've got to recover. The medical and legal professions have recovered—you can have your health looked after and you can be represented in court. But you can still be living in a hovel. So the next stage has got to be the environment. There is a demand out there and potentially we have the right skills. We just have to bring the two together.'

For 10 years or more Hackney has been peddling his views by publicising, almost obsessively, his own work and by establishing himself as a significant political figure in the profession. He has just completed a continuous six-year stint (the maximum allowed) on RIBA Council—part of it as vice-president—is senior vice-president of the UIA and is on RIBA president Michael Manser's inner circle of personal advisers.

Until recently, although a discernible community architecture movement has been steadily growing, the results have been unspectacular, but Hackney believes the Prince of Wales' famous Hampton Court speech last May could be the turning point. 'It was dynamite,' he says, 'Suddenly the future King has come along and said that the way to work isn't the Modern Movement, isn't the way that most architects are working, but is the way that community architects work. That means that the image of community architecture has suddenly leap-frogged over a lot of Establishment figures who have been opposing it. He didn't just close the door on architecture, he opened the door for the way out. He has shown the direction. The Cinderella of the profession has at last found its prince, and the RIBA and the Government will now ignore it at their peril.'

INDUSTRIAL REGENERATION, WEAVER'S TRIANGLE, BURNLEY

# ARCHITECT AS ENTREPRENEUR

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**In Burnley, Lancashire, Hackney hopes to regenerate a large part of the inner industrial heartland by combining his skills as an architect, designer and entrepreneur with the usual local base.**

**The Weaver's Triangle is typical of large parts of many cities in Yorkshire and Lancashire. It is sandwiched between the city centre and a grotesque 1960s system-built council housing estate, a 1½ mile long hotchpotch of derelict industrial land and underused, deteriorating but handsome Victorian mills where about 700 people are now employed in a variety of small industries.**

**In its heyday Burnley was one of the world's largest weaving centres, with over 100 mills, but it is now a shadow of its former self, struggling to find a new role. Unemployment in Burnley is 12½ per cent. There are over 1 million sq ft of empty industrial floorspace and acres of derelict land.**

**Until the last year or so, Burnley District Council's instinctive reaction was to flatten the entire area, and it probably would have done so had the money been available. Instead, in July 1983, the planning department commissioned Rod Hackney & Associates to advise on a strategy for the area.**

**Architects have, of course, done studies for such areas before. What makes Hackney's strategy unique is that instead of simply preparing a physical plan for others to implement (or more likely ignore for lack of funds), he has produced an implementation strategy in which he plays a vital catalytic role as architect, developer and urban manager.**

**It works as follows. First, Hackney talked to all existing and potential participants to discover their problems, aspirations and requirements. These included land and property owners, tenants, amenity societies (Burnley Civic Trust and Friends of the Weaver's Triangle), potential investors, developers and employers.**

**Next, one of Hackney's building companies, Castward Ltd, bought (for £4000) a derelict canalside mill, Slater's Terrace, and announced intentions to convert it to 10 000 sq ft of offices and nine dwelling units. The building will also house Hackney's site office, with its full-time staff.**

**Then came the feasibility study—two hefty reports compressed and simplified in an eight-page glossy brochure. This was aimed primarily at the borough council as client but also, significantly, at all the participants already mentioned and, via the local Press, the entire population of Burnley.**

**The study looks at each site in the first phase of the area and makes proposals. In short, what is proposed is the transformation of a decaying industrial area into a thriving inner city area with a mix of offices, industry, housing and leisure. None of the proposals would be viable on its own. They only make sense as a total package, for none of the participants is going to invest time and**

money on their part of the project unless they are confident that the others are going to do their part as well—thus ensuring that the area as a whole has a future. And the key to success is, of course, Burnley council. 'We know the scheme is viable,' says Hackney. 'We know it works. But it needs the goodwill of the council. They must start thinking like capitalists and act as agents.'

The study emphasises that a lot of public money is not necessary. Of a total development cost of £7 million for the first phase, the public sector share need only be £2 million, with less than £500 000 from the council (the rest coming from central Government). The council must act as catalyst.

The immediate tasks include:

- submitting Urban Development Grant applications to the Government
- acquiring property that comes on the market
- securing Conservation Area status for the area

1 Hackney's vision for the Weaver's Triangle.
2 Generating enthusiasm: Hackney and mill owner John Watts discuss the area's potential from the top of the Clock Tower Mill.
3 Burnley's handsome mills. Hackney thinks they could have a prosperous future if converted for new use.
4 Early signs of regeneration. Restoration of a timber canopy over the canal towpath creates confidence in the future.
5 Hackney's own stake in the area—Slater's Terrace—represents a bid to create confidence. He intends to convert it into housing and offices. It will also house his own site office.
6 A typical redundant mill floor ripe for new uses.

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- publicising the area to the private sector
- relaxing zoning restrictions to allow mixed use development—'You can't generate wealth by zoning,' says Hackney—or establishing the area as a tourist attraction.

At first, when the study was submitted in spring 1984, the council was sceptical. That might have been the end of the matter, but other participants had begun to get excited by the idea that the area might have a future. Instead of creating blight as most planning reports do, Hackney's report—combined with his own commitment to its findings by buying property—has already begun to generate interest and growth.

The mill owners have started seeing the area in a new light. One, at considerable expense, has just replaced a timber canopy over the canal, 4, which has no functional use but is a tremendous boost, visually and psychologically. The amenity societies—which have already achieved a great deal by producing pamphlets on the history of the area and opening up the canal towpath—have started campaigning with increased vigour. The new town steel mill came on the market in September and was snapped up by the town's leading developer which is reported to be intending to use it in line with Hackney's proposals. The snowball has already begun to roll.

One of the leading sceptics until recently was Brian Whittle, Burnley council's chief executive. The borough's initial approaches to the Government for resources had drawn a negative response and Hackney's vision seemed to him pie in the sky.

But when I visited him (with Hackney) he had just visited the rejuvenated Bristol docks—which Hackney had cited in his report as showing potential—and now saw the area in a new light. 'Burnley has a tremendous asset,' he declared. 'There's no way this authority has the resources necessary but I'm prepared to have a go with the civil service. They threw the battalions at Liverpool, why not east Lancashire? The gauntlet has got to be thrown down at a national level. The question is, how are the Government and the private sector going to deal with dereliction in the Burnleys of this world?

'Over the coming months we're going to have to get hold of people at a more senior level and have a teach-in—here in Burnley—to show them the totality of the project. If they don't back us I can't see they've got an urban policy at all.' The planning strategy would be put to council members for approval shortly, he said.

Hackney is quietly confident about Burnley, even though there are innumerable obstacles still ahead. 'It's on the back burner at present. We're at the stage of generating interest.' In the meantime he has bought another property which he is converting into residential units, with workshops attached, for sale on the open market, 'in order to maintain an interest in the town,' he says.

A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH, NORTH EVINGTON, LEICESTER

# ARCHITECT AS URBAN DESIGNER

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**The work of Hackney's Leicester office shows the potential for a comprehensive approach to inner city renewal when community architects join force with a local authority and a housing association at local level.**

**North Evington is a diverse neighbourhood about 15 minutes' walk from the city centre, with housing, industry and commerce, cheek by jowl. Five years ago it displayed all the characteristics of provincial inner city decay. Fears of comprehensive redevelopment had blighted the area. The classic symptoms were evident: dilapidated buildings, low property values, 'red-lining' by building societies, residents—70 per cent non-British, mainly of Asian origin—unable to afford to maintain their property, landlords and businessmen unwilling to invest and a declining commercial sector.**

**The blight was lifted when, in 1978, the local authority declared a Housing Action Area (under the 1974 Housing Act) containing 800 houses, and persuaded the East Midlands Housing Association to set up an office in the area. The association invited Hackney to establish an office in the same building which also came to house an area office of the local authority (providing housing advice and processing grants).**

**From this local base, these public, semi-public and private sector agencies have acted as a team, using a variety of government programmes to upgrade the area and trigger private investment. In the last five years new building costing £600 000, area improvements costing £1·25 million and house improvements costing over £2 million have been completed or are under way. 'We are not just branding the area with any one approach—compulsory purchase order and demolish, 15-year life, 30-year life—we're doing a bit of everything and therein lies the key to success,' says Hackney.**

**Several of these schemes have been particularly successful. The first enveloping scheme, for instance, helped to secure the 1982 National Home Improvement Council's house improvement scheme award (out of 172 entries).**

**More important has been their combined effect in restoring confidence to the area. Private owners and tenants have responded by improving their property. Landlords have started buying property. The shops are busy again and new ones have opened. A disused building has been converted into a mosque. Although undoubtedly partially reflecting the availability of grants, derelict houses that could have been bought for as little as £400 in 1978 are now fetching £8000.**

**Unlike earlier projects, Rod Hackney & Associates is not working directly for the residents and is not accountable to them. The client is the housing association, which is not accountable to the residents either in any direct sense.**

**The key mechanism is the local office, ensuring a close relationship between professionals of all disciplines and between professionals and users. 'If you want anything done in this area you come to this office,' says Hackney. 'You've got the council here, you've got the major landlord and you've got architects. All day you've got streams of tenants coming in—it's a very personal relationship. The tenants relate to us on an individual basis and therefore they don't need residents' associations and confrontation.'**

**A residents' association does, in fact, exist but it meets at the same office and works closely with the professionals. Its main role is in applying political pressure on the local authority for resources. And as for the professionals: 'It's much easier to go downstairs and talk to the local authority than to write them dozens of letters,' says Mark Lupton, housing and development manager of the East Midlands Housing Association. 'And it works both ways, with a minimum of bureaucracy.'**

**These factors enabled the team to overcome the normal problems with enveloping—of simply tarting up the outside without solving internal problems—by co-ordinating improvement grants so that the insides were done at the same time. Complicated juggling with property boundaries was also possible, allowing the construction of back paths with sitting areas and a communal garden shared between three properties which previously had minuscule gardens or none at all.**

**Few other organisations would have**

**7 The North Evington Housing Action Area in Leicester—a comprehensive approach to inner city renewal. Hackney says, 'We're doing a bit of everything and therein lies the key to success.' His local office is marked solid block.**
**8 Community architect Pol Jozsa can monitor progress on the market square landscaping without getting up from his drawing board. Hackney always has an office in the area where the practice is working.**
**9 An enveloping scheme, St Saviour's Road. The fine street facades designed by Arthur Wakerley in 1910 have been given a facelift.**
**10 Complex juggling with property boundaries has made it possible to construct new walkways and sitting areas behind properties on St Saviour's Road.**

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**11, 12 Wakerley Court, a high density scheme of 35 flats for the elderly, with a common room and communal courtyard. The scheme had joint clients, the East Midlands Housing Association with Asians' Sheltered Residential Accommodation. The style might not grab the glossies but the scheme has been greeted rapturously by the Asian community. There maybe red brick instead of white stone and the communal meeting room has to be indoors, but there is the same self-contained and neighbourly atmosphere.'**
**13, 14 Landscaping a disused market square has provided a new focus and sense of status for the area. The surrounding buildings have been given a facelift.**

*architect* Rod Hackney & Associates, Leicester
*client* East Midlands Housing Association Ltd, Leicester City Council
*quantity surveyors* Hubbard Revis and Partners
*builders: Wakerley Court* Frederick Bowles; *envelope schemes 1 and 2, market square* S. Cranes & Sons; *boundary walls* S. Cranes & Sons, D. Sutton & Sons, C. Laker Construction Ltd.

**been able to make use of government underspend money by spending £360 000 on boundary walls to 126 properties within the required 10 winter weeks—involving complex liaison with all the tenants and owners.**

**The team does not restrict its activity to programme work but sees its brief as dealing with all the problems in the area. 'If we are working on a middle of terrace housing association property, we can knock next door and say, "We are the architects to your neighbours, can we do anything?" It's a free service but it makes sense,' says Hackney. 'If the housing association only looked after its own property while houses either side were derelict, the increased equity would be minimal. By providing a free service to the neighbours, the equity of the whole terrace increases.'**

**The same comprehensive and expansionist policy applies equally to the adjacent neighbourhood, and the team are already beginning to cast their eyes beyond the boundaries for areas with potential.**

**'The community architect is taking over much more control of the environment than the normal architect,' says Hackney. 'He won't stop at just doing his brief, he'll go on extending the brief.'**

**Hackney's Leicester office has been operating—with two or three architects—for five years and there appears to be plenty of life in it yet.**

**'Our architecture isn't the grandiose stuff. It's humble and serviceable, it will last and it produces the right results,' says Hackney. 'Our presence here has helped provide stability by enhancing values in what could have been quite a dodgy area.**

**'A lot of areas where ethnic groups build themselves up are associated with the decline of an area. This is the exact opposite. The people who might have been associated with the twilight of the area are the very people who are now regenerating it.'** **▶ 59**

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SELF-BUILD FOR THE WAITING LIST, STIRLING

# ARCHITECT AS SELF-BUILD AGENT

15 Resident architect Genevieve Jones supervising site clearance. 16 Publicity material.

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The Colquhoun Street development in Stirling is a self-build housing scheme aimed at first-time buyers from the council waiting list. Due to start on site in April, it is the first self-build scheme in Scotland since the war and provides the most comprehensive support system for self-builders without their own capital anywhere in the UK.

Rod Hackney & Associates was called in as consultant by the Labour Stirling District Council on the initiative of the director of housing, architect Douglas Johnston. Faced with a waiting list of 2000 and with little money available to build, the council was keen to examine other methods of housing provision.

The site chosen for a pilot project contains a derelict council-owned terrace with backlands. Hackney has designed a scheme for rehabilitating the terrace for 27 flats and erecting nine new two- and three-bedroom houses in a staggered terrace at the rear.

Self-builders can either rehabilitate a flat or build a new home on a prelaid slab. The general layout and external materials are fixed but self-builders will be able to design their own interiors. They will also be able to choose how much building work they do themselves, with the rest being organised by Rod Hackney & Associates. This flexibility is made possible by employing a community architect to live and work on the site for the duration of the building programme, to handle detailed design and co-ordinate self-builders, contractors and materials. Even before the self-builders have been identified, architect Genevieve Jones—who has worked in Hackney's Birmingham and Leicester offices—is already installed in a flat on the site.

The progress of each self-builder will be monitored on a computer at Hackney's head office in Macclesfield, which will also be responsible for the bookwork.

To make things as easy as possible for the self-builders, the new houses are of a traditional Scottish design, with rendered single-skin blockwork and an internal skin on timber stud.

A major breakthrough for self-build is that two building societies—the Abbey National and the Scottish Building Society—have agreed to provide mortgages (with generous interim payments for the new-build). Even the unemployed will be able to get mortgages since the DHSS has agreed to pay the interest payments in the same way that it normally pays rent. 'This will be very good for the scheme and for the unemployed,' says Jones. 'The unemployed will have more time for building and they'll learn new trades, making them more employable at the end.'

The National House-Building Council is being less supportive, and, unlike at Roan Court, has so far refused to certify the scheme. Self-builders will have to sign a management agreement which binds them to completing the work by 1988.

Based on previous experience, Hackney has calculated that self-builders will save up to 28 per cent of overall building costs, bringing the total cost of a new home, including land, to under £20 000. To make such a saving, self-builders would have to put in about 2000 hr. The rehab flats will cost about £10 000.

Publicity material stresses that involvement in the scheme will require 'hard work and determination', but by mid January over 60 people had applied for the 38 places. They range from civil servants to lorry drivers and include several single women. Selection will be made after a joint interview by the council, the building societies and Rod Hackney & Associates, with priority given to those with building skills.

The council, which is impressed by the scheme's popularity, has already earmarked other sites for similar projects, and council leader Michael Connarty is enthusiastic: 'We're helping people to build for themselves. If they've got the bottle to go for it, we've got the resources to help them. Our motivation is in giving people control over their lives, their community and their environment. We're investing in people breaking the cycle of dependence.'

SPECULATIVE ESTATE, ROAN COURT, MACCLESFIELD

# THE TOTAL SERVICE

19

**Roan Court demonstrates that community architecture principles have much to offer the volume builder. Named after Rod Hackney's 2½-year-old son, it is a partly self-help speculative estate of 32 houses for sale, where Hackney acts as community architect, developer, builder and estate agent. It is just up the road from his famous early self-help General Improvement Area schemes in Macclesfield—Nos 1 and 2 Black Road—on a greenfield site bordering a canal.**

**Buyers can choose between a completed house, a serviced slab or anything in between which is priced accordingly.**

**Externally self-helpers will have to build to Hackney's design (open to negotiation on detail) but they will be free to alter internal layouts. They will also be able to call on Hackney's labour force for tasks they are unable or unwilling to do themselves. 'Anything they can't do themselves, we do,' says Hackney.**

**In addition to space standards being above those of Parker Morris, the standard of finishes and materials is higher than in most private housing estates—Brazilian mahogany windows, hardwood patio doors, double glazing throughout, open fires as well as central heating, hand-made bricks and natural slates. Prices for finished units range from £31 500 for two- and three-bedroom terrace houses, to £45 000 for the two bigger detached units.**

**Initially Roan Court was to have been an estate of detached houses (which sell for more) but it was changed to terraces after a neighbouring residents' association complained that it would set the newcomers apart from the existing community who all live in terraces. A special feature will be a swimming pool converted from some old water storage tanks on site which will be for the exclusive use of residents.**

**One of the houses will be used as a temporary architect's office, even though Hackney's main office is only half a mile away.**

**Hackney believes the flexibility necessary to provide such a service—and make a profit—is only possible because he has total control over the whole process.**

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**There are 23 staff now on site, all employed directly by Hackney through his building company, Castward Ltd, and, according to Hackney, paid 'above the going rate'. Subcontractors are only used if absolutely necessary. 'We try and employ people from on the street or within a radius of a mile,' he says. 'We emphasise craftsmanship and are trying to train tradespeople. We're also trying to break down the great divide between architects and builders and between the different trades.' There are two architects working on the site as assistants to craftsmen. The personnel manager is June Daniels, a former housewife living in No 2 Black Road who has worked with Hackney for the past 10 years.**

**Hackney believes the approach is paying off. 'There's no theft, no swearing and morale is high,' he says. 'One of the craftsmen is even thinking of buying one of the houses himself.'**

**The total value of the development is estimated at £1·1 million, with completion expected in December this year.**

**'In a traditional speculative development there are five profits involved: the developer's profit, the site value gain, the builder's profit, the architect's fee and the selling agent's fees. Take three of these away and one is still making a profit. So you can produce higher quality things cheaper than the normal speculative developer. I'm out to create a new niche in the market, concludes Hackney.'**

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**17, 19 The Macclesfield site before construction. This plot is just up the road from Hackney's earlier self-help General Improvement Area schemes, Nos 1 and 2 Black Road.**
**18 Site plan.**
**20-22 Second, first and ground floor plans showing flat types A-E. See site plan for key.**
**23, 24 Ground and first floor plans. House type F.**
**25, 26 Ground and first floor plans. House type G.**
**27, 28 Ground and first floor plans. House type H.**
**29 Model of development; north at the top.**