



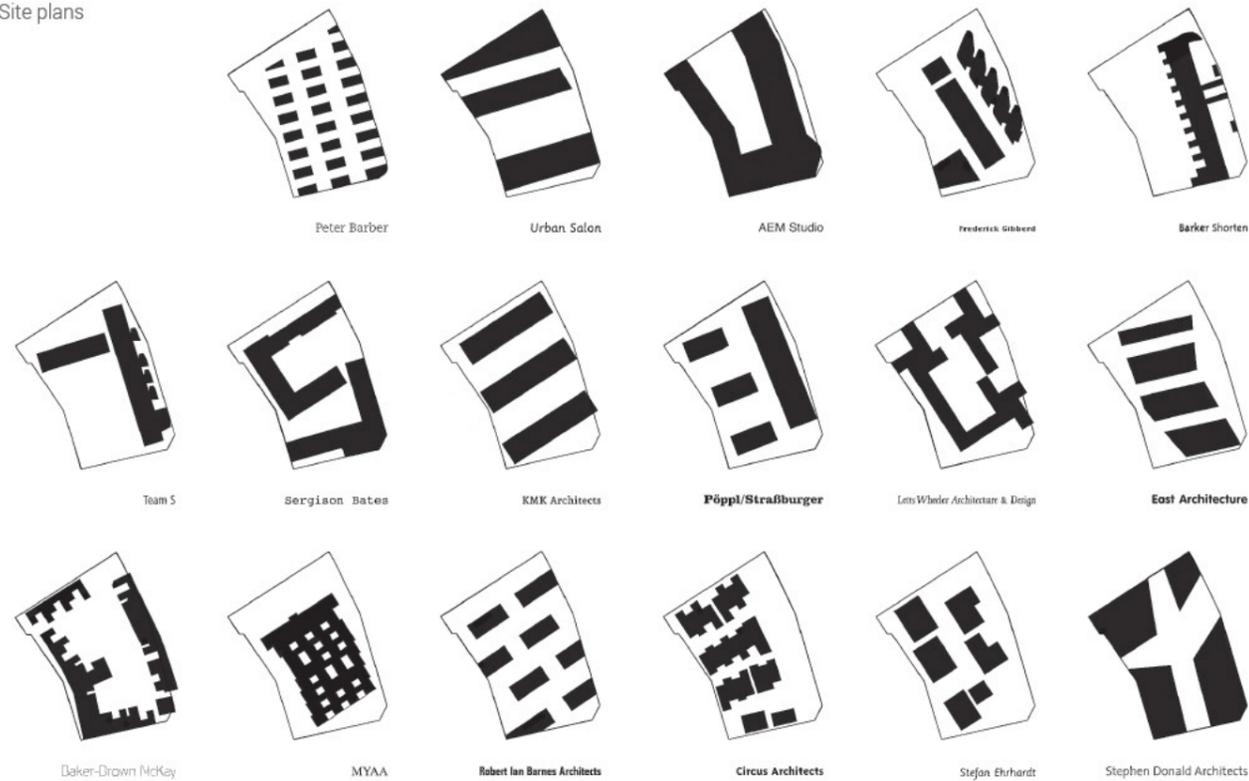
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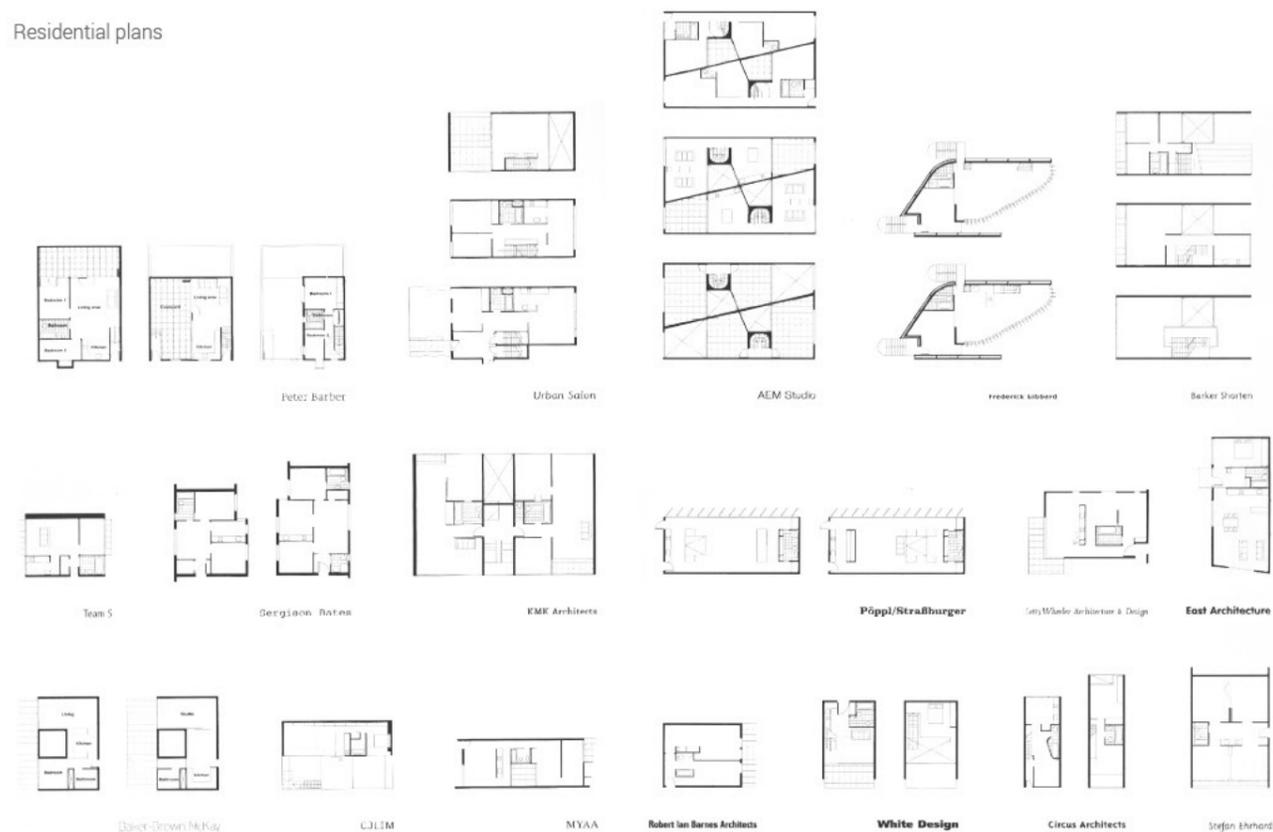
**French, H. (2018) 'Accommodating change: innovation in housing', in Menteth, W., ed. *Competition culture in Europe: voices*. London: Project Compass CIC, pp. 102-109.**

Official publisher site: <http://projectcompass.co.uk/index.php/compass/publications/>

Site plans



Residential plans



# 14 Accommodating Change Innovation in Housing

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speculation, in Building Design magazine on its completion, that “in 10 years time, Donnybrook might be remembered as a significant turning point in the culture of British housing provision”.

Looking back perhaps we might also consider the competition itself as an exemplar. Firstly as an ‘open’ competition its main, stated purpose was “to explore the creation of new house plan typologies – in effect ‘plans for living’ ...” ignoring tried and tested norms to encourage architects not previously involved in housing to take part. Secondly, beyond its primary purpose to secure a high quality innovative winning design that would be built, the Accommodating Change initiative set out to raise awareness about contemporary issues in housing design. To achieve this the project included a second ‘ideas’ competition for students, a touring seminar programme, an exhibition, a website and – detailing the whole process – a publication as a permanent record (figure 14.5).

**The Brief**

The brief for Accommodating Change makes clear that whilst it is intended to build the winning design, entrants are challenged to carry out “action research into the field of innovative housing where we hope all competitors will challenge assumptions about how people live, and will continue to live, in homes of the future”

*“Circle 33 attaches great importance to good design, and to the contribution it makes to the quality of life of those for whom we provide homes ...”*  
Jane Blom Cooper, Circle 33, Client

*The challenges of this architectural competition are wide ranging and it is a unique opportunity, for it is our aim that the winning design is built in a significant central London location ...”*  
Paul Grover, The Architecture Foundation

The Donnybrook Quarter scheme won in the Accommodating Change competition is widely considered as the ‘breakthrough’ project that established Peter Barber’s architectural practice. We might even agree with Ellis Woodman’s insightful

figure 14.1  
Accommodating Change. Publication extract showing comparative selected site and residential plans

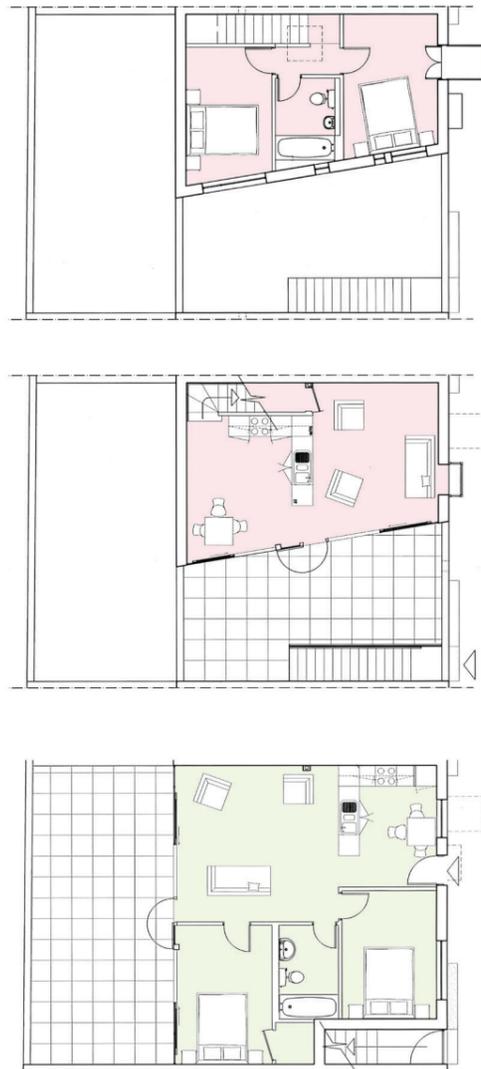


figure 14.2  
Typical plans of the  
winning scheme  
by Peter Barber  
Architects Ltd

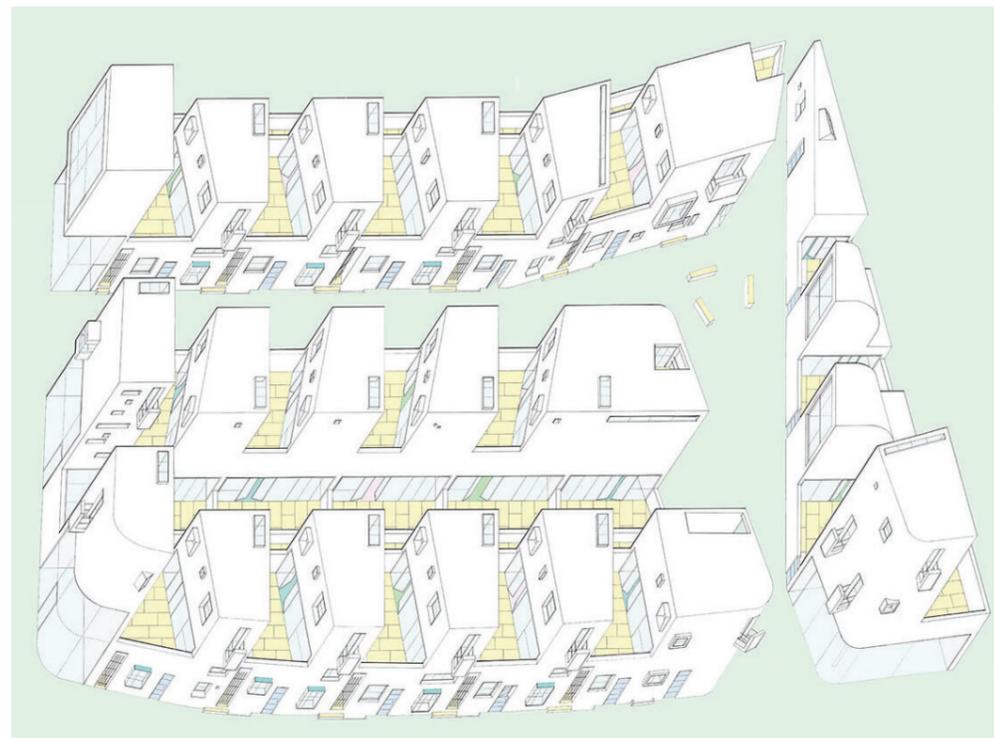


figure 14.3  
Aerial axonometric  
drawing of the winning  
scheme by Peter  
Barber Architects Ltd

*"action research into the field of innovative housing where we hope all competitors will challenge assumptions about how people live, and will continue to live, in homes of the future"*

Flexibility, or the ability to 'accommodate changes', was a key requirement related to a re-examination of the static notion of the 'family', and open spaces both private and shared had to be included. Density was under review at the time and – extraordinarily – competitors were invited to "define the schedule of accommodation" themselves. The usual density for the site (then 247 habitable rooms per hectare) would result in 'around 23 units' but the planning department had agreed to waive their guidelines, allowing densities of up to around 50 units on the site.

The invitation to ignore all precedent and be critical about planning guidelines in order to think about new design ideas was appealing to architects, and resulted in approximately 140 entries, a large number for a housing competition.

#### Student Competition

Following the professional competition a separate ideas competition for students was launched with a similar very open brief on a nearby site.

The aim was to encourage university courses and students to consider working in the housing field and to "offer a unique opportunity for students to challenge assumptions as to what makes for good housing design, as well as contributing fresh ideas for the future" (Jane Blom Cooper) acknowledging the potential difficulty in tackling a fully resolved project,

students were encouraged to focus on one of four key themes: Typology, Sustainability, Density and Technology. Architecture schools then hosted a series of seminars based on these themes which attracted contributions from some well-known architects and other notable housing professionals.

#### Dissemination: Exhibition, Website and Publication

The culmination of the entire process was captured in an exhibition held at the Architecture Foundation gallery in Central London and online through a dedicated website. But it is the book, intended as "a model for debate on housing in the twenty-first century" published by the client and the Architecture Foundation at the same time that has remained a lasting testament, revealing the detailed processes of the competition as well as the winning design. Alongside the images of his winning drawings and models, Peter Barber was invited to contribute a contextual essay that expands on his approach to housing "based on the idea of the street as central to successful urban design".

The book, which is still referred to on many of the participating architects' websites and is still available through RIBA bookshops, captures the 'mood' of the time, the key issues being discussed – flexibility, density, sustainability – and a flavour of the kinds of projects

*"The Donnybrook Quarter housing project is now considered an exemplar and is regularly used to illustrate innovation in housing design"*

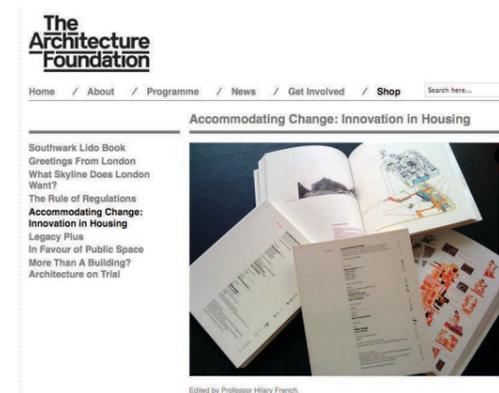


figure 14.4  
Aerial view of  
completed scheme ©  
Morley von Sternberg

to come. Information submitted for the competition was used to describe the schemes selected for publication, which are loosely grouped by urban typology, and scale drawings of the site plans and unit plans inside the covers were especially made for ease of comparison. Will Alsop, then Chair of the AF, contributed the foreword and Jeremy Till, Sarah Wigglesworth and Pierre D'Avoine provided essays for a section on history and context.

The Donnybrook Quarter housing project is now considered an exemplar and is regularly used to illustrate innovation in housing design (figure 14.2-14.4, 14.6, 14.7). The architect Peter Barber has gone on to design and complete many other innovative housing projects.

There can be no doubt that the client Circle 33's Jane Blom Cooper played a key role in the success of all aspects of this competition. Commissioning London's Architecture Foundation and its then director Lucy Musgrove meant trusting their belief that a competition without the usual constraints and guidelines would attract high quality, innovative and buildable results. The Accommodating Change initiative was certainly optimistic and relied on many committed individuals to make it a success. The Donnybrook Quarter and the book demonstrate that their confidence was not misplaced.



Accommodating Change Innovation in Housing



figure 14.5  
The Architecture  
Foundation,  
dissemination of the  
competition research

figure 14.6  
Competition drawings  
view of the main  
street by Peter Barber  
Architects Ltd

## PROJECT DATA

<b>Name</b>	<b>ACCOMMODATING CHANGE. INNOVATION IN HOUSING</b>
<b>Location</b>	Donnybrook, Eden Way, London E3 2JD
<b>Country</b>	<b>ENGLAND</b>
<b>Year</b>	2001

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

<b>Type</b>	40 Mixed tenure housing units
<b>Size</b>	2,848 m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Budget Cost</b>	£4.5m

## COMPETITION DESCRIPTION

<b>Client</b>	Circle 33 Housing Association (Now Clarion Housing)
<b>Programmer/Agent</b>	The Architecture Foundation
<b>Public/Private</b>	Public
<b>Procedure</b>	A Design Contest
<b>Procedure Reference</b>	Directive 2004/18/EC. Article 66 (equivalent)
<b>Stages</b>	2
<b>Project Intention</b>	An intention to build

## COMPETITION FACTS

<b>Timescale</b>	Registration:	18 May 2001
	Submission:	15 June 2001
	Shortlisting to 6:	June-July 2001
	Q & A session:	18 July 2001
	2nd Stage submission:	21 September 2001
	Judging & Award:	24 - 25 September 2001

<b>Submission Required</b>	Stage 1: 2 x A1 panels and an 6 page A4 report (unverified estimate only) Stage 2: 4 x A1 panels and a report (unverified estimate only)
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<b>Announcement</b>	25 September 2001
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<b>Number of Entries</b>	139
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## ASSESSMENT & SELECTION

<b>Jury Numbers</b>	7
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## Jury composition

### With a deliberative role:

Jane Blom Cooper, Circle 33  
Anne Lacaton, Lacaton and Vasal Architects  
Walter Menteth, Walter Menteth Architects  
Bruce Robertson, Tower Hamlets HAT  
Ian Ritchie, Ian Ritchie Architects  
Professor Edward W Soja, UCLA  
Roger Zogolovitch, Lake Estates

### With an advisory role:

Jamie Campbell, Circle 33  
Hilary French, Royal College of Art  
Margaret Hays, HAT resident, Tower Hamlets  
Brendan Ritchie, Wilmott Dixon  
Neil Squibbs, Buro Happold

<b>Number Shortlisted</b>	6
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<b>Winner</b>	Peter Barber Architects Ltd
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<b>Runners Up</b>	Circus Architects, London UK East Architecture, Landscape, Urban Design, London UK Poppl/Straberger, Germany Robert Ian Barnes Architects, London UK White Design Associates, Bristol UK
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<b>Prizes &amp; Awards</b>	Shortlisted entries were each awarded £6,000 (€6,850) Student winner was awarded £4000 (€4,560)
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<b>Conclusion of Process</b>	Construction design commission
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<b>Project Completion</b>	Completed January 2006
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## FURTHER INFORMATION

Book published and website launched February 2002, and with an exhibition at the Architecture Foundation Gallery, The Economist Building St James', London 22 February–27 March 2002

The project team included: Paul Grover, Project Coordinator, Kerr Noble, book, exhibition and website design, Hilary French consultant to the Architecture Foundation to contribute to the brief writing, curate the exhibition and prepare and edit the publication.

French H (ed). Accommodating Change Innovation in Housing. Circle 33 Housing Group. February 2002. ISBN 0-9519067-7-1. [www.ribabookshops.com/item/accommodating-change/29226/](http://www.ribabookshops.com/item/accommodating-change/29226/) (accessed 21 March 2018)

Peter Barber Architects Ltd: [www.peterbarberarchitects.com/donnybrook-quarter](http://www.peterbarberarchitects.com/donnybrook-quarter) (accessed 21 March 2018)

Housing Design Awards, 2004  
Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, Highly Commended, 2004  
RIBA Stirling Prize, Listed 2006  
AIA Excellence in Design Awards, 2006  
RIBA Award Winner, 2006

Nota: Circle 33 became Circle Anglia in 2005, one of the largest housing associations in the UK. It merged with Affinity Sutton in 2016 and was renamed Clarion Housing.

figure 14.7  
Design drawing of  
the winning scheme  
by Peter Barber  
Architects Ltd.

