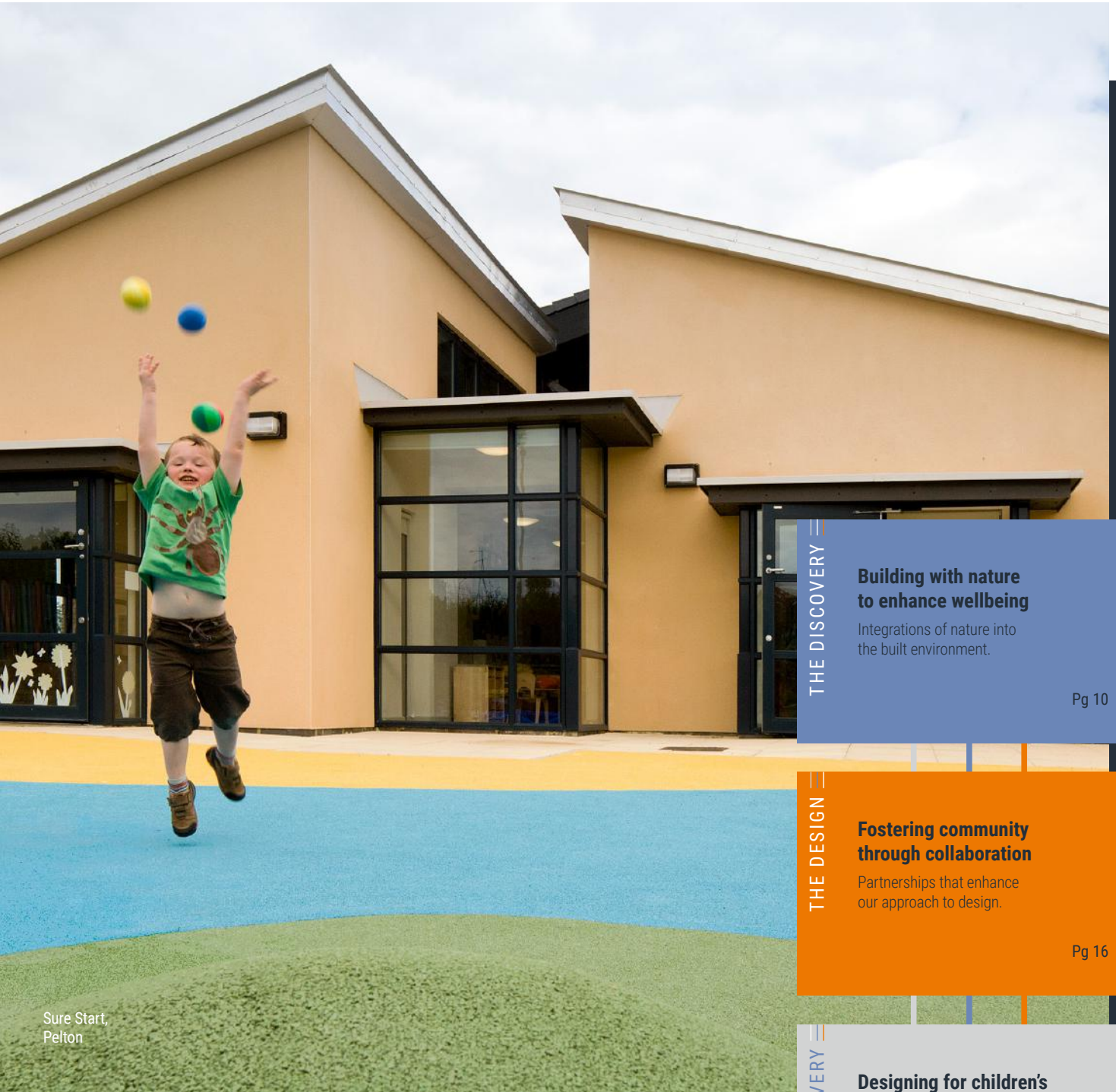


Spring 2024

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Millmount.



Sure Start,
Pelton

THE DISCOVERY

Building with nature to enhance wellbeing

Integrations of nature into the built environment.

Pg 10

THE DESIGN

Fostering community through collaboration

Partnerships that enhance our approach to design.

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THE DELIVERY

Designing for children's development

Inspirations from Italy that inform early years experiences.

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DISCOVER
DESIGN
DELIVER

A word from Millmount

At JDDK we know that our clients have long trusted our expertise thanks to the strong relationships that we share between our team, clients, and wider project team members. As the much-publicised cost of living crisis has been very difficult for so many people over recent months, we have felt that our relationships with the people around us have been a bright light amidst challenging times.

This edition of Millmount explores how the power of collaboration has helped us exceed expectations in our work and continue to push boundaries and deliver our people centric, bespoke design service. On behalf of our clients, we have worked alongside universities, construction firms and building safety specialists, to ensure that our work is delivered to the highest standard and that a roadmap is in place to help shape the future of the industry.

Inside you'll find insights on how we're working alongside partners to ensure our projects maintain the highest building safety standards and how we are supporting the next generation of architects to achieve success in their careers. We also visit The Elms, one of our flagship projects, to explore how our work with an international research centre is helping us to deliver exceptional accommodation for older people.

We are proud of the partnerships our team has built across the North East and beyond, and have these to thank for the exceptional results our projects have achieved – helping communities and businesses to flourish for years to come. With some exciting projects in the pipeline, we're looking forward to new opportunities to approach the design process in innovative new ways. In the meantime, we hope you enjoy learning about our recent projects as much as we enjoyed working on them.



Mura Mullan,
Director at JDDK Architects

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Plans unveiled for Kingsbrook Meadows visitor centre



At Kingsbrook, east of Aylesbury (Bucks), Barratt David Wilson Homes, the RSPB and Buckinghamshire Council are working together to raise the bar for wildlife-friendly new housing. Three villages began construction in 2016 which, alongside the new homes, will feature 60% greenspace that houses wildlife, parks, orchards and wildflower meadows. The site demonstrates how new housing developments can be designed to offer homes for wildlife, to benefit nature and enhance the lives of the residents and visitors.

As part of the innovative new development, at JDDK we have been working on plans for a visitor destination called Kingsbrook Meadows. The Visitor Centre will be designed to fit within the ethos of Kingsbrook, using sustainable construction techniques and creating habitats for wildlife.

The Visitor Centre concept is based on two splayed wings with a connecting entrance foyer. The northern wing will be conceived as a barn, referencing the local vernacular while the southern wing has a flat roof supporting photovoltaics. The building is set to be designed with sustainability at its heart, with orientation to maximise on solar gains and views of the Chilterns in the café area, while the pergola provides solar shading. The pitched roof over 'the barn' will allow for an attractive café area while providing zones for bird and bat boxes.

Elsewhere climbing plants on pergolas and frames will be incorporated to create living walls and structures which extend out from the central barn structure into the landscape. At the entrance these living walls will also define an entrance courtyard and frame the linking glazed entrance area, which in turn allows for distant views through the building to the lake beyond.

The plans are due to be submitted later this summer, and - subject to permission - it is hoped that the Kingsbrook Meadows will be open in the next couple of years.

Kingsbrook Meadows offers the chance to create a different kind of visitor experience that focuses on connection with nature in its broadest sense. Quality habitats will be created, including ponds and meadows, hedges and woods, to benefit 'common' wildlife, much of which of course is no longer common. The site will also feature:

- Wildflower-rich hay meadows for butterflies, grasshoppers and moths
- Flower fields for pollinators and farmland birds
- Ponds, scrapes and small reedbeds to home a range of wetland species
- Hedgerows and areas of scrub and woodland

Kingsbrook Meadows is equally designed to help people immerse themselves in these habitats. Visitors will be encouraged to come and spend time in nature, using the centre to eat, drink, play, socialise, relax and connect with nature as well as each other.

The Visitor Centre at Kingsbrook will be a premier demonstration site for what individuals and families can do to save nature on their doorstep, what homeowners can do in their own private gardens and what small landowners can do with their sites.

Plans underway to refurbish historic Keelmen hospital

JDDK are working with the Tyne and Wear Building Preservation Trust and Newcastle City Council, in a joined effort to save the Keelmen's Hospital, Newcastle's most significant heritage building at risk within the city. Built in 1701, the building was statutorily listed as a Grade II* in 1954 and is now in the early stages of major renovation works to convert the building back into residential use, funded with the support of Historic England.

The listed site has overlooked Newcastle's Quayside since the early 18th century when it was used as an almshouse to care for sick and ageing Keelmen and their families. The Keelmen of Tyne and Wear historically used wooden boats, called Keels, to transport coal from the banks of the Tyne out to the ships too large to travel up the river.

The JDDK team have been developing initial designs to refurbish the former hospital into 20 new one and two bed affordable apartments following an unsuccessful attempt to sell the building in 2021. The plans have now reached an important next step, as they reach the end of the viability stage, which will allow for applications for funding from Historic England and a Heritage Lottery Fund grant to finance the next stage of works. If funding is received, we'll be embarking on the next phase of design work in the early summer.

Samantha Dixon, Associate and Conservation Architect at JDDK, who is project lead, "We're working closely with the Council and the Tyne and Wear Building Preservation Trust, with the backing of Historic England, to find a way to breathe new life into the building. We've also partnered with Maya Polenz, a Specialist Conversation Architect, to allow us to broaden and strengthen our skills in this sector.

"Keelmen's Hospital is an important Grade II* Listed building in a prominent position in the city, which has laid derelict since 2009 and is on Historic England's register of at-risk buildings. One of the key challenges we face will be to create a development that adheres to the requirements of the Building Regulations whilst also maintaining the special historic character of the building. It is a great pleasure to be part of the team protecting a hugely important part of the City's mining industry history, and to save the building from further decay whilst creating affordable housing for use by generations to come."

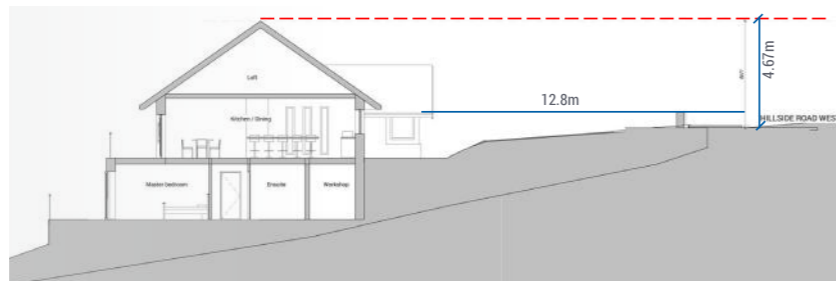
The Architectural Heritage Fund is set to provide funding for the next phase of the works.

To hear more from Sam about preserving and restoring heritage sites, read our Winter 2023 edition of Millmount.



PROJECT UPDATES

Hidden hillside home begins construction



Works are progressing well onsite for a one-off domestic house situated in the Rothbury countryside, that we had the pleasure of designing for a private client. This unique home will surprise visitors, with a steep hillside slope hiding the bottom half of the house from passers-by, appearing as a single storey building from the north along Hillside Road.

The bottom storey of the building has a larger footprint than the upper storey which has provided the opportunity to provide a terrace from the living accommodation on the upper floor. The stunning location overlooks the Coquet Valley, and will be one of nine self-build plots.

This dwelling features three bedrooms, and an open plan living, dining, kitchen space that extends the full width of the house to the south and wraps around the corner with the kitchen extending back to the north elevation, allows for natural surveillance of the entrance to the property off Hillside Road.

The property is well orientated to benefit from the views across the Coquet Valley. The house will also benefit from green technologies, such as solar panels to the south facing roof, air source heat pumps, and energy efficient lighting.

A natural mix of stone, render, slate, and timber will be used, in keeping with the local material palette of this area of Rothbury. It's great to be collaboratively working alongside JCC Engineers, Thornton Firkin, DTA and DP Builders.

The next exciting milestone for the project will see the roof structure installed.



22 new affordable homes set for Deerbush

After securing planning permission in 2023, construction has begun on 22 new one and two bedroom bungalows in Deerbush, Newcastle. The homes are being developed by Newcastle City Council and are set to be made available for affordable rent in 2025.

What sets this project apart is its innovative approach to urban renewal. The site formerly housed low-level blocks of flats and is intersected by several pedestrian routes but has limited access to vehicles. In response to these challenges, the design response is orientated to seamlessly integrate with the existing pathways and established landscaping.

The new Deerbush homes are a welcome addition to the area, supporting the much-needed increase in affordable housing in our region.



PROJECT UPDATES

Community drive for Corbridge church renovation



Community drive for Corbridge church renovation

In an endeavour to transform the former Corbridge Methodist Church into a Community Hub, the Corbridge Community Partnership has recently submitted a funding application to the Community Ownership Fund. At JDDK we have drawn up plans for the interior refurbishment of the church and anticipation is high as we await the outcome of the funding application.

If successful, a Phase 1 planning application will be prepared and submitted for the project, detailing plans for refurbishing the church space for community use including the addition of a single-storey lobby extension equipped with a platform lift to enhance accessibility.

Additionally, the Corbridge Community Partnership has plans underway to apply to The National Lottery funding for Phase 2 of the project, involving further expansion of the facility. The Corbridge Heritage Centre will be extended, which is currently located in one small room within the building, as well as adding a two-storey lobby extension and a mezzanine floor

to accommodate lettable meeting rooms and office spaces to help local businesses thrive.

This project will not only touch the lives of people in Corbridge, but also across the world. Ahead of renovations, the Church's organ is in the process of being relocated to St Mark's Cathedral in Bangalore, India. Chris Gray, of the Midland Organ Hele & Company Ltd recently played the organ in the former Corbridge Methodist Church for the last time, before carefully deconstructing and cleaning the thousand individual components, for them to soon be transported over 6000 miles to its new home, where music students will learn to play the classic instrument.

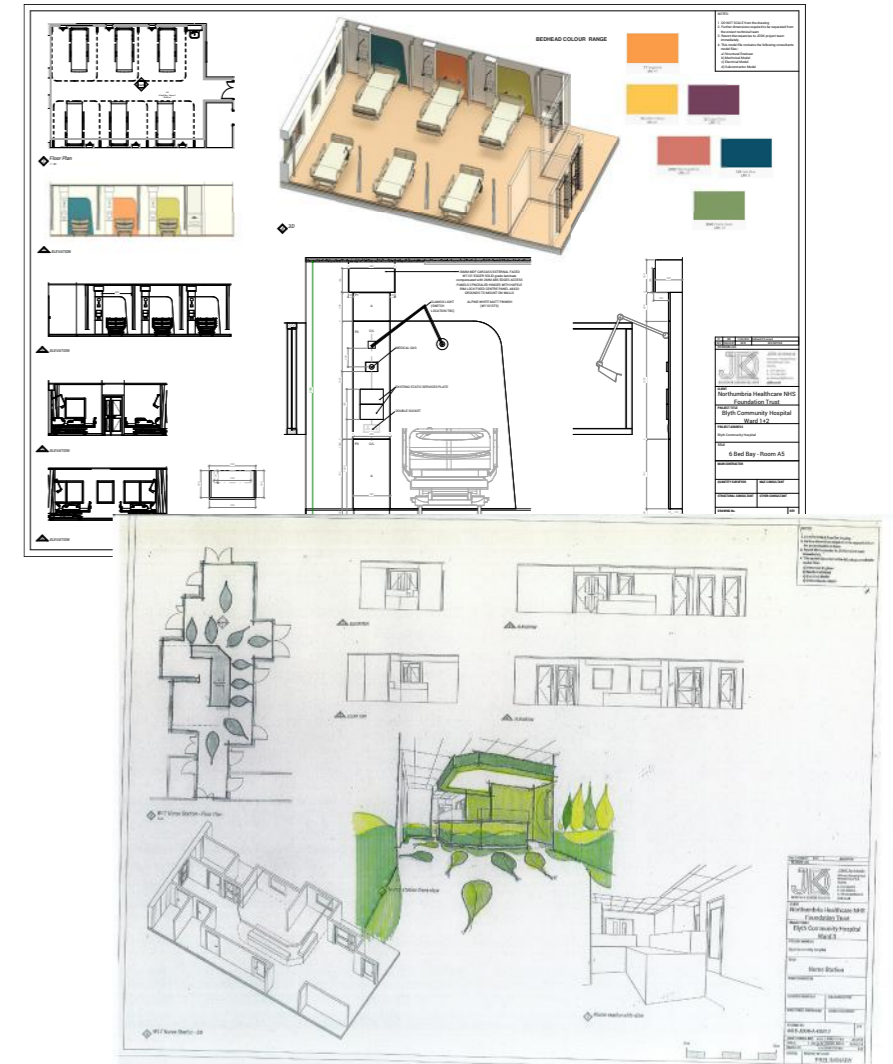
Alongside the funding applications, the Corbridge Community Partnership has launched a crowdfunding page to garner support for the project. This collective effort to improve the local area by the community, for the community, is a powerful example of how positive change can be brought about in local areas.

Reshaping the patient experience at Blyth community hospital

Alongside a series of recent design projects for the Northumberland Health Care Trust, we have recently been asked to refurbish Ward 2 at Blyth Community Hospital, which primarily cater to the elderly, offering palliative care alongside other essential services. The focus is on upgrading the wards to meet modern healthcare standards – prioritising infection control and enhancing the overall aesthetic of the ward.

We're also reconfiguring Ward 3, currently an Adult In Patients' Unit, into a new Children's Outpatients' Unit. The space will consist of consulting rooms, therapy spaces and recreational areas, with the aim being to create an inviting, child-friendly environment, to help alleviate the apprehension associated with children's hospital visits.

We hope that the transformations will help patients feel more comfortable and at ease on their healthcare journey.



Success for Walker homes retrofitting

In 2022, Newcastle City Council (NCC) became one of the local authorities to secure Wave 1 funding from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, allowing Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) and our team at JDDK to retrofit old housing stock to improve energy efficiency and create more comfortable living conditions for all.

The funding allowed the project team to retrofit 242 properties with a range of measures including new windows, doors, solar panels, external wall insulation and loft insulation. JDDK provided Retrofit Coordination and Retrofit Design services on the £7.4M project, including making over 670 building inspections during the installation stage.

The key statistics for the delivered project are:



These results demonstrate that retrofit can be delivered at scale, helping to drive down carbon emissions and extending the lifespan of the city's housing stock.

Building with nature to enhance wellbeing



By Stuart Franklin,
Associate Director at JDDK Architects



By Otis Murdoch,
Architect at JDDK Architects

Natural spaces in our cities and urban environments are an underused answer to many societal challenges we face.

Worsening mental health, poor air quality, and limited recreational spaces are issues city-goers face every day, and the pressures on everyday life caused by these problems can no longer be ignored.

The built environment has a major influence on the urban quality-of-life – when views out of buildings showcase natural landscapes, plants are extracting carbon from the air and green spaces are accessible to all, then people begin to feel better connected to their environment. In answer to this growing responsibility, architecture projects are considering the integration of nature much more than they have done in previous years.

At JDDK our designs are often influenced by nature as part of our continued commitment to making our built environment more sustainable and giving users a meaningful connection to the natural world through the spaces they inhabit every day. As humans we are intrinsically connected to the earth and can feel our wellbeing depleting when we are deprived of nature's presence.

Here we explore the different methods for integrating nature into a range of buildings, from healthcare through to offices, and how any construction or refurbishment project can be practical in bringing elements of the outdoors inside for users to enjoy.



Prudhoe Hall Estate, Northumberland



Watch Stuart and Otis explore the latest innovations in biophilic design

Watch now



Balancing buildings and nature

There are three distinct theoretical strands to how we can incorporate nature into architecture; biophilia, biomorphism and biomimicry:

- Biophilic design integrates and connects us directly to natural phenomena and environment.
- Biomorphic design evokes nature by drawing inspiration from nature.
- Biomimicry in design works like nature - mimicking lessons from nature.

This range of design approaches offer a wide scope of ways that nature can be considered in design, we have seen examples across the world of environments and structures that heavily emulate natural forms. There is a balance to be struck within architectural design. Where there are multiple overt references to natural forms there is a risk that people can begin to feel alienated and the design can overwhelm the purpose of the space. We find that subtle integrations that create delight and excitement are most successful.

As architects we are able to work with our clients to develop the best possible version of a space or place, within the resources available, often challenging preconceived ideas. The influence and integration of nature can help us to achieve the best results, reaching a beautiful alignment between the natural and built environment.

Connecting humans and environment

Some architectural innovations become iconic of their decade as achievements in biophilic and biomorphic design. The Barbican Centre in London is a landmark example of these principles in use. Built as part of the Brutalist movement in the 1970s, the Barbican is exemplary of biophilic design in an urban setting. In contrast with its striking concrete exterior, the interior of the Barbican features lakes, ponds, flora, and its famous conservatory which is home to exotic fish and over 1,500 species of plants, that bring the 4,000 city centre residents the benefits of being close to nature and wildlife without leaving Central London. While it is inspiring to look to iconic examples of biophilic design principles in use, striking integration of nature into the built environment is not reserved for once-in-a-lifetime briefs.

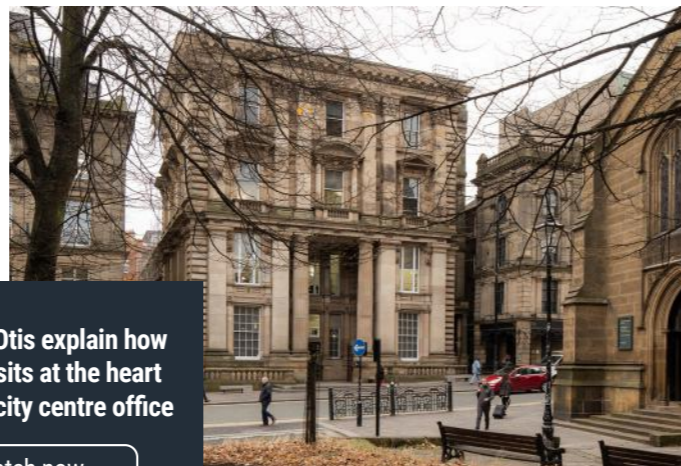
We have worked on residential, healthcare, and office projects, among others, that have used biomorphic and biophilic design in urban settings. By maximising views out into nature, incorporating greenery in interiors, using local materials to blend in with natural landscapes, and mimicking shapes derived from biological forms, at JDDK we have designed a range of projects that incorporate the benefits of the natural world to uplift the urban experience beyond normal expectations.



**The Old Post Office,
Newcastle upon Tyne**

City Centre application – a serene hidden oasis amidst the cities densest area or urban grain and traffic.

The £1.8m refurbishment and redevelopment of the Old Post Office on St Nicholas Street in the centre of Newcastle is an award-winning example of a modern workspace that brings its workers close to nature. Working on behalf of RIBA Enterprises, the design created workspace for over 200 staff brought together across two main floors. The office interior was designed to include spaces for indoor plants next to workstations to bring nature indoors and improve air quality. The site also features an enclosed rooftop garden terrace, surrounded by floor to ceiling glass doors that integrate nature and light into the workspace whilst also offering staff a green space to enjoy without having to leave the heart of the city.



Watch Otis explain how nature sits at the heart of this city centre office

Watch now

**St Oswald's Hospice,
Newcastle upon Tyne**

Suburban application of principles – detailed intimate breakout spaces with pockets of tranquillity.

As part of a long-standing relationship with St Oswald's Hospice, JDDK's team has developed a large-scale hospice over decades that deeply resonates with the humane small scale. Outward looking and spacious vistas help offer positive mental benefits to residents from private rooms, while enclosed courtyards provide views of luxuriant planting and let natural light flood into the heart of the building, reinforcing our connections with nature, whilst offering a space for contemplation, relaxation and time with family and shared experiences within nature. These spaces are designed to ensure advanced and challenging healthcare standards are met, whilst maximising patients' enjoyment for day-to-day life to make for a highly uplifting space; for the healthcare team to deliver excellence. Particular attention is given to patients having access to outside space even while in bed they can spend time with their families outdoors and feel the breeze and sunlight.



Prudhoe Hall Estate, Northumberland

Urban fringe application – vast outlooks and generous green spaces.

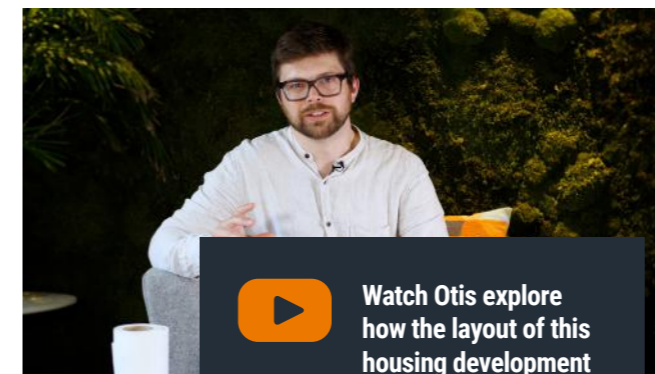
For housing developer Gentoo, we embarked on an ambitious 100-acre development that represents a shift in conventional housing developments. Located on the former site of Prudhoe Hospital and in the grounds of Grade II Listed Prudhoe Hall, the development of over 400 homes balances the need for quality housing whilst leaving the openness of the Green Belt unaffected.

The result is a new parkland neighbourhood, split into a series of distinct character areas, that maximises the benefits of biophilic design, integrating and connecting residents to nature. The masterplan focuses on offering families generous gardens, a series of open public spaces, play areas set in the natural environment, and access to surrounding woodland. Strategically arranged wildlife corridors support biodiversity and landscape permeates all parts of the site, reinforcing the sense of woodland living and facilitating communion with nature.



Biophilic principles are applied throughout the scheme, particularly where houses are carefully designed and located to make the best of the views onto nature, including open spaces within the site but also from the site to the surrounding countryside, showcasing a vast array of green outlooks. The masterplan even supports the benefit of biophilia for residents living in neighbouring streets, as the new housing designs and layout on the site ensures that their long distance views over the landscape remain unaffected.

The layout spreads through the landscape, following the contours of the land to form tree lined avenues and footpaths, with interspersed pockets of parkland, woodland, and wildlife hubs, creating an environment where people feel the physical and mental benefits from maintaining connections with the natural world.



Watch Otis explore how the layout of this housing development fits seamlessly within the landscape

Watch now

Innovative new approaches

Those who have visited us at Millmount recently, will have seen our reception area adorned with a moss wall that features real Nordik moss that stays fresh by drawing in moisture from the air. The wall was kindly installed for us by Benholm Group, who specialise in delivering plant and floral products and services, including design and installation, to bring nature and creativity into commercial spaces.

Adrian Byne, Director at Benholm Group explains, "We were delighted to work on the Millmount refurbishment, and to share the natural and sustainable beauty of our Nordik Moss. Benholm share Millmount's passion for using the power of plants in innovative ways to both enhance the aesthetics of indoor spaces, and also the well-being of everyone who steps through their doors."

We have been working with Benholm Group to bring elements of nature into our designs, recently researching the possibility of bringing Nordik moss walls into healthcare spaces. The OLED lights give a facility to the moss that, whilst the glass encasing means it is easy to wipe, removes any dust damage to the moss and maintains infection control within healthcare environments. It's an exciting opportunity to be able to bring a little nature into the health environments and give patients a sense of ease.

Bringing nature into your project

If you are planning for a construction project that is set within an urban space, you may be looking to understand how its design can make it stand out as an addition to the city that improves the wellbeing of those who use and surround it. The natural world can be incorporated into any project, and for your development it represents a long-term commitment to sustainability and the local community. As Biodiversity Net Gain regulations have come into play, these considerations will also contribute to meeting these legislative requirements.

There doesn't need to be a financial burden with this approach – integrating nature into a build can be as simple as taking better consideration of where windows go, or using a biomorphically shaped reception desk that sets the tone for guests on entry. The key to success is having a conversation in the early stages of the process. We like to start off with blue sky thinking and get everyone outside of the box and looking to broader possibilities.

Being ambitious in our joined approach to new developments would help us take small steps towards better urban life and shape our towns and cities into the type of spaces we hope our future selves and generations will enjoy. The built environment influences our identities as individuals and as communities, and making the right decisions now can lead to invaluable psychological, physical and environmental benefits in years to come.

Fostering community through collaboration

 **Mura Mullan,**
Director at JDDK Architects

 **By Gavin Wu,**
Architect at JDDK Architects

Countries across the globe are grappling with a challenge that universally impacts all members of society – how to adapt to caring for an ageing population.

Thanks to advancements in healthcare, we are lucky to be seeing life expectancies rise to an all-time high, which means our current systems and facilities for supporting the elderly are in urgent need of adaptation to ensure that everyone can enjoy the senior years of their lives.

Feeling the pressures of change more than most sectors is healthcare and the housing providers of extra-care facilities, as the ageing population places increasing demand on their services. Extra-care facilities are a beacon of light for people who have outgrown their private homes and require special support for their care needs, finding new homes in residences alongside peers with similar needs. These spaces are often cherished by residents who have found community in their specially designed environment, but building enough of these facilities is a challenge for housing developers across the UK.



The Elms, Chester-le-Street

At JDDK we have worked on supported residential projects for decades and have seen the approach to designing these change over time. Here we explore how our collaborative approach to delivering extra-care housing developments means that we can work closely with housing providers and other partners to ensure the design of extra-care accommodation helps residents live life to the fullest.

Creating space for communities

With Karbon Homes and South Tyneside Council, we are currently working alongside the Dementia Services Development Centre (DSDC) at Stirling University – an international centre for knowledge exchange and research impact dedicated to improving the lives of people with dementia and making communities dementia friendly. A common challenge for people moving to extra-care facilities is maintaining their sense of independence whilst also integrating with a new community, and we use our collective specialist insights to design accommodation that puts community fostering at the heart of its priorities.

“
We use our collective specialist insights to design accommodation that puts community fostering at the heart of its priorities.”



Residents participate in gardening

The Elms, Chester-le-Street


One of our flagship extra-care projects that has been in use for almost ten years and has demonstrated the success of our focus on fostering communities through design is The Elms. The Elms is a specialist housing development for the over 55's in Chester-le-Street which has been widely praised as an example of best practice in its field. Although The Elms was built prior to our current collaboration with DSDC, we designed the space to follow the principles developed by its team.

The scheme originally designed for Cestria Housing, and now managed by Karbon Homes, consists of 52 apartments and six bungalows, for rent, sale and shared ownership, all designed specifically for people aged 55 and over who require support with their care or housing. We delivered the project with user enjoyment in mind, aiming to make the highly popular living spaces a joy for residents.

With a sense of independence created through the living spaces, the shared spaces in the accommodation were designed to create a sense of community amongst the residents and local area. A range of social spaces are integrated into the design, including gardens that feature raised planting beds so residents can garden together, a cafe, a hair salon and activity rooms for use by the residents and local community groups who use the space to host meetings and workshops.

The shared spaces facilitate dynamic community relationships, and the result is a lively home where the public is able to integrate with residents to give a sense of community.



 Watch Mura and Gavin visit The Elms to see how residents are enjoying the space

[Watch now](#)

Balancing independence and community

Today, our collaborative approach with DSDC is being put into practice, and we are currently developing extra-care projects with South Tyneside Council and Karbon Homes, including a development in Hebburn, where work on site is due to start shortly, and one near Benton Road in South Shields, which is currently in the early planning stages. These proposals are set to add up to 300 new homes, helping address the lack of specialist affordable accommodation options in the borough, and helping people with differing levels of care and support needs to live well and independently.

These spaces are where residents will likely live for the rest of their lives as they have been specifically designed to respond to their changing support needs. Changing needs can be a huge challenge for providers, and the aim is to avoid the need to change your home to meet your changing care needs, as this can be a huge challenge for residents facing sudden change.

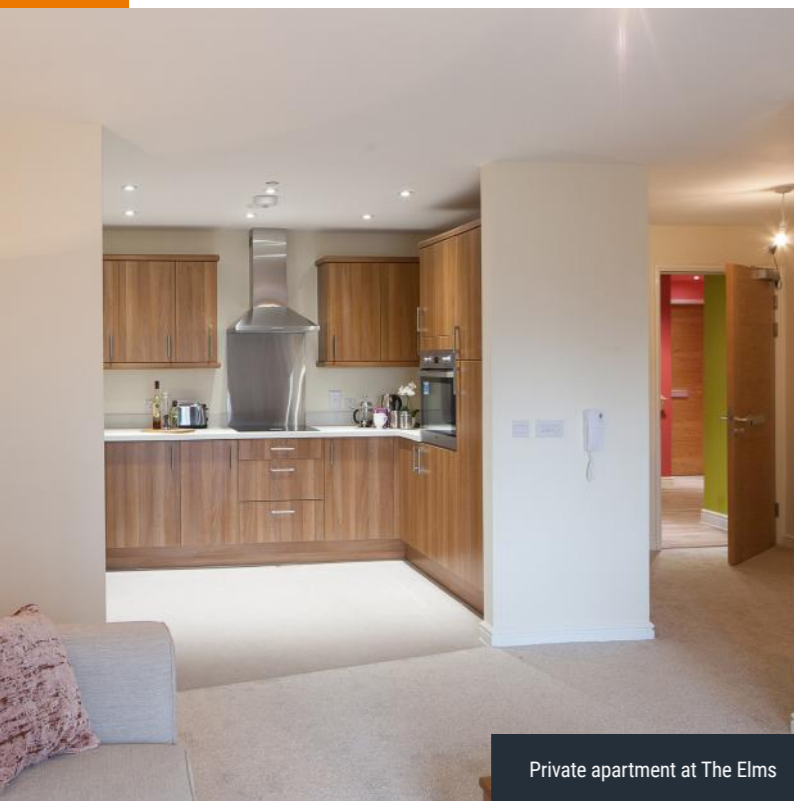
All of the apartments in our extra-care schemes with STC and Karbon are currently designed to meet M4(3) wheelchair adaptable standards. The independent apartments each feature a living space, kitchen, bedroom, bathroom and generous hallway. The units for residents living with dementia will be located on the ground floor, opening onto internal courtyards to allow residents to safely access the outdoors in a way that supports independence. The layout is also designed to have no dead-ends, removing any element of challenge for residents with easy wayfinding.

Both the Hebburn and Benton Road developments will also feature social spaces mirroring those at The Elms, to give residents balanced lifestyles that offer the same independence and social living that they have enjoyed for years before.

All project requirements are different by nature, but The Elms acts as an example of how we are working to enhance the standards for the delivery of extra care accommodation that improves residents' lives, and we apply this thinking to all projects we work on with our social housing clients, to deliver the very best quality of new build and refurbished extra-care accommodations.



Balconies and terraces feature in every apartment at The Elms



Private apartment at The Elms



The Elms, Chester-le-Street

Designing for children's development

 **By Nicky Watson,**
Director at JDDK Architects

 **By Stuart Franklin,**
Associate Director at JDDK Architects

Childcare in the UK has been increasingly in the spotlight with the wider availability of funded hours from the government, which was introduced in April for two-year-olds and will open up to nine-month-olds from September.

As a result, there's growing demand for more childcare places, which in some areas may see the need for the expansion of existing facilities and the development of new ones.

Early years schemes present a unique and fun opportunity to get into the mind of a child, playing and experimenting with spaces to design practical and inspirational settings where children can grow.

We've been designing these schemes for over 20 years, led by our Director Nicky Watson and our Associate Director Stuart Franklin. Here, Nicky and Stuart share their experience of effectively designing for children's development now and into the future.



An early years setting designed to offer a variety of spaces to support child development



Spaces designed for children

Easy access to areas for outdoor play

European inspiration

We were both very fortunate to be part of a group research trip to Italy which allowed us to see the Reggio Emilia approach first-hand. The approach is admired across the world for the value it places on the care of children outside of the home by maximising a child's personal and social development opportunities. Design considerations prioritise creativity, interaction, and exploration, as well as the overarching priority of child safety and protection, whilst creating an environment that supports the best and efficient work by the staff.

The approach relates itself to the setting of an Italian town, centred around a communal piazza where children of varying ages can be together or in their own age groups, leading to smaller and more private areas. This design approach creates a strong sense of identity within the setting and opens up varied socialisation opportunities.

We both agreed the trip solidified our fondness of the approach, as we visited multiple early years centres living and breathing its principles, and joined talks from specialists who were leading the movement. The experience and inspiration we came away with is evident in many of our early years' schemes, and as the values of the approach are just as profound today, we'll continue to incorporate its principles as we design these settings in the future.





Water Playroom

Designing sensory experiences

Early years schemes have always been a hive of activity, used by multiple ages and developing the next generation of young minds. There's a lot to consider when it comes to the design and here we identify some fundamentals, taking inspiration from the Reggio Emilia approach. Reggio educators refer to the importance of creating sensorially "complex" environments that will support development and learning. They call the physical environment of their settings "the third teacher", alongside the adults and the children themselves.

Sensory rich experiences are key and it's all about balance, as the environment shouldn't be bland and uninspiring, nor should it be overstimulating. Décor is a big factor in this, and we would avoid overly bright colours dominating wall space, as well as popular images or characters that children will be familiar with. Instead, keeping it abstract allows the children's imagination to come alive. The space should be designed to allow the use of the walls as a canvas to be altered on a regular basis and display the children's artwork, making them the protagonists of their environment.

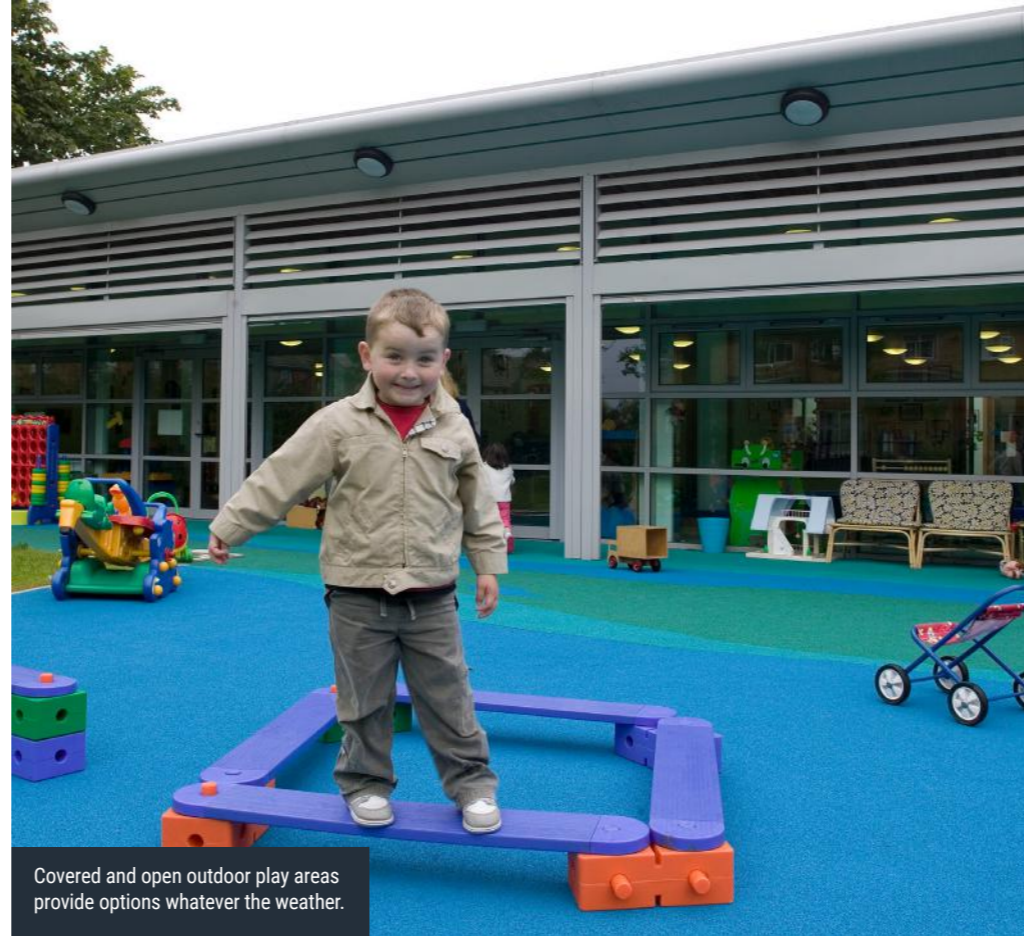
Visual and physical connections to the outside and nature add to the complexity of the sensory experience for children and are key to providing extended learning opportunities. The practical provision of covered outdoor areas and a conveniently located place for wet coats and muddy wellies will support outdoor play and learning all year round. Child (and baby) height windows are a fun way to make sure every child can be connected to the outside, helping them to orientate themselves as well as enjoy the benefits of daylight and views of the natural world.

As humans our wellbeing is supported when we have freedom of choice and children thrive when they are in spaces that are conducive to autonomous discovery. If a child is in their own home, they are likely to be able to choose to play in a variety of types of spaces – whether those are small, tall, dark or light. When we design childcare spaces, we endeavour to include opportunities for similar experiences. Whether it's finding an enclosed spot that's the perfect size for them and offers a sense of privacy and enclosure; spending time in a large space with more light, different acoustic qualities and more to explore; being on their own or with other children and adults – it's about easy access to variety and the power of choice. Examples of this include introducing bay windows that are child sized; creating under-worktop spaces where children can create a "hideaway"; open play areas and more communal areas where different age groups can mix.

Promoting investigation through play is key for development at this young age and there are a lot of different ways to achieve this, such as water playrooms, which are fantastic assets if the space is available.

Storage is an essential within the Reggio Emilia principles, where there is an emphasis on planning specific play and learning opportunities. It's therefore essential to have space to put away items of equipment and play materials and leave out only the key items for that day. Available storage space differs from setting to setting, but we design as best as we can in the spirit of this principle.

Reggio Emilia also encourages risk taking, and on our trip, we saw examples of this such as no handrail on a small staircase or the option to take a slide on the way down. The thinking behind this being that children need to take risks and make right and wrong decisions to support their learning. While in the UK we may be more bound to safety policies, again we design in the spirit of this, with one of our design schemes including a mound in the outdoor area which the children could enjoy crawling up and making their way down.



Covered and open outdoor play areas provide options whatever the weather.

Supporting future generations

Early traces of the Reggio Emilia approach date back to the mid-nineteenth century and we feel that it is still as relevant today. However, what has changed over time is the sustainability of designs becoming more of a focus. Every sector wants to make positive shifts when it comes to the environmental impact of builds and energy efficiencies. These two areas go hand in hand for us, with our experience of delivering projects guided by the Reggio Emilia approach and designing with environmental considerations at the forefront.

We have been keenly interested in sustainable design throughout our 30 years history. However, business as usual is no longer sufficient. The climate crisis and the planet's biodiversity loss both threaten our way of life, and on behalf of future generations, we have a responsibility to work with our clients to ensure our projects help contribute to a better future. In the case of early start schemes, there is an opportunity to ensure that any investments in new spaces are made whilst keeping the long-term wellbeing of young people and the environment as the top priority.

Design highlights for North East early years settings

We've enjoyed working on a range of Sure Start, Children's Centres and nursery projects across Northumberland, Newcastle and County Durham. These projects have ranged from completely new builds to enhancing existing centres, all with principles from the Reggio Emilia approach woven within them.

The teams were forward-thinking and very receptive to the approach, so we were able to create some fantastic spaces with many design highlights. These included:

- ✓ Child height windows and bay windows at their level, offering views to the outdoors and an enclosed safe space.
- ✓ A water playroom, filled with pipes that the children could fill up and pour as well as showers of different heights.
- ✓ Fish tanks built into walls and reception desks, at child height as much as possible, offering a sensory rich experience in multiple areas within a setting.
- ✓ Full height windows to allow views between rooms, including into the kitchen and from one age group to another, so children could see the preparation of food and each other more freely.
- ✓ The zoning of spaces by using seating, different types of flooring and different ceiling heights, giving the children choice and multiple areas within one room setting to investigate.



Visual connections to the outside are key to sensory rich spaces

WHAT'S TOPICAL

Improving building safety standards for the future



By Tristan Cooper,
Associate Director at JDDK Architects



By John Neilsen,
Director at CK21

Building safety is a current key issue across the UK and is fundamental to good design, and here at JDDK we regard the issue with extreme importance. June 2024 marks the 7th anniversary of the Grenfell Tower tragedy, which caused dozens of lives to be needlessly lost. Since then, the industry has begun to take some much-needed steps forward in improving building safety through design, construction, and occupation.

In 2022, the Government passed the Building Safety Act, which saw some of the biggest changes in relation to building safety for a generation, aiming to give more protection to residents than ever before. The Act has also enabled more recent amendments to other associated Secondary Legislation, including The Building Regulations, which will see the approach to building safety become more stringent than ever, but have the changes progressed far enough?

As the industry responds to the changes, Tristan Cooper, Associate Director at JDDK, and John Neilsen, Director at Engineering Consultancy firm, CK21, weigh in on the impact, challenges, and opportunities the new regulations bring.

The Act

The Building Safety Act (2022) creates a more rigorous safety process for all buildings, with a particular focus on higher-risk buildings (HRBs); structures that are over 18 metres high and contain at least two residential units. The Act aims to deliver a system that is fit for purpose and increases accountability, compliance, and risk management.

A shared responsibility

The regulations have caused a pivotal shift in the way the industry collectively approaches building design and construction. Building owners, architects, and construction professionals each play a crucial role in ensuring a building meets the new standards.

One of the key changes is the introduction of a number of new duty holders across the design, construction and occupation of building projects, some of which are similar in name to those existing under CDM, but crucially have very different duties and responsibilities relating to the safety and performance of buildings.

Architects and other Designers hold the most influence over the safety and functionality of buildings and must integrate safety considerations into every aspect of their designs, to ensure buildings are compliant with the relevant regulations. For the lead designer, often the Architect, this can include taking on the new Building Regulations Principal Designer role brought in under the Building Safety Act, which brings a duty to plan, manage, monitor and co-ordinate the design work to ensure safety considerations are embedded into the design work as a whole.

Contractors also play a crucial role in adhering to the design safety measures throughout the construction process, whilst Clients and Building Owners bear the overarching responsibility of ensuring the safety of their property in use and engaging the right professionals at the beginning of a project.

The responsibility is very much split between the Client, Architect and other Designers, Contractors and Building Owners of occupied buildings, to shoulder the burden of safety, and it's important all parties understand the role they play in ensuring standards are met.

Closing the education gap

When the Building Safety Act came into force, there was a noticeable knowledge gap. A lot of people felt there was a lack of guidance or didn't realise that the new regulations were applicable to them. The industry has taken big steps forward since then, and we are now seeing that institutions such as the CIAT and RIBA are providing comprehensive guidance on the new regulations which has helped to address the educational shortfall, but there is still work to be done.

One of the biggest areas for improvement is the education piece for clients. Building owners bear a significant responsibility when it comes to ensuring

their property adheres to the new safety standards, and they need to be proactive in sourcing qualified professionals early in the process to enable this to happen, which isn't always clear from the offset.

Since the new legislation came into force, we have been contacting our current clients to notify them of the regulatory changes and how they impact existing and future projects. We routinely advise clients of their duties under the act at the outset of projects, as it's crucial that clients, especially those in the HRB sector, are aware of the implications of the new regulations and what it means for their project. We're also providing in house and external training for staff, including enrolment in the RIBA's Principal Designer training course.

Navigating challenges

The implications of the new legislation are significant, and they are certainly something that is being felt industry wide as we all adapt our processes and ways of working to accommodate them. Changes are required across many aspects of the design and construction process, as well as when buildings are occupied, with a particular emphasis on how we communicate and collaborate across design and construction teams.

The industry is still navigating the financial implications of the new regulations too. Architects and contractors are taking on additional risk, responsibility, and resource to meet the new standards, so we are working collaboratively to find effective and sustainable methods to cover the resources needed to complete this essential work. Whilst the new regulations come with a host of challenges, we're also seeing a wave of new opportunities within the industry, as businesses are adapting and innovating their services to stay compliant, especially where a lot of their work is in the high-risk building (HRB) sector.

At JDDK, we now offer Building Regulations Principal Designer services for the Building Safety Act alongside our design services, and across the industry we are also seeing the emergence of roles that are specifically dedicated to overseeing the requirements and ensuring the implementation of the new processes are adhered to across all stakeholders.

The creation of new processes and opportunities is something we hope to see play out on a larger scale over the next 6-12 months, as the industry continues to adapt to the changes and innovate efficient and effective ways of working.



Awards

JDDK hospice design wins at the Hadrian Awards

Following the resurrection of the Hadrian Awards by the Northern Architectural Association, the JDDK team were proud to celebrate a win in the Best Small Projects Category for St Oswald's Hospice Family Room extension.

Established to celebrate architectural success across the North of England, the awards attract entries from projects across Northumberland, Tyne & Wear, Cumbria and Teesside. The awards focus on buildings completed at least two years ago, to allow time for the projects to "bed in" and landscaping to mature.

This year we were thrilled to be recognised for our work on St Oswald's Hospice. The project involved adding an external breakout area to the building where visitors, staff and patients could have some privacy away from the main communal areas.

The Sill: National Landscape and Discovery Centre in Northumberland received a commendation in the community category.

“ We were really pleased to win Best Small Project for the St Oswald's project. It's shows how cost effective and well considered small incremental additions to an existing building can renew and revitalise key areas such as the surrounding garden. The space proved to be particularly valuable to users throughout COVID, enabling patients to see family and friends during lockdown, and we're delighted that it continues to be a frequently used flexible space to this day.

By Stuart Franklin,
Associate Director at JDDK Architects



Awards

Judging talent for RIBA North East Awards

Our Director, Nicky Watson, was delighted to be invited to join the Jury for the 2024 RIBA North East Awards, judging pioneering work from across our region.

This year's shortlisted projects featured a diverse mix of innovative projects, including Auckland Castle by Niall McLaughlin Architects & Purcell, Fire Station Auditorium by Flanagan Lawrence, Percy Cottage by Elliot Architects and Raven Tower by Newton Architects.

The winners of the RIBA Regional Awards will also be considered for several RIBA Special Awards, including the RIBA North East Building of the Year, before being considered for a highly coveted RIBA National Award. The winners will be announced in summer.

Commenting on the day, Nicky said: "It was fascinating to see such a wide range of projects in locations spread out from north Northumberland down to Country Durham. The common thread between them all was ambitious clients working with talented architects to deliver projects that were having significant positive impacts."



A huge thank you to all of the architects and project teams we met during the judging process, for both your time and your commitment to making a difference to people's lives through architecture.

Nicky Watson RIBA,
Director at JDDK Architects



Charity

Celebrating 70 years of keeping Britain tidy

As proud participants in Keep Britain Tidy's 70th anniversary campaign, our team were back cleaning up Cowgate for our sixth year. Alongside hundreds of thousands of #LitterHeroes across the UK, we joined forces to make a lasting impact on our environment, with #LitterHeroes pledging to pick over 425,000 bags of litter.

This milestone is a testament to the collective dedication and hard work of our team and the wider community. Our involvement is part of our commitment to preserving the beauty of our outdoor spaces and safeguarding wildlife and marine life from the dangers of litter pollution.

Our own dedicated team of #LitterHeroes included Romanda, Karen, Mura, Adam, Sam, Stuart, Gavin, Leexin, Kushi and Callum. The team took to the streets of Cowgate and got to work collecting ten bags of litter, to give the area around Millmount a spring refresh.

Thank you to Keep Britain Tidy for inviting JDDK to be a part of this remarkable journey. Together, as #LitterHeroes, we have demonstrated the power of community in taking steps towards a greener future for generations to come.



Mentorship

JDDK mentors local architecture talent

At JDDK we have long supported up and coming architecture talent in the region, and this year we have seen more team members than ever turning their hands to mentorship.

Gavin Wu, Sam Dixon, Otis Murdoch and Stuart Franklin are dedicated RIBA Student Mentors, supporting second year Architecture Undergraduate students from Newcastle and Northumbria University. As part of the RIBA Future Architects scheme, our mentors are working closely with the students to give them insights into working in practice, getting them out on construction sites and exposing them to the different opportunities available to them after graduating from University.

Stuart Franklin, Associate Director at JDDK said, "The education process in the journey to becoming an architect is lengthy, so it's fantastic to be able to offer young talent insight into the working world along the way. By working with Gavin, Sam and Otis we can together show undergraduates what success looks like at different stages of an architect's career, and our JDDK mentors have been working hard to help students prepare for post-graduate life."

As part of our ongoing partnership with Northumbria University and The University of Newcastle, this year Stuart also joined the judging panel for the NAS x NAUS Design Competition 2024. The intensive competition invites students from every year of both Universities' Architecture courses to complete and present their design from the same brief, within one-day, testing their creative and technical skills.



We were delighted to assess the fantastic ideas presented by the next wave of talent to enter the workforce and are excited to see what careers they go on to pursue.

By **Stuart Franklin**,

Associate Director at JDDK Architects



Employee Benefit

JDDK introduces Employee Benefit Fund

Following our transition to an Employee Owned Trust (EOT) in 2022, we've recently introduced an Employee Benefit Fund, which sees the business put a sum of money aside each month to build a shared fund that the team can decide how to spend for their mutual benefit.

Associate Director, Stuart Franklin manages the budget and ensures that any decisions surrounding where and how it is spent are managed fairly and democratically, and in the interests of the whole team. We're looking forward to putting the pot to first use in a few months' time, when we will be holding a summer party for everyone at JDDK and their families.



Our hope is that the fund will contribute to a culture of trust and transparency here at JDDK, and that the team see a tangible benefit for their hard work, as well as have a greater role in shaping the future direction of the business. As a very close-knit, collaborative team of creative people, creating the fund felt like a natural progression for us and an important step in ensuring the retention of our business ethos and values.

We're really looking forward to the summer party, it will be a great opportunity to get together as a team to celebrate our achievements so far this year.

Nicky Watson RIBA,

Director at JDDK



Presentation

Exploring award-winning projects with CIAT

Our Associate Director, Tristan Cooper, attended an evening with CIAT Northern Region, at Hadrian's Tower, where he was delighted to present the Holly Hall Barn scheme which won Highly Commended in The Award for Excellence in Architectural Technology (small to medium), at the national AT Awards.

Tristan's presentation looked at the history of Holly Hall Barn, and the renovation work that we undertook, diving into key areas of the dwelling and the various works carried out to restore it. Originally converted and lived in by a former Head of Architecture at Newcastle University, the barn was a traditional Northumberland hemmel, that underwent an extensive 11-month renovation project to give it a new lease of life. Tristan presented the success of the project to over 30 members and affiliates of the Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists, including their President, Eddie Weir.

Reflecting on the evening, Tristan said: "It was a fantastic experience being able to meet other members and affiliates of the CIAT Northern region. It was a great opportunity to chat, share stories and get to know other peers in the region. The North has a fantastic community of Architectural Technologists, and events like this one are a brilliant opportunity to get together and celebrate everyone's achievements."



We were delighted that the proceeds from the event went to the Architects Benevolent Society, an organisation we have supported for years at JDDK, where it will be used to support the charity's work offering confidential advice, support and financial assistance to the architectural community and their families in times of need.

Tristan Cooper,

Associate Director at JDDK





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