



Design Statement

Poplar Court is set in an area that is very architecturally diverse. On the opposite side of Moss Lane East, the nine storey Alexandra House is a 1970's office building whose design is very typical of its era: the office floor plates, where they face Moss Lane East, have pre cast concrete spandrel panels with ribbon windows and the stair and lift core is expressed as a separate brick section. The residential housing next to Alexandra House is three storey, arranged as a series of serrated blocks, clad with timber to the top floor, whilst the two lower floors have light coloured brick cladding. The housing immediately adjacent Poplar Court is a mixture of three and four storeys and has red, blue and buff coloured brickwork and off white render. The Moss Side Leisure Centre, which is diagonally opposite, is a large building composed of a number of blocks that have dark red brick and mid grey metallic cladding. The housing on Quinney Crescent and the adjacent streets is more suburban in character, generally of two storeys and arranged in terraces that are faced with buff and red brick and with pitched tiled roofs.

The surrounding area is characterized by all manner of building forms, heights and materials. There is no underlying consistency of design or building form.

Poplar Court sits at the boundary between the cosmopolitan, diverse and urban feel of the Hulme High Street area and the consistently residential area to the South.

The final design of the existing Poplar Court building and the current proposed extension have both been designed by s p a c e architecture and design.

Poplar Court was originally conceived as being a linear building of two different parts.

The front part, closest to Moss Lane East, is made up of two timber clad blocks either side of the retained poplar tree. Each is then divided into two mirrored halves either side of a lift and stair core. The lift and stair cores have four storeys, the blocks either side have three.

The rear part, closest to Quinney Crescent, is a long linear brick clad block that has four storeys. Sitting on top of this are two visually separate and predominantly glazed single storey raised sections. The brick block has a solid appearance with punched window openings, whereas the sections above have continuous ribbon glazing and appear more lightweight.

The initial stage in the development of the proposed design was to assess the structural capability of the existing relevant sections of the building and whether or not they are capable of taking the additional load imposed by the four new separate apartments.

Space architecture and design worked with Dan Sawyer Consulting Engineers to closely investigate this issue. The drawings and other information produced by the original structural engineers was used as the basis of the investigation and the conclusion was that the existing structural steel frame is capable of supporting the proposed extensions so long as they are constructed using lightweight materials and external cladding. The report produced by Dan Sawyer Consulting Engineers that confirms this statement can be made available if necessary.

The plan layout of each new apartment is a virtual repeat of the existing apartment below. The draft technical design upon which the planning application drawings are based allows for the structural floor of each new apartment to sit above the existing retained roof of the apartment below. This approach will allow continued use of all of the existing apartments during the construction period. Some investigation was also made into the use of off site prefabrication of large parts of the new apartments and so that they could be craned into position and with minimal finishing trades being needed for work carried out on site. Should planning approval be given, this would be investigated in each detail.

The layout and sizes of the constituent parts of the apartments exceed the requirements of The Nationally Described Space Standards and fire escape distances and other requirements of the Building Regulations achieve compliance.

Given the initial structural investigation described above suggested the use of lightweight construction it became apparent that the optimal constructional system to be used would be some form of SIPS (structural insulated panel system) and that this would include timber cladding as the main elevational material.

In visual terms the first inclination was that the cladding should copy the timber cladding of the original building. However, the existing cladding is untreated western red cedar and this has aged with time, acquiring its characteristic silvery grey appearance. Trying to replicate this would be extremely difficult.

Furthermore and more importantly, it is felt that the new extensions should appear as a contrast to the existing timber clad sections of the buildings and so that the new and the existing both maintain their own visual identity.

After a degree of design development it was established that the main elevational format should loosely follow that of the existing sections below but that the windows should be larger and should have a different form of subdivision and that the cladding material should be bleached Larch plywood. This is what is shown in the drawings that accompany the application.

The new apartments will have roofs constructed in a very similar fashion to the existing, ie with a 'negative' inset powder coated aluminium edging detail and using a grey single ply upvc membrane. Rainwater run-off will discharge into the existing internal rainwater pipes.