



LIBERTY HOUSE

Paul Keogh Architects

Award: Highly Commended - 2015 RIAI Irish Architecture Awards
Client: Dublin City Council

Image
Liberty House takes its inspiration from the Georgian brick terraces

Project Photography: Peter Cook

Location: Dublin North City Centre







A SENSE OF COMMUNITY LIBERTY HOUSE

Alex Ely

--
Image

- 3 The use of two different coloured bricks creates a visual plinth (blue) on which the building sits
- 4 The community room is the focal point of the courtyard

The area between Foley Street and Sean McDermott Street is still characterised by its Georgian planning legacy and its morphology of streets and squares with their robust and generously proportioned brick terraces – this provides a context with sufficient material to inspire any architect. Paul Keogh Architects' Liberty House creates a synergy with its location, and does so without mimicking either type or expression.

Consisting of a perimeter courtyard block, above a semi-basement car park, the typology contributes to the restoration of a coherent urban structure, responding to the historic context in an area that has been blighted by demolition and neglect for decades. The scheme improves pedestrian permeability – and thereby the overall environment of the locality – by creating a new pedestrian route from Talbot Street to Sean Mc Dermot Street, with a frontage onto a pre-existing open space – Liberty Park – along its south elevation.

The design accommodates 56 dwellings plus community facilities, comprising a mixture of one, two and three-bedroom units. The upper levels are accessed off shared lift / stair cores and the lower duplexes have their own front doors off the street. The density of 126 dwellings per hectare (30 per acre) is urban in scale, but without being oppressive, and the courtyard feels generous. At five storeys, with a six-storey 'pop up' to mark the Liberty Park corner, the building conforms with both its Georgian context and the maximum height permitted under the city's development plan.

The stepped ground floor entrances refer to the eighteenth century terraces in the locality, creating a threshold between street and door, whilst the level difference provides privacy and active surveillance of public spaces – a condition that has been legislated out of contemporary housing design, despite being such a useful device in terms of privacy and security in urban locations.

Clearly, the scheme provides its residents with desirable places to live and raise families: the central courtyard forms a space for young and old to socialise; the access galleries facilitate neighbourly interaction, and the on-site community rooms provide an education and leisure facility previously absent, and rare in this locality.

Corresponding to the city's minimum space standards, the 80 square metre floor area of a four-person apartment is some 10 square metres larger than London's, and 85 per cent of dwellings being dual aspect is highly admirable in terms of aspect, daylight and ventilation.

The limited numbers of dwellings sharing lift lobbies and access decks facilitates the creation of a sense of community; something very much apparent when I visited with colleagues, when we witnessed neighbours gathering on the decks to discuss the purpose of our visit.

The buildings are robustly made. With their one-and-a-half brick deep reveals and brick lintels, the windows and door



openings feel like they're carved out of a thick solid wall – a feature now too often value-engineered out of housing development. The architect's careful detailing gives a weightiness and a sense that the building is designed to last.

The use of two bricks – a warm red brick on the street and a lighter white brick in the courtyard – differentiates between the outside world of the city and the inner space of the courtyard. The red blend was created specifically for PKA, with a colour and texture that refers to the indigenous material of the city. The more reflective white brick creates a brighter and more domestic aesthetic in the courtyard. A limited amount of blue-black engineering brick creates a visual plinth, and an easily maintained base where the building meets the street.

Internally, the architects have taken considerable care to ensure the dwellings are easy and comfortable to live in. The family units have flexible kitchen and dining areas that can connect to the living room, or be closed off. The dual aspect plans ensure that good daylight is provided to each room, and even bathrooms

have natural light – something that the usual drivers for efficiency would have engineered out of the scheme.

Designed in consultation with the local community and Dublin City Council's architects department – a long forgotten entity in the United Kingdom – Liberty House is as admirable as it is ambitious in its aim to rejuvenate one of most disadvantaged areas of inner city Dublin into a neighbourhood where people and families would choose to live and work, now and in the future. It should be the benchmark for future regeneration opportunities in the city.

--
Alex Ely is a London-based architect, planner and author of the Mayor of London's Housing Design Guide. He has written numerous research and best-practice publications for the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and combines planning and policy experience with a passion for good design.

5
6 7
8

Image

- 5 The scheme overlooks Liberty Park along its south elevation
- 6 The stepped ground floor entrances refer to the eighteenth century terraces in the locality
- 7/8 The access galleries facilitate neighbourly interaction. Apartments are dual aspect, with emphasis on daylight and ventilation



Site Plan



Elevation



Section