



Press Release  
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## APT COMPLETES CITY OF LONDON 656-BED STUDENT HOUSING AND OFFICE SCHEME FOR URBANEST



London based architecture studio, Apt, has completed Urbanest City, a 656-bed student accommodation and office scheme achieving BREEAM Excellent.

The mixed-use building offers a new, high-profile destination in the City of London and includes high-quality student housing, incubator and flexible office space, as well as a



**café and a public exhibition space which houses a preserved section of the original Roman London City Wall that once delineated the Roman city of Londinium.**

Following planning approval for the scheme (designed by Hopkins Architects) in 2017, client Urbanest appointed Apt to develop the design, optimise the proposals and take the project through to completion. Construction began in January 2018 and continued through the Covid-19 lockdowns with site specific protocols.

Whilst coordinating and delivering the consented scheme, Apt's efficiency and creativity led to them being appointed by Urbanest to develop concept designs for the fit-out of the 8,000 sq.ft incubator space, the 55,000 sq.ft office space, and the student common areas.

Urbanest is now occupying the building and works are underway to fit out the exhibition space which will open to the public in Autumn 2022.

**The construction of the building responds to the unique challenges of the location...**

The building features a variety of construction methodologies to respond to the specific requirements of the brief and the constraints and challenges presented by the site. The Roman Wall and Bastion exhibition area demanded a large column free space with the structure designed to protect this important heritage asset. This introduced a significant transfer structure, spanning 17m across the exhibition space to support the fourteen floors of student accommodation above.

Other key design features which respond to the unique challenges of the location include post tensioned slabs for the office space to maximise column free spans with clean soffits, reinforced concrete for the student accommodation on an efficient 5m grid and a lightweight steel frame for the Crosswall building that allows the re-use of the previous building's foundations in this area.

The distinctive silhouette of the building features inset terraces, sheltered by the oversailing barrel vault roof. The upper storeys are set back from the building line to maintain good levels of light to the neighbouring buildings and streets. A bespoke inclined cladding system was developed with an integrated framework of solar shading louvres that preserve views out whilst reducing heat gain and improving occupant comfort. The inclined façade includes openable vents so that students can enjoy natural ventilation.





**The student accommodation offering is bright and contemporary with fantastic views across London...**



The 656-bed student accommodation features clean, contemporary interiors, designed by Apt, alongside substantial, and varying amenity spaces.

At the top of the building, two common rooms provide spectacular views of the City Cluster and Tower Bridge which accommodate a range of activities and include study booths, group working settings, games areas, chill out zones and a giant screen with bleacher seating for screening sports and movies. The reception lobby includes group working and meeting rooms as well as touchdown workspace with views into the adjacent Roman Wall exhibition space and access to the neighbouring café.

The accommodation includes studios and clusters with en-suites, non-en suites and twin rooms to meet the range of student requirements in the area. Each room includes generous floor to ceiling glazing providing an abundance of natural light as well as opening vents, discretely integrated within the façade, so that the students can enjoy fresh air. The clusters include generous kitchen and dining areas, whilst a series of studios benefit from fantastic views from the building's curved, glazed prow that addresses the new Aldgate square.

**The office space, provides distinctive, flexible workspace with an abundance of facilities...**

The new office provides 11 floors of boutique workspace with fantastic views of the city. The building's form creates a variety of floorplates, ranging from 2,800 to 4,800 sq.ft. to suit different occupier's requirements, with an external terrace provided at level 10. The floor to ceiling glazing provides plenty of natural light, whilst the exposed services and concrete structure add height and create a contemporary aesthetic.

The double height reception area includes generous touchdown space and informal meeting space with views over the newly created shared surface on Vine Street and landscaping to Jewry Street. A view is framed from the lift lobby through the newly created public walkway into the Roman Wall exhibition space to enhance the connection with the other elements of the development whilst also serving to animate the new walkway.

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The communal areas feature in-situ palladiana terrazzo and bespoke mouldings that create a seamless finish, integrating elements including the reception desk, bleacher steps and seating with the floor finish. The walls are lined with shou sugi ban timber cladding, a traditional Japanese technique to seal and preserve timber through charring. Wire brushed timbers alternate with the crackle charred finish timbers to reveal the beauty of the accoya's grain. Brass inlay and fretwork are employed in the detailing and are off-set by the dark timber and marble background.

The office component also provides active travel facilities including secured cycle parking, cycle maintenance and showers at Basement Level.

### **The triple-height Roman Wall Exhibition Space offers the public an opportunity to view the surviving Scheduled Monument and learn about the history of this part of London...**

The Roman Wall Exhibition Space, designed in collaboration with specialist exhibition designer, Metaphor, and Museum of London Archaeology (Mola), forms part of the City's London Wall walk and offers the opportunity to view the surviving section of Roman Wall and Bastion; a Scheduled Monument. It also offers the public the chance to learn about the history of the site, the people who lived and worked there and its relationship with the wider city through the archaeological finds revealed during the previous development cycle of the site.

The Exhibition Space fronts Vine Street and the new walkway across the site and has its own dedicated entrance from Jewry Street or can be accessed via the café on Vine Street which provides visitors with refreshments encouraging them to dwell longer in the space. It is overlooked by the Student Accommodation, the Incubator Workspace and offices which provides activation and animation for the exhibition but also articulates its position as the hub of the development.

The café, being visible and accessible to all, is a space where the building's different users can come together, offering the opportunity for collaboration and innovation between students, start-ups and more mature businesses.

### **Sustainability is key to the design of Urbanest City...**

Urbanest City features a number of sustainability initiatives, including the sharing of plant between the different building uses to optimise its efficiency. Solar shading is integrated within the façade design to reduce cooling loads and improve occupant comfort with blinds provided in all the tenanted spaces as part of the base build.

Active travel is encouraged with extensive facilities provided for cyclists, including parking, showers and a cycle maintenance station that is shared by all building users.

The roof areas are planted to improve biodiversity and reduce rainwater run-off and include PV Arrays to provide renewable power. The building design also re-uses the existing basement structure of the former buildings on the site as well as areas of existing foundations.

#### **Nat Lee, Project Leader at Apt, said:**

*"Urbanest City is a distinctive new building and provides a new destination within the City of London, combining student accommodation, workspaces and public areas, all carefully integrated. The Apt team worked tirelessly to add significant value to the scheme for our client and exceeded the expectation and vision for a striking and adaptable building in this prime location. Adapting a previously consented design is never simple, but we believe this has been successfully achieved through our sensitive analytical approach and our vision to really explore the opportunities and constraints presented. We have delivered a greater number of student accommodation beds within a simplified building envelope. The rationalisation of access and provision of facilities which prompt users to consider their carbon footprint also contribute to making this scheme a huge success which we hope will bring joy to its occupants and visitors for many years to come"*



**Angus Kearin, Head of Development at Urbanest UK Ltd said**

*“Having appointed Apt to deliver Urbanest City following obtaining planning permission in the summer of 2017, we are delighted with the way Apt’s proactive approach to leading the design team and integrating the main contractor brought the design together to deliver a sector-leading building. With a Roman wall, large sewers, barrel vault, large office and student elements to deal with Apt’s positive, always solution-based approach inspired the project team and certainly was one of the major factors to bring the project in on time to such a high quality. Working with Apt has been a pleasure, we have created an exceptional mixed-use development that we and our investor are very proud of.”*

**Paul Tumelty, Construction Director at Balfour Beatty, said:**

*“Right from the outset the Balfour Beatty and Apt teams formed a strong positive culture. Challenges have been approached with an open mindset and a real collaborative approach has been adopted. This has led to solutions which have given our mutual customer Urbanest the best value for money whilst maintaining the architectural vision for this fantastic complex project. It has been a pleasure working with Apt, a very strong team bond has been established and we look forward to working together again in the future.”*

**Mitesh Patel, Project Director at Robert Bird Group**

*“Bridging over the Roman remains added a challenging extra dimension to the structural design but working with Apt we have designed a development complex that as well as providing much needed student accommodation in the City of London also preserves important Roman history for posterity.”*



## Notes to editors:

Link to download high-res images of the scheme (credit: Will Scott):

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/lsi4j3zvgwpsnscs/AAA6CYvUMXslb4DJZ2vf0wwHa?dl=0>

### Key Information

**Project address:** 35 Vine Street, London EC3N 2PX  
**Sector(s):** Mixed Use – Student Residential, Commercial, Leisure (Exhibition Space)  
**Project value:** £90m  
**Project size:** 315,000 sqft (GEA)  
**RIBA Stages:** 3-6  
**Date appointed:** August 2017  
**Planning approved:** November 2017  
**Start on site:** January 2018  
**Practical completion:** July 2021

### Design Team / Consultants

**Client:** Urbanest UK Ltd  
**Architect:** Apt  
**Main Contractor:** Balfour Beatty  
**Planning:** Gerald Eve  
**Landscape:** Townshend  
**MEP:** mtt  
**Structural Engineers:** Robert Bird Group  
**Project Manager:** Tower 8  
**Cost Consultant:** Cast  
**Fire Engineer:** Sweco  
**Accessibility:** David Bonnett Associates  
**Exhibition Designer:** Metaphor  
**Archaeology:** MOLA  
**Façade Engineer:** Mott MacDonald  
**Acoustics:** Hann Tucker Associates  
**Transport:** Caneparo  
**Daylight / Sunlight:** Point 2  
**Party Wall:** Paragon  
**Façade Engineer:** Mott MacDonald / KFK

### About Apt

Apt is an architectural practice underpinned by a creative and collaborative approach. We create architecture that inspires through great design, innovation, and craftsmanship.

We work as a collective in a transparent and logical way. We do not have a 'house' style and look at every project afresh; creating desirable places to live and work that are richly detailed and diverse in character, celebrating the culture, customs, and heritage of their setting, reinforcing a sense of identity and place.

From our studio in the heart of London's design district we work across multiple sectors including housing, commercial, heritage, arts and community projects of all shapes and sizes across London and the UK.

This is Apt.

[www.aplondon.com](http://www.aplondon.com)

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