

# Friends in open spaces

A new development of stylish, affordable homes in Glasgow uses linked courtyards to encourage neighbourliness, discovers **Caroline Ednie**

A new housing development that brings both quality and affordability to Glasgow's east end is a welcome addition to an arid housing market. The £11.6m Moore Street development, which has 93 properties, is the brainchild of the small but forward-thinking Molendinar Park Housing Association, and follows the success of its neighbouring Graham Square housing, which earned the association a Royal Institute of British Architects Client of the Year Award in 2001. The development is on the site of the former meat market in Gallowgate. And, in common with Graham Square, Moore Street features a clever arrangement of private and public spaces that echo the scale and spirit of the historic site. Aimed at first-time buyers or those who are unable to buy a property at full market value, this is also a development that is genuinely affordable. In terms of contemporary urban housing, it doesn't get much better.

"The main idea behind Moore Street was to look at moving towards energy efficiency and sustainability without having silly windmills and stuff like that," says Rob Joiner, the housing association director. "It was decided that the best way to achieve our energy-efficiency aim was by means of super-insulation and large areas of south-facing glazing.

"We've built upon the energy efficiency of the housing in Graham Square; and the courtyard design of the Market Hotel worked well in social terms, so this idea has been taken forward. We've also placed the car parking [on gravel to allow natural drainage] behind, rather than in front of, the housing and planted more fruit trees. This creates a coherence and connection between the two developments."

Coherence and continuity has also been achieved in the choice of designers, as Moore Street brings together again the Graham Square architects Richard Murphy Architects; McKeown Alexander (now Jmarchitects) and Page Park, along with a new addition, Elder & Cannon. Each of the four practices was invited to present a masterplan, based on the idea that they would be responsible for building between 20 and 25 flats.

Richard Murphy Architects' scheme, which centres on a private but communal courtyard behind the meat market's archway, prevailed. Each architect has since designed housing with individual private courtyards linked to the main one. Completing the picture is a blue brick wall embedded with glazed bricks, which connects all four projects and forms the communal boundary to the surrounding streets.

There are 42 rented and 51 shared-equity and shared-ownership flats. The Richard Murphy Architects' scheme features 22 homes around a south-facing courtyard. The main entrance from the public courtyard to the private one is through a lych gate-like structure (also a bicycle store), and there is also a rear entrance leading from the parking area. Within the courtyard there is a combination of external staircases and terraces. "It

creates an interesting precedent for dense but neighbourly urban development," says Richard Murphy. All of the flats have been rented out, but there are some for sale in the other developments.

The Page and Park scheme, on the corner of Melbourne Street and Gallowgate, features two blocks of 11 flats with a private courtyard. The bedrooms and bathrooms are at the rear and sides, and the south-facing living rooms are at the front. Each has a balcony.

At the Gallowgate edge of the blocks, there are curved bay windows, which are a modern take on the traditional Glasgow tenement bays. High thermal mass construction, which provides insulation on the outside, allows for a "tea-cosy effect". This means that in winter the heat is kept inside the flats and in summer it is kept out. As a result, costs for heating and cooling are reduced, and the insulation has excellent acoustic and fire-separating qualities, too.

Jmarchitects' scheme features a free-standing

block to the north east of the site and two blocks in the southeast corner, next to the historic archway. It serves as a reminder of the site's past. The simple, modulated facade also echoes the simplicity of Moore Street's tenement predecessors. The blocks comprise 25 two-bedroom flats and two one-bedroom flats, with landscaped gardens and communal storage spaces.

Panoramic views across Glasgow are at a premium in the Elder & Cannon development, which is made up of twin blocks arranged around a courtyard. The blocks run perpendicular to the street, and the living areas have substantial south-facing windows and generous full-length balconies. In contrast, the north-facing and side elevations are well insulated and openings have been kept to a minimum.

The Elder & Cannon-designed buildings have rear and side elevations clad in silver metal-insulating material, but the south elevation is finished in larch cladding, which gives a softer feel to the

balconies. "We like the fact that Richard Murphy Architects' masterplan idea opens up the site," says Rob Joiner.

"The courtyard gives us a much more interesting arrangement than a more traditional approach. In conventional housing you tend to see another house across from you, and you don't get a sense of a city at all, whereas the views across the city in Moore Street are fantastic. It will be a tremendous place to live."

The new development's properties for sale are targeted at first-time buyers or those who can't afford market prices, and are offered on shared-equity/shared-ownership schemes.

The shared-ownership scheme means a percentage of the property is bought and the remainder is rented from the housing association (on behalf of Glasgow city council).

The shared-equity scheme allows someone to buy between 60% and 80% of the property and receive a grant from the Scottish government for



Moore Street; below, the historic archway