

METRO PROPERTY

TRYING A NEW ANGLE

AJAY TELI TAKES A CLOSER LOOK AT THE RIVERSIDE BUILDING NAMED BEST DESIGN AT THE NHA AWARDS

C LISTENING in the bright sunshine, like a bejeweled mirage on the horizon, it is certainly not difficult to see why Mapleton Crescent won the Best Design category at this year's prestigious National Housing Awards, where Metro was the official media partner.

Inspired by the mesmerising hues of the River Wandle, the 27-storey tower in Wandsworth is clad in bespoke, semi-transparent blue-green ceramic panels, developed with the help of local artist Lorraine Rutt.

The award-winning turquoise building also impressed judges for using ingenious modular construction techniques - with each flat being built and fitted off-site, then craned into place at the astonishing rate of one storey a day.

The challenging triangular building site - smaller than 1/10th of a football pitch - was a neglected leftover from the construction of the 1970's Southside Shopping Centre.

But where others saw problems, the brains behind the project - Metropolitan Workshop

and Pocket Living, which specialises

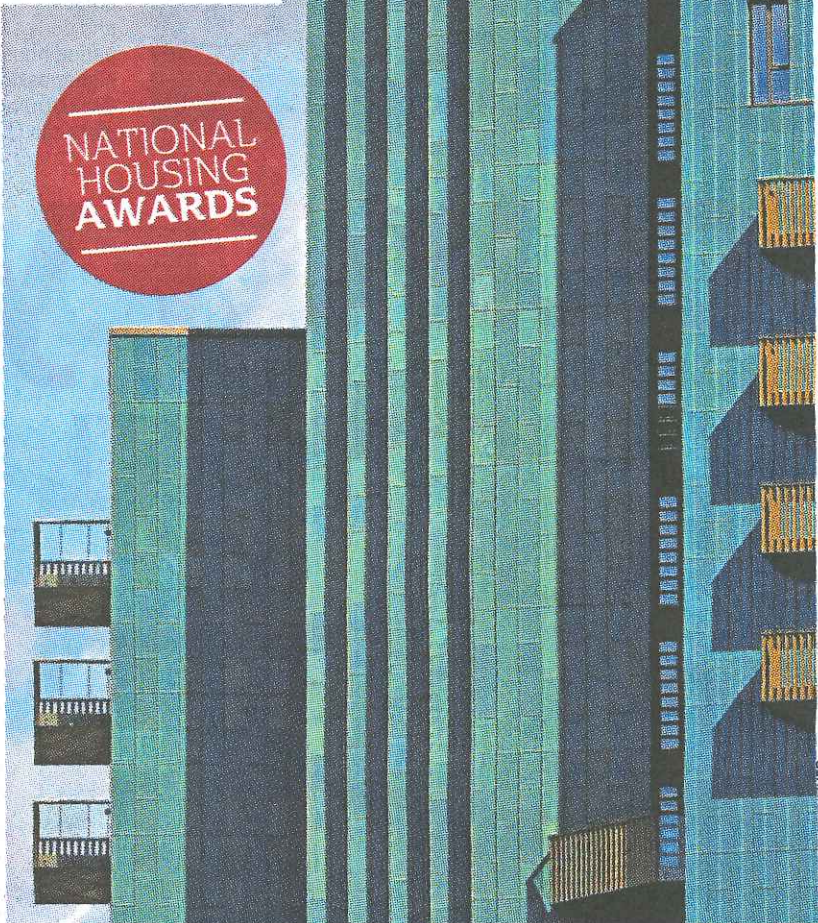
in creating genuinely affordable homes for local first-time buyers on moderate incomes - saw a tremendous opportunity.

Combining the off-site prefabrication and an in-situ concrete structure, they saved 15 per cent on costs and a whopping four months in construction time, compared to traditional builds.

And unlike many new landmarks, this one is aimed at first-time buyers, with 60 per cent of the homes classified as affordable (sold with a tantalising 20 per cent discount).

Mapleton Crescent, in SW18, features 53 one-bedroom, one-person affordable flats (measuring 410sq ft) and 36 larger apartments (from 733 to 888sq ft).

High-quality shared amenity spaces, rooftop gardens, shared balconies and a riverside terrace have helped to build a community and encourage social interaction. The entrance lobby, residents' lounge, delivery lockers and a cycle store with workbench/changing facilities sit within the first two floors, creating a 'plinth' onto which 243 steel-framed modules, in two wings of five flats per floor, were craned and



Winner: NHA pick Mapleton Crescent was constructed using pre-engineered units

installed in just six weeks - reducing noise nuisance and site waste by an estimated 90 per cent.

'Mapleton is really special because its pair of tall and slender volumes mean that daylight penetrates into the very heart of the building,' Neil Deely, senior architect on the project, tells us.

'The central stair creates an exhilarating 27-storey triangular void and means that the city is visible on every floor in three directions.'

But let's step back a moment. Pocket Living

was started in 2005 by Marc Vlessing and Paul Harbard, who set out to help the millions of young Londoners who contribute to their city in so many ways, get on the housing ladder.

Their company started creating affordable Pocket homes exclusively for local first-time buyers, giving those on lower incomes a way to own a piece of the city they love.

What's unique is that these homes are 100 per cent owned homes - so while shared ownership isn't available, buyers can use Help to Buy. These homes are, as the name suggests, quite compact. And this is where some of the design ingenuity comes in.

At the award-winning Mapleton

Crescent, the smallest one-bedroom apartments are designed for a single person. By utilising every inch, the designers have ingeniously packed in an open-plan living and kitchen area, a separate double bedroom with space for a wardrobe and a wetroom/bathroom. There is a fully fitted kitchen with a fridge, hob, oven and space for a dishwasher.

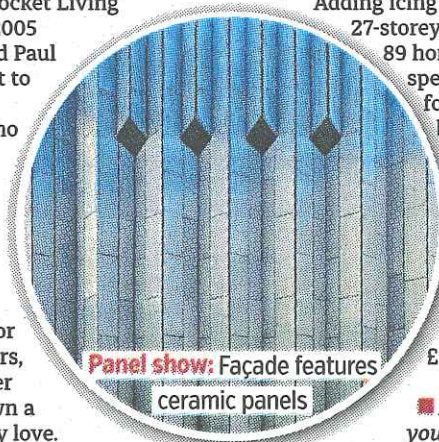
A well-sized utility cupboard houses a washing machine, with storage tailored towards those extras such as suitcases and an ironing board. The floor-to-ceiling windows mean the rooms get maximum natural light, while high ceilings and neutral finishes maximise the feeling of space.

Adding icing to the gleaming 27-storey cake, 53 of the 89 homes were specially reserved for local first-time buyers - who lived or worked in Wandsworth - at an affordable 20 per cent discounted price, ranging from £225,000 to £330,000.

■ If you'd like to get your hands on one of these award-winning homes (located at 11 Mapleton Crescent, SW18 4GY, alongside River Wandle and just a stone's throw from amazing local facilities), you will need to hurry, as 70 per cent have already been reserved. For more information visit pocketliving.com



Majestic: The central stair



Panel show: Façade features ceramic panels

PHOTO: EDMUND SUMNER