The weekly newspaper for architects

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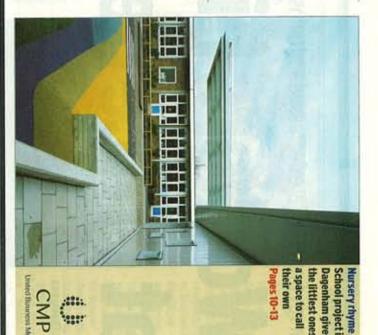
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board's actions defends the Robin Vaughan Arb hits back:

Living on the edge: AA exhibition housing projects Renaudie's major ooks at Jean



Huge research projects to improve design in new member states as EU gives go-ahead to European Technology Platform

ne vision for new

Damian Arnold

Brussels is plotting a single pan-European vision of the future of architecture in an expanded European Union, BD can reveal. The European Commission last week gave the green light to the formation of a well-funded technology research body for the

built environment Researchers will be drawn from Europe's main built environment players, and British architects are being urged to jump on board.

The core group, which includes Richard Rogers Partnership, the Architects' Council of Europe (ACE), contractors such as Bouyges, Dragados and Taylor and State of the Core of the Core

Woodrow, and research institutes including the BRE, is already working up specific research proposals worth "tens of millions of

The move is a long awaited acknowledgement of the stiff challenges facing European towns and cities. The commission considers the accession of ro eastern European countries to the union poses a particular chal-lenge in maintaining overall housing quality.

According to Adrian Joyce, an adviser to ACE involved in set-

adviser to ACE invariant ting up the body, "up to 80% of the population [of the new member states] live in apartment buildings that were put up in the 1960s and need to be upgraded."

mous quantities of unused brownfield land. The researchers will also address the effect of cli-mate change on building design. states also boast enor luantities of unused

Construction think-tank sets its sights

- Research projects likely to be identified by the European Technology Platform include:

 Developing new building regulations to respond to climate change.

 Sharing innovation on design of schools and hospitals.

 Creating accessible

Marco Goldschmied, director of RRP, urged other UK practices to get involved to drive up the standard of building design. "The platform is particularly exciting for architects and should "There will be lots of opportu-ies for architects," Joyce said Marco Goldschmied, director

- buildings in towns and cities.

 Developing self-cleaning buildings.

 New methods of working with building end users.

 New materials, especially nano-technology.

 Indoor air pollution.

 Technology transfer.

be supported," he said
"Europe hasn't done this kind
of thing before, and we are in
danger of being left well behind
countries like China."

He added that the platform,
which it is hoped will involve up
to 50 of Europe's construction

giants, could lead to British architects being seconded to work on key research projects to innovate the building design of

the future.

"We are all rushing around doing projects and there is never time to innovate in any depth," said Goldschmied. "At RRP we have a lot of know-how, which we

Research, and a permanent secretariat will now be set up. It will be based on the model of the newly launched pan-European Hydrogen Platform, which has already been deemed a huge success. The platform's research agenda and planned launch with EU president Romano Prodi at Maastrict, Holland, on October 13 was last week approved by the EC's Directorate General for

If the Technology Platform is similarly successful, it will gain research funding for projects under the EU's forthcoming funding round for research projects known as the Seventh Framework Programme for Research. Funding under the new framework is expected to double from the current £1.3 billion for Priority 3 projects, which includes construction.

The Directorate General for Research's officer for construction Christophe Lesmak told BD: "Construction has not been very successful in bidding for research money. The sector is still very fragmented, but I would still the additional contracts."

still very fragmented, but I woul expect the platform to help writ the Seventh Framework."

Joyce promised: "There are going to be specific actions to ge a handle on some of that money help write

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asterplan for e City Road isin and are pected to be lopted by er by
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Second Clissold legal claim to focus entirely on design

Hackney council is preparing a second legal claim over the troubled Clissold Leisure Centre in north London which will focus solely on the building's design problems.

As BD went to press, details of the legal claim were scant, but Hackney council was preparing a public statement to "further clarify the legal position" on the Stoke Newington

"The second case hasn't been filed yet; it focuses on the design

flaws [with the Clissold Leisure Centre]," a spokeswoman for Hackney told BD.

The council is already taking legal action against the leisure centre's architect, Hodder Associates, and quantity surveyor Davis Langdon & Everest over cost and time overruns with the building.

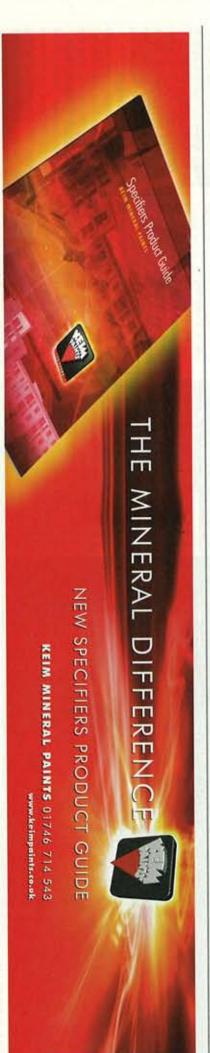
Hackney commissioned a separate architect in December to look at the problems with the centre. "Serious defects in the design and construction of the

building" were identified, according to Hackney mayor Jules Pipe.

BD last year revealed problems with the building, including cracked walls, a leaking roof and blocked drains.

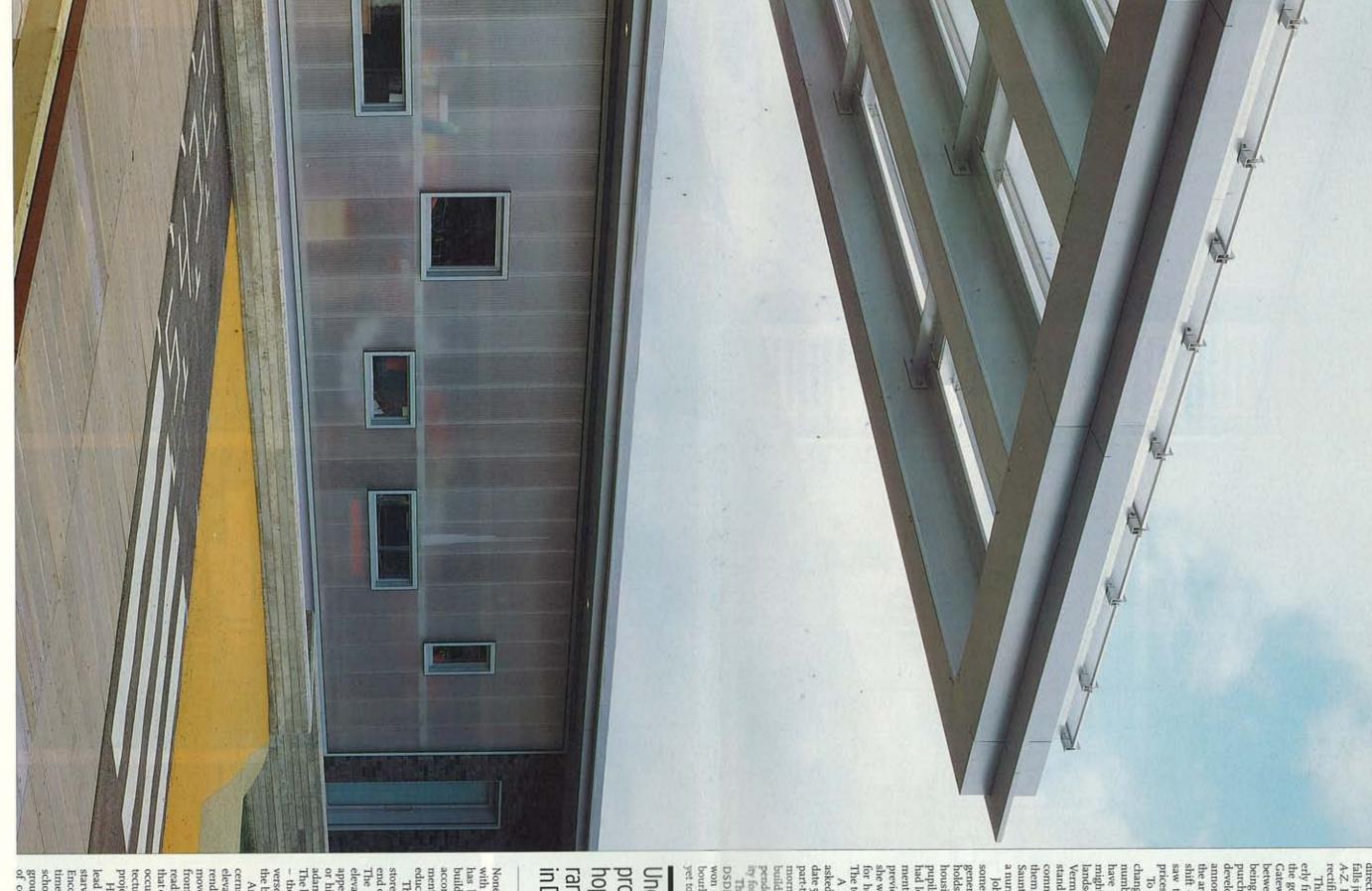
The centre was closed in

December last year for an initial period of three weeks. The closure was then extended to three months. Last month, Hackney council announced that the flagship leisure centre would be closed indefinitely.





DEBORAH SAUNT DAVID HILLS ARCHITECTS, DAGENHAM 11



Deborah Saunt is struggling to give me directions. Frustratingly, Dagenham falls just outside the scope of her London A-Z. It is a situation that will surely be rectified in the next edition.

This stretch of the capital's most easterly fringe is a key development zone in the government's plans for the Thames Gateway. An enormous tract of land between Dagenham and the Thames is

Gateway. An enormous tract of land Gateway. An enormous tract of land between Dagenham and the Thames is being assembled through compulsory purchase orders in preparation for its development to masterplans by Macreannor Lavington and West 8. Already the area is undergoing a major economic shift – last year Barking & Dagenham saw the second largest rise in house prices of any London borough.

To date, there are few built signs of change. However, in the past year a number of uncommonly creative projects have offered hope that something rare might be achieved here. Torn de Paor's landscaping for the A13 and Cottrell & Vermeulen's Parsloes Online centre stand as tributes to the imaginative and committed local authority that funded them. To this list we can add Deborah Saunt David Hills Architects' new project a nursery for John Perry Primary School. John Perry occupies a rather handsome brick complex built in 1952. A

generous provision of outdoor space holds back the vast slick of suburban housing from which the school draws its pupils. Head teacher Jeannette Harris had long been pleading for the replacement of the dilapidated prefab that previously housed the nursery. In 2002, she was given the go-ahead and rewarded for her patience with a decent budget. The total cost was £429,000.

A competition was held. The brief asked for a facility that could accommodate 52 two- to five-year-old children on a part-time basis, taking half in the morning and half in the afternoon. The building also had to incorporate as a second control of the second cont

DSDHA, a practice that n won one of the Cabe-spons bourhood nursery competition

in Dagenham. rare might be achieved hope that something projects have offered Uncommonly creative

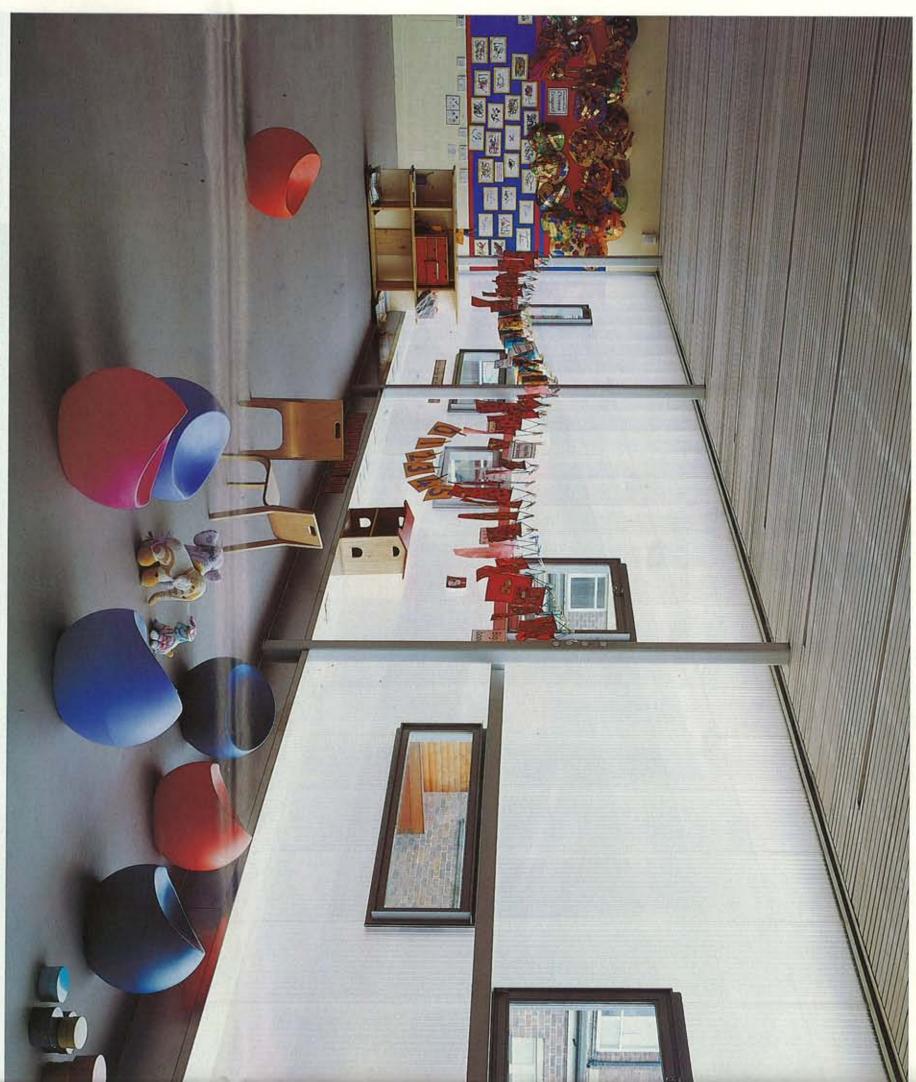
storey structure which closes off the east end of an existing three-sided courtyard. The nursery's three outward-looking elevations present a rather defensive appearance, offering only child-height or high-level openings within a wall of adamantine Dutch engineering brick. The brick actually sits on a rendered base—the first indication of a wilfully perverse tectonic grammar which guides the building's detailing throughout.

Another of the building's key concerns is signalled midway along the east elevation, where the height of the rendered base suddenly increases. This

rendered base suddenly increases. This move, supported by a slight level drop from north to south, fools the eye into reading the building's south elevation as that of a two-storey structure. Such a pre-occupation with the mutability of architectural scale underpins a number of the project's major formal decisions.

Harris believes many of her pupils lead an overly housebound life, starved of access to outside space. Encouraging children to spend more time outside is key to her vision for the school. To this end, John Perry's

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landscape", and it is equipped with educational features such as a black-board and mirror walls, a balancing bar, a solar fountain and a rill.

Saunt says a key point of reference for the relationship between the nursery and the courtyard was Barbara Hepworth's sculpture garden in St Ives, which features a series of polycarbonate lean-to studios ranged around its perimeter, establishing an indoor/out-door life focused on an active landscape. DSDHA has developed that image into what Saunt calls "a studio for children". The elevation to the courtyard enables an open relationship between the interior and the learning landscape. Behind a polycarbonate skin, secondary steelwork supports a series of opening windows (put in place before the walls in which they sit), scaled so as to preserve a delicately judged sense of enclosure.

In good weather, foldaway doors allow the space to be opened up to the courtyard. This connection is enhanced by the scheme's most dramatic feature: the steel and polycarbonate canopy, which continues an improbable 8m from the

supports, which might be hazardous to children, but its raison d'être is broader, dissolving the boundary between building and courtyard and dramatically shift-

ing perceptions of the nursery's scale.

Internally, the building is divided between the nursery, which runs the full width of the courtyard, and the more internalised special educational needs facility, tucked away to one end. The nursery is dominated by a cork-faced "landscape wall" named in recognition of its stratified character and cranking geometry. It flexes down the length of the playroom, providing pin-up space and enclosing toilets, an office, a kitchen and a storeroom. At one point it kicks back to establish a storytelling niche which looks out to the football pitch.

These tactile, small-scale environments, complete with miniature fixtures and fittings, sit side by side with the building's more heroic moments. This sense of plurality is one of the design's most distinctive characteristics. At once heavy and lightweight, industrial and domestic, monumental and intimate, the building offers a whole world of possibilities waiting to be explored by its young users.

Architect DSDHA.

Client London Borough of Barking & Dagenham.

Contractor Forest Gate Construction Co Ltd.

Structural engineer Price & Myers.

Corvice engineer Pearce & Associates.

DEBORAH SAUNT DAVID HILLS ARCHITECTS, DAGENHAM 13



eft: The play area is a robust asi-industrial aracter, with a ringy lino floor, ycarbonate wall the courtyard and siling of softwood bens with

om left: landscape wall the length of play area, mmodating

right: The new ding viewed oss the football ch, with the rance on the the levation.



