Our clients include universities and colleges, charities and private providers. The budgets range from low to high, and the sites range from conservation areas to urban regeneration areas.

The common features in all of them are;
— using good design to derive maximum value and quality, within the budget whether low or high,
— enhancement of the student experience.

Over 30 years, we have developed many typologies to suit different circumstances. The range of room types has expanded and includes ensuite rooms, paired rooms, studio rooms, microflats, cluster flats, within numerous configurations responding to different briefs and sites. With property so expensive to buy, some projects are now aimed at young working people as well as students.

The market to attract new students is increasingly competitive. Through good design, we can help to give clients an edge by offering students ‘value for rent’, as well as delivering ‘value for money’ in design and construction.
The annual *Times Higher Education* Student Experience survey shows just how important social and environmental aspects can be in a student’s choice of university.

To be successful, the design of student accommodation needs not only to provide the right environment for living and studying, but also to promote social and academic interaction. It needs to project a life-style and foster a community in which new students feel they belong, as well as reflecting the ethos of the university or institution. For this, the quality of spaces around the buildings, the circulation and communal spaces, are as important as the quality of the student rooms and the organisation needs to be clearly legible.

At Friendship House for LHA London, within a limited budget, our design has given a distinctive identity and an attractive living environment which have contributed to a constant demand for rooms. The Garden Quadrangle at St John’s College is in heavy demand from conference organisers as well as students and, ten years after completion, was voted the most popular Oxford building of the past 75 years in a poll conducted by the *Oxford Times*. 
“People are very happy here. It is such a calm building in such a busy place.”

TONY PERKINS
CHIEF EXECUTIVE,
LHA LONDON
Through the quality of our architecture we have been able to develop good relations with town planning departments around the country. New development is heavily regulated. Most sites come under the control of a range of planning policies and directives from other statutory bodies. Careful design and negotiation are required to achieve advantageous planning consents. Our extensive experience brings this advantage.

In historic and prominent locations, applications come under greater scrutiny. We have successfully delivered many student accommodation projects in historic towns including Oxford and Cambridge, and other building types on landmark sites in London, Durham, Ludlow and the historic dockyard in Portsmouth, amongst others. Some are next to, and some are conversions of, listed buildings.
Student accommodation is naturally repetitive and lends itself to off-site fabrication and ‘modern methods of construction’ which can reduce construction time and cost. Some of our projects exploit these technologies within architectural solutions which respond to, and are appropriate to, their settings.

We have used different methods to pre-assemble the external envelope off-site, complete with windows, and simply crane into position. At Torquay House reconstituted stone panels, with textured finishes, were factory assembled. Similarly at Elm Grove Hall, for Roehampton University, brickwork was laid on concrete backed panels. Unitised curtain walling was used at Aspire Point, for Alumno Developments, with a lustrous terracotta rainscreen. The elevational designs are modulated to subsume the panellisation.

Internally, shower pods, kitchenettes, stairs and furniture are all factory built and, in many projects, all vertical elements of the structural frame are precast in concrete.

The aims are to increase speed and quality of construction without increasing cost.

“Working with MJP Architects was a thoroughly positive experience.”

KEITH WELLER,
SENIOR DESIGN MANAGER
OSBORNE, MAIN CONTRACTOR FOR ELM GROVE HALL
“MJP have produced three wonderful buildings for St John’s College, Oxford.”

DR A BOYCE
BURSAR
ST JOHN’S COLLEGE
OXFORD
Designing contemporary buildings to meet modern needs in historic university cities requires sensitivity and deftness. Within the Oxford and Cambridge colleges new buildings need to respond to the past but talk to the future.

Kendrew Quadrangle for St John’s, Oxford, surrounds a magnificent beech tree and is adjacent to listed buildings. It follows the form and scale of the traditional Oxford quadrangles but contains modern facilities; a café, library, gallery, gym as well as student rooms. MJP also designed the Garden Quad and Senior Common Room for St John’s.

The Jowett Walk Buildings for Balliol College, Oxford, were designed for phased development. The solution is a series of linked pavilions, creating open three-sided quadrangles. The design of the pavilions allowed flexibility to change the brief for future phases.
Masterplans for long-term development need to be both robust and flexible enough to adapt to changing needs. Working with University Estates Departments, MJP have created a series of campus masterplans and delivered many buildings within them. For other universities, we have planned large new developments to enhance and integrate into existing campuses.

Elm Grove Hall is arranged around two courts in the heart of Roehampton University, designed to complement its verdant campus. Well-crafted student accommodation is combined with a state of the art Conference centre and roof terrace looking out across London. Careful planning of the building enabled the campus to remain fully operational throughout construction.

The Manor Park residences at Surrey University are arranged around interlinked courtyards, some enclosed, some open on one side. Courtyard planning optimises the site’s development potential while creating an attractive and sociable living environment. It is also efficient in maximising the number of student flats accessible from each nodal stair/lift core.

“We are delighted with the architectural design of these buildings.”

PROF STEVE BAKER
DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT,
UNIVERSITY OF SURREY
“The result is a highly efficient building and splendid architecture that is a delight for the students.”

DR. GHWA ALWANI-STARR, DIRECTOR OF ESTATES, UNIVERSITY OF ROEHAMPTON
High value city centre sites and changing planning policies have increased pressure to build higher. Towers come under greater scrutiny during the planning process, due to their longer range visibility on the skyline. They require different strategies to promote social interaction, and different construction techniques.

Aspire Point for Alumno Developments, near Queen Elizabeth Park, provides 445 rooms for Queen Mary University of London. The base of the tower contains complementary uses; two floors of artists’ studios, and a café. The tower’s triangular plan creates a slim profile due its acute corners, avoids overlooking, and neatly creates three seven room flats per floor.

Torquay House, for LHA London, is close to London’s West End and next to the M40. Shared social and study areas are located in ‘hot-spots’ near lift lobbies throughout the building to encourage people to meet and mingle.

“It’s a stunning landmark building for our students.”

BARBARA ASHCROFT
HEAD OF HOUSING SERVICES
QUEEN MARY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
Student numbers in many European countries have grown rapidly in recent years. This has been driven partly by demand from international students, many of whom prefer purpose-built accommodation. While about a quarter of UK students live in newly built accommodation, the proportion in other countries is much lower, but now growing.

The ‘Ebu 19’ project in Riga, Latvia for Spire Baltic, will be woven into the historic city centre, creating new pedestrian routes and helping to re-vitalise the local area. It will house about 600 students on the upper floors around courtyards, above retail and commercial units animating the public realm at ground level. The design matches the scale and forms of the older neighbours, though it has a modern and complementary architectural language.

“MJP Architects’ entry to our open competition was the unanimous choice of all seven members of the judging panel.”

JASON ALLEN, CHAIRMAN, SIA SPIRE BALTIC
With a lack of affordable housing for sale in cities, purpose-built homes for private letting are in high demand.

Torquay House and Friendship House were designed for LHA London, a charity providing accommodation on a flexible and affordable basis to young working people and students who would normally struggle to live in central London. There is a choice of room types, typically ensuite rooms sharing kitchens or ‘microflats’ which include a kitchenette. The planning is similar to a hotel, with rooms along light and airy corridors. Shared social spaces are distributed throughout the building to encourage social interaction.

Cambridge University wanted to offer affordable rented accommodation to their teaching staff. Forster Court and Franklin Court provide a range of flats of different sizes to suit different needs, and include a creche on the ground floor.
MJP pursued sustainability for many years before it became de rigueur. As well as conserving the environment, it can also bring many advantages to clients by reducing energy consumption and cutting running costs. It is a principle rooted in all our designs.

Where clients wish to pursue this topic, we develop a sustainability agenda with them to suit their preferences. Usually the priority is to minimise energy consumption through passive design controls, and then to supply the remaining energy requirement, as far as possible, from renewable sources.

The Kendrew Quadrangle at St John’s College won the David Steel Sustainable Buildings Award. It achieved a rating of 11 out of a maximum 12 on the Natural Resource Impact Assessment.
Running costs can be greatly reduced by minimising maintenance and using efficient maintenance regimes. These objectives need to be achieved in the design process. We have built up knowledge of materials, products and systems and their suitability for student accommodation. Some of our design aims are:

— Choice of self-finished materials which do not require re-decoration
— Control of rainwater run-off to minimise staining of the outer walls and, where possible, protection from the rain.
— Use of durable materials, commensurate with their use and exposure
— External wall details which are robust and have two lines of defence.
— Ease of access

An example is the Jowett Walk Buildings for Balliol College in Oxford. The Architects’ Journal carried out a ‘Building in Use’ study after three years and found it to be very popular with students, durable and weathering well.

“I think it’s been a tremendous success.”

DR. OSWYN MURRAY
CHAIRMAN OF BUILDING COMMITTEE, BALLIOL COLLEGE
We often work with clients at an early stage to assess the potential of prospective sites through quick capacity studies or feasibility studies. We can assess the potential of different site assembly options and assist clients in their negotiations with adjoining owners. Also in programming and planning the project in response to land acquisition dates and phasing requirements.

Quality is subjective; there is not a standard measuring system for it! Different projects and uses bring different priorities, budgets and conceptions of quality. Within the constraints of the budget we assist clients to decide on appropriate quality levels offering best value. When we discuss quality, we look for built examples to ensure we have a common understanding. Visiting buildings to see how products and materials have performed in practice is a way of underpinning the process.
MJP Architects are also working in these other sectors.

CULTURAL BUILDINGS

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