

BM3 Housing 19

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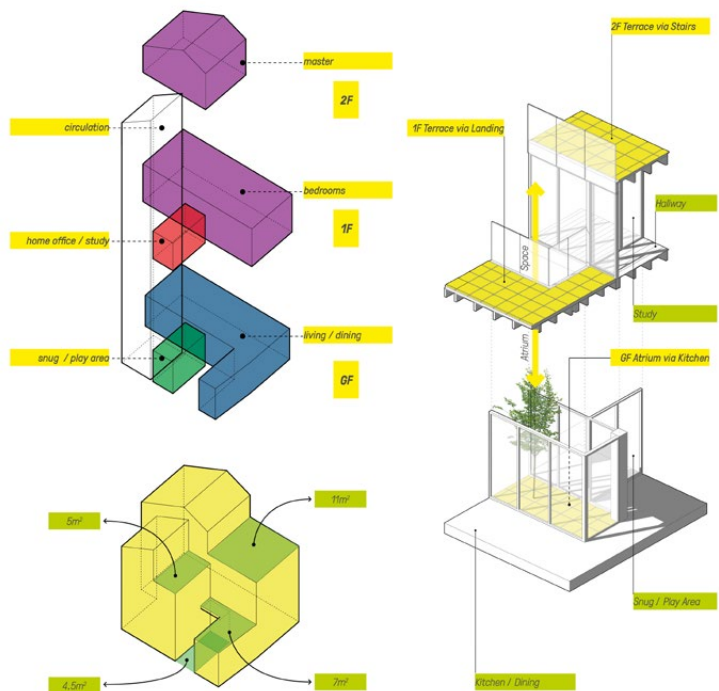
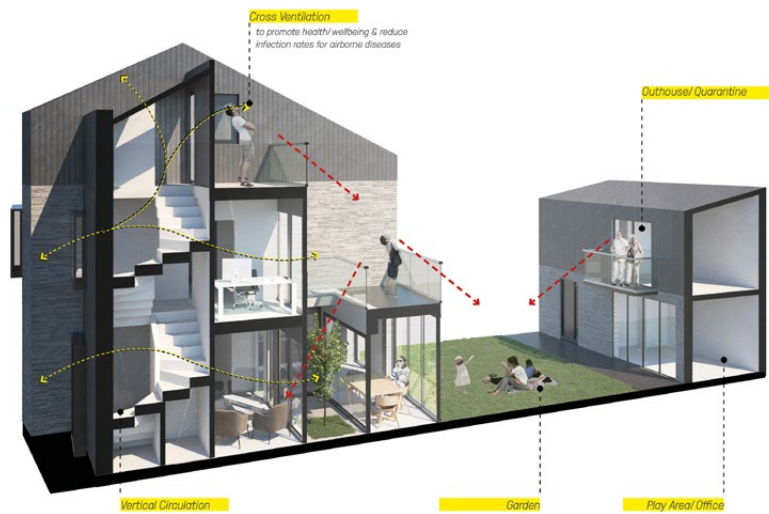
BM3

Towards the end of 2020, BM3 initiated an internal design competition for all of its staff, which would explore the day to day impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on our homes. The competition was held during the third lockdown, which BM3 hoped would provide a focus for employees during this challenging time. As part of the brief, competitors had to form a team with fellow colleagues from either the Birmingham or London studios. Again, BM3 was keen to ensure their members of staff were keeping in touch with other, during what has been a lonely time for many.

The practice, which specialises in residential architecture, was also very interested to see how housing might be affected by significant changes in people's lives, such as working from home, needing to quarantine or home schooling.

The brief was kept intentionally simple; staff could choose to use either a 1 bedroom apartment or a 3 bedroom house as the basis to explore design ideas. The gross internal area of the dwellings was expected to be approximately in line with Nationally Described Space Standards. There was also the added option for the teams to explore the design of the apartment or house in the wider context, such as an urban block.

The purpose of the competition was to provide ideas for how new housing and master planning could be designed to help people cope better with such a situation and the related issues such as lock down, food shortages, health and well-being, home working and cohabiting with extended families. 12 teams entered the competition, including groups made up of staff from both studios, The practice was particularly pleased about this, as the process encouraged employees to interact and build relationships with people they might not have known previously.



Winning Entry - 3 bedroom family home @ 100m² excluding private amenity space that sits within a larger housing complex. (BM3's Jay Rajpra, HoLim Yung, Tasos Siakotos)

There was an array of different designs and approaches by the entrants, but it quickly became evident to the judges that people saw ‘The home’ as being more important than ever; where living, sleeping, exercise, education, work and online socialising all need to be carried out under one roof, and often by multiple occupants. The entries explored the need for flexibility in both internal and external spaces, with spatial arrangement being of paramount importance to ensure that different spaces worked in harmony, especially when considering the needs of home schooling or working from home.

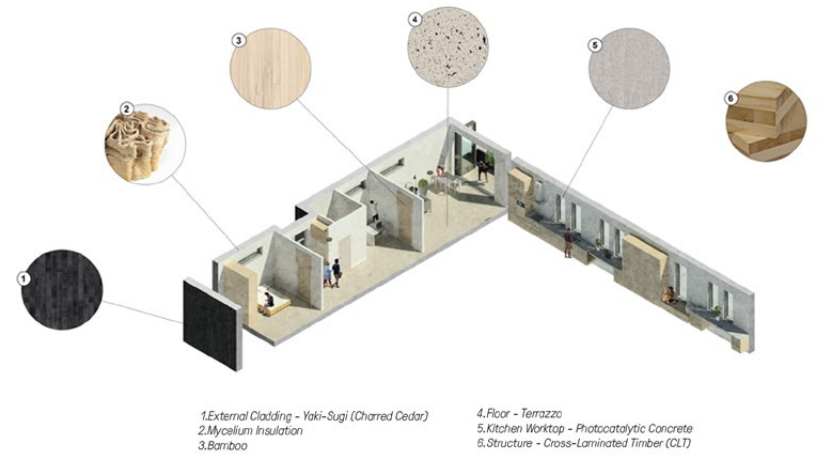
There was a greater emphasis on external space, where balconies and terraces were provided in addition to a rear garden. This was a key feature for the 3 bedroom family dwellings, where it provided occupants with the options of being together or enjoying some time alone.

The design of better integrated outdoor space was also an important design response for the apartments, and associated blocks. Communal spaces, walkways and roof gardens could all become areas where residents could benefit from well-designed amenity space, in addition to private outdoor space.

Some of the designs looked at providing multi use annexes (either connected or separate to the dwelling) where an occupant could self-isolate if needed, or it could be used as a play space/ office or even additional bedroom for overnight visitors. Again, flexibility was the key driver.

One of the apartment designs was very clever in providing a central zone which could be separated from the rest of the dwelling. It allowed a 1 bedroom apartment to work as an office, and even facilitated welcoming work visitors without them entering the more private spaces of the home.

Other ideas included a more focused specification of sustainable materials including self cleaning concrete for kitchen worktops, Mycelium insulation made from the vegetative part of a fungus and the use of bamboo for internal finishes.



Runner up apartment design with specific focus on materials. (BM3’s Jessica Humphrey, Richard Dunn, Charlotte Peters)



External and Internal 3D Visuals of the runner up design providing multi use annexes. (BM3’s Leena Gupta, Bianca Neagu)

The judges were **Rebecca Smith**, of the RIBA, together with two of BM3’s Directors, **John Jones** and **James Boulter**. They were delighted with the quality of ideas that were put forward, together with the accompanying design explanations provided by the teams.

Rebecca Smith, Regional Director RIBA West Midlands said:

“I was delighted to be asked to be involved as a judge for this project. It’s amazing to see one of our Chartered Practices looking forward and furthering their staffs design skills during a very difficult period. The submitted designs and willingness to examine the current and future climate to provide a solution was impressive. The selected winners all came up with innovative solutions that had responded well to the brief and really embraced the current requirements of the pandemic, whilst putting together design solutions that I could see in future developments. A huge well done to all involved!”

The competition was a great success in several ways, it explored how housing might evolve following significant social change, such as a pandemic, and demonstrated that the flexibility of spatial arrangement both internally and externally should be considered as an integral part of every housing brief moving forward. It also brought people together at a time when it was needed the most, and there was also the benefit of cash prizes for the winning entry and the 4 runners up.

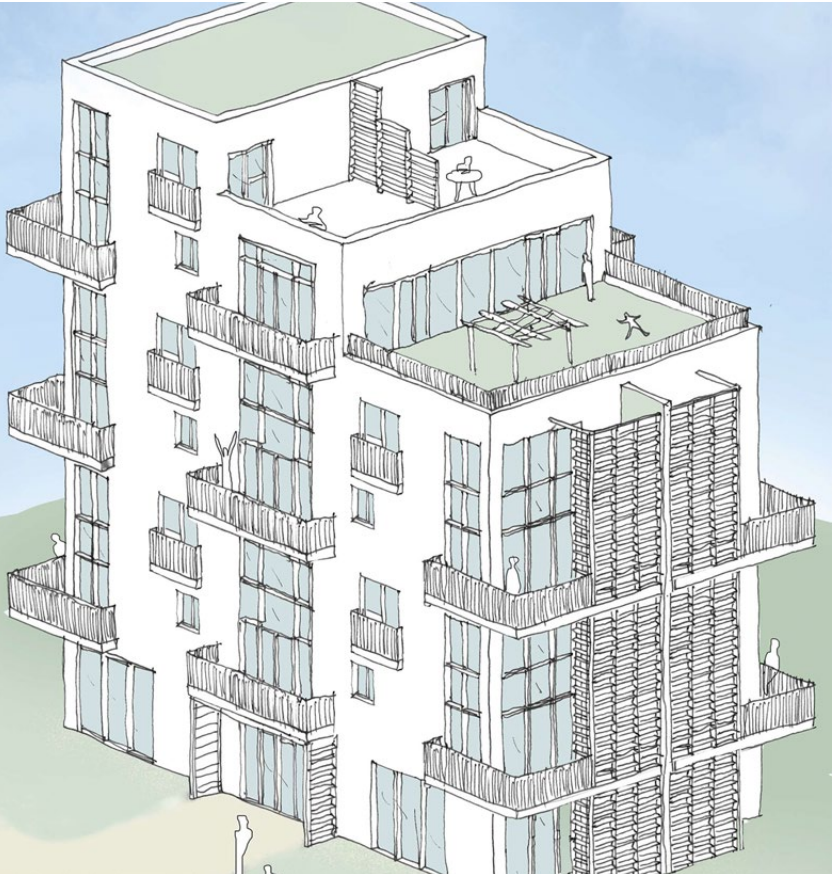
To take positives from a situation such as a global pandemic is difficult, but from carrying out this process, BM3 and its employees have learnt valuable lessons which will hopefully shape future housing projects.

Many congratulations to the winning team:

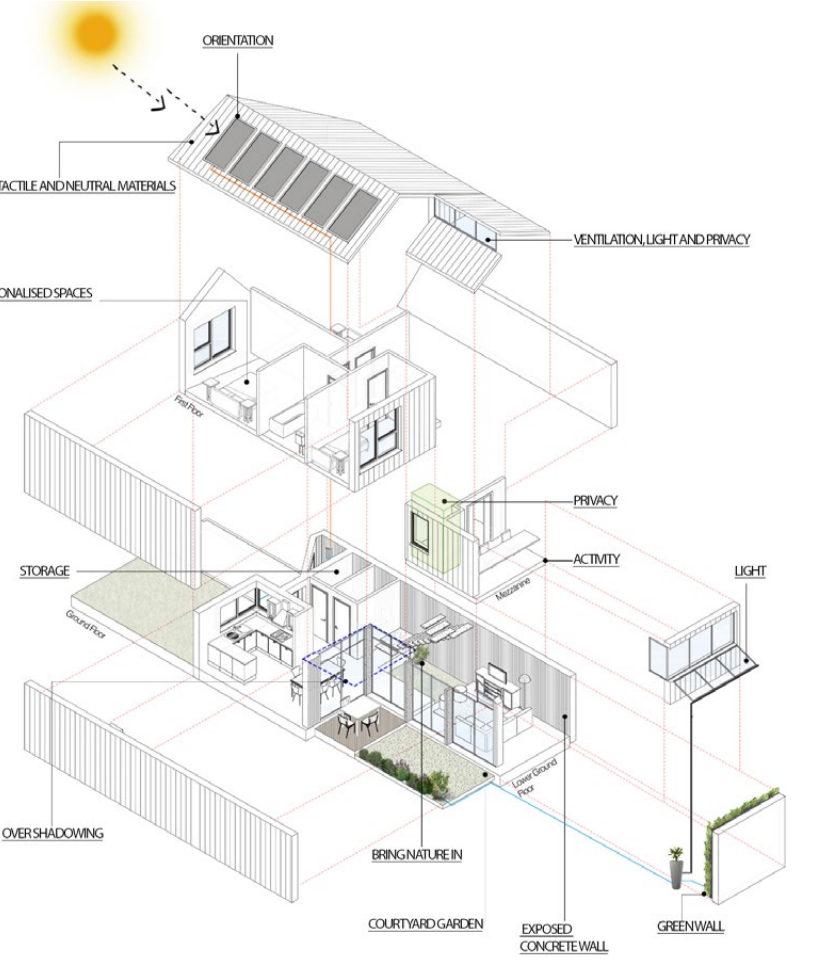
Jay Rajpra – Architect | Urban Designer, **HoLim Yung** – Architect | Principal Designer, **Tasos Siakotos** – Architectural Visualiser.



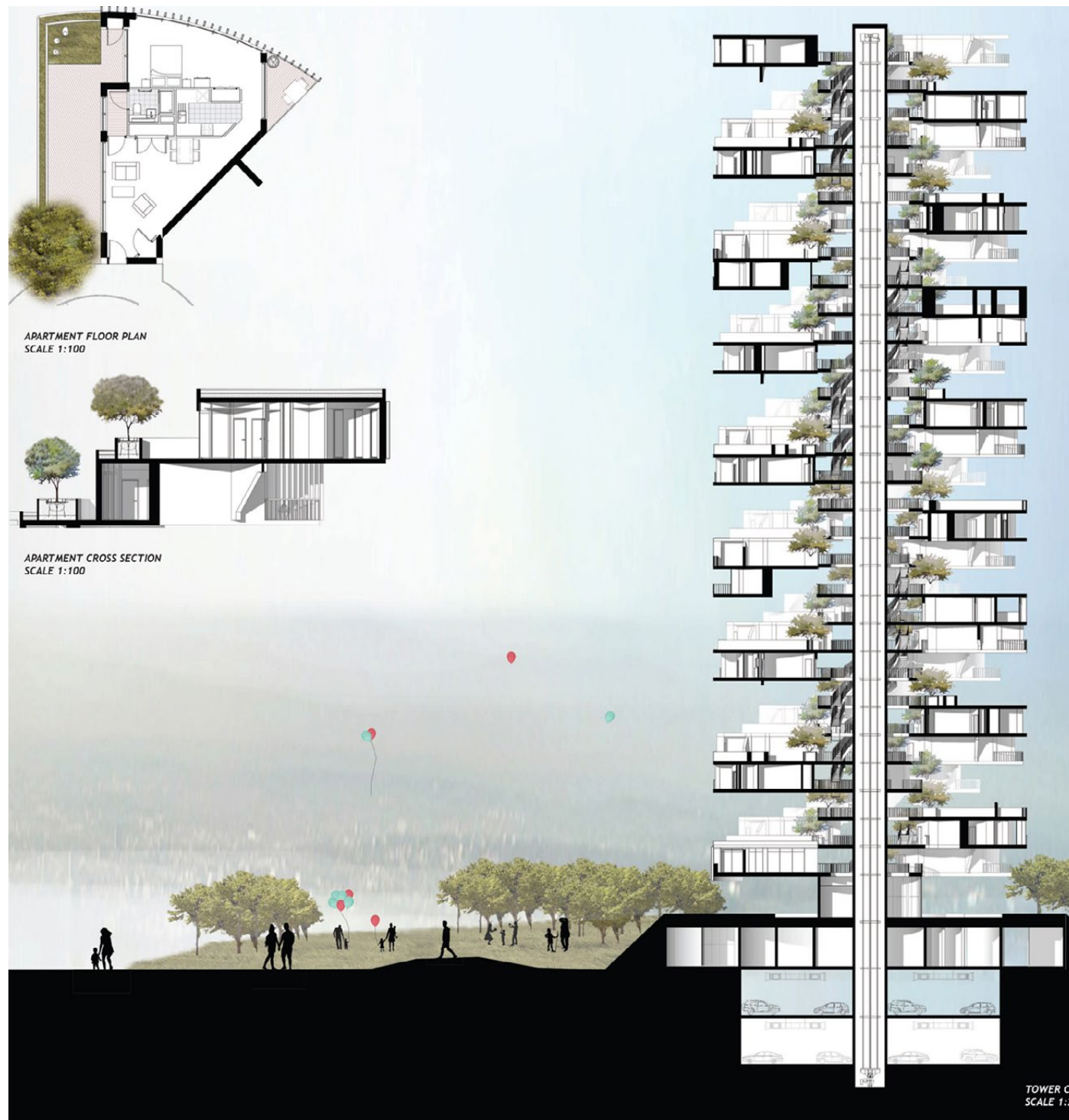
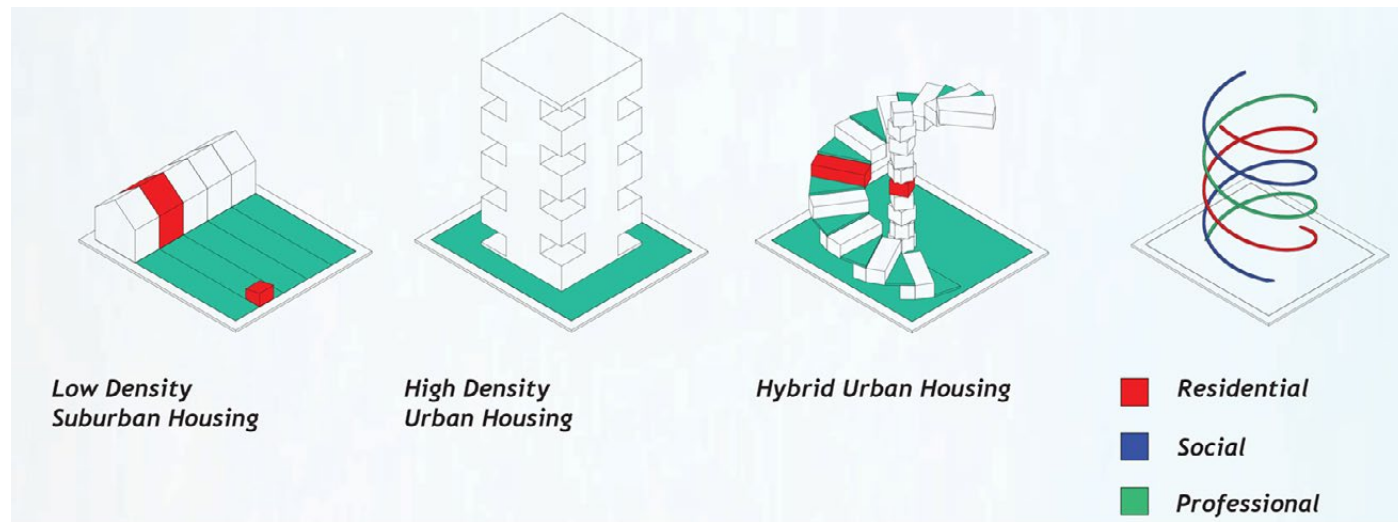
Left to right: Jay Rajpra, HoLim Yung and Tasos Siakotos



Runner up sketch visual which illustrates a variety amenity spaces. (BM3’s Marcello Seminara, Jaspal Johal, Ben Giles, Michele Wright)



Runner up design where the split-level structure takes advantage of different floor to ceiling heights and tactile materials to influence one’s psychology between differences spaces. (BM3’s Tammy Kariolis, Andrew Wilkins)



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