

The expert casts his eye over some of the projects. . .

**THE COUNTRY HOUSE – Corbin House, Cheshire (architect – Shed KM)**



This is designed to take into account the characteristics of local history and materials. It is constructed with large, clear span interior spaces inside rather than traditional cellular rooms. All spaces are enclosed with floor to ceiling glazing, allowing the dwelling and landscape to merge. "This is fairly radical in its internal space," comments Rob, "keeping very much to the landscape around it."

**THE CITY HOUSE – Garner Street, London (architect – Fat)**

The property contains a maisonette for a family of three, an office and a separate apartment. It has a billboard-like character, which communicates its function as a house and office. "This is a one-off project," says Rob, branching away from the possibility that London will soon be swamped by such-like houses. "It questions what a house looks like with its façade design. It's a bit cartoon-like!" he laughs. "Internally it is much more of a model because it's already a house with a family in it. It shows how, what was originally a traditional site, it has been adapted. Internally, it is a model that can be followed."



**THE "NON-PLAN" – Dungeness Beach House, Kent (architect – Simon Conder Architects)**



The shacks that populate the area have developed through improvisation. The scheme develops that tradition, in a way, responds to the drama and harshness of the landscape. Externally, both the walls and roof will be clad in black rubber, a technically more sophisticated version of the layers of felt and tar found on many existing buildings. "This is a house that just grows in an ad-hoc way," considers Rob. "It is not designed by architects as such – it is one that is much more reactive to the needs of the people living there. What is radical here is that it's covered in rubber! This is a new, and quite effective, way to cover your house."

"These kind of houses are, more often than not, found in areas like Dungeness Beach, where planning controls are not so strict. Nowadays, these houses are less and less common." The reason behind Rob's sad reflection is soon clear: "This is probably my personal favourite. The 'non-plan' is quite an interesting idea – it is pushing and reinterpreting current designs."

**THE TOWER BLOCK (image on page 42) – Holloway Circus, Birmingham (architect – Ian Simpson Architects)**

This 40-storey building integrates private and affordable housing over a 220-bedroom hotel. Each apartment, where possible, is orientated towards the south to maximise the potential for utilising passive solar gain. "I see no reason why this couldn't work in London," Rob contemplates. "It provides more private apartments, but with affordable housing mixed in, all built over a hotel. However, it is very much about finding and identifying a need. One of the problems with post-war housing was that it was plonked down without a thought to local needs. Now it is very different."

**THE MOBILE HOME – M-house (architect – mae)**

This is a factory-produced mobile structure, which comes in two zip together sections, and has a 50-year lifespan. The timber-lined interior has underfloor heating and the option of a small wood burning stove, and units can be ordered as fully wheelchair accessible. Transported to a site in two parts, the "m-house" could be weathered and installed in the morning in time for its owner to move in and cook lunch! Contradicting any tacky thoughts, Rob says: "It is very liveable. It's quite a generous house as it is a big unit. There is still the legal question of finding a site, and it is still untested. However, in theory there shouldn't be a problem. Either it is a stand-alone house, or it could almost be used as an extension – potentially on top of an office development!"

