

HIDDEN HOMELESS EDINBURGH

An Architectural Design Competition for Homeless Young People
Summer, 2020



Preamble

Homelessness is rising and is visible on streets and towns throughout Scotland. Shelter estimate that every 18 minutes a household becomes homeless in Scotland. The high cost of housing and shortage of affordable housing in Edinburgh means that homelessness is a particular problem in the city. Shelter Scotland has warned that the capital Edinburgh is at risk of a housing crisis comparable to that in London.

The Scottish Government assessed 2,895 households as homeless in 2018 in Scotland, in addition to this figure more than 1,245 people were in hostels, temporary shelters or unsuitable and overcrowded accommodation.

Young people are the hidden face of homelessness as they are often 'sofa surfing' or sleeping on buses, in transient housing or shelters. Half of the reported homeless population are single young males (followed closely by single young females). Within this context, a number of organisations are doing important work supporting homeless young people but are finding it extremely difficult to source suitable short term accommodation where people are supported and safe while they receive help with long term solutions.

It is significant that Under the 'Housing (Scotland) Act 1987' a person should be treated as homeless, even if they have accommodation, In addition to this 'The Homelessness (Scotland) Act 2003' outlines the provision that by 2012 anyone finding themselves homeless through no fault of their own must be entitled to settled accommodation (a council or housing association tenancy or private rental).

In addition to this, the Scottish Government code of guidance on homelessness says that: "Accordingly, when making accommodation available, local authorities should always seek to secure long-term solutions to homelessness. This should include consideration of the wide range of factors which may impact on resettlement - in particular the household's requirements in terms of proximity to family and friends and the accessibility of healthcare, employment, education and training and support providers."

The guidance emphasises that the minimum physical standard for accommodation must:

- be within the local authority's area. This is to prevent households with children being placed out of area and into accommodation where other clients may pose a risk to children, which the local authority may not be aware of. It also helps to preserve access to support services offered by the local authority;
- provide adequate bedrooms and adequate toilet and personal washing facilities for the exclusive use of the household. LAs should use their own HMO standards when considering if accommodation meets this standard;
- provide adequate cooking facilities - as above facilities should meet HMO standards. Note that cooking facilities can be shared with other households in the accommodation - subject to what HMO standards define;
- provide the use of a living room (the purpose of this is to allow any children space to play and do homework) - again, as with the cooking facilities, this does not have to be for the exclusive use of the household;
- be usable by the household for 24 hours a day. The purpose of this is to prevent households being locked out of the accommodation for part of the day, as can be common practice in some sorts of temporary accommodation.

Society has a responsibility to address the growing homeless crisis in Edinburgh and elsewhere. The current situation is unethical, unacceptable and unnecessary and must be addressed immediately. The Architects Foundation/McAslan Fellowship 2020, focuses on the young homeless of Edinburgh to address the problem at its roots. Those who fall on hard times and find themselves without a home deserve more than just temporary solutions or kind words. They deserve real help that gets them back on their feet.

HIDDEN HOMELESS

Contents Page

1

Introduction

2

Competition Brief

3

Competition Site

4

Competition Process

5

Key Information

HIDDEN HOMELESS

Edinburgh

3

1. Introduction

The American Institute of Architects Foundation (Architects Foundation) with the John McAslan Family Trust, the sponsor for this fellowship initiative, believe that much needs to be done to increase the amount of housing, or other forms of secure accommodation, for the estimated 15%* of people across Scotland who have been forced to stay in insecure or unsafe places because they have nowhere else to go. This initiative, in the form of a travel fellowship and design initiative, focuses specifically on short and medium term accommodation for 28 young homeless people, where these young people can stay safely while they are receiving support with longer-term solutions, alongside private housing.

The initiative challenges designers and architects to propose innovative approaches to decent housing for homeless young people in Edinburgh. This initiative seeks proposals that are demonstrably durable, functional and serviceable, because there is an opportunity to build the best designs on a selected site within the historic core of Edinburgh. It is estimated the proposed homeless accommodation within this competition, will be designed for a total of 28 people, with associated staff, and include private and shared space with open external areas.

Proposed designs should not hide the homeless. They should integrate accommodation for homeless young people with associated accommodation as space dictates. Although this integration does not necessarily require the two different uses to be within a single building, the private/public, or private/charitable combination may be necessary to help fund the scheme as it moves forward; it is also an important requirement to ensure that those who have become homeless are recognised as an acceptable part of the community in which they live.

Participants are encouraged to think of innovative ways to implement complicated building typologies in the context of the selected site. There are a number of additional key brief considerations which have been outlined below:

- **Social Responsibility** - The dramatic rise in homelessness over the last decade is a direct result of the housing crisis. Society has a moral responsibility to tackle rough sleeping and not to turn a blind eye. This initiative aims to tackle this issue head on and create a sustainable solution that could be replicated across a number of sites.
- **Co-Living** - There is a fantastic opportunity to create a sustainable scheme that provides a unique offer for different user groups. For instance homeless residents could be financially supported by the private users who in turn will feel socially gratified to give back to the community. Proposals should be informed by, and advertise this collective endeavour.
- **Planning Policy** - As the homeless shelter will be defined as 'temporary living accommodation' there is an opportunity to deviate from standardised UK housing policy (in the same way that student hostel accommodation is provided in much smaller units than could be the case for regular residential accommodation).
- **Community Issues** - Homeless housing is often unwelcomed by local residents, and can lead to animosity in communities. Design proposals must balance providing privacy for all residents with the need to create a scheme that encourages community spirit.
- **Security** - Research has shown that four in 10 rough sleepers have had mental health problems, 41% needed help with alcohol dependency and 31% with drug abuse*. For this reason creating a safe and secure environment is critical.
- **The Site** - The value of this university of Edinburgh named 'site' will need to be factored into the design proposals. Innovative design solutions to help preserve land values for this hybrid scheme should be considered.
- **Viability** - The shelter will require an ongoing means of economic support to ensure its financial viability. Designs should provide a proposal for a potential revenue stream for the university by virtue of the associated accommodation. This might be in the form of regular accommodation, short term lets, a more commercial facility, or an events space.

* https://scotland.shelter.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/1594103/Hidden_Homelessness.pdf/_nocache

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Numbers in rough sleeping are rising:



Causes of the rise in rough sleeping include:

Housing benefit cuts and an insufficient supply of genuinely affordable housing

A breakdown in relationships including with Family / Friends or a Partner

Cuts to mental health services that leave many vulnerable people with nowhere else to go

Source:
<https://www.rocktrust.org/youth-homelessness/>
https://scotland.shelter.org.uk/housing_policy/key_statistics/homelessness_facts_and_research
https://scotland.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/policy_library/policy_library_folder/getting_behind_the_homeless_statistics_update_for_2017-18

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2. Competition Brief

This is an ideas competition and while it is hoped that the winning ideas might be turned into a real project by the University of Edinburgh or an alternative, this is not a competition for a live project. The competition brief requires two key design elements. Firstly to provide a homeless shelter for 16-21 year olds. Secondly to provide a private use (cultural/commercial/residential) on the same site footprint.

The homeless shelter must provide a variety of short and medium stay emergency accommodation for 16 - 21 year old with all the associated support facilities.

1. The Homeless Shelter Brief

In order to provide shelter for 28 young homeless people the project will require 560 sqm NIA of space which will be comprised of the following spaces:

Short stay emergency accommodation (280 sqm)

This space will be provided for a maximum of 28 days and must be designed as a temporary living space for young vulnerable homeless people. The accommodation will provide a space to sleep, store clothes and wash whilst receiving psychological help from the charity in an emergency situation. The dormitories and associated facilities must be separated between male and female. Each dormitory must provide a shared bedroom and shared bathroom facility as well as storage lockers.

- 1 ten person male dormitory - 120 sqm
- 1 support facility for the male dormitory to include showers and toilets - 20 sqm
- 1 ten person female dormitory - 120 sqm
- 1 support facility for the female dormitory to include showers and toilets - 20 sqm

Medium stay accommodation (160 sqm)

These spaces will be provided for a maximum of 3 months and must be designed as shared living accommodation in the form of a flat. Each flat must provide private rooms and bathrooms with a shared kitchen area for up to 4 people.

- 1 female housing unit to provide a 4 bedroom flat - this should be approximately 80 sqm
- 1 male housing unit to provide a 4 bedroom flat - this should be approximately 80 sqm

Support Facilities (120 sqm)

- 1 bedroom for the homeless site operative - this should be approximately 20 sqm
- 1 private homeless communal space to include clothes washing facilities - 20 sqm
- 1 four bedroom flat for private rental with dedicated separate entrance at 80 sqm

Brief requirements

- There must be clear separation between male and female sleeping areas
- There must be a clear separation between short and medium stay accommodation
- The site must provide shared amenity space, clothes washing and drying facilities, controlled access, storage for linen and bedding as well as a shared kitchen for staff and residents
- There must be a secure storage facility for resident's belongings
- There must be a provision for a staff flat to manage the building. This must also provide sleeping facilities for staff
- The facility must be designed to be respectful to its neighbours
- It is envisioned that the majority of support and training will continue to operate from New Horizons headquarters
- As well as providing a homeless shelter, each design proposal should also provide an ongoing revenue stream for the homeless charity. The brief above suggests a rentable flat but this might be an alternative use.
- A possible source of revenue should be included as part of the competition entry within the context of the shelter's financial viability strategy. This might be in the form of residential accommodation, an events space, retail space, commercial space, a start-up space, catering or food and beverage offers or workshops (see the private site brief opposite).

HIDDEN HOMELESS

2. Competition Brief

2. The Private Use Site

Proposals must also incorporate an independent development opportunity on the site which can co-exist with the homeless shelter. This brief suggests two options for the private component that should be selected and applied to the site. Option A suggests a commercial / cultural component and Option B suggests a private housing component. The proposed scheme must provide a truly integrated solution that offers both user groups privacy but also create shared community spaces for all user groups. Proposals must respect and protect the vulnerable homeless users whilst safeguarding the value of the private component.

A. Commercial Accommodation Brief

In addition to the homeless shelter requirements, Option A asks designers to look at providing a commercial or cultural space to satisfy the brief for the private component. Design proposals should provide the following spaces:

- Approximately 560 sqm of accommodation for the homeless shelter and associated facilities (set out in 'Homeless Shelter Brief')
- Approximately 560 sqm of accommodation for the private commercial / cultural space
- A dedicated entrance to the private commercial space

B. Residential Accommodation Brief

In addition to the homeless shelter requirements, Option B asks designers to look at providing residential accommodation to satisfy the brief for the private component. Design proposals should provide the following spaces:

- Approximately 560 sqm of accommodation for the homeless shelter and associated facilities
- Approximately 560 sqm of accommodation for the private residential space
- A dedicated entrance to the private residential space

The Site

A site is yet to be identified for the project, details will follow shortly

4. Competition Process

Deliverables

All entries should be submitted digitally no later than the competition deadline of January 17, 2020 via the Architects Foundation's OpenWater portal. Competitors should note that hard copy submissions are not required and should not be sent.

The project submission must contain the following files:

- Two landscape A1 boards with the project information including plans, sections and perspectives. Participants are encouraged to submit all the information they consider necessary to explain their proposal but this must be contained within the two A1 boards.
- 1 project statement (600 words max)
- 1 financial plan for income generation (200 words max)
- 1 entry form containing the entrants' personal information including Team Structure (including names, professions, and contact details).

The Judging Process

The jury will meet to assess the submissions and identify 2 winners. In addition to the winning schemes the Jury will select a number of semi-finalists who will have their proposals exhibited along with those of the winners in a public exhibition at John McAslan + Partners' offices in Edinburgh. All teams selected for the public exhibition will be contacted by email by February 28, 2020.

The Exhibition and announcement of the winners

The public exhibition showcasing the winning schemes and those of the semi-finalists will open to the public to begin during CGIU and extend through the AF/McAslan Fellowship period (estimated June, 2020). There will be an opening event that will be attended by a number of influential people and covered by the press. The judges will introduce the charity, announce the names of the winning teams and present the competition winners with their awards.

The Judging Criteria

The judges will take the following issues into consideration when making their selection of the schemes that will be exhibited and the winners:

1. Problem Definition

Does the applicant have a clear understanding of the constraints and opportunities associated with this challenge?

2. Design Solution

Has the applicant clearly defined an architectural solution? Is the solution distinctive or fundamentally different from existing approaches? Could the solution viably be implemented and sustained in the real world? Would the solution inspire people to support it?

3. Potential for Social Impact

Do the proposals clearly understand and address societal issues? Does the solution demonstrate the potential to make life better for the target population(s)? Do the proposals raise social awareness and encourage engagement with the target populations?

4. Sustainability

Has the applicant developed a plan for the economic sustainability of its proposal? For this competition, this means the ability to continually generate revenue to sustain the operations of the team's design.

5. The Applicant

Has the applicant engaged a strong group of advisors and/or partners?

Awards

Please note the prize money, which has now been confirmed as US \$7,500 Architects Foundation/McAslan Fellowship Award

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5. Key Information

Key Competition Dates

- Competition Launch: 11/05/2019
- Closing date for Queries 11/29/2019
- Competition Deadline: 01/16/2020
- Judging of Competition 02/21/2020
- Public Exhibition (winners announced): 04/17-6/30/2020

Winners will use AF/McAslan Fellowship funding to attend CGIU in Edinburgh April 17-19, 2020, and a subsequent month during the summer working alongside John McAslan + Partners to further explore opportunities to realise the project.

The Judges

- John Snow, Broadcaster
- Marci B. Reed, Executive Director, Architects Foundation
- John McAslan, Executive Chairman, John McAslan + Partners
- Heather Macey, Associate, John McAslan + Partners