

**Future
Architecture
Platform**




Archifutures

The Site

A field guide
to the future
of architecture

Edited by &beyond

A halftone photograph of a residential building with a hot air balloon in the sky. The image is composed of a grid of small dots, creating a textured effect. The building is a multi-story structure with a gabled roof and several windows. A hot air balloon is visible in the sky to the left of the building. The overall scene is a quiet residential street.

Intimate Infra- structures



**A social and spatial
strategy for high-density
design at a human scale**

By Natasha Reid

Intimate Infrastructures
A social and spatial strategy for high-density design at a human scale

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Intimate Infrastructures

“These *intimate* ideas of living emphasise the connections, relationships and interactions between people from the scale of the home to the community.”

In search of creative solutions to London's burgeoning housing crisis, Natasha Reid looks at redesigning the classic townhouse typology as mixed-use with communal facilities better suited to the city's diverse needs and changing demographics.



In response to the housing crisis in London, Intimate Infrastructures proposes a toolkit and strategy for locking together social, cultural and economic values into a framework for human-centric housing delivery. By addressing the challenges of contemporary living and changing situations, the project proposes new models for accommodating twenty-first century patterns of life. These more “intimate” ideas of living have an emphasis on the connections, relationships and interactions between people, from the scale of the home to that of the community.

Natasha Reid Design

Natasha Reid founded her studio in 2014 with the aim of enriching the practice of design through a closer focus on how people experience, relate to and perceive their surroundings, with a heightened sensitivity to human nature and behaviour.

The studio has worked with a wide range of clients, from individuals to local authorities, leading developers, cultural institutions and arts organisations including the UN High Commission for Refugees and the British Council. Their *Intimate Infrastructure* project won an international competition in 2015 for solutions to the housing crisis and was presented to the office of the Mayor of London in the context of informing future policy. They were also awarded funding in 2016 for their *Intimate Neighbourhoods LDN*NYC* initiative – to work in partnership with leading experts and institutions in New York and develop new cross-city insights on placemaking.

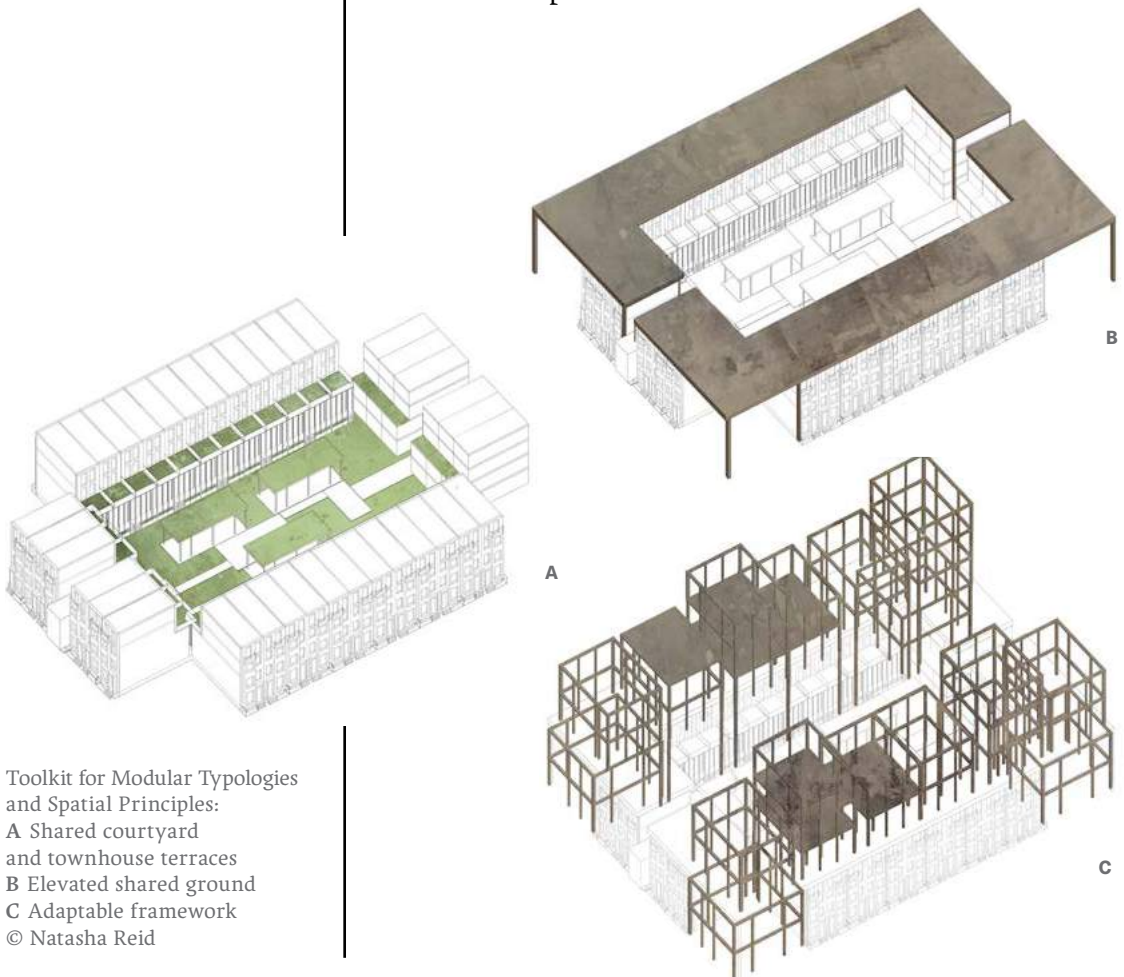
Previous page:
Juxtaposing domestic scale with new infrastructure.
© Natasha Reid

This page: Reinterpretation of the townhouse.
© Natasha Reid

Intimate Infrastructures

The project challenges the pervasive model of residential towers. It asks how we can build at high density, using an alternative model, by proposing a strategy for maximising available land use to provide an economic housing solution for different groups in need, yet without incurring the formidable build costs of high-rise.

The proposal is to capitalise on the land available within the city, to allow for urban intensification rather than sprawl, exploring ways of working at large scale, which also pay attention to quality of life, urban vitality, character of place and civic relations.



Toolkit for Modular Typologies
and Spatial Principles:

- A Shared courtyard
and townhouse terraces
 - B Elevated shared ground
 - C Adaptable framework
- © Natasha Reid

The project focuses on two groups: local communities at risk from radical urban renewal and vulnerable to displacement, and private renters who cannot access home ownership in the current crisis, from young professionals on low incomes to other more vulnerable and mobile city dwellers.

A *missing typology* of new-build shared housing is proposed to meet the demand of renters in the immediate term, whilst also accommodating larger family homes within a framework that focuses on quality of place. The study explores how different types of people can be mixed in a development rather than creating a mono-tenure “ghetto”.

Currently, the private rental market is unregulated in terms of space standards. Intimate Infrastructures proposes new, mass-produced, modular “shared houses” as standardised components, to ensure minimum space standard levels, while speeding up delivery and reducing construction costs.

The *shared house* modules are low-cost, robust shell spaces, which can be finished by inhabitants according to their means. This new model could also provide a radical approach to giving access to property and security by allowing for micro units of space to be owned too, such as a single bedroom.

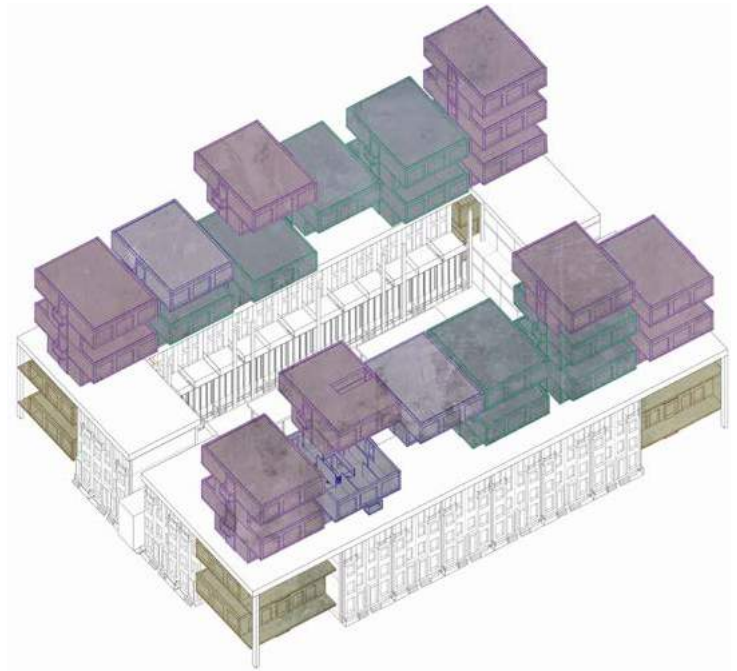
Permanent infrastructure is provided at ground level in the form of courtyards and owner-occupied townhouses, based on the London pattern of squares, and aims to embed the importance of street-life into areas undergoing change. The townhouse typology is an updated version of the traditional London terrace, proven to be a highly

*Mixing old
and new typologies*

London street life

Intimate Infrastructures

resilient and adaptable model in the city fabric. The spatial configuration responds to the changing nature of family structures and work patterns, for instance the increase in adult children returning to the family home in the face of the housing crisis.



Toolkit for Modular Typologies
and Spatial Principles:
shared house typologies.
© Natasha Reid

An adaptable frame structure above street level contains the shared homes, which can change, grow and recede according to future needs. Within this, individual dwellings are articulated and vertical elements give rhythm to the street and a human scale to the city – differentiating them from the usual model for mass housing of monolithic, uniform blocks.

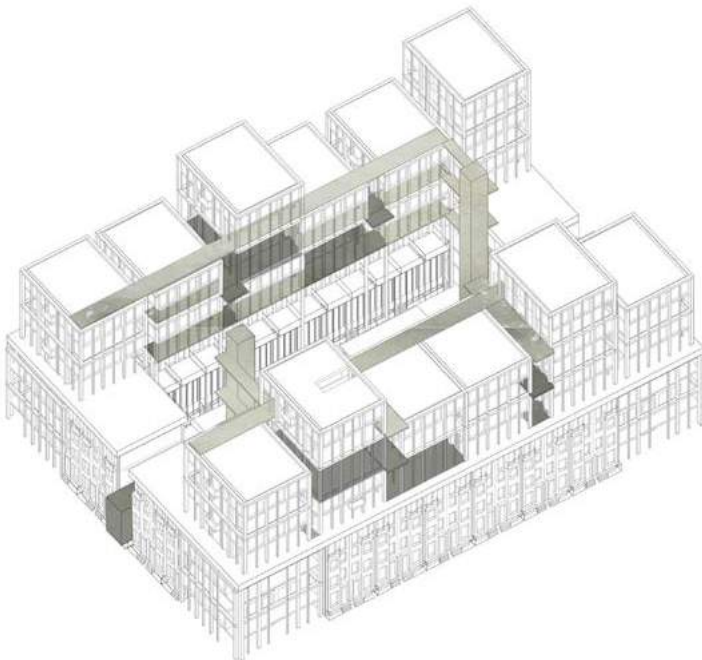
Communities of place

The collision of different tenures and groups reflects the heterogeneous city; the proposal provides a range of different conditions to suit people at different stages in life, incomes and lifestyle preferences. It seeks to interlock

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two types of community, not “pepper potting” them but allowing opportunities for interaction through mixing space for social activities. In order to create a closer, denser layout of households, shared space is emphasised and privacy provided by the careful treatment of boundaries.

This framework approach provides the physical infrastructure for urban densification, while simultaneously setting up a social infrastructure to support strong communities. The project considers the in-between spaces to be as important as the buildings themselves. The areas between interior and exterior allow for overlapping spaces and functions, and subsequently different social groups. Shared spaces are provided for people to appropriate and collectively shape, increasing the number of their chance encounters and facilitating wider participation in civic and communal life.



Building connectedness

“This project considers the in-between spaces to be as important as the buildings themselves.”

Toolkit for Modular
Typologies and Spatial
Principles: network of
passages and “inbetween”
spaces. © Natasha Reid





***Typological
relationships***

Previous page:
New shared house typology.
© Natasha Reid

The two house typologies have been developed to define much more than a particular appearance or aesthetic. Boundaries are the means to generate both privacy and community in both house types. Using social relations as the generator for design, the built fabric informs how inhabitants meet through creating settings and graded thresholds that delineate the borders between public and private realms. A range of spatial devices across interior and exterior conditions determines the relationships between households and even between members of the same household.

Overall, the project is an exploration of how the arrangement of space can reflect and support relationships from the individual to the civic. Seeking to go deeper than surface appearances and form, it puts forward an architecture that can act as a facilitator of activity and a collective framework for public life. ■