A NEW COLLEGE FOR CAMBRIDGE

The selected design for the new Robinson College at Cambridge provides traditional collegiate organisation for the Herschel Road site, in sharp contrast to the other three schemes from shortlisted practices.

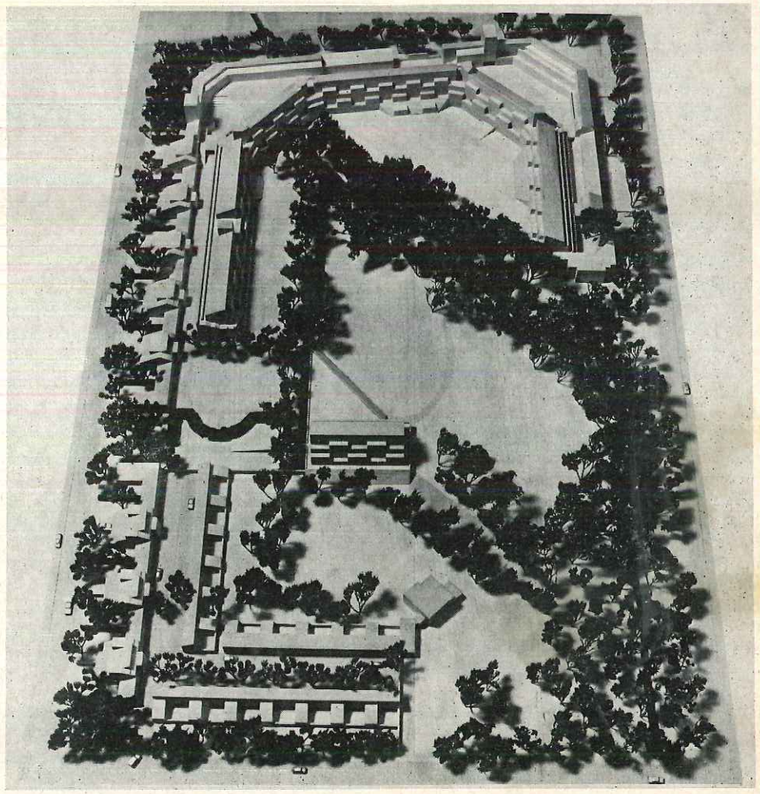
The design by Glasgow architects Gillespie, Kidd & Coia, which has been selected for the new Robinson College at Cambridge, lives up to the architects' preliminary appreciation of the project in which they said: "Conceptually, the new foundation should not only be a college, but should seek to manifest its built form within collegiate terms of reference."

The scheme echoes the traditional colleges both in its organisation as a simple single entity, easily identifiable, and in its creation of a wide variety of external spaces, each with its own recognisable character. It is probably this aspect, together with its minimum disturbance of the trees, lawns and waterways on the site, that attracted the trustees to the scheme.

The other three shortlisted schemes all used more of the site and, in varying degrees, offered more segmentalised solutions with domestic scale and intimate characters as opposed to the "formal" collegiate approach.

Architect's report

A college can be considered as a self-governing society organised around the idea



Selected scheme by Gillespie, Kidd & Coia.

of study, of learning and teaching: activities which demand an environment of calm and relative seclusion. Corporate identity, historic continuity in an evolving society is reinforced by a strong sense of place deriving from organic ordering of built form and space with clear articulation of parts, grouping needs and activities of varying priorities and formality.

These needs and activities are complex. There are the potentially conflicting needs of the long term inhabitants; the masters and fellows, the administrative and domestic staff; and those of the more transient inhabitants, the graduates, undergraduates and visitors. There is evident need for long-term flexibility and growth.

Contemporary factors influencing the prototype are the mixed community, private car parking, vehicular and service access, conference use, building and fire regulations, consideration for disabled people, and cost.

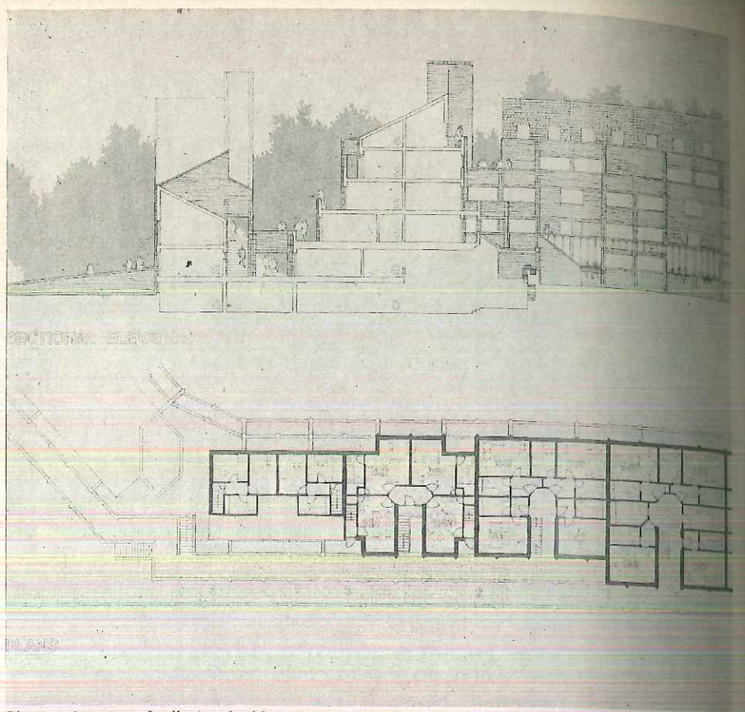
The flexibility of the traditional college buildings, although remarkable, limits the response to the changing nature of the present day college communities. There are two basic problem areas: first, those generated by married academics and second, the admission of both sexes. The latter problem is largely taken care of by the planned inclusion of individual toilet facilites for conference purposes. The urgent problem is that generated by the families of the academics, an unsatisfactory solution to which poses a threat both to the college and to the comfort and life style of the family. We regard the solution of this problem as of major importance.

Private cars generate problems and basic to the resolution of these is their visual exclusion from college areas by the sectional exploitation of ground and building levels. Access and parking relate to circulation patterns and the needs of service, college inhabitants, married members, general visitors and conference participants.

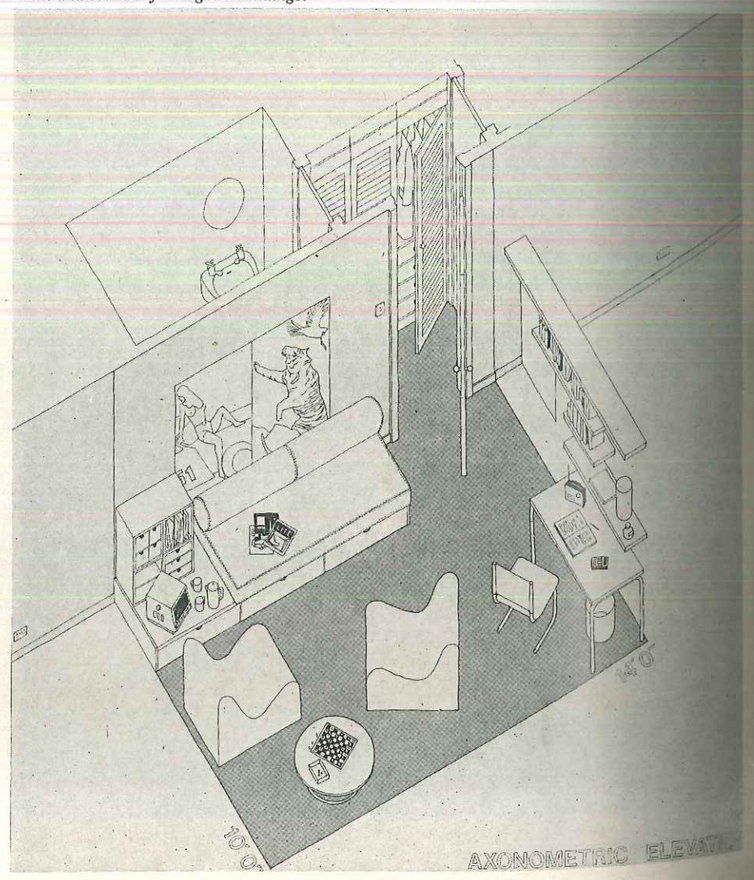
Conference letting is subject to strong competition among colleges, and planning of a completely new college makes possible the incorporation of conference requirements from first principle to the mutual benefit of the college and the conferences. The following factors are primary: conference activity should not prejudice the life style of the college and also not inhibit the conference user; as most conference visitors are likely to arrive by car, parking facilities are of major importance, and conferences require many or all of the facilities already catered for in college, and careful planning of lettable accommodation would minimise duplication of space and interference with normal college activities in other parts of the building.

The increasing stringency of building and fire regulations are especially onerous in the impact on traditional college planning, and the requirements of alternative means of escape create most impact on staircase access systems. The use of balconies and terraces for this purpose additionally serves the needs of disabled people.

Continuing public concern and its corresponding governmental legislation makes access and provision for disabled people an evermore important constraint, and full access by handicapped people should be incorporated in a college and the use of access balconies and lifts makes this possible.



Plans and section of collegiate buildings.



Axonometric of typical study bedroom.

The present economic circumstances constrain balance between investment and running cost with an over-emphasis on minimum capital outlay, causing imbalance in favour of impermanence. Collegiate life with its suggestion of continuity makes it wiser to look for reasonable balance between initial and recurring costs which favours buildings of relatively loose fit and long life. This is in harmony with current re-examination of attitudes to permanence and obsolescence.

Site considerations

The site is fortunate in its situation near the main university library and the existing pattern of roads and pedestrian ways suggest the college's centre of gravity is near Grange Road. This would also imply a building with the maximum density near Grange Road graduating down towards the gardens. This follows the traditional pattern in which the college buildings lie on the interface between town and garden.

The conservation of mature planting allows the creation (simultaneously) of college buildings and college gardens, while Bin Brook, although presenting problems of water management and fluctuation of level, suggests a possible creative use of water.

Construction is affected by the availability of leases, but the presently available site coincides with the area established by the circulation pattern as likely to be the most densely developed.

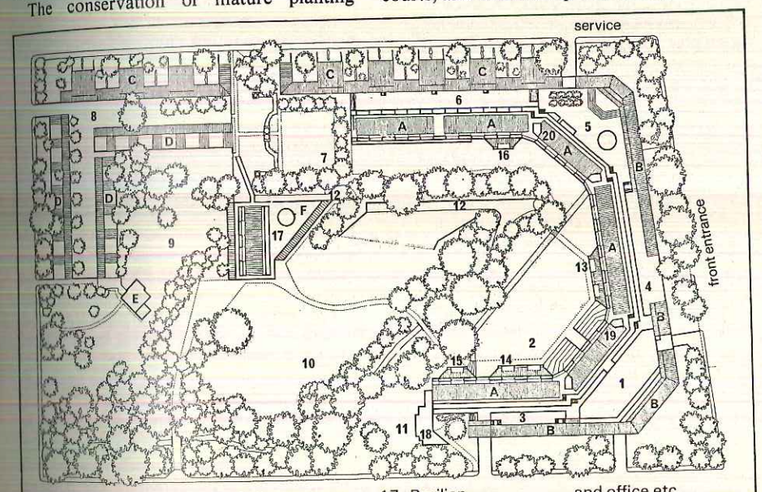
Proposals

The college buildings are arranged on the perimeter of the site from Binstead to No 2 Sylvester Road, with an independent pavilion replacing Thorneycreek. This arrangement permits the preservation of virtually all the important existing planting and gardens, and places the college behind a 10 foot and 40 foot screen of mature trees which are part of the existing street. The main frontage and entrance are in Grange Road with a service access in Adams Road and subsidiary vehicular access from Herschel Road.

Family houses are placed along Adams Road and Sylvester Road creating an extramural residential enclave with its own private and college gardens.

The built form of the college derives from the concept of a linear sequence of courts of varied width contained between a higher block of staircase units on the inner or garden side, and a lower block of sets and units of varied size, shape and purpose on the outer or public side. This outer building varies also in height and becomes family housing along the Adams Road frontage.

Major social functions are inserted under the staircase block and the library, hall and chapel extend into the gardens to articulate and emphasise the collegiate nature of the buildings. Common rooms and teaching rooms are anonymously arranged along the courts, and where no special accommodation is needed, the residential floors infill down to garden level.



1 Front court
2 Lawn
3 Library court
4 Senior common room court
5 Junior common room court
6 Back court
7 Topiary garden
8 College mews
9 Family garden
10 College garden
11 Wardens' garden
12 Canal
13 Hall
14 Library
15 Chapel
16 Music room
17 Pavilion
18 Wardens' lodge
19 Senior common room
20 Junior common room
A Inner staircase blocks
B Outer blocks, sets and office etc
C Family houses, sets over
D Family houses courtyard
E Existing house
F Pavilion staircase block on games podium

Strategy plan of selected scheme showing site organisation.

Staircase units are galleried permitting variety of access and more specifically allowing alternative fire escape routes.

The buildings are conceived as basically brick built with stone or brick paving on the courts and galleries and pitched tiled roofs. Internally, rooms are plastered with timber lining or brick facing where appropriate in circulation areas or public rooms.

Planning

Pedestrian entry from Grange Road is to a Front Court from which access is obtained to the important facilities such as library, hall, large lecture hall, senior common room, etc. A lift adjacent to the library connects all public facilities and each gallery level, and facilitates access by disabled people.

The large lecture room, college bar and the hall together with a number of teaching rooms, lettable rooms or offices can form an independent conference suite. The senior common room suite, of sitting room, dining room and breakfast room, is adjacent to the hall with overlooking reception balcony.

From the Front Court a short narrow court leads past the porter's accommodation, senior common room suite, bursaries and tutorial offices towards a wider court around which are grouped the undergraduate facilities, cafeteria, junior common room, club, television and music rooms, etc. A stepped lecture room fitted with audio visual equipment could also be sited here as could an external amphitheatre.

A long court connects the junior common room court and a topiary garden which utilises the existing topiary hedge. The staircases in this area extend down to the garden to provide units of 18 residents, while the building on the outside accommodates two family houses with garages and private gardens and four single sets in each unit.

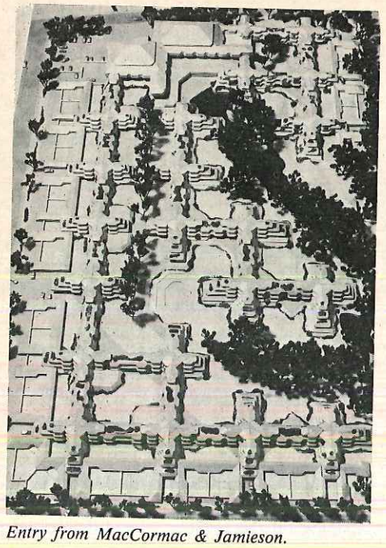
A separate pavilion on the site of Thorneycreek provides three more staircase units and games and sports facilities including squash. Beyond the topiary gardens an L-shaped mews area provides family housing relating to the college having its own private and communal college garden.

A service yard for the works department, bulk storage, kitchen, buttery, etc is placed under the junior common room court which is raised to provide full headroom. The placing of the kitchen allows service to hall, junior common room, cafeteria and senior common room, breakfast and drinking facilities and all bars. An adjacent goods lift reaches all gallery levels. Beyond the Front Court a short court leads to the warden's lodge and the chapel.

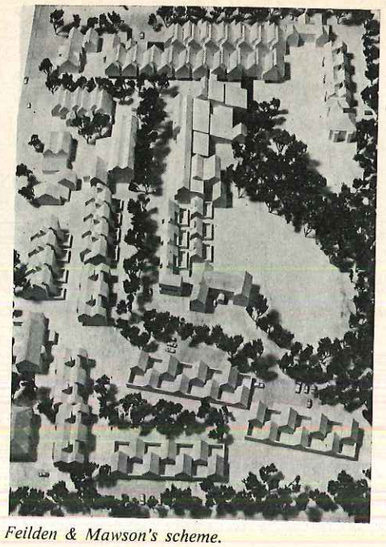
Segregation of vehicular and pedestrian access has been achieved largely by use of changes in level. Parking to the required scale is provided, but a major innovation is the introduction of an additional conference car park under the college lawn adjacent to the main buildings. It must be emphasised that this suggestion is optional, it need not happen, now or even later, but in our opinion could be a major feature in conference attraction and could serve as an undergraduate car park in term time. Parking for each phase of the college development occurs under the court levels. Parking areas are designated according to convenience; fellows can enter college via the mail room in the porter's lodge, servants would park in the service yard, etc. Short term visitors would park under the trees adjacent to the main entrance. Entrance to the service yard and conference park can be supervised by porters.

Architectural treatment

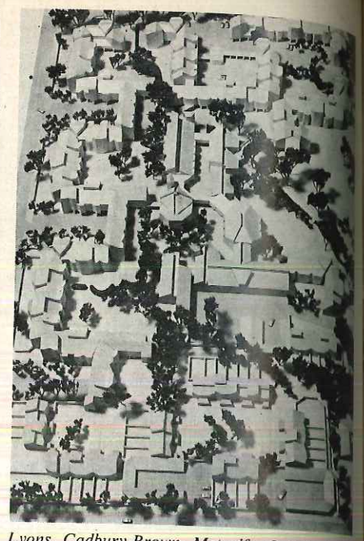
The concept of the final development shows a graduation of density of development from the very densely built up front to the generous open space of the secluded garden area. Planting and built forms define a sequence of self-programmed spaces. Front court, back court, college lawn, college garden, wardens' gar-



Entry from MacCormac & Jamieson.



Feilden & Mawson's scheme.



Lyons, Cadbury-Brown, Metcalfe, Cunningham.

den, topiary garden, service yard, etc. The college precinct presents a formal, tree screened front of an appropriate scale and size to the town, which changes to a looser residential screen along Adams and Sylvester Road.

The staircase units are organised into blocks of visually manageable size adjacent to the gardens and the overall dense effect minimised by the use of the existing mature tree lines to create a variety of architectural and landscape effects. The brick facades are ordered and organised by a system of diagonal brick piers linking balconies, windows and galleries together into a human scaled composition.

The projection of the library, hall and chapel beyond the main line of the building is carefully related to the size of the college lawn, and of a clearly non-residential character. The use of facing brick, roofing tile, pavoirs and stone slabs is intended to allow the buildings to weather gracefully and be enhanced by the passage of time. The discrete units envisaged also allow for changing ideas in developing the proposals over a period of time.

The basic staircase unit groups 14-18 undergraduates to a stair in a variety of room shapes and combination which make change possible and would allow the introduction of teaching or special rooms. A gyp room and trunk store is provided on each stair.

The suggested double undergraduate sets in the top floor which have minimal bedrooms could be replaced by two bedsitting rooms if this was required. It was felt they were useful for freshers or friends who liked sharing a sitting-room. The additional area generated at each floor by the corner blocks permits the introduction of a number of flats of different sizes.

No attempt has been made at this stage to design the larger single sets, flats or houses in detail, but enough investigation has been done to prove the viability of the proposals. This accommodation is incorporated into the lower block on the outside of the college which allows accommodation to vary in height and width and will incorporate sets of flats and possibly (temporary) houses. The 30 foot or 40 foot set back from the pavement allows the development of an extra-mural garden space if necessary.

The hall and the library are designed to have the traditional high window cill but views into the garden are available from internal balconies. The chapel can merge more intimately with the nearby trees via floor to ceiling windows.

The basic room is entered off the stair via a small lobby with wardrobe and cupboards which also give access to the bathroom permitting cleaning without disturbing the occupant of the room. The rooms are simply shaped, carpeted, with plastered walls and ceilings. Where possible built-in furniture in the room is avoided to permit choice of furniture arrangement to the occupant. Most rooms have access to a gallery or balcony; all have alternative escape routes.

The landscape proposals envisage the creation of a sequence of gardens utilising the basic existing planting and water. These consist of a college lawn, a large formal grass area adjacent to the buildings bounded by the existing dense woodland containing Bin Brook, and a major college meadow garden behind the tree belt, deliberately kept simple and lengthened by judicious clearing of shrubs and small trees in the vegetable garden area. A broad walk has been created under the line of trees to the north of this area separated from it by a new canal. Beyond this, a topiary garden leads to a way through to Adams Road completing the private college area of garden.

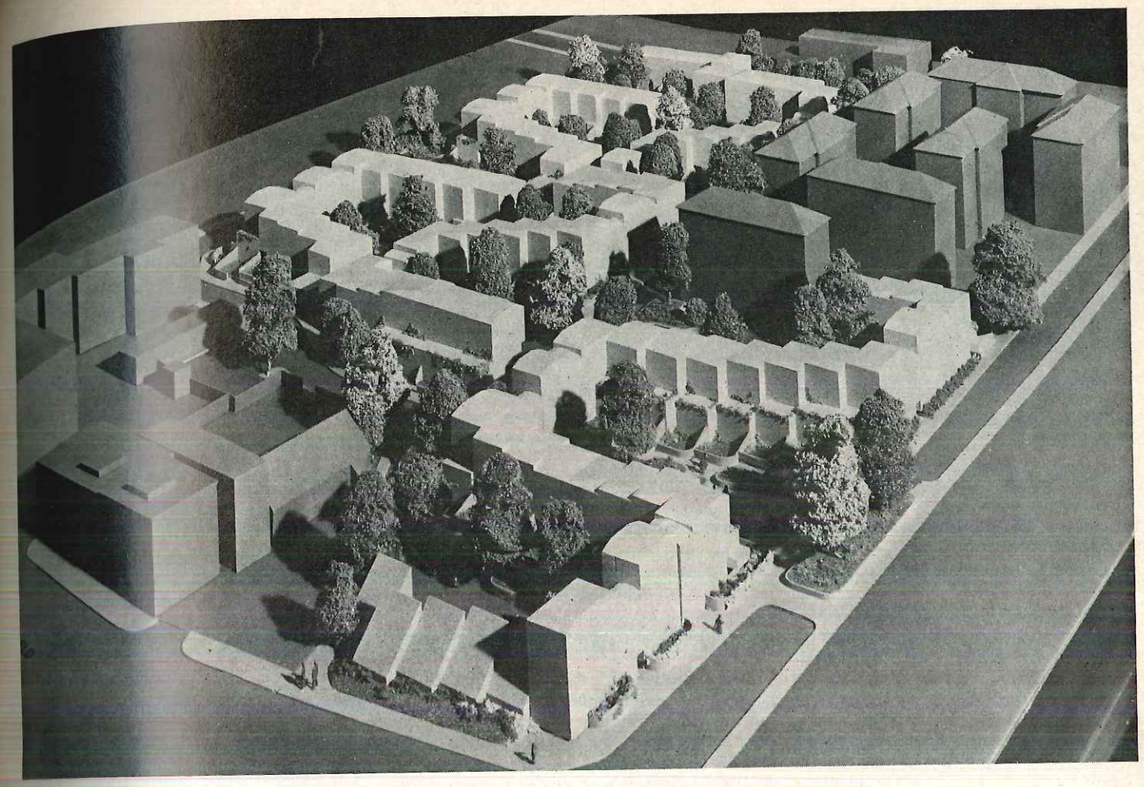
A college garden for the families of college members has been incorporated to the west and north of the avenue to Thorneycreek, which could be where college and family can meet and enjoy the pleasures of the garden. This garden would be a particular attraction for families with young children and would extend college benefit and privacy without intrusion on the college.

Central to the landscape proposals is the idea of a college garden as a place apart where the impact of the outside world is minimal. The existing landscape structure suggests the possibility of achieving such a space by extending the central meadow, clearing the smaller trees and shrubbery from the vegetable garden area. A small lake was considered but felt to be of less value than a large meadow garden. Doubt about the amount of water was another factor in the decision to reject a lake. On the other hand the idea of using water to isolate the meadow both in the wood (Bin Brook) and adjacent to the broad tree-walk envisaged makes possible a considerable variety of genuine landscape experience, light and shade reflection and sparkle, with associated wild life and sounds.

The proposed canal will flow in a cut towards the pavilion and will be circulated by pipe to avoid stagnation. The gentle slope of the meadow down towards the canal will enhance the idea of the length of the garden, will soften the edge and will provide a basin in case of flood. A circular weir will feature the entry of the Bin Brook to a culvert which will emerge from the street face of the building into a short canal providing some water interest on the main street facade.

The landscape consultants have examined the site and made valuable suggestions as to feasibility. They suggest the effect of the building on the water table could be more acute than any interference with Bin Brook, but indicate proposals for a vigorous rehabilitation of the somewhat neglected woodland and include suggestions for the timely moving of useful specimens likely to be lost in building.

The area of site immediately available is adequate for the envisaged first phase but does not contain any area allocated to family housing in the ultimate development other than the wardens' lodge. It is suggested, therefore, that the low block along the outside of the courts on Herschel Road should be utilised as single family housing at the present ultimately coming back into college when family housing is available as projected. On the other hand, Thorneycreek could provide some six family units at the present time, but it is felt that the presence of families with children in the college garden would negate the desire for autonomy.



ROYAL MINT HOUSING WINNERS

The first large housing competition to be held in London since Lillington Road in the early 1960s was recently won by Andrews, Downie & Kelly with Pierre Lagesse.

In October 1973 the GLC invited architects to enter a two-stage competition for the design of a housing scheme at Royal Mint Square in Tower Hamlets. Lying immediately on the edge of the City of London, nearby the St Katharine Dock redevelopment area, the site is in the midst of an area that is rapidly changing in character and appearance. The question of providing high density housing on this site presented the competitors with many of the complex economic, design and social considerations which local authority architects face in the centre of London.

The 1·824 hectare site, bounded by Royal Mint Street, John Fisher Street, East Smithfield and Cartwright Street, was to be developed at a density of 306 persons per hectare (124 ppa). Dwellings were to range from 2-person to 6-person and open space and play spaces were required along with a corner shop, pub and doctor's surgery.

A total of 299 entries were received for the competition, from which the assessors selected six finalists to proceed to stage two.

In their report on the competition results, the assessors, Andrew Renton, Gabriel Epstein (chairman), Frederick Lloyd Roche and Stanley Woolf commented: "It would be a pleasure to report that the GLC's initiative in promoting this competition has been rewarded by an unqualified success but unfortunately this is not the case. The overall standard was disappointing, and so was the lack of development, in a variety of ways of the six final schemes from first to second stage. In the event the assessors have awarded the first prize to the scheme by Andrews, Downie & Kelly with Pierre Lagesse, primarily because of the qualities of the layout. The competition has demonstrated yet again that the building of imaginative housing within the restraints of yardstick, building regulations and so many other demands is an extremely difficult task; but it has also shown that at high urban densities and on difficult sites many architects are capable of designing housing which responds to people's hopes for a decent urban environment."

FIRST PRIZE(£3500)

Andrews Downie & Kelly with Pierre Lagesse

Competition team: David Falla (leader), Uta Giencke, Rolfe Chrystal, Andrew Thomas, Susan McDonald, Rob Gooderham, Mike Defriez, Minty Mullen, Ian Burl

Consultants: Pierre Lagesse (architect, GLC), Mike Norton (landscape architect, GLC), Alan Baxter (engineer, Alan Baxter & Associates), Bob Ridgewell and Ray Liechti (quantity surveyors, MDA)

Scheme description

The retention of the public house has been used as a catalyst in modelling "Mint Square" as the nub of the development. The United Soap Company warehouse has also been retained, but has been altered to provide the old people's day centre and two maisonettes. The space between the existing

Above: *Perspective of winning scheme for the Royal Mint Square site.*