

# House, Studios and Flats

## King's Grove, SE15

Quay 2C Architecture  
1998–2002

Regeneration projects come in all shapes and sizes. The conversion and extension of this former milk depot in Peckham into a private house, design studios and flats may lack the scale of Tate Modern (see pp. 66–67) or the glamour of the nearby Peckham Library (see pp. 88–89), yet this project is significant as a truly transformational example of reuse, reflecting the continuing growth of Southwark's artistic and design community.

Architect Ken Taylor and sculptor Julia Manheim, who are both directors in the multi-disciplinary (architecture/design/art) practice Quay 2C, acquired the building in King's Grove from Southwark Council in 1998 – planners had signified (after consultation with local residents) that change of use from light industrial to live/work accommodation was acceptable. The existing fabric was in poor condition after several years of disuse, but its 'industrial barn' aesthetic appealed to Taylor and Manheim and was something they endeavoured to retain in the reuse project. (The motive, they say, was not nostalgic "but rather to reveal, as an archaeologist might enjoy, the previous uses, transformations and

wear that the building had undergone".) As far as possible, not only the basic, very solid structure of the old depot but also its textures and details were retained. Reusing old materials, of course, helped keep down the cost and reflected a commitment to sustainable development.

The essence of the project is, according to Ken Taylor, "a somewhat surreal narrative of being at the seaside while in Peckham. This introduces ideas of 'between-ness', seasonal change, popular imagery, colour, weathering, etc., associated with the coast, reflected in the layered quality of the scheme." The working studios are placed to the front, with living accommodation behind. Bedrooms and bathrooms are placed at first-floor level – the old roof had to be replaced – in a series of 'beach huts', externally clad in western red cedar boarding, accessed via an internal walkway and sitting above the former cold store. Living spaces are at ground-floor level. Corrugated metal sheeting, taken from the former roof, is used extensively as a wall cladding. All internal doors (other than fire doors) are items salvaged from the site.

The second phase of the project, the construction of three flats on the street front of the site, was undertaken in 2000–02. The frontage to the street is rendered, with corten steel cladding at ground-floor level. The south wall is made of sea-green reinforced plastic (commonly used for garage doors), providing daylight to the stairs, and the roof is a wave of aluminium. This eclectic mix of materials reinforces the 'as found' and layered ethos of the first phase of the project. The housing for bins and cycles on the front of the block, clad in green oak and envisaged as a boardwalk, continues the seaside theme of the beach huts. This element is sedum-roofed, giving a green horizon for passers-by. Along the side is a metre-square window, forming the smallest art gallery in Southwark and endorsing the project's creative agenda. It is planned to cover the yard along the north side of the development in resin-bonded gravel to resemble a beach.

Eclectic, certainly, with touches that some might consider eccentric, King's Grove is the sort of development that enriches the city, visually and socially.

The mixed-use King's Grove development is a conversion-extension of a former milk depot. The bedrooms and bathrooms are placed in 'beach huts' on the roof (below).



