

NEWS

Architect designs bungalow for 39-stone man

Will Hurst

Norwich-based architect Chaplin Farrant has revealed details of its designs for a new home specially suited for a 39-stone man.

The two-bedroom bungalow in the city, which is due for completion before Christmas, is for morbidly obese grandfather Michael Williment, 67, who is virtually housebound and currently lives in sheltered housing earmarked for demolition and redevelopment.



"Take this to the nth degree, you will end up designing hospitals for 10-tonne people"
Mike Nightingale

The new design-and-build scheme, by Flagship Housing Association and mainly funded by the Homes & Communities Agency, includes oversized corridors and door-frames, and two winches to move Williment around, from bedroom to bathroom and from his wheelchair to a specially designed armchair.

"You basically approach this as being like a disabled person's bungalow except oversized," project architect Neil Macnab said.

"The doors are 1,100mm wide compared to a normal width of 900mm... and [contractor] Lovells had to check floor loads and the roof strength because of

the need for the winches to have a 60-stone lifting capacity.

"The house is a lot more open-plan to minimise corridors and things like that. We've made it easier to move round the house and to get outside.

"We're using asphalt outside rather than paving due to the weight issue."

The UK is thought to be the fattest nation in Europe with around a quarter of adults clinically obese, and Cabi and the Department of Health have called on architects to help "design out" obesity.

Mike Nightingale – founder of leading health architect Nightingale Associates which has designed a £28 million health and sports facility in Burnley that aims to tackle obesity – questioned the long-term value of the Chaplin Farrant house.

"We've all got a responsibility to look at the root causes of this problem, which is to design stuff to help people avoid getting into this situation in the first place," he said.

"If you take this to the nth degree, you will end up designing hospitals for 10 tonne people."

And urban design and master-planning expert Alan Baxter said anyone of 39 stone was suffering from an illness and questioned how much design professionals could do.

"I'm all for making stairs more enjoyable to go up... but fundamentally, this is about diet and cultural attitudes," he said.

Brian Anson 1934-2009

Brian Anson, who died last weekend in France, was part of the late 1960s Greater London Council team dreaming up new uses for Covent Garden after the market moved out to Nine Elms. When he realised the area was to be handed over to developers and traffic engineers he decided to blow the whistle. The GLC fired him in 1971. He described the experience as "his biggest education".

After this, and unable to get work, he was invited to run a unit at the AA and it was from there he launched the Architects Revolutionary Council (ARC), a critique of the profession that he argued was "a destroyer of communities" and had lost all responsibility to society. Among his targets were the education system and the RIBA.

In 1979 he was one of the academics responsible for the Schools of Architecture Council (SAC), which set up annual events for students to exchange ideas and create their own educational systems and architectural proposals, independent of a main organisation. SAC was dissolved in 1981 but the momentum did not dissipate and its framework was recycled in the form of winter schools.



Anson: spoke for the underdog.

Anson's other campaigns include the campaign for the demolition of the Divis Street Flats in Belfast. A campaign was instigated which led to eventual demolition of the complex.

Architect Sam Webb, who was a friend of Anson, said: "Without Brian and the sacrifice he made nearly 40 years ago in giving up a successful career as an architect planner, the Covent Garden we know now wouldn't exist.

"He was a very brave man who spoke out passionately for the underdog in our society at enormous cost to himself."

FIRST LOOK



The three waves will provide seating, shelter and lighting and reconnect the beach to the esplanade.

Tonkin Liu's seafront wave plan echoes the white cliffs of Dover

London-based practice Tonkin Liu has won planning permission for its £2 million scheme to overhaul the seafront at Dover in Kent.

The practice won the commission in April following a design competition organised by the Landscape Institute to find a new vision for the seaside town's existing esplanade.

Its scheme features three custom cast concrete "waves" which create areas for seating and shelter as well as reconnecting the beach to the esplanade.

The first wave, the white concrete "lifting wave", creates a ramp and stairs from the beach, with a shingle garden planted with indigenous plants running alongside.

The second, "resting wave", takes the form of a pre-cast concrete retaining wall in sections which curves back to create seating bays.

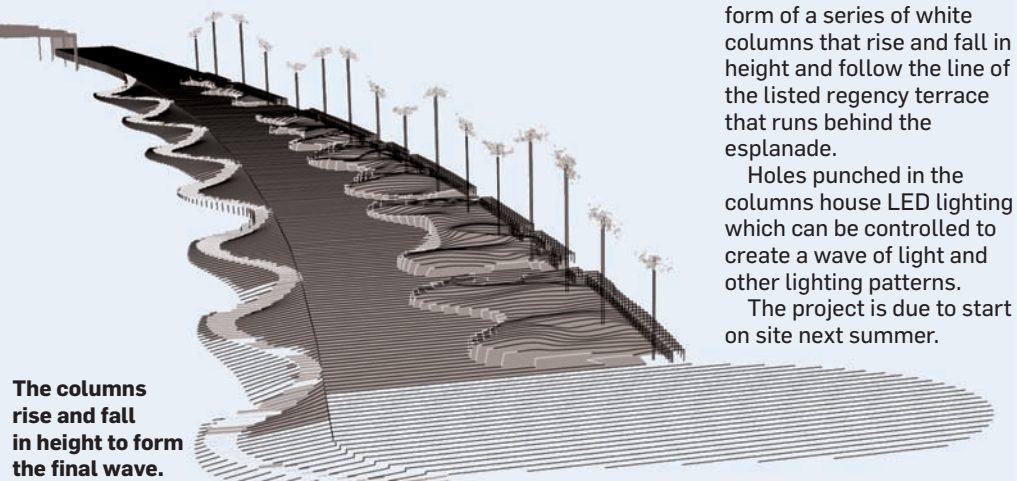
The blocks have been cast with a rippled surface to create a stratified effect, similar to the layers of sediment that form the local chalk cliffs.

"We wanted to make it white but break the surface up... so it becomes something you can't tag very easily and you can't put fly posters on," said Mike Tonkin.

"It's very robust. But it hopefully looks very elegant and has a delicacy to it."



A series of white columns, a curved wall and a ramp to the beach comprise the three "waves".



The columns rise and fall in height to form the final wave.

The final wave takes the form of a series of white columns that rise and fall in height and follow the line of the listed regency terrace that runs behind the esplanade.

Holes punched in the columns house LED lighting which can be controlled to create a wave of light and other lighting patterns.

The project is due to start on site next summer.