

Evenlode & Windrush Towers Oxford



Client Oxford City Council
Cost £3-4m
Services High Rise

Working in a consortium of consultants led by EC Harris, BM3 Architecture was selected through a competitive tender process to work on the refurbishment of Oxford City Council's stock of high rise flats.

Evenlode and Windrush Towers were built in the 1960s for the workers of the Cowley car plant. They are situated either side of the local centre within the Blackbird Leys Estate. The blocks have 60 flats split over 15 floors, with 4 flats per floor.

The Blackbird Leys area is earmarked to undergo a major regeneration programme. The refurbishment of Evenlode and Windrush

towers forms the start of this work. The towers will 'serve as beacons of regeneration and stimulate further investment' in the area.

The cladding proposal seeks to give each pair of blocks its own identity. Whilst the landscape proposals are individually designed to respond to the needs of each particular block.

Traditionally high rise buildings can elementally be split into three elements: the base, which grounds the building; the trunk which defines its character and the top which crowns the building. The same principle is applied here and it is proposed to clad the ground and first storeys (the plinth) in dark brick slips, clad the middle of the tower in rainscreen cladding and insulated render, then continue the cladding up past the render to provide emphasis to

the feature corner. Cladding the plinth in brick slips provides a robust and durable finish at ground level and gives the block a human scale at entrance level.

The existing tower is proportionally quite squat, it is proposed to 'divide' the upper levels of the tower vertically into three elements by cladding each element to change the towers apparent proportions. The three separate clad elements are proportionally tall and narrow accentuating the perceived height of each tower block. There is a feature corner on both Evenlode and Windrush that frame either end of the local centre.