

NEWS

Arb seeks bigger fines for fake architects

Marguerite Lazell

The Arb has called on magistrates to crack down harder on people who fraudulently describe themselves as architects after having to bring a repeat prosecution for misuse of title for the first time.

Last month David Grant of east London-based Inspire Design was fined £1,500 and ordered to pay £4,500 costs for breaching Section 20 of the Architects Act, having been fined £200 and ordered to pay £1,300 costs at a previous hearing in September 2006.



David Grant has been prosecuted for the second time for breaching the Architects Act

Arb's professional standards manager Simon Howard told BD that Grant could have been fined up to £7,500 at the latest hearing but entered a last-minute guilty plea, leading to a reduced fine.

"We've never prosecuted anyone twice before," he said. "The fine was paltry last time — £200 doesn't get the message across."

"We can only bring the prosecution and leave it to the magistrates — it's out of our hands. They've got to fine people properly, or they'll do it again."

The latest charges brought against Grant included advertising under the "architects" listing in a telephone directory and using the title on the company's website.

Grant was found guilty of three breaches of Section 20 of the Architects Act at Stratford Magistrates' Court on May 13.

Last weekend Grant was the subject of an article in the Sunday Times, which described how the "fake architect" had set up in London, claiming 25 years' experience, after a documentary by RTE in Ireland catalogued his property dealings in the republic, which included operating a Dublin hostel without planning permission or a fire-safety certificate.

As BD went to press, Grant's website www.inspiredesign.org was still live. It read: "At Inspire Design we complete architecture, project management, structural engineering, quantity surveying and all ancillary services for your project."

"Our principal Mr David Grant has over 25 years experience in architecture, design, property development and planning applications."

Howard said: "We'll write to him again, and if he doesn't take the site down we'll prosecute him again."

Grant did not respond to calls made to the Inspire Design offices from BD this week.

Listing of Sheffield store in jeopardy

The government is to review the listing of GS Hay's post-war Castle House department store in Sheffield, just weeks after the 1964 building was given grade II status.

Both English Heritage and the Twentieth Century Society back the listing decision, taken in April, but Sheffield City Council has claimed the building could stand in the way of new development and has lodged an appeal which could see the listing overturned.

Twentieth Century Society caseworker Jon Wright said: "EH did an excellent job of assessing the building — the rules are very stringent. If EH list a post-war building it's got to be exceptional. In a national context this is an exemplar of retail architecture. The interior fittings are exquisite."

But councillor Colin Ross, cabinet member for development, said: "The government's agreement to review the listing confirms our concerns they got it wrong. Unfortunately the review is going to take us way into the autumn before we have a clearer idea about what we are working with."



Exquisite: Castle House.

"It is important, especially in the current climate, that Sheffield's development not be stifled by unnecessary restrictions."

In its letter to the DCMS asking for the listing to be reviewed, the council said it objected "in the strongest terms" to the decision. Its main objection was that there has been no national review of post-war retail architecture, without which the building's significance could not be assessed.

FIRST LOOK



Traditional glazing has been replaced by a series of perforations inspired by Swedish architect Sigurd Lewerentz.

Cassion Castle plans a stealthy citadel for Bethnal Green

Cassion Castle Architects has won planning permission for a 60sq m private studio development on the site of a former garage in Bethnal Green, east London.

The project, for a product designer who lives locally, navigates a restricted plot surrounded on three sides by existing structures.

A red brick facade at the front has been designed for anonymity, with traditional glazed windows replaced by a series of scattered 30mm by 85mm holes, inspired by similar perforations in Swedish architect Sigurd Lewerentz's Swedish churches.

"We liked the idea of it being almost stealthy in its presence on the street," said project architect Cassion Castle. "It's a strong structural form but also almost an extension of the surrounding fabric. It's something you'd only notice as you walked past."

An internal double-height space is open to the air to create a "vertical courtyard" with additional light provided by the higher density of holes towards the top of the facade.



Steel grille flooring allows light to filter down.

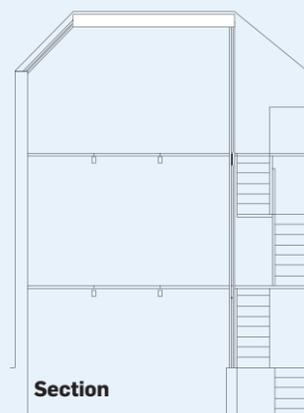


Interior view looking towards the courtyard stairwell.

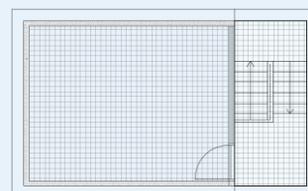
This courtyard space provides access to each of the three studio spaces which are arranged on top of each other to create a tower, with steel grille flooring on the second and third floors allowing light to filter down from the glazed roof to the lower floor.

"You go through the front door and you're not actually inside," Castle added. "On a very small site to do that seems a bit nuts but it helps you to ventilate the lower floors and it means that the rooms can operate independently."

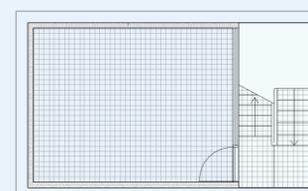
Work is due to start on site later this year.



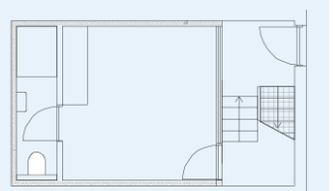
Section



Second floor



First floor



Ground floor