

URBANLIFE

MANCHESTER'S ESSENTIAL PROPERTY GUIDE - EVERY WEDNESDAY

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Taking a sensitive approach

BY JILL BURDETT

Design duo Wayne and Gerardine Hemingway must be delighted. The Manchester apartment scheme they have been collaborating on for the last year has just been singled out for the quality of the conversion work. The restoration of the 1930s department store warehouse in the Northern Quarter into 90 apartments is nearing completion with first residents due to move in this spring.

And town hall building inspectors have been so impressed by the sensitive work carried out by the builders, Manchester based Dwell Developments, they have given it a Built In Quality Award.

They praised the way original features in the communal areas had been retained and restored and the use of sympathetic materials like the copper roof which will weather and change colour over the years.

Such high praise must be particularly satisfying for the Dwell team as the Birchin is their first development and was selected from more than 2,500 schemes across the city.

Director Sheldon Cohen said: "We are totally delighted. We are a Manchester company and our aim was to produce a building people are proud to live in. "Almost all the buyers to date are young people who have bought to live here, not to rent out.

"This Built in Quality Award proves you can have excellent design, using first class materials to sell homes at a reasonable price without sacrificing on quality. "The Northern Quarter has the opportunity to become a truly individual district of Manchester, full of quirky, well-designed buildings with a character of their own. "We want to contribute to that and I believe this award emphasises the all-round quality of work that has gone into creating real city centre homes for real people."

The Hemingways began their iconic Red or Dead clothes label just across the



Wayne Hemingway takes a break (top) in The Birchin apartment scheme (above, right) which has been praised for the quality of the conversion work

road from The Birchin in Affleck's Palace and have been involved in defining the layout of the apartments and the contemporary interior design, which includes individual pieces of furniture.

The Birchin is typical of the character conversions that typify the Northern Quarter and more are planned.

Just around the corner, work is going on to convert another warehouse, which will have the slimmest glass tower in the city – just 12ft wide – pointing up like a needle between two red brick sections.