The chips are ready!

Final touches to Will Alsop's bold work

Flats feature typical Urban Splash style

THESE finishing touches are being made to the first residential building by the maverick architect Will Alsop which sits alongside old mills and new canals in Manchester's New Millennium community at New Islington.

The delivery of this new community is painfully slow and piecemeal with pockets of new development interspersed by expanses of wasteland and still derelict buildings.

But you have to admire the ambition and by the end of the summer the new canal should be filled with water and the new park, Cotton Fields, finally open to the public.

And Chips was always going to be dramatic. Modelled on a stack of wavy designer chips and emblazoned with the names of the north's great canals it has been delivered by Urban Splash, the developers who are working with New East Manchester and the City Council to make this new neighbourhood happen.

And it looks great. At nine storeys high it is big but the wavy lines and the bright colours make it much more appealing than the monolith of the City Lofts scheme which stands close by.

They have just completed the fit-out of a couple of apartments to show what life inside Chips would be like and they are up to the usual Splash style with spare but stylish kitchens featuring bright red glass splashbacks, neat bathrooms and varying layouts.

The one-bed show unit has a folding door separating living and sleeping and a full wall of glass with the east of the city as a panorama.

In the two bed the kitchen dominates at the cost of living space but the master bedroom is a great retreat with good wardrobe and built-in storage.

The three high stack contains 142 apartments and of those 127 have been sold - 50 of them to Manchester Methodists Housing Association and they are being made available on an interesting deal for first time buyers.

Rent to Homebuy gives people looking to buy their first home the chance to rent at below market value with the option to buy a percentage stake further down the line.

Splash are the first private developer to have signed up to this Government backed scheme and are understandably chuffed.

It means that a one bed can be rented for 80 per cent of market value - that's £400 instead of £500 - including service charge.

But it also gives you the chance to buy a stake further down the line, anything from 25pc, if you decide you want to make it your home and your circumstances change so you can get a mortgage.

Nicola Wallis, sales director with Splash said: "We have always maintained that Chips and the whole of New Islington is a community for everyone and this scheme allows first time buyers to live there in a brand new and iconic building."

To qualify you have to earn under £60,000 and not own any other property.

Urban Splash director Nick Johnson, who has himself bought here said: "Chips is audacious but looks completely right in the surroundings.

"The vision of Manchester council has allowed this area to reinvent itself and has tempted a range of income groups to an area that was ostensibly very working class."

LOTS TO ADMIRE The inside of Urban Splash's New Islington apartments are as striking as the outside.