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HOUSING IN LAMBETH 1965–80 AND ITS NATIONAL CONTEXT A THEMATIC STUDY

Geraint Franklin and Elain Harwood



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Frontispiece: Lambeth Towers (designed c.1964-65, completed 1971, main job architect George Finch). Photograph by James O. Davies; © English Heritage (DPI 58436).

Front cover: Bodley Manor Way on the Cressingham Gardens estate, Tulse Hill (1971-78, main job architect Charles Attwood). Photograph kindly supplied by Charles Attwood.

CONTRIBUTORS

The section on national context was written by Elain Harwood; Geraint Franklin completed the remainder of the report. Photography is by James O. Davies and the authors, and the location map is by Tom Duane.

ARCHIVE LOCATION

English Heritage Archive (formerly the National Monuments Record Centre)
The Engine House
Fire Fly Avenue
Swindon
SN2 2EH
Telephone: 01793 414600.

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CONTACT DETAILS

Geraint Franklin,
Assessment Team (South),
English Heritage,
1 Waterhouse Square,
138–142 Holborn,
London EC1N 2ST.
Telephone: 020 7973 3773;
email: geraint.franklin@english-heritage.org.uk

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SUMMARY

This short report was commissioned by English Heritage's Designation Department (South team) in response to an application to list the Cressingham Gardens Estate in Lambeth, south London. With the reorganisation of London government in 1965 responsibility for housing was transferred to the London County Council (LCC) to the London boroughs. Edward (Ted) Hollamby (1921-99) moved from the LCC Architect's Department to Lambeth in 1963, presiding over a new Department of Architecture and Planning. Over the following two decades Lambeth gained a national reputation for its public housing schemes, which ranged from prefabricated towers to innovative low-rise schemes via sensitive refurbishment schemes which patched up the existing urban fabric. Bespoke accommodation was designed for semi-independent older people, different family groupings and disabled people and most schemes included community and welfare facilities. The report contains sections profiling Hollamby's career, the Lambeth Architect's department and key Lambeth housing schemes from 1965 to 1980. The final section examines the national context of public housing during a diverse and little-understood period of architectural history, with particular reference to so-called 'low-rise, high-density' schemes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LAMBETH 1965–80

Ted Hollamby

Edward (Ted) Hollamby (1921-99) was born in Hammersmith, the son of a policeman. At age 13 he gained a supplementary scholarship to study at the LCC Hammersmith Technical School at Lime Grove. In the 1930s the Arts and Crafts and co-operative movements were still going strong in Hammersmith, and first-hand memories of William Morris were passed on to Hollamby. He gained a solid grounding in drawing and construction from Alwyn Waters, (later the architect partner of A. Llewellyn Smith) and at age 16 attended evening classes at the Hammersmith School of Arts and Crafts next door. Architectural design was taught by Alex Lowe, an assistant of Max Fry; the German émigré architect Arthur Korn; and Arthur Ling, like Korn a member of the modernist MARS group. Hollamby joined MARS as a student member and, through Lowe and Ling, became involved in politics, joining the Communist Party of Great Britain where he met his future wife (Hollamby remained a member until the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968). His sense of the continuities between William Morris and the Bauhaus was enlarged by Nikolaus Pevsner's *Pioneers of the Modern Movement* (1936). Hollamby sensed a common goal of social progress and a view of architecture that he would later encapsulate as 'anti-monumental, anti-stylistic, and fit for ordinary people'.¹

After gaining practical experience in a few architects' offices and war-time service with the Royal Marine Engineers, Hollamby worked in Hammersmith Borough Council before finding employment with the Miners' Welfare Commission in 1947. Within a group system introduced by Kenneth Campbell and John Sais worked architects such as John Stillman and Egon Riss. In 1949, Hollamby took his final examinations at the RIBA and commenced a town planning course at the Bartlett School of Architecture under William Holford. The same year he followed Campbell to the LCC Architect's Department, then flourishing under the leadership of Robert Matthew and Leslie Martin. Starting in Schools Division, Hollamby worked on Eltham Green School and designed, with Bill Kretchmer, linked comprehensive schools for boys and girls at North Hammersmith. The local association with William Morris was celebrated at Christopher Wren School (now Phoenix High School) through Morris wallpapers, patterned wall tiles and tapestry curtains by Gerald Holtom depicting Morris, Burne-Jones and Rossetti.² Meanwhile when Red House, Bexleyheath (designed in 1859 by Philip Webb for William and Jane Morris) came up for sale in 1952, Hollamby and his wife moved in with fellow architect Dick Toms and his wife. 'It was our joint dream, to live and work together', Hollamby recalled in later life. 'When Red House came on the market, buying it together seemed a pretty natural thing to do'.³

Hollamby then transferred to the Housing Division under H.J. Whitfield Lewis, working on the Avebury Estate, Bethnal Green, a mixed development including low brick flats with pitched roofs. A stone's throw to the west was the LCC Boundary Estate (1893-1900), one of the earliest housing schemes completed by a local authority. Hollamby and colleague David Gregory Jones, again in pursuit of a progressive tradition, tracked down pioneering LCC architects Owen Fleming and A. Halcrow Verstage and wrote up an article tracing the heritage of the Architect's Department.⁴ Hollamby and Gregory

Jones were then working on the Brandon estate in Kennington, and with planners Leslie Lane and Chris Whittaker introduced a relaxed mixture of rehabilitated Victorian terraces, a shopping precinct, low-rise blocks and 18 storey towers—then the tallest in the capital. Brandon was the first LCC development to incorporate older houses; towers, it was claimed, were necessary to achieve the required density of 136 persons per acre (ppa).⁵ Hollamby secured a Henry Moore sculpture (fig. 1) through the LCC Patronage of the Arts scheme and murals by William Mitchell and Anthony Hollaway, who worked as ‘artistic consultants’ to the LCC under the supervision of Hollamby and Oliver Cox.⁶



Figure 1: Henry Moore's Two Piece Reclining Figure No.3 (1961) against the towers of the Brandon estate, Kennington. © English Heritage. AA101178.

Hollamby became Assistant Senior Architect in 1960, taking on general responsibility for housing south of the Thames and liaising between the Housing and Town Planning Divisions. Schemes at Rotherhithe, Elephant and Castle and Southwark Park took up such innovations as ‘scissor section’ maisonettes⁷, pedestrian/vehicular segregation and cluster dwellings for old people. In 1962 he was briefly involved in planning a group of ‘platform villages’ in the Erith marshes; this later became the Thamesmead development. On New Year's Day 1963 Hollamby left County Hall to become Lambeth's first borough architect, and the work of his department is described in greater detail below. With the reorganisation of local government in London in 1965 he took on responsibility for

housing and two years later headed a directorate of architecture and planning. In the 1970s friction developed between Hollamby and a younger, more belligerent faction of Labour councillors who, on gaining power, sought to curb what they saw as an overlarge Directorate of Development.⁸ Local authority expenditure, meanwhile, had plunged and Hollamby hankered after a fresh start.



Figure 2: Hollamby's 1991 guide to Red House.

In 1981 Hollamby was appointed chief architect and planner to the newly established London Docklands Development Corporation. His 1982 design guide for the redevelopment of the Isle of Dogs proposed piecemeal

mixed development based on the scale of the existing dock warehousing. His design principles were soon overshadowed when Canary Wharf was re-planned by other hands as London's secondary financial district.⁹ Hollamby's influence nonetheless persists in the retention of the docks as amenity space, the quality of the architect-designed housing, the realisation of the Docklands Light Railway and the refurbishment of Hawksmoor's St George-in-the-East. After his retirement in 1985, Hollamby served on English Heritage's London Advisory Committee (1986-90), wrote a guide to Red House (fig. 2) and in 1996 set up the Red House Trust.¹⁰

Design in Lambeth

The post of Architect to the Metropolitan Borough of Lambeth was created in January 1963, in anticipation of the transfer of enhanced planning powers and housing functions on the reorganisation of London government. To his surprise, Hollamby was consulted on the reorganisation of the committee and consultation structures in addition to setting up his own Department of Architecture and Planning. A Directorate of Development Services was established in 1967, with chief officers presiding over planning, architecture, landscape, building economics, rehabilitation and maintenance and service engineering.¹¹ Hollamby, a believer in the role of the public sector in training the trades, also nurtured a sizable direct labour organisation, which grew out of the maintenance and rehabilitation division.¹²

Hollamby was by nature a consensus builder and forged constructive working relationships with officers and members alike. Ken Livingstone, one of the 'Young Turks' of the 1970s Housing Committee, recalled that 'Like many other inner-city Labour councils, a strong, authoritarian, quite conservative Labour administration had been in power since the war, led by a handful of competent working-class men with strong roots in the area'.¹³ As constituted after 1965, it was the largest, most diverse and densely populated of the inner-London boroughs, and its huge housing waiting list created a sense of urgency and a resolve to get things done. The administration, led by Alderman Archie Cotton, was enthusiastic about breaking new ground, and Hollamby's easy-going relationship with Housing Manager Harry Simpson created a flexibility rare in local government.¹⁴ There were also close links with the Ministry of Housing and Local Government (MOHLG), whose Chief Architect, Whitfield Lewis, was Hollamby's division head in LCC days. Schemes were kept in the plan chest, so that Lambeth could take up Whitehall offers of unused budgets at the end of the financial year.¹⁵

Hollamby gradually built up a team with a steady stream of ex-LCC architects including Bill Kretchmer, his deputy, and group leaders Don Eastaugh, George Finch (fig. 3) and Rosemary Stjernstedt. When the Directorate was set up the Architect's Department was headed by Rae Evans, succeeded by William Jacoby in 1972. Andrew Kelt headed a group of 'old' architects who predated Hollamby, working on committed schemes. But on the whole, the concepts and enthusiasms of the LCC survived at Lambeth.¹⁶ From the LCC, too, came the group system which struck a balance between the delegation and supervision of design work. There were four groups at first which later grew to six or seven. Hollamby kept a close eye on everything through weekly design conferences, and senior architects' meetings were occasionally held at Red House. Prior to 1963, the Housing Department had farmed out large schemes to private architects, and

this practice was maintained, with commissions given to Darbourne and Darke (at Bowland Road)¹⁷, Stillman & Eastwick-Field (Gresham Road)¹⁸, Trevor Dannatt (Union Road)¹⁹ and Ted Cullinan (the Lambeth Community Care Centre on Monkton Street).²⁰ The young Ted Happold was seconded from Ove Arup & Partners to advise on structural engineering, cutting his teeth on Central Hill, West Norwood Library and the subterranean boiler house at Myatts Fields.²¹

Hollamby thought that the LCC had been remote from the people it served, and at Lambeth held exhibitions and meetings to gauge opinion on major or controversial schemes. 'We want [the public] to be involved, to complain, to argue, to come rushing down to the Town Hall every time they have a legitimate grouse', he explained to the *RIBA Journal*.²² Local opposition to the large Central Hill scheme was headed off by persuading the residents' group to hold a joint meeting at a pub near Crystal Palace. The architects outlined their low-rise approach, showing sketches not yet presented to committee. On convincing the residents that a sense of community would be preserved, opposition was transformed into support. Public consultation was subsequently more formal, but it predated the introduction of the principle in *People and Planning*, the 1969 Skeffington Report.²³

Lambeth Housing 1965-81

Hollamby's empirical, undogmatic approach, and his clout as architect-planner resulted in a diverse housing stock. The borough included sites of widely varying character, from the South Bank and Lambeth proper—with their fair share of bomb sites and slums—to the leafy slopes of Gipsy Hill, Tulse Hill and West Norwood (fig. 4). At first Lambeth adopted the LCC planning strategy of mixed development, combining tall blocks, four-storey maisonettes and family houses with gardens to meet a variety of housing needs at fairly high densities. Smaller sites were sometimes entirely given over to sheltered accommodation, such as 269 Leigham Court Road (designed by Kate Macintosh; fig. 5) and 23 Garrad's Road, Streatham, which both received Good Design in Housing Awards from the Department of the Environment. Lambeth estates were also notable for the successful integration of community and welfare buildings, such as community halls (fig. 6), junior training centres, crèches and old persons' day centres. It was considered a matter of regret that schools were the responsibility of the Inner London Education Authority, and remained poorly integrated with housing.²⁴



Figure 3: George Finch with his son in front of a prefabricated tower block of his design. Photograph reproduced courtesy of Brenda Vicary-Finch.

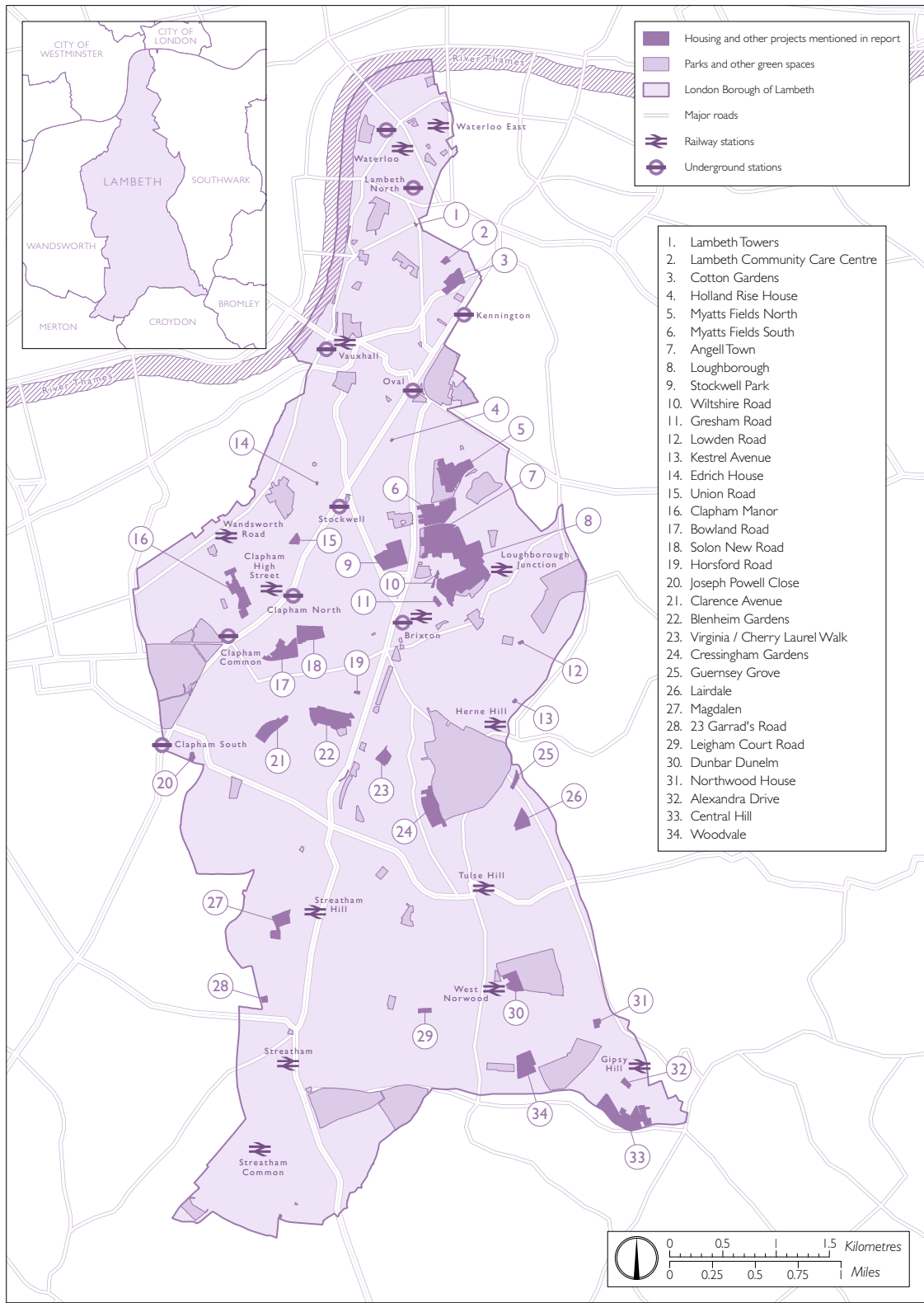


Figure 4: Map of the London Borough of Lambeth showing the location of housing schemes mentioned in this report.



Figure 5: 269 Leigham Court Road, a community of sheltered accommodation for older people, was designed by Kate Macintosh. Photograph kindly supplied by Kate Macintosh.



Figure 6: Surrey Hall, a community hall of c.1971, with Edrich House in the background. © English Heritage. AA98/06379.



Figure 7: A 1971 perspective drawing of the initial phase of the Clapham Manor scheme. Reproduced by kind permission of Lambeth Archives department (LBL/BDD/1/18).



Figure 8: Mature landscaping of Evesham Walk, part of the Myatts Fields South estate (SP004001).

Another source of variety was the careful retention and rehabilitation of historic housing. The 1965 Lambeth *Official Guide* stated, 'it is the policy of the Council to rehabilitate and preserve old buildings of merit which provide continuity in the life of Lambeth'.²⁵ Whereas it was then common practice to retain a Victorian church or pub as a picturesque foil to a comprehensive development, schemes such as Clapham Manor went further, retaining and respecting existing patterns of topography, grain and historic character (fig. 7). It was also recognised that developments combining owner-occupied with rented accommodation didn't 'read' as council estates and were less likely to become ghettoised. Particular efforts were made to retain frontages of main roads, and areas of 19th century villas densified by slotting in new housing into 'underused' back gardens. It was the surveyor's department that distinguished the good housing from 'slums', but the chief surveyor John Hines was happy to negotiate borderline cases with architects.²⁶ The amount of integration between old and new depended on the size and ambitions of the scheme, but generally increased with the designation of Conservation Areas (18 were created in Lambeth between 1967 and 1975 alone) and General Improvement Areas under national legislation.²⁷

Hollamby, like his LCC mentors Robert Matthew and Leslie Martin, encouraged groups and individuals to develop distinctive architectural approaches. There was no house style, but in general he thought 'the architecture should be delightful, liveable with, not overwhelming, maybe exciting, relating to the surroundings'.²⁸ Lambeth had a good landscaping department led by John Medhurst, who had studied under Peter Youngman at the Bartlett School of Architecture.²⁹ Developments hugged contours and exploited changes in level to create a lively roofscape. The hard landscaping of pedestrian access routes was often contrasted with the mature foliage of retained trees and open spaces (fig. 8). At Cressingham Gardens, planters were placed at paired front doors, with space for residents to linger, promoting a sense of ownership of space.³⁰

In the choice of materials, variety and context were the watchwords. Bricks were favoured, being cheap, hard wearing and popular with residents, and thanks to calculated brickwork and cross-wall construction could form a good part of the structure too. Thousands of London stock bricks were reclaimed from slum clearance, giving instant character and saving energy (Hollamby regretted that he could not stockpile bricklayers).³¹ In Kennington and Clapham yellow stocks were used, whereas red brick was thought fitting for Streatham. Against this background, there were points of contrast: a hard red engineering brick was used for the Brixton Recreation Centre (fig. 9), white bricks at Garrad's Road, and metric Forticrete concrete blocks for Leigham Court Road. It was found that dark-stained timber windows were easier to maintain than repainting, although the joinery had to be carefully detailed.³²

The interiors of Lambeth housing were carefully planned also (fig. 10). Virtually all schemes were dual aspect and all were built to the space standards recommended by the 1961 Parker Morris report (mandatory from 1969 to 1981).³³ Central heating was a novelty, too. 'This is going to have a tremendous social effect', Hollamby enthused in 1965. 'The house you can design when everything is warm is entirely different from one where life revolved around an open grate'.³⁴ The bane of Lambeth housing architects was the '100% car parking' demanded by the Housing



Figure 9: The Brixton Recreation Centre. Designed by George Finch in 1971 and opened in 1985, it was the only implemented element of a larger redevelopment scheme for central Brixton (SP004002).

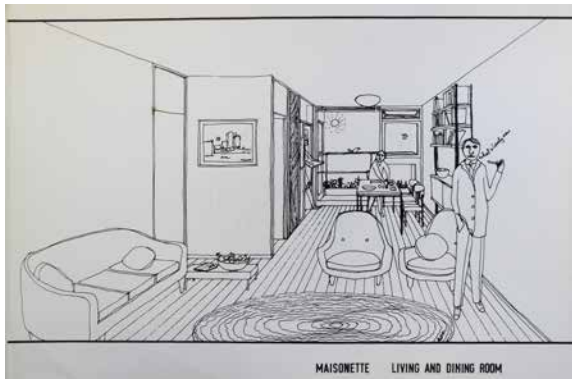


Figure 10: A presentation sketch by George Finch of a typical interior of a maisonette in Lambeth Towers. Reproduced by kind permission of Lambeth Archives department (LBL/BDD/1/70).



Figure 11: A 1964 scheme for a short terrace of 'town houses' for infill sites. Reproduced from *The Builder*, 11 December 1964, pp. 1239.



Figure 12: the private courtyard of a single-storey patio house in the Alexandra Drive housing scheme. Reproduced by kind permission of Lambeth Archives department (LBL/BDD/1/12).

Committee by the late 1960s, which meant a space for every dwelling.³⁵ Following the principles of the 1963 Buchanan report, vehicular access was usually segregated from pedestrian circulation. In large comprehensive developments, garages were usually sunk beneath a raised pedestrian deck, whereas ground floor garaging was incorporated into the smallest infill schemes.

Standard designs were judiciously adapted to different sites and briefs. In 1964, a design for a three-storey block of 'town houses' was prepared under group leader Don Eastaugh (fig 11). They included dual-aspect, open plan living/dining areas and variants were produced for north and south aspects.³⁶ This was realised at several sites including Lowden Road, Horsford Road and Kestrel Avenue. Rosemary Stjernstedt developed single-storey L-plan patio houses (fig. 12). Courtyard housing schemes like this were adopted to provide privacy and security to small families.³⁷ 'In a house like this with its enclosed private garden it is very easy for a family to relax, even under intensely urban conditions', Hollamby told the *RIBA Journal*.³⁸ Variants for families of four, five and six persons were first tried out at Alexandra Drive, presented to the housing committee in 1964, and many subsequent sites. Back-to-back layouts were revived by the quad house, with a flat occupying each corner. Closely-spaced groups were built at the Lairdale Estate, Clarence Avenue and Guernsey Grove.³⁹

From 1956 local authorities were encouraged to achieve the required densities by building high. Hollamby opposed slabs, but approved of groups of point blocks, strategically placed on prominent urban sites such as

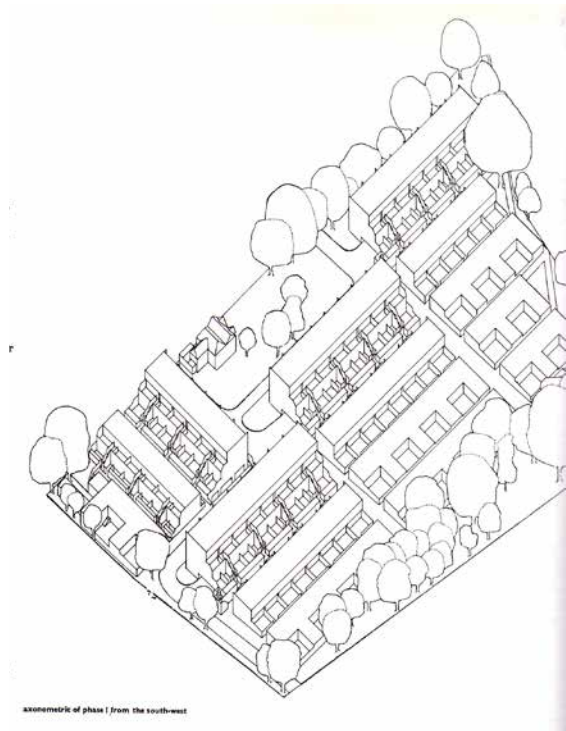
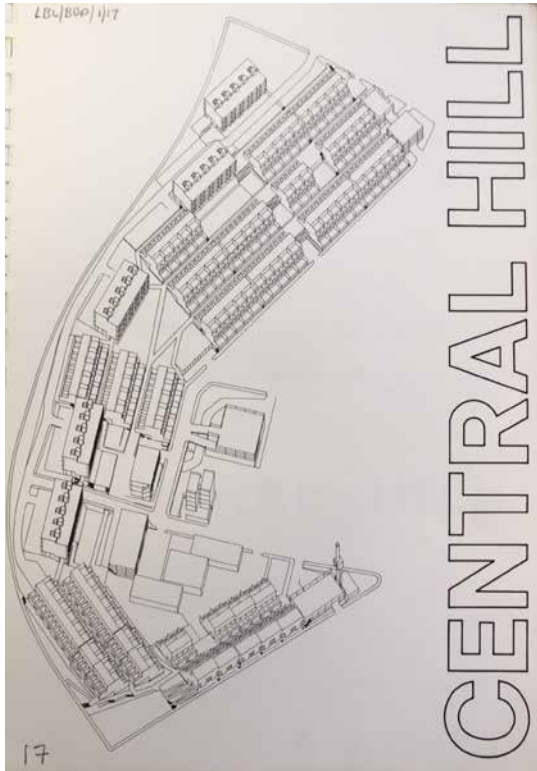
busy road crossings.⁴⁰ At ground level there was plenty of hard landscaping and low-rise housing, and car spaces were sunk under the tower podiums. George Finch's Lambeth Towers (designed c.1964-65, completed 1971, frontispiece) was the flagship scheme, planted at a conspicuous junction in north Lambeth and published internationally.⁴¹ A chain of interlocking dwellings, rising to eleven storeys, incorporated a doctors' group practice, old people's club and post office and shops. But the scheme was expensive and central government was pushing for industrialised building techniques. Lambeth architects were sent to Germany to research large panel systems. At several sites, including Edrich House on Binfield Road, Holland Rise House on South Island Place; and Ebenezer House, Fairford House and Hurley House on the Cotton Gardens estate, Finch contrived the Wates system into a dentilated profile. Residents, he explained, could better pick out their own flat from the ground.⁴² William Jacoby, meanwhile, devised a pentagonal plan that was applied to several towers of different heights, built in the Swedish Allbetong system.⁴³ These included Bedford House on the Solon estate; Northwood House and Belgravia House on Clarence Avenue (fig. 13).



Figure 13: William Jacoby's design for three pentagonal towers. The front cover of a 1968 brochure prepared for the Lambeth housing committee. Reproduced by kind permission of Lambeth Archives department (LBL/BDD/1/111).

Some Lambeth architects had serious reservations about housing families in point blocks, and attempted to achieve the required densities while bringing residents closer to the ground. Charles Attwood recalls that the design of Cressingham Gardens was a battle between satisfying the densities and architectural and urban design considerations.⁴⁴ Hollamby explained his low-rise high-density approach in Jill Craigie's BBC documentary *Who are the Vandals?*, screened in February 1967.⁴⁵ If Craigie's critical stance anticipated an era of disillusionment with public housing, Lambeth's recent schemes were praised as a sane alternative. 'For superb examples it is necessary to look at Lambeth and the experience of the borough's most sensitive architect, Edward Hollamby', Craigie wrote in *The Times* in 1968. 'Although he has in his time also built large estates with high buildings, he has concentrated for years on housing his people back on the ground. Today Hollamby is the acknowledged leader in high density housing with low buildings'.⁴⁶

At Central Hill (presented 1966, group leader Rosemary Stjernstedt) long terraces step down a tree-lined escarpment near Crystal Palace. A variety of flats and maisonettes were included, and height was limited to the tree line (figs 14 & 15). Crisply detailed by Adrian Sansom with Roger Weston, the design predates comparable London schemes at the Highgate New Town (Stage One), Branch Hill and Maiden Lane and schemes designed by the LB Camden Architect's Department. At Virginia Walk & Cherry Laurel



Figures 14-18 (clockwise from top left).
 Figure 14: Axonometric projection of Central Hill (1967-74, group leader Rosemary Stjernstedt). Reproduced by kind permission of Lambeth Archives department; LBL/BDD/11/17
 Figure 15: Central Hill (© Elain Harwood).
 Figure 16: Axonometric of part of the Magdalen Estate (1968-69). Reproduced by kind permission of Lambeth Archives department; LBL/BDD/11/87
 Figure 17: Woodvale Estate. (© Elain Harwood).
 Figure 18: Blenheim Gardens (1969-74). © English Heritage AA/98/06313

Walk in Tulse Hill (1968-70), patio houses were combined with upper-floor flats with terraces, resulting in a density of 83.5 ppa. The chequerboard layout, devised under group leader Tony Davies, incorporates two pedestrian walks. The *Architects' Journal* reported 'despite proximity of dwellings (the walks are 17ft (5.2m) wide and the patios 24ft (7.3m) deep), clever manipulation of single aspect and screen walls ensures a high degree of privacy.'⁴⁷ The scheme won a DOE Good Design in Housing Award in 1971.

The Magdalen Estate on Streatham Hill (fig. 16) occupies the site of the 'Magdalen Hospital for Penitent Prostitutes', founded in Whitechapel in 1758 and removed to Drewstead Road in 1869.⁴⁸ The 80ppa housing scheme was presented in March 1967 and built in 1968-69. Three-storey blocks are placed at the north of the site to shelter the rest of the estate from a railway line. They comprised an undercroft garage with deck access to a two-bed flat and a three-bed maisonette above that. Running alongside in parallel rows was a two-storey house and a group of patio houses. Mature trees and the hospital lodge were retained. The Woodvale Estate, completed 1975 (fig. 17), has similar raised access maisonettes with lower houses. These are placed at the north and south ends of the estate with staggered rows of housing in between, divided by a central greenswathe. The same detailing—exposed brick cross walls, split-pitch roofs, and strips of slate hanging and glazing—is applied without relief, and the unbroken sightlines tend to visual monotony.

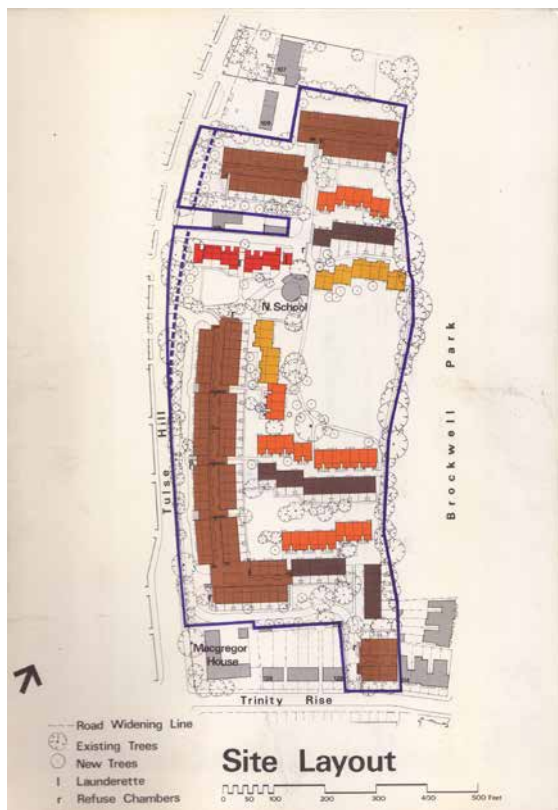


Figure 19: site layout plan for the Cressingham Gardens estate, Tulse Hill. The colours distinguish different housing types (see figure 20 right). Drawing kindly provided by Charles Attwood.

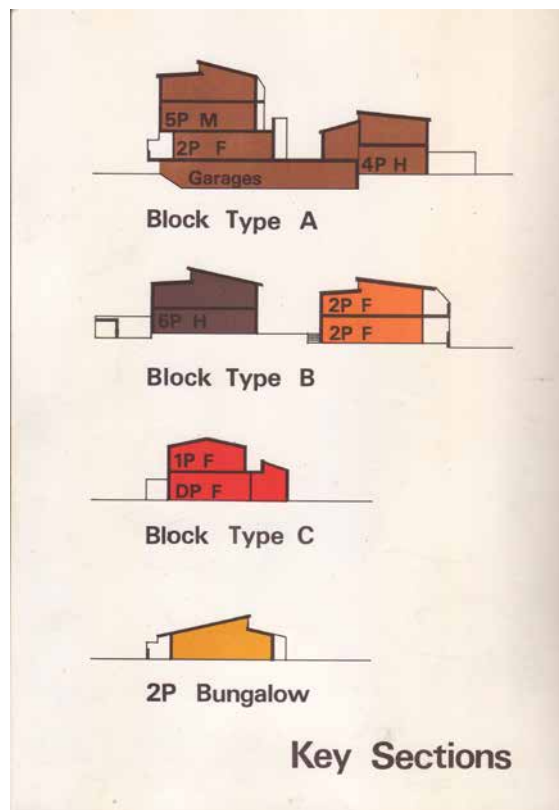


Figure 20: Sections of the housing types used at Cressingham Gardens. Drawing kindly provided by Charles Attwood.



Figure 21: Pedestrian walkway at the Cressingham Gardens estate. Photograph kindly provided by Charles Attwood.



Figure 22: Circular nursery school at the Cressingham Gardens estate. Photograph kindly provided by Charles Attwood.

Blenheim Gardens (fig. 18) was presented in January 1968 and built in 1969-74. It is a compact arrangement of two-storey terraces accessed from a landscaped central mall. Alternating pairs of houses are entered from opposing directions, softening the orthogonal layout and undermining the customary distinction between 'front' and 'back'. At either end are deck-access flats above garaging. The estate was separated from the surrounding housing by a buffer of open space and community buildings including a junior training centre, old peoples' welfare home and children's' home. The scheme was highly commended in the 1974 Good Design in Housing Awards.

When Cressingham Gardens was presented to committee in January 1969, job architect Charles Attwood successfully made the case for a lower density of 100ppa (instead of the expected 140ppa) to preserve the sensitive setting of the adjacent Brockwell Park. He had the site surveyed, and from the contour map projected sightlines from the park to create 'fingers' of low-rise development. The higher density accommodation was broken into linked blocks, creating a perimeter chain shielding the rest of the estate from the noisy Tulse Hill road. The sectional design of the linked blocks derives from the Magdalen Estate, but the blocks were pulled closer together, giving a sense of enclosure to the raised walkway (figs 19-21). By introducing offsets, changes in level in the pedestrian

access routes and angling blocks, vistas were closed up and a sense of 'townscape' consciously developed. The result is a sense of spatial interest absent from the earlier rectilinear plans.⁴⁹ The scheme was singled out in Lord Esher's *A Broken Wave* as 'warm and informal [...] one of the nicest small schemes in England'.⁵⁰



Figure 23: High level walkways connecting parts of the Stockwell Park estate in Brixton. Photograph © Amanda Vincent-Rous; reproduced by kind permission.

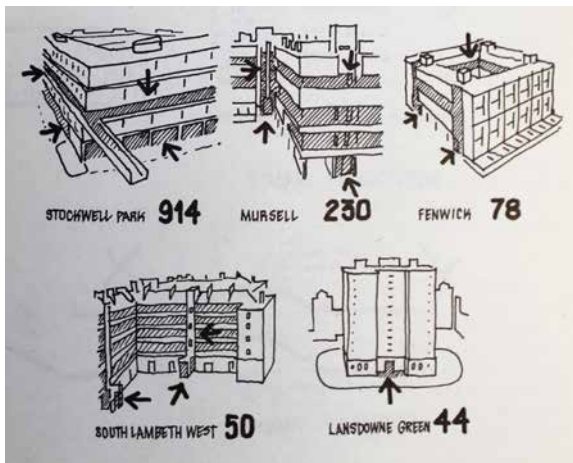


Figure 24: Sketch diagram in the Lambeth Inner Area Study of 1977. The original caption reads 'Location of vandalism in access areas. The figures denote the number of dwellings accessible from a single point of entry in the blocks affected by vandalism'. The study was prepared by the planning practice Shankland Cox, who designed several housing schemes for Lambeth. Illustration crown copyright; reproduced under the terms of the Open Government Licence.

Less 'warm and informal' were the medium-rise, high-density estates completed in Brixton, including Stockwell Park (presented March 1968, completed 1976), Angell Town (built in 1974-78) and Myatts Fields North and South (built c.1970-78).⁵¹ Grids of yellow brick maisonettes were stacked over undercroft car parking and linked with long decks and high level bridges (fig. 23). There was even an unrealised plan to connect Stockwell Park and Angell Town with a pedestrian bridge over Brixton Road. Densities of around 140ppa were achieved, but the estates suffered from high levels of crime and lack of security, which the Lambeth Inner Area Study of 1977 attributed in part to the ease of circulation and multiple points of entry (fig. 24).⁵² The redevelopment or remodelling of these estates is planned or in progress.

One of the most prominent Lambeth schemes is Loughborough Park (designed from c.1969; group leader Magda Boroweicka), largely due to the nine-storey Southwyck House along Coldharbour Lane. This 'barrier block' was intended to screen the low-rise housing to the south east from Ringway 1, a motorway scheme proposed by the Greater London Council. The scheme was approved and put out to tender when the motorway was cancelled in 1973. Cancelling the tender would have involved compensation payments to the

contractor and Lambeth's Housing Committee decided to proceed. A similar planning strategy was proposed by Ralph Erskine in 1970 for the redevelopment of the Byker estate in Newcastle upon Tyne (page 19).⁵³

Clapham Manor was the first major Lambeth project to reject comprehensive development in favour of grafting infill onto the existing street pattern, conserving or refurbishing older buildings as appropriate (fig. 7). Lambeth Council approved outline plans in March 1967 and detailed design was planned from 1969. Due to administrative complexities and a public enquiry, construction started only in 1975.⁵⁴ The new housing, of yellow stock brick, is carefully scaled and massed, and individual dwellings expressed by a combination of set backs, cantilevers, external stairways and monopitch roofs. The



Figure 25: Dunbar Street / Dunelm Grove in West Norwood, an infill scheme of 1977-80. © Elain Harwood.



Figure 26: Wiltshire Road / Sisulu Close (completed 1992, main job architect Abe Hayeem). (SP004003).

estate includes a day nursery, health centre, community centre and children's' play areas, linked to existing roads by new pedestrian routes.

Dunbar Street and Dunelm Grove, adjoining West Norwood cemetery, is a mature example of a compact, low-rise development on a slum clearance site (fig. 25). Designed under group leader Magda Boroweicka, it was presented in November 1974 and built in 1977-80. It is a tight layout of long, narrow family houses, mostly of three-storeys. The adjoining old persons' day centre and sheltered housing form a polygonal termination, and some Victorian housing and a Bethel Chapel were retained. Although the high densities attracted the criticism of local councillor Ken Livingstone, they were such that the scheme qualified for additional funding, spent on extras such as second-hand stock bricks, neat pre-cast concrete lintels and brick pavements. Pulling down the eaves level allowed a rhythmic arrangement of dormers for the upper storeys; which soon became a Lambeth trademark.⁵⁵ Slate hanging was another later trend, popularised following its use by Darbourne and Darke in the third phase of Lillington Gardens from 1969-72. This treatment is combined with boxy dormers at Joseph Powell close, off Hazelbourne Road, a small, narrow-frontage infill development designed in collaboration with the South London Consortium.⁵⁶

Little public housing was built after Hollamby's departure in 1981, so Wiltshire Road and Sisulu Close (completed 1992, main job architect Abe Hayeem) comes as an unexpected postscript. Its white rendered walls, black stained joinery and De Stijl graphics are closer to the 'neo-purist' work of Benson and Forsyth in Camden and the Grunt Group in Milton Keynes, but the variety and articulation of different dwelling types mark it out as a quintessential Lambeth scheme (fig. 26).⁵⁷

CONTEXT: LOW-RISE HIGH-DENSITY PUBLIC HOUSING

A starting point for low-rise, high-density housing in south London is the work of Eric Lyons for Span Developments Ltd., beginning in 1954-56 with two- and three-storey flats at Parkleys, Ham, and progressing at Blackheath into terraces and squares of small houses as well as flats (both developments listed at Grade II). His work never served as a model for public housing, however – with the notable exception of the Haddo Estate in Kentish Town, by his former assistant Robert Bailie in 1963-65, and even there tile-hung terraces were only an adjunct to a block of flats. Although Lyons's terraces achieved densities of rather more than 70 ppa, this was not enough for public housing even at the very south of the LCC area, where Central Hill reached 89.5 ppa.⁵⁸ But this is only a partial answer. The public sector could not maintain the complex, dense planting that was key to giving character and privacy in Span estates, where overlooking could be a real problem, while it needed a great many more facilities than the private sector could get away with. It needed a greater range of properties on one site, it needed social facilities, and above all by the 1960s it needed car parking. Span was losing its way by the mid-1960s as it attempted to build on a larger scale outside London, and Bailie's regurgitation marked the end of the line.

Yet, ironically, one new model came from another of Eric Lyons's former assistants. John Darbourne won a competition for housing at Lillington Street, Westminster, in 1961 with a scheme at 200ppa that rose to a maximum of eleven storeys, but which averaged only seven (fig. 27; Grade II*). Lillington Gardens (as it became) used planting, but with a more limited range than at Span, and it later hung slates rather as



Figure 27: Lillington Gardens Estate; Darbourne & Darke, 1964-72. (SP004004).

Span had used tile hanging, but its predominant facing material was a response – like its constrained height – to its neighbour, G.E. Street's church of St James the Less. That was a dark red brick, and it appeared not only in the facades of the flats but in steps, stairwells, walls and planting boxes – a very hard, firmly delineating and easily maintained landscape. It also defined an old-people's day centre, an electricity substation, underground car park, three public houses and, in the last phase, a public library. Darbourne and his partner Geoffrey Darke, who had also worked for Lyons, not only had a complicated brief but introduced further complexity, arguing that intricate elevations helped tenants to associate themselves with their part of the large development.⁵⁹ More complexity came from scissor sections, which gave many of the flats and maisonettes a dual aspect despite their narrow plans and the high densities required. Complexity and materiality gave public housing a tactile quality and together marked a shift away from pure modern movement ideals to give a sense of place and a new vernacular; pitched roofs followed.



Figures 28 & 29: Bishopsfield, Harlow, Essex; 1960-61 by Michael Neylan. © Elain Harwood

Another model, also from a competition held in 1960-61, was Bishopsfield, Harlow (figs 28 & 29). The winner here was Michael Neylan, who had previously worked for Chamberlin, Powell and Bon, most notably as the design assistant for Crescent House (grade II*) at the Golden Lane Estate. Bishopsfield, known popularly as ‘the Casbah’, shares many similarities with Lillington Gardens but its lower density (70 ppa) gives each house a private garden and allows for considerable public open space. Again there is an underground car park, and the concept of the traditional terrace or modern Georgian town house that had held a place in Harlow’s earlier development was swept away in search of a more creative and complex vernacular.

Above all, Bishopsfield brought to Britain at an early date the concept of the a hill town, as conceived by Le Corbusier on a modest scale with his ‘Roq et Rob’ project of 1947 and realised by Atelier 5 with their extremely influential Siedlung Halen outside Berne of 1961. These schemes informed Neave Brown’s work: firstly his own housing and later that for LB Camden. What was not always available in Camden was a hill; Brown successfully managed without one at Alexandra Road (Grade II) but Benson and Forsyth rather struggled at Maiden Lane. In Lambeth, the suburban parts of the borough south of Brixton offered a multitude of steep hills. Car parking could be inserted underneath on the lowest level, while housing placed on top could be entered at several levels - and always at a natural one without artificial walkways.

Patio housing, where the wall of one house shields the garden of the next, is another fashionable device that first appears at Bishopsfield from the Continent. Its sources lay in conceptual ideas by Mies van der Rohe that were partially developed by Arne Jacobsen at Søholm (1946) outside Copenhagen, and most fully and influentially by Jørn Utzon, firstly at Lund in Sweden, built in 1957, and most famously with his Kingo housing at Helsingør in Denmark begun the same year – where he exercised greater control (fig. 30). Neylan developed the drifts of lawn found at Lund and Helsingør into great open slopes, but there was less room for this at Lambeth, though the approach informed the grasslands around the lower housing at Cressingham Gardens.



Figure 30: Jørn Utzon's Kingo housing at Helsingør, Denmark, of 1957-68. © Elaine Harwood.

There has not been a definitive study of 1970s housing. The decade is dominated by the Byker Estate, Tyne and Wear, planned from 1968 and built between 1970 and 1982 (fig. 31; Grade II*). It is a distinctive, indeed idiosyncratic product of the very personal vision of one man, Ralph Erskine; it is probably his finest work and one of the finest housing developments of its date anywhere in the world. Also notable is Edward Cullinan's housing, as at Highgrove in Hillingdon, both in his use of materials and colour, and in the employment of personal quirks. Other large developments had hung over from the 1960s, including World's End, Robin Hood Gardens, Brunswick Centre (Grade II) and Alexandra Road, a scheme designed in 1967 that was not begun until 1972 and not



Figure 31: Byker Estate, Tyne and Wear, Ralph Erskine, 1970-82. Photograph by James O. Davies; © English Heritage.

completed until 1978. The late 1960s, however, had become markedly more individualistic – tenants were less docile and willing to live by the rules of large estates, and it is suggested by housing theorists that an underclass of tenants were emerging from the slums to be rehoused, the better tenants having been rehoused first. Vandalism is first reported by the *Architectural Review* at the LCC's Canada Water Estate in Southwark in November 1967, when Nicholas Taylor first attacked the 'bullying' architecture of very large blocks like this and the nearby Pepys Estate.⁶⁰ The collapse of Ronan Point in May 1968 hastened the demise of very tall point blocks, but medium-rise slabs continued to be built into the 1970s, notably as barrier blocks alongside fast roads or facing a waterfront.

Social conditions and the growing demand to preserve parts of the inner city - advanced in cities like London and Bristol

but much slower elsewhere – encouraged the building of social housing that did not look like a housing estate. This is true of local authorities and the housing associations that were beginning to emerge following the 1964 Housing Act. Large plots of land were also more rarely available. The Housing Act of 1974 finally made it realistic for local people to secure improvement grants for older properties. A lot of the most interesting schemes are infill or backland sites, where again the need for relatively high densities encouraged combinations of flats and maisonettes with complex sections. LB Islington, under Alf Head, employed Darbourne and Darke, Andrews Sherlock and Partners, Pring, White and Partners and Eric Lyons. Though best known for its in-house schemes, Camden brought in a striking range of private architects for its smaller sites (aided perhaps by having a higher rate income than other boroughs), which included Castle Park Dean Hook, Colquhoun and Miller, Evans and Shalev, Gerd Kaufmann, Tom Kay, Frederick MacManus and Partners, and James Stirling. Enfield turned to Neylan and Ungless and Haringey produced an array of small schemes under the Borough Architect

Alan Weitzel that included low-rise work by Colquhoun and Miller; Howell, Killick, Partridge and Amis; Lee and Miles, John Melvin and Partners, Ivor Smith and Cailey Hutton, Douglas Stephen and Partners and two schemes by Colin St John Wilson and Partners.

The slightly more open land south of the river offered better possibilities. In Southwark the most important infill schemes are by Neylan and Ungless (figs 32 & 33), brought in to counter the very large slab developments by the Borough Architect's Department under Frank Hayes and H. P.

(Felix) Trenton, but all have been severely altered. Greenwich has housing for the elderly by Trevor Dannatt (1975-77) as well as earlier work by James Gowan for the LCC, and Nightingale Place, Woolwich Common, a very large development by V. H. Hards and later R. L. Dickinson (1975-82) where the aesthetic of Darbourne and Darke comes to the fore. Merton produced a series of schemes in-house that explored the ideas of perimeter planning, at Pollards Hill, built in 1968-71 with Richard MacCormac among its



Figure 32: Churchmead, Camberwell Road, Southwark; Neylan & Ungless, 1967-71. © Elain Harwood.



Figure 33: Setchell estate, Southwark; Neylan & Ungless, 1972-78. © Elain Harwood.



Figure 34: Pollards Hill estate; Merton, 1968-71. © Elain Harwood.

assistants but now denuded by window replacement (fig. 34); Watermeads from 1974-7, perhaps the most attractive because of its setting; and All Saints (1978-80). Most curious is Lewisham, where Nicholas Taylor, a councillor from 1971, became chairman of the council's planning committee and from 1978 of its housing committee. He brought in Howell, Killick, Partridge and Amis at Somerville Road and later Walter Segal, as well as in-house schemes such as Brockley Park (1978-80).

Outside London this range of low- and medium-rise housing-density did not exist, as densities were lower and the demand for houses made mixed schemes with flats rarer. Where comprehensive redevelopment schemes continued, as in Nottingham, the Meadows (1972-80) was less regular than the earlier redevelopment of St Ann's from 1967-76, to a remarkably rigid grid, but its brickwork remained sallow and details mean. It demonstrates the limitations of yardstick housing. Darbourne and Darke produced backland housing at Pershore, Worcestershire, now heavily altered. Alteration also makes it difficult to identify individual examples of the low-density housing built in the early phases of Milton Keynes in the 1970s: Norman Foster's housing at Bean Hill has been given pitched roofs; Erskine's extensive estate at Eaglestone has some new windows, and the Development Corporation's signature works at Netherfield have been partially re-clad or, at Coffee Hall, gained pitched roofs. The more complex developments in the north of the town at Great Linford and Stantonbury require further investigation: Stantonbury remains largely modern, with work by Attenborough Jones; Gillespie, Kidd and Coia; John Winter and Peter Womersley, but Great Linford saw contextual issues coming to the fore in a neo-vernacular, together with early examples of energy-efficient designs such as Solar Court.

Much housing of this period separates pedestrian routes from roads for cars, creating a complex form of Radburn planning and considerable feelings of personal insecurity at night. At Corby, adventurous developments to Radburn plans by John Stedman, both as Chief Architect to the Development Corporation and from 1972 in private practice, have largely been demolished. Gentler, and noted for its skilful landscaping, is The Brow at Runcorn, by Don Ritson and Peter Fauset of 1969-71 for the Development Corporation, and Palace Fields, also by the Development Corporation, from 1972-73. Also designed for pedestrians, and intricate despite the regularity of its plan, is the private estate High Kingsdown in Bristol, built in 1971-75 to designs by Andrew Mackay of Whicheloe, Macfarlane and Towning Hill after a Conservative council sold off the sensitive hilltop site in 1968. More vernacular are schemes like St Columb Minor in Cornwall by Feilden and Mawson, who worked most extensively in Norwich, and schemes by Essex County Council following their *Design Guide* of 1973.

Where does Lambeth fit in this context? The massing and landscaping of the smaller schemes is notable, though detailing has often been lost through mass window replacement. Though no other authority after Camden produced such a consistent and extensive body of housing, it is the very smallest schemes that are most interesting, where individuality and contextualism are most finely balanced. These include Cressingham Gardens, Leigham Court Road, Dunbar Street and Dunelm Grove, and elements within the Clapham Manor complex.

ENDNOTES.

- 1 Edward Hollamby 'The Social Art' in *RIBA Journal*, March 1974, pp.37-44 (p.38). Other biographical sources are Elaine Harwood, 'Hollamby, Edward Ernest (1921-1999)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, September 2011; British Library National Life Stories, 1997 interview in the Architects' Lives series; Andrew Saint, notes from interviews of 19 October and 10 November 1994, (copy in the Hollamby biographical file, EH Assessment South), London; and *Architects' Journal*, 16 January 1963, p.121.
- 2 Bridget Cherry and Nikolaus Pevsner 1991 *London 3 North West*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, p.210; Andrew Saint, notes from interviews of 19 October and 10 November 1994.
- 3 Cited in Michael Simmons 'Appreciation: Ted Hollamby', *The Guardian*, 10 February 2000
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- 5 Bridget Cherry and Nikolaus Pevsner *London 2: South*. New Haven: Yale, p.594.
- 6 Margaret Garlake 1993 "'A War of Taste": The LCC as Art Patron, 1948-1965', *London Journal*, vol.18, pp.45-65.
- 7 In 'scissor section' housing, corridors on alternating floors serve interlocking and split-level maisonettes. The type was developed in the early 1960s by a team which included David Gregory Jones, Colin Jones and Ian Hampson ('Cubitt Town: Public Housing', Survey of London: volumes 43 and 44: Poplar, Blackwall and Isle of Dogs (1994), pp. 539-547. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=46531> Date accessed: 31 October 2013).
- 8 British Library National Life Stories, 1997 interview in the Architects' Lives series; William Jacoby pers.comm., 20 September 2013; Lionel Esher 1981 *A Broken Wave: the Rebuilding of England 1940-1980*. London: Allen Lane, p.163.
- 9 Edward Hollamby, David Gosling and Gordon Cullen 1982 *Isle of Dogs A Guide to Design and Development Opportunities*. London: London Docklands Development Corporation; Charles Attwood, pers.comm., 18 September 2013. Attwood followed Hollamby to the LDDC in 1981.
- 10 Edward Hollamby 1991 *Red House, Bexleyheath: The Home Of William Morris*. London: Phaidon.
- 11 *RIBA Journal*, March 1974, p.12.
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- 13 Ken Livingstone 1987 *If Voting Changed Anything They'd Abolish it*. London: Collins, p.15.
- 14 William Jacoby, pers. comm., 20 September 2013.
- 15 British Library National Life Stories, 1997 interview in the Architects' Lives series
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- 17 Located on the bend of Clapham Park Road, it was completed in 1983 (LBL/BDD/1/12).
- 18 *Architects' Journal*, 4 August 1965, pp. 275-86.
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- 21 Derek Walker and Bill Addis 1998 *Happold: the Confidence to Build*. London: Happold Trust Publications Ltd, p.41.
- 22 *RIBA Journal*, July 1965, p.350.
- 23 *RIBA Journal*, July 1965, p.351. A. Skeffington (1969) *People and Planning* [Report of the Committee on Public Participation in Planning]. London: HMSO.
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- 25 *Lambeth Official Guide* 1965-66, p.41, Lambeth Archives reference collection.
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- 29 <http://www.johnmedhurstlandscape.co.uk/about/>; *Landscape Design*, no.98, May 1972, pp.18-23.
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- 33 Parker Morris Committee 1961 *Homes for Today and Tomorrow*. London: HMSO.
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- 35 Charles Attwood, pers.comm., 18 September 2013.
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- 37 *Architects' Journal*, 4 March 1964, p.506.
- 38 *RIBA Journal*, July 1965, p.354.
- 39 *Architects' Journal*, 9 May 1973, p.1122.

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- 41 *RIBA Journal*, July 1965, pp. 350-57; *Deutsche Bauzeitschrift*, vol. 20, no. 10, October 1972, pp. 1849-52; *Architects' Journal*, 17 May 1972, pp. 1062-64; *Architects' Journal*, vol. 156, no. 35, 30 August 1972, p. 470; *Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, April/May 1972, no. 161, pp. 77-79; *Community Action*, no. 3, July/August 1972, pp. 30-32; *Werk*, no. 3, 1972, pp. 152-54; *A&U*, vol. 3, no. 7, July 1973, pp. 109-14.
- 42 George Finch, pers.comm., 13 January 2006.
- 43 LBL/BDD/1/111; *RIBA Journal*, July 1965, pp. 350-57.
- 44 Charles Attwood, pers.comm., 18 September 2013.
- 45 Broadcast 2 February 1967, BFI reference 322835; Carl Rollyson 2004 *Documentary Film: A Primer*, Bloomington, Indiana: iUniverse, pp.69-70.
- 46 Jill Craigie, 'People Versus Planners', *The Times*, 14 September 1968.
- 47 *Architects' Journal*, 1 December 1971.
- 48 LBL/BDD/1/87
- 49 LBL/BDD/1/123; Charles Attwood pers. comm., 18 September 2013; Roger Bicknell, pers. comm., 3 October 2013.
- 50 'Elsewhere [at Lambeth] though the seventies the domestic scale was carefully maintained, sometimes in white brick, sometimes in black, sometimes using old yellow stocks from demolished buildings, sometimes cool and geometrical like Central Hill on the steep wooded slope at the far end of the borough, sometimes warm and informal like the snug village that lines the west edge of Brockwell Park along Tulse Hill, one of the nicest small schemes in England. The proper modesty of scale of each of these projects should not conceal the fact that cumulatively they were working a beneficent transformation of the atmosphere of south London'. Esher 1981 *op cit*, p.161, with an illustration of Cressingham Gardens on p.160.
- 51 Stockwell Redevelopment Area: LBL/BDD/1/118; Myatts Field North Development: LBL/BDD/1/91; Myatts Field South Development: LBL/BDD/1/92.
- 52 Shankland Cox 1977 *Inner London: Policies for Dispersal and Balance. Final Report of the Lambeth Inner Area Study*. London: Department of the Environment, p. 159. Similar views were expressed by former Chief Architect William Jacoby (pers. comm., 20 September 2013).
- 53 Magda Boroweicka pers. comm., 13 September 2013; LBL/BDD/1/82-84
- 54 LBL/BDD/1/18; LBL/BDD/1/21
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- 56 *Building*, vol. 235, no. 7059 (42), 20 October 1978, pp. 93-98.
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