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# **SOUTH ACTON: HOUSING HISTORIES**

## **AN HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT CHARACTERISATION STUDY**



Architectural Investigation

Reports and Papers B/001/2005



ENGLISH HERITAGE

**SOUTH ACTON**  
LONDON BOROUGH OF EALING

**AN HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT CHARACTERISATION STUDY**

February 2005

Surveyed September-November 2004  
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*Architectural Investigation*  
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## SUMMARY

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This report is an investigation of the historic environment of the suburban London district of South Acton. It arises from survey work undertaken in 2004 in response to proposals for regeneration that promise considerable change in coming years. The report does not contain specific recommendations for action. Rather it aims to inform all those involved with the regeneration of the area through insights into the character and history of South Acton's built environment. These may be summarised as follows:

- The first development of South Acton in the 1860s and 1870s established the district as dominated by densely built low-quality working-class housing, within which laundries emerged as a dominant industry. This working suburb to the south of Avenue Road and the Mill Hill Park Estate, where speculations were of a higher standard, was a largely self-contained and self-sufficient entity.
- From the 1880s new buildings in the area tended either to integrate industrial and domestic accommodation, or to be purpose-built flats in terraces, though the opening of South Acton Station in 1880 did enable some terrace house speculations to the east and south. Numerous shops, pubs and churches sustained the district through the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, during which period its privately rented housing became increasingly overcrowded and poorly maintained.
- In the late 1940s Acton Borough Council's first Labour administration set about tackling South Acton's severe housing problems. Initial opportunistic redevelopment of bombsites and other infilling, as at Bollo Court and St Margaret's Lodge, led on to the establishment of the South Acton Comprehensive Development Area, first plans for which were settled in 1951. These aimed to maintain existing densities in blocks of flats that would give people more spacious accommodation and many new amenities, not least large open green spaces between the buildings.
- From the outset progress was slower than anticipated, constrained by the practical complexities of re-housing people, as well as by financial and bureaucratic impediments. By the end of the 1950s progress had extended across the southern and poorest parts of the district, culminating in the Hanbury Estate (Grahame Tower *et al*), six architecturally progressive blocks in a 'mixed development' that incorporated both high- and low-rise flats around carefully planned greens.
- Through the early 1960s comprehensive redevelopment was pursued across the rest of the southern and western parts of the district, with a quadrant to the southwest separately zoned for the relocation of local industry. Constraints of cost and emphasis on rapid output meant that development became somewhat more pinched, in terms of both architectural design and allowances for open space. The area's first tower block, now known as Jerome Tower, was built in 1962-3, with the intention that it should be the estate's centrepiece.
- The apogee of the confident application of Modernist architectural principles in South Acton came in the mid 1960s at the centre of the district. Large new open spaces were created between two massive slab blocks (Charles Hocking House and Barwick House) and a 20-storey tower (Barrie House). The area's 19<sup>th</sup>-century street pattern was abandoned, roads being closed for the sake of safety and amenity.
- Comprehensive redevelopment continued uninterrupted in the late 1960s under the London Borough of Ealing, though central government cost controls compromised architectural

quality and layouts. The nine blocks south of Avenue Road that are known as 'the castles' were complete by 1972. These lack architectural distinction and taken together have an unusual mixture of shapes, materials and orientations. However, they continued to provide spacious new homes without significantly raising densities.

- In 'Phase II', or the 'South Acton Extension', redevelopment extended north of Avenue Road towards Acton High Street, an area not previously considered part of South Acton. After numerous changes of plan there was a significant change of approach here, typical of its time, in what has come to be known as the 'red brick' area. Built in 1974-9 the blocks of flats here are predominantly low rise, abandoning mixed development and wide-open landscaping for 'neo-vernacular' massing, concrete decks and an intricate array of closes.
- Through the 1950s and 1960s social provision failed to keep up with housebuilding. There were also problems with management, maintenance and anti-social behaviour from the outset, as there had been in the area's earlier housing. Immigration gradually became an important factor in a climate of changing perceptions of community and identity. Successes in the establishment of new communities were severely undermined by negative perceptions and publicity, particularly relating to tower blocks, as well as by a critical and typical failure to invest adequately in management and maintenance. By 1975 outsiders had labelled South Acton a 'sink estate', a characterisation many locals did not recognise.
- There was much refurbishment and re-landscaping through the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, along with the development of community infrastructure, but the shrinkage of funds available for public housing and other centrally dictated moves against local-authority dominance of social housing meant that many maintenance and management problems remained unresolved. Ghettoisation of the estate and commercial retreat (the closure of shops and pubs) caused South Acton's historic self-sufficiency to falter.
- Plans for comprehensive regeneration of the South Acton Estate (latterly the South Acton Neighbourhood) were first mooted in the late 1990s. These advanced through the demolition of Barrie House and the construction of 'Phase 1' buildings in 2001-4, which include terraced flats and houses facing streets. Further plans for the rest of the district were developed in late 2004 envisaging much demolition, new mixed-tenure housing and higher overall densities. These proposals have generated opposition among some local residents who fear the loss of good buildings and open spaces, and the destabilisation of established communities. The implementation of major change in South Acton presents a substantial challenge, for which recent history provides important lessons.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## INTRODUCTION

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The background to this report is the regeneration of the South Acton Neighbourhood, plans for which involve the replacement of much housing from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. More particularly, the work takes its cue from one of the 'Aspirations for Change' in the manifesto of the South Acton Residents' Action Group (SARAG): 'The history, continuity and community spirit of the area is important and should inform what happens and which buildings are retained. We need to conserve any historical artefacts and could consider our heritage and diverse cultural identity through public art.'

In June 2004 SARAG and Ealing Civic Society approached English Heritage about the need for historical characterisation in South Acton. They had no experience of such studies themselves. Indeed there are not ready models for the characterisation of comparable places. English Heritage believes strongly that the process of regeneration provides an opportunity for strengthening historical awareness and thereby continuity. Historical understanding is vital both for those managing change and for wider public appreciation of the everyday built environment as something that can and should be valued, cared for and enjoyed. Baba Dioum, a Senegalese conservationist, has summarised this dynamic: 'In the end, we will conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand what we are taught'. It has been working in South Acton: 'Learning a bit about the history, especially the history of the blocks themselves, you do start looking for certain things, you just start thinking'.<sup>1</sup> Regeneration will be more successful where it takes place against a background of good understanding of social, economic and cultural character as seen through the histories of existing buildings and landscapes. In addition there is a need for new approaches to the historical investigation of post-war housing that extend beyond assessments of architectural significance. South Acton therefore has presented English Heritage with a timely opportunity to make progress on multiple fronts.

Working closely with local interests a project was set up in July 2004, aiming to act as quickly as possible to feed into the already well-advanced regeneration programme. Research and investigation were undertaken from September leading to this report, first circulated in December 2004. It is hoped that the study will provide a body of information that will influence approaches to regeneration. At another level it can simply raise the profile of the neighbourhood, identifying and celebrating its positive qualities. It will also have value for posterity as a record of a vital and fascinating place just before major change, and might serve as a model, inspiration or lesson for studies of other places where the regeneration of post-war housing is underway.

Specific objectives agreed at the outset determined that the report should:

- Set out the historical and chronological development of the neighbourhood
- Provide an analysis of its historic, architectural and social character
- Analyse the 'ensemble' grouping of the blocks in a landscape
- Set out ways in which South Acton's buildings are typical or atypical of their time, and make clear distinctions between those elements that illustrate wider national and regional trends, and those that are locally distinctive or genuinely unusual.
- Identify the ideas that motivated the building of the housing and how far these were achieved in built form
- Relate the site of the post-war housing to surrounding streets and topography over time, investigating historical and physical relationships with the High Street, Mill Hill Park and the South Acton Trading Estate
- Discuss how the blocks have been adapted to meet the changing needs of residents, addressing alterations as a social document in built form
- Analyse how access routes have evolved
- Ascertain what the residents value in the neighbourhood
- Aim to inform perceptions as to what there is to retain and enhance

The report does not make specific recommendations. It is about what has happened, not about what should happen, though understandings of the past do, of course, inform attitudes to the future. The methodological approach follows well-established practice for historic area assessments, taking buildings as a starting point, and combining rapid-survey fieldwork with documentary research, photography and phase mapping as raw materials for the construction of a narrative history. The report is essentially an academic history, basically constructed as a chronological story, blending social and economic contexts with details of topographical change and building development, architectural motivation and contexts being assessed in passing. For pragmatic reasons maps show the area as it was at the end of the 1990s, an important historical juncture just before regeneration began, rather than as it continues to change. Two appendices, a chronological list of major events and a gazetteer of public housing, isolate 'core data'.

This, however, is just half of a dual approach, historical research and analysis having been partnered in the project by community engagement. A parallel study by Fluid, acting as consultants for English Heritage, has created an oral-history based synthesis of local residents' thoughts, memories and feelings about South Acton. This exists as another report and a digital documentary CD, titled 'South Acton Stories: Sharing Histories, Revealing Identity'. Though separately presented, there has been close collaboration, with some integration of material and sharing of interpretations, the two approaches combining to provide complementary explorations, of convergence and divergence between architectural intentions and lived experience, and academic and popular histories. All the work will be made available in South Acton, as well as through other local and national outlets. It is hoped that it will be unified through a dedicated website in early 2005.

South Acton has been overlooked by those documenting London's buildings. *The Buildings of England* dismissed its housing estate in 1991 as 'soulless wastes',<sup>2</sup> and English Heritage's own *London Suburbs* of 1999 paid regard locally only to the late-19<sup>th</sup>-century development of the Mill Hill Park Estate, seen as compromised by 'the proximity of the working-class South Acton area with its piggeries and laundries'.<sup>3</sup> Topographical clarity is crucial, particularly and significantly as perceptions of what is or is not South Acton have changed. Formally, and for the sake of manageability within a tight timescale, the study area has been defined as bounded by Acton High Street in the north, Oldham Terrace, Newton Avenue and Church Path to the east, the former North London line railway to the southeast, Bollo Lane to the south-west and Gunnersbury Lane, Mill Hill Road and Crown Street to the north-west. However, the London Borough of Ealing and other interested parties have urged a wider perspective. These boundaries have not, therefore, been treated as hard, but rather as contingent. So far as has been practicable South Acton's relationships with adjoining areas has been addressed. Acton is essentially a suburb, of which South Acton is a part. Suburbs are maddeningly mutable things, geographically, architecturally and temporally. Contingency is in their nature and multiple identities and boundaries are not only possible, but inevitable. The placing of a peripheral place like South Acton at the centre of attention is itself a play with identity, a trick of the map.<sup>4</sup>

What is special about South Acton is in considerable measure its typicality. The place has a subtly unique disposition of familiar and widespread forms, representing virtually all approaches to public housing through the post-war period. It has one of the largest post-war housing estates in west London, presenting a rich variety of buildings with completion dates ranging from 1948 through to 1978. South Acton can thus be provisionally looked at as a kind of exhibition of housing types, dissonant in its combinations, but instructively representative of changing approaches through a long period. This is important because post-war housing tends to be reviled, or, more rarely, loved, and there is an undoubted need for greater objectivity in assessing the history of post-war housing programmes.



More importantly, and more germane in the context of regeneration, the subject of post-war housing is seldom treated by historians other than in isolation as a subject in its own right, seldom being connected to contiguous earlier and later developments, private, public or social. Linking housing across historical periods, and across types of provision in a specific broader local context should help to make sense of a whole place, characterising mix rather than highlights, and revealing that it is not, in fact, an exhibition, but rather a settlement. Variability in public housing needs also to be understood in terms of local contexts as well as in relation to national programmes. Finally, the degree to which use as opposed to design has affected (or failed to affect) what was initially provided needs to be taken into account. Alterations can be as revealing as original form.<sup>5</sup>

History is a record of what has happened, compiled from facts rather than myths. However, it is acknowledged that, like any other narrative, this report is a subjective account, qualitative not quantitative, presented alongside another, 'South Acton Stories: Sharing Histories, Revealing Identity', with full awareness that, as the historian Raphael Samuel put it, 'our understanding of the historical past is constructed not so much in the light of the documentary evidence, but rather of the symbolic space or imaginative categories into which representations are fitted'.<sup>6</sup> It is hoped that it will be understood as a beginning, a source from which local initiatives can draw and imaginations be fired.

## DEVELOPMENT

Until the 19<sup>th</sup> century South Acton was fields and streams on Thames gravel terraces. The village of Acton clustered along the High Street that was an ancient and long built-up road linking London and Oxford. The western branch of Stamford Brook crossed the High Street and ran along its south side, under what has latterly become the 'red brick' part of South Acton (fig. 1). On its north bank, to the south of what became the site of Acton Town Hall, was the Berrymead estate, the home in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century of Evelyn Pierrepont, the 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Kingston, whose daughter, brought up here, achieved literary fame as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. The house, largely rebuilt c.1802 to castellated 'Gothick' designs by Thomas Burnell, came to be known as Berrymead Priory, a romantic conceit, as there had been no monks here. It was demolished in the mid 1980s. To the west what has become Gunnersbury Lane was variously called Bellow (Bollo) Bridge Lane or Brentford Lane in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Crossing Bollo Brook near the site of Acton Town Station, it headed on out of the parish to Gunnersbury House. The brook ran along Bellow (Bollo) Lane to the southeast and the hamlet of Acton Green. What has become Acton Lane meandered southwards from Berrymead Priory. A parallel footpath linked Acton Green to Acton, running along or close to the surviving line of Church Path, Newton Avenue and Oldham Terrace, along the east side of which there survives early but heterogeneous and much rebuilt brick walling, some of which may date from the 17<sup>th</sup> century; this was the western boundary



Fig. 1 - Acton in the 1740s (John Rocque, 'An Exact Survey of the City's of London, Westminster . . . and the Country near Ten Miles Round', 1746).

wall of the Berrymead estate. In a parish with a dispersed population this path would have been not just a route to the church, but also a connection to the market, hostelryes and transport links of the High Street. Until about 1830 Turnham Field, which lay roughly between where Avenue Road and the North London line were to be built, was common, that is divided, arable that was not to be built on or otherwise enclosed.<sup>7</sup>

## A working suburb takes shape: 1850 to 1900

Nothing significant happened to change this until 1851-3 when the North & South-Western Junction Railway (the North London Line) arrived and Acton (Central) Station opened. This was not a well-connected or commuter line until 1865, but the opportunities that the railway represented broke apart the prospering local agricultural economy. Under the terms of the General Enclosure Act of 1845, numerous Acton landowners began in 1856 to re-negotiate the fragmented strip ownership of the area's common fields, recognising that the land had significantly greater value for building than for agriculture. Agreement led to the passage of Acton's own Enclosure Act in 1859. Many landowners quickly cashed in their chips, though one of the larger ones, the Royal Society, which had acquired property in Acton in 1732 as an investment, did hold on. Bollo Bridge Road was laid out, as was Southfield Road to the east, and Churchfield Road to the north.<sup>8</sup>

The Enclosure Act of 1859 opened the door to the first concerted speculative housing development in any part of Acton. Mary White, a widow resident in Acton Hill or Mill Hill House, a large villa of c.1800 part of which survives at No. 11 Avenue Crescent, sold her 85-acre estate all but immediately. Bounded to the west by Gunnersbury Lane and Bollo Lane, this ran as far south as Bollo Bridge Road and east to what was to become Church Road, Park Road East and the approximate site of Berrymede School. The buyer was the British Land Company, which had been formed in 1856 by three Liberal members of Parliament: Richard Cobden, the leading champion of free trade, Sir Joshua Walmsley and William Arthur Wilkinson. It was an offshoot of the National Freehold Land Society, which had been formed by Liberals in the 1840s to buy land to sell to humbler party members, in plots just large enough to make them eligible to vote, incidentally facilitating the building of homes for artisans, that is the upper end of the working class. The subsidiary 'building society' that was the British Land Company operated widely around London.<sup>9</sup>

In Acton two more new roads, Mill Hill Road and Avenue Road, were formed to run across land nearer the High Street. Plots with substantial frontages of up to 40ft (12m) on these roads and on Gunnersbury Lane were auctioned off, mainly to local builders. Numerous detached and semi-detached villas went up in the early 1860s, many of which survive (fig. 2). Somewhat more modest, though not much, was Leicester Terrace, a four-house speculation of 1862, from which 30-34 Mill Hill Road survive. The large plots and use of the word 'avenue' (said to derive from an avenue of elms on its line), implying spaciousness and social decorum, indicate the high aspirations for development south of the High Street at this point. Yet the houses were architecturally conservative, suggesting that the speculators were more interested in the safety of solid respectability than in anything more fashionable. Even so, the market did not oblige. The middle-class housing proved difficult to let, and the development of these streets remained incomplete. As a consequence succeeding work was less ambitious. The seven



*Fig. 2 - No. 11 Avenue Road, a villa of the 1860s, with Beaumaris Tower beyond (English Heritage, 2004).*



Fig. 3 - Nos 8-14 (even) Mill Hill Terrace, houses of c.1870 (English Heritage, 2004, D. Kendall).



Fig. 4 - Church Road in the early 20th century (Ealing Local History Centre).

small houses at 2-14 Mill Hill Terrace were built c.1870, with all but those at the ends having 15ft (4.5m) frontages (fig. 3). Church Road, formed as such in 1861, was quickly built up, becoming a busy trading street with an open market (fig. 4), a Baptist church being built here in 1864. All this was essentially outward growth from Acton High Street. Another reflection of transformation at the heart of Acton at this time was the rebuilding of the parish church of St Mary in 1865-7.<sup>10</sup>

Further from the High Street land was that much harder to sell. South of the gardens of Mill Hill House Osborne Road, Enfield Road, Hanbury Road, Park Road East and Park Road North were all laid out from 1862 as a simple interconnecting grid of streets. To start with only a few smaller house plots, many with 15ft frontages, were sold (fig. 5). To help to encourage interest

the building leases were left free of restrictions. The British Land Company bought more land, permitting the laying out of Strafford Road from 1864, and the area south of Bollo Bridge Road to the railway line from 1867. Development followed, as on Junction Road (later Vincent Road), where houses built between 1869 and 1874 had 20ft (6m) frontages, rather more than was typical (fig. 6). There was about 800 sq ft (72 sq m) of living space in eight rooms in each of these houses; singly occupied this was modest, but not poor, housing. Into the 1870s development was erratic. Most first occupants were labourers and their families, some houses having no more than four rooms. The British Land Company also bought land south of the railway where Rothschild Road and streets further south were built up c.1870 as northwards extension from Acton Green, discontinuous with development on the other side of the railway line.

Elsewhere in Acton, as on the Goldsmiths' Company's Acton Station Estate north of Churchfield Road, development was a bit more controlled, with the aim of ensuring somewhat higher-status occupancy, which, of course, meant higher rents. Across newly suburban west London as a whole, 'from the outset the various land company estates came to acquire distinct characteristics. Social differentiation is evident not only between middle-class properties (mostly leasehold) on the one hand and many of the

estates divided into freehold building plots on the other, but also between different estates of the same land company.'<sup>11</sup> Acton south of Avenue Road was thus unlike other parts of Acton. It was effectively designed and destined to be a working-class district. Once the market, operating through the British Land Company, had dictated small house plots and unrestricted leases in a location that did not have good transport connections a standard had been set that market forces would only reinforce. South Acton could thus only grow as a largely self-contained and low-status mix of the residential and the industrial, employment needing to be local for a working population (fig. 7).

Between 1861 and 1881 Acton's population and housing as a whole increased from 3,151 in 649 houses to 17,126 in 3,236 houses, much of what was new being in South Acton. It has been estimated that by 1900 South Acton's working-class population was about 15,000 people.<sup>12</sup> Uncontrolled development gave rise to social problems from the outset.<sup>13</sup> The Acton



*Fig. 5 - Osborne Road, houses of the mid 1860s, photographed in 1954 (The Acton Gazette).*



*Fig. 6 - Junction Road (later Vincent Road), houses of c.1870 on the south side, photographed in 1954, just before their demolition. Note the 'ginny' shuttle train in the background at South Acton Station (Ealing Local History Centre).*

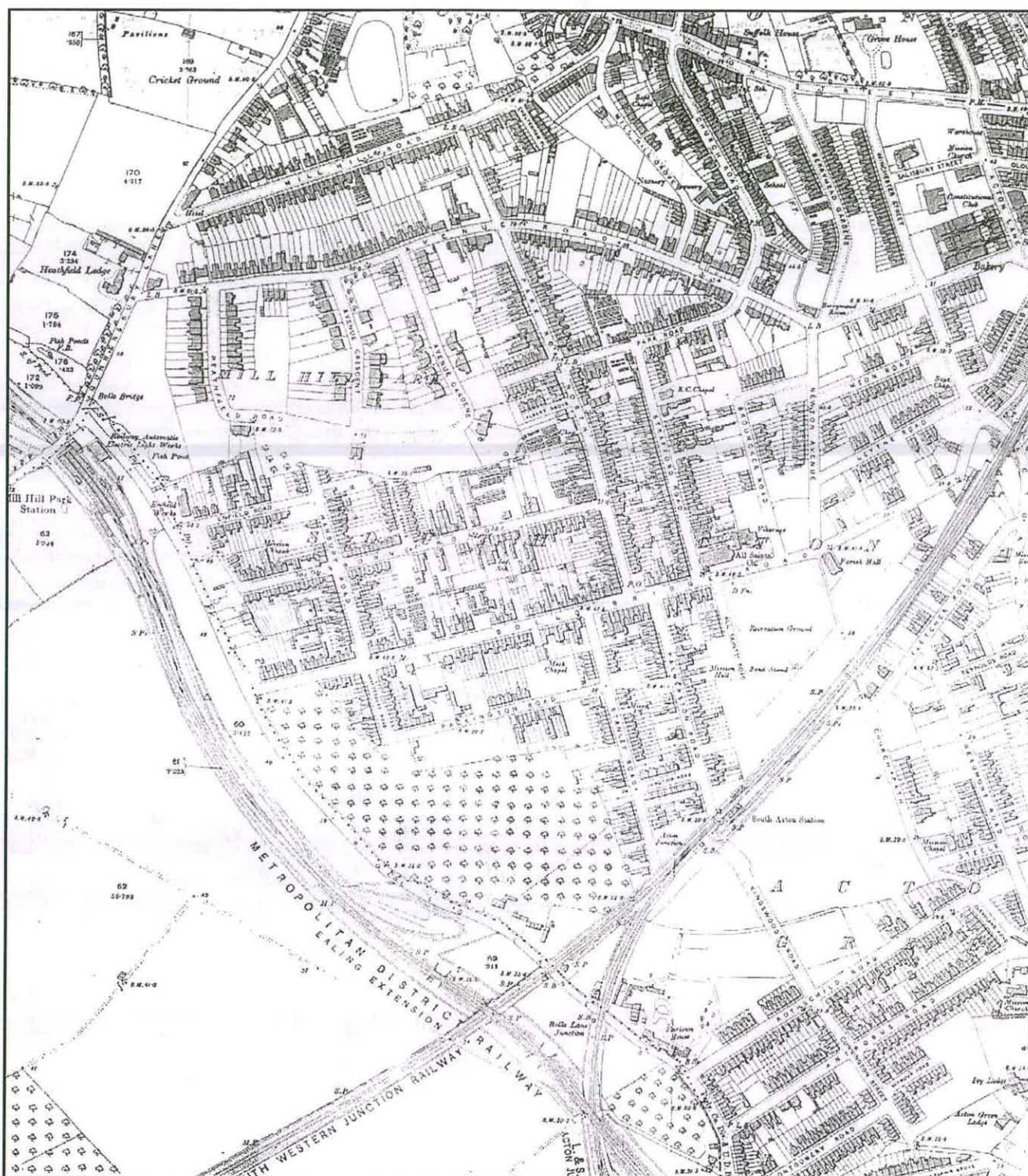


Fig. 7 - South Acton in 1893 (Ordnance Survey).

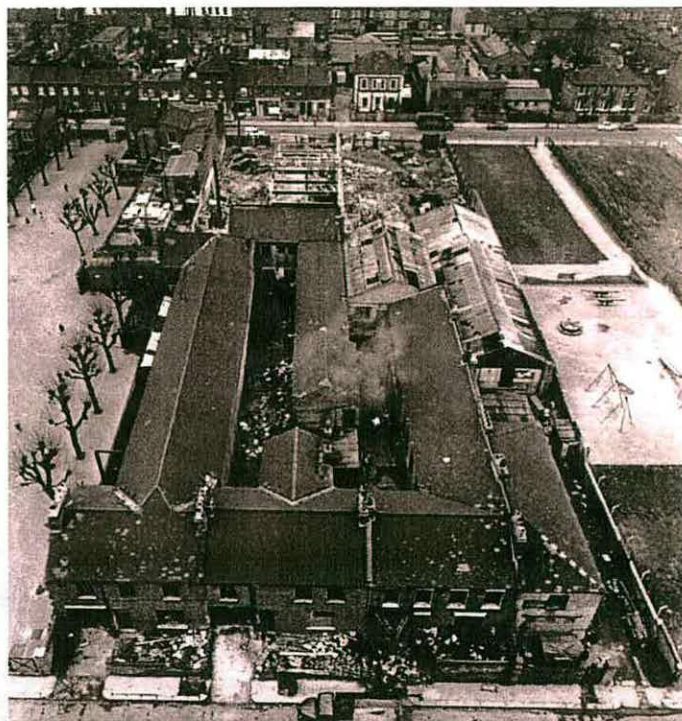
Local Board was formed in 1866 to begin to attempt to control building development and provide adequate drainage; at this date overcrowded parts of East London were suffering an outbreak of cholera. As early as 1869 an inquiry was launched to look into the poor housing and living conditions in South Acton.

Local employment grew principally through laundries, an industry that did not depend on travel (or fares) to get to work, and which was not thought to be a problem in terms of living conditions. By 1872 there were over 60 laundries in the area, rising to 130 plus by 1881, 168 plus by 1887, and 212 plus by 1895, after which growth peaked. There were more of these

laundries in Bollo Bridge Road than in any other road. However, these numbers relate to enterprises and it is likely that the numbers of premises used were significantly larger. The South Acton Working Men's Club was formed in 1873 and the Laundry Proprietors' Club in 1885, based in Strafford Road. Hand laundries perhaps started as supplementary income earned by women. For labourers a second income would have been necessary to pay the rent on a newly obtained home, and taking in washing was a traditional way of meeting this need. Concentration of the laundry trade was moving from the somewhat earlier suburbs of Kensal Town, Notting Dale and North Kensington. Like these places South Acton was well situated to serve ever-growing wealthier west London districts, also benefiting from the cleanliness of the prevailing winds. Generally mains water was used; the area's springs and brooks were already polluted and were not a basis for the establishment of the laundries. The nickname 'Soapsud Island', in use only from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, was taken over from and shared with other laundry centres, notably Kensal Town.<sup>14</sup>

Pig keeping was another widespread early local industry. This was not a hangover from the area's agricultural past, but a consequence of the absence of restrictions in the leases of the 1860s. The Metropolitan Board of Works excluded pig keeping and other obnoxious trades from London, so they came to Acton, beyond reach of the MBW. More than the numerous slaughterhouses it was the production of pig feed and manure that generated smells and complaints. While the growth of the laundry industry continued unhindered, an Acton Local Board byelaw considerably diminished pig keeping in South Acton after 1881. Yet a slaughterhouse in Hanbury Road that had been adapted for the production of kosher meat in 1926 endured into the 1950s, having become what was then said to be Britain's second biggest horse slaughtering centre.<sup>15</sup>

Increasingly from c.1880 South Acton's houses were purpose built to accommodate the likely presence of a laundry or other domestic industry, with integral 'workshop' bays, that is double doorways for carts that led to yards or substantial outbuildings for wash-houses below ironing and mangling rooms, as at 59-61 Osborne Road (demolished), just west of Berrymede School, or as survives at 63 Brouncker Road (see below) (figs 8 and 13). From the standpoint of the speculative builder the character of the area had resolved itself sufficiently as to make the integration of domestic and industrial spaces advisable. The area that was considered to be South Acton extended beyond the North London railway line, and other three-bay purpose-built laundry houses can still be seen on Rothschild



*Fig. 8 - 59-63 Osborne Road, late-19th-century houses with integral laundry wings to the rear, photographed from the newly completed Jerome Tower in 1964, shortly before clearance (Ealing Local History Centre).*



*Fig. 9 - 67 Rothschild Road (to centre), house of the 1880s with workshop bay, occupied as William Everitt's laundry by 1887 (English Heritage, 2004).*

Road, seemingly not developed until the 1880s, at intriguingly regular intervals on its south side: at 21, which was the Heston House Laundry by 1887 until c.1940, 27 which was the Orchard Laundry by 1881 until c.1930, as well as 47 and 67, running as William Everitt's laundry by 1887 (fig. 9). Many other ordinary houses on this road were also used as laundries.<sup>16</sup>

The church was the principal source of social welfare support. In 1871 Reverend Andrew Hunter Dunn (1839-1914) arrived in the area. He was a young and ambitious Anglo-Catholic cleric from a well-to-do family who had sought out a challenging parish, following the model of East End missions to the poor. Dunn stayed in South Acton until 1892 and had a huge impact on the area, investing about £7,000 of his own money and raising much more, never forgetting self-promotion. He wasted no time in getting a church, though his haste proved ill judged as it was badly built. It opened in 1872 as the Church of All Saints, a red-brick Gothic Revival structure with a prominent south-west tower on Bollo Bridge Road. It was designed by Richard Life Adams and John Kelly, little known Leeds-based architects, and a south chapel was added in 1895, to designs by Edward Monson (see below). The church was demolished in 1982. Dunn established several satellite mission churches, one in Osborne Road in 1877, and a nursery, institute and kitchen for the sick in Strafford Road. Adjoining All Saints to the north he built a school in 1874-5, before there was any other school in the area. He also helped set up a provident club, a maternity charity and a coffee tavern in Osborne Road to promote temperance. Another small iron mission church ('tin tabernacle') was put up in Stanley Road in 1881-2, and a parish hall was built nearly opposite All Saints in 1884, on the site of the All Saints Church Centre that succeeded the church in 1985.<sup>17</sup>



*Fig. 10 - Berrymede School, originally Osborne Road School, the first build of 1880 with the girls' school addition of 1897-8 to the left, Edward Monson junior architect (English Heritage, 2004, D. Kendall).*

From 1882 Roman Catholics met in a temporary building on Strafford Road, the population of the area including many of Irish origin. The surviving church of Our Lady of Lourdes that replaced it was built on the High Street in 1902. An iron Congregationalist mission hall was built in Palmerston Road in 1885, and by 1893 there was a Methodist chapel set back from the south side of Bollo Bridge Road, and another chapel on Park Road North. After a split in the Church Road Baptist congregation a new evangelistic church was built on Newton Avenue near the Avenue Road corner in 1895-6, a low stock-brick building, designed by F. W. Stocking, architect. Since 1977 it has been the Ukrainian Autocephalic Orthodox Cathedral.<sup>18</sup>

From 1875 the state had begun to take on some responsibility for social support in Acton through the formation of the Acton School Board. This led to the transfer of some children from the school at All Saints to the new Osborne Road (Berrymede) School in 1880 (fig. 10). The architect was Edward Monson (1847-1935), whose father, also Edward, had been appointed surveyor to the Local Board at its formation in 1866. The younger Edward was made the first architect to the School Board. He stayed



local, serving as the Chairman of Acton District Council in 1909. His sons, Edward Charles Philip Monson (1872-1941) and Harry Castle Hiett Monson (1877-1961), were both also successful architects who maintained local roots. Osborne Road School was originally narrow-fronted, just the west part of the surviving building on the south side of Osborne Road. It was built for £3,146 by John Cardus to accommodate 337 infants. It was enlarged eastwards with a girls' school in 1897-8, and in 1903-4 the boys' school across the road was added, to provide room for 720 pupils in what became known as South Acton Schools, All Saints School closing. Both extensions were designed by Edward Monson junior, and built by William Blackburn, continuing the simple idiom of the first build, that is with red brick fronts with grey brick trim, stock brick behind, bargeboarded gables and half hipped roofs. With each of the two additions a house was built, at 172 Bollo Bridge Road and 20 Osborne Road. These are among the only pre-war houses to survive in the vicinity. The schools remain the strongest reminder of South Acton's Victorian origins as a densely populated district. They were renamed Berrymede Schools in 1930.<sup>19</sup>

Significant transport improvements came to the area from 1878, when trams began to run from the High Street/Acton Lane junction to Shepherd's Bush. A year later Mill Hill Park Station (Acton Town Station from 1910) opened on the District Railway Ealing extension, and in 1880 South Acton Station opened on the North London line. Reflecting these changes there was a significant attempt at a new kind of development just outside South Acton parish. From 1877, when the District Railway Ealing extension gained approval, William Willett began to develop the Mill Hill Park Estate, land that the British Land Company had repeatedly failed to sell. Willett was a speculative builder of means and ambition, who went on to work extensively in Hampstead.



*Fig. 11 - St Margaret's Terrace viewed from Park Road North, a dead-end street abutting against the boundary wall to the Mill Hill Park Estate, photographed in 1961 (Ealing Local History Centre).*



*Fig. 12 - A section of the Mill Hill Park Estate boundary wall, viewed from Jerome Tower (English Heritage, 2004).*

He aimed to build 'Acton's first select suburban estate'.<sup>20</sup> He deliberately isolated his property South Acton, laying out Avenue Gardens, Heathfield Road and Avenue Crescent so that there was no communication other than with Avenue Road, with entrances, at which cement rendered and rusticated piers remain, that are said to have been gated. It had no doubt been intended in the 1860s that Hanbury Road and Park Road East would be extended to intersect in an extension of the grid layout to the south. The west end of Park Road East (St Margaret's Terrace) had a row of houses that stopped abruptly up against the boundary wall that firmly sealed off access to the Mill Hill Park Estate, and still does (figs 7, 11, 12, 14 and 23). Perhaps

there was already a wall here when this irregular boundary was the southernmost extent of the gardens of the late-Georgian Mill Hill House. In taking on this land Willett would have been conscious of nearby Bedford Park, the development of which by Jonathan T. Carr had begun in 1875. Within a decade Carr had formed, in large measure through his employment of Richard Norman Shaw as estate architect, a model bourgeois and 'artistic' tree-lined proto-garden suburb.<sup>21</sup> Large villas did begin to go up on Willett's land, but, as in the 1860s, they were difficult to sell. By the mid 1880s the Mill Hill Park Estate was only somewhat less than half built, and so it stayed for some time. There was no getting round the fact that the social character of southern Acton had been determined twenty years earlier. It is important to distinguish between the aspirations of speculative builders as manifested in the scale and appearance of houses, and the failure or success of these aspirations as



Fig. 13 - 61 and 63 Brouncker Road, house and workshop, built c. 1890 and first occupied as John Charles Gee's Southfields Laundry (English Heritage, 2004, D. Kendall).

manifested in sale and occupancy. The road layout and boundary wall notwithstanding the proximity of a working-class suburb compromised Willett's aspirations.<sup>22</sup>

In another part of this second building boom further houses went up on the east side of the district following 1882, when the 32-acre Royal Society estate was sold, its redesignation as the South Acton Station Estate indicating underlying cause and motivation, and the Berrymead Priory estate was acquired by the Reading Land Company (later the Berkshire Estates Company), outbidding the Acton Local Board, which wanted the land for a public park. Further south the Beaumont Park estate was bought by the National Liberal Land Company. By the mid 1880s all but nine acres of the former Royal Society Estate south of the railway line had been laid out for building, with Brouncker Road being named after William, 2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount Brouncker (c.1620-1684), first president of the Royal Society, and Newton Avenue after Sir Isaac Newton, another early president of the society.<sup>23</sup> But progress was fairly slow, development on all three of these estates being less than half

complete by 1893 (figs 7 and 14). Frontages were 16ft to 18ft (4.8-5.4m), the possibility of a commuter market perhaps encouraging speculators to provide somewhat better housing. There were few restrictions on the leases, but noxious trades were no longer to be tolerated. Laundry houses were built, as surviving at 61-3 Brouncker Road, which was John Charles Gee's Southfields Laundry by 1893 (fig. 13). There is still a two-storey six-bay laundry wing here, for a wash-house below a mangling and ironing room, all behind a carriage-entrance bay that would have housed a stable and cart. Adapted to be the Myrtle Knitting Works by 1927, the building continues in use as a furniture workshop. Another laundry site almost opposite at 24-6 Brouncker Road was redeveloped as two houses in the late 1970s. Nearby, and still on what had been the Royal Society Estate there is another surviving laundry house at 78 Bollo Bridge Road, where the Carlton House laundry was built in 1901 on the same carriage-entrance/rear-wing pattern, Percy Denyer continuing here until c.1920.<sup>24</sup> Into the 20<sup>th</sup> century development for mixed domestic and industrial use continued to be characteristic through much of South Acton. Such mixed use endured where it was not rooted out by comprehensive redevelopment, small industries being widespread in these eastern areas into the 1980s, then and since gradually being displaced for speculative housing infill. Even in 2004 some industrial use does still hang on (fig. 14).

The Acton Local Board had seen to the formation of recreation areas in other parts of Acton. Land for Acton Park was bought in 1887-8, providing a precedent that inspired Reverend Dunn to sell some of his own land opposite All Saints Church to the Board, provided it bought other adjoining land for a public open space. Thus South Acton Recreation Ground (or Pleasure Grounds, latterly the Rec) was formed in 1889-90. Newly planted trees, paths and low walls lined the perimeter, with a drinking fountain to the northwest and a bandstand to the south. In the

**HOUSING DEVELOPMENT  
IN SOUTH ACTON  
TO 1999**

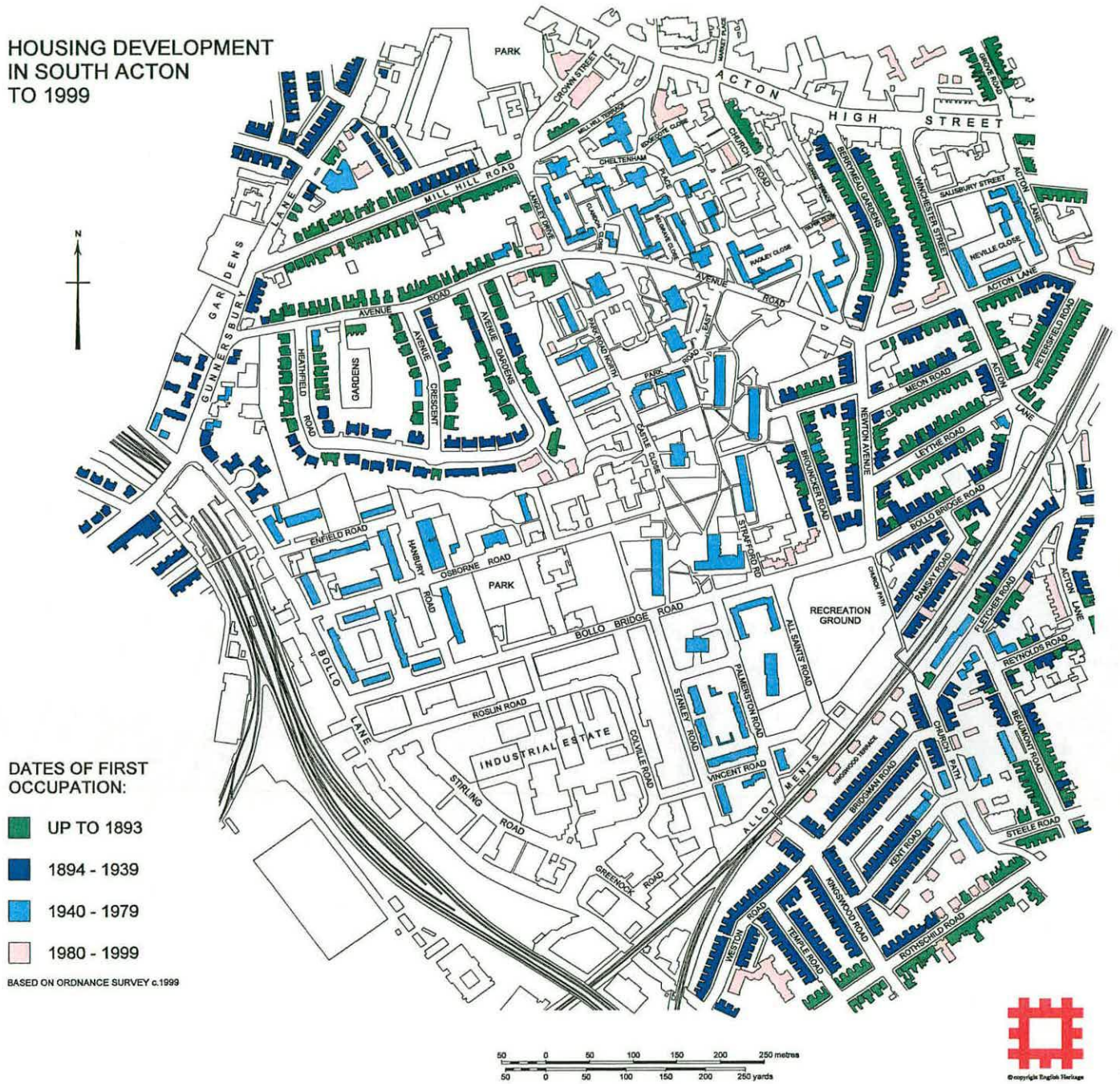


Fig. 14

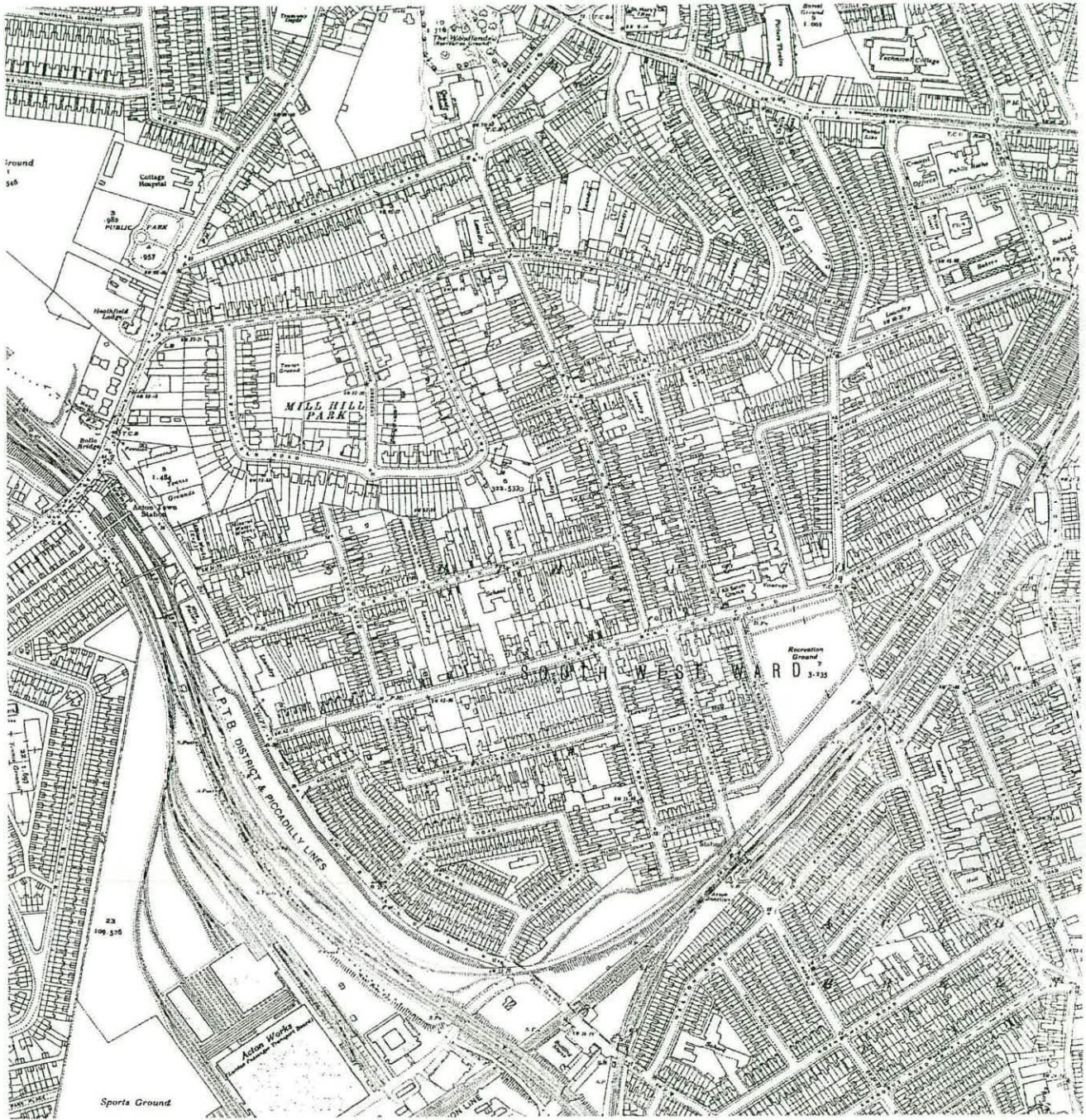


Fig. 15 - South Acton in 1935 (Ordnance Survey)

early 20<sup>th</sup> century public lavatories were built near the drinking fountain.<sup>25</sup> Filling out the account of South Acton's first-phase development, the south-western area that was later to become an industrial estate was still market gardens into the 1890s. Ten acres here were sold in 1895, advertised as suitable for medium-size houses. Within a year it had been accepted that the only likely demand was for cottages and laundries. Stirling Road and Colville Road were laid out and of 178 intended cottages most had been built by soon after 1900 (figs 7 and 15). They were soon criticised for being badly built and overcrowded.<sup>26</sup> Immediately to the south a rail link was formed in 1899 to carry freight between the District Line and South Acton Station. An extra platform was built at the latter in 1905 for a passenger service. From 1932 to 1959 this link was used only for a shuttle service that was locally known as the 'ginny' (fig. 6). Former Royal Society land immediately south of South Acton Station also remained undeveloped until the later 1890s. It is notable that there was no obvious provision for laundries or other workshops in both these late developing areas. Their streets just had houses, of comparable dimensions, no extra bays being evident. Full-height bay windows as are to be seen on Kingswood Road are a touch of gentility that was absent north of the railway line, suggesting that these speculations were aimed at a commuting lower middle class or clerical market.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the changing parameters of speculative development South Acton remained overwhelmingly working class and largely poor. Second incomes apart another way of paying the rent was subdivision of the home, that is by taking in lodgers. By 1900 typical six-room South Acton houses were often subdivided into two three-room tenancies, upper floors being let unfurnished for 6s 6d/week in 1905.<sup>28</sup> Multiple occupation in houses designed for single occupation meant overcrowding. Densities in 1919 were 63 and 82 people per acre in the two South Acton wards, compared with only 15 and 17 in the two wards to the north. These denser wards may not seem particularly packed to those familiar with post-war densities, but it must be recalled that they also contained all the laundries and other industry, and that 'the streets were wide, there were no back-to-back houses or courts, and every dwelling had its own garden and yard.'<sup>29</sup> There were spaces between the houses, but South Acton was no garden suburb. Of the private garden/yard Reg Dunkling has recalled that in the 1930s 'some enthusiasts cultivated a few flowers and vegetables but most just used it to store their unwanted junk.'<sup>30</sup> Indoors the houses were increasingly crowded.

Rising population density and the fact that multiple occupancy was coming to characterise earlier development that had been designed for single occupation came to be reflected in later speculative building. Flats in terraces, or maisonette flats, sometimes even more misleadingly called cottage flats, that is two-storey terrace 'houses' designed as two flats, are not thought typical of London, being more commonly associated with Newcastle, where the two-storey two-dwelling 'Tyneside flat' was well-established as a local vernacular housing form by 1870. However, by about 1890 the type was at home and widespread in London, in South Acton and other suburbs across the metropolis, from Hornsey, to Walthamstow and Charlton, all places where speculators found whole houses difficult to sell and so accepted that they were building for low-rent and working-class occupancy. Even the newly formed and progressive minded London County Council built simple maisonette flats in the early 1890s, as in Deptford.<sup>31</sup> Perhaps the earliest development of this nature in South Acton was by the Berkshire Estates Company on Petersfield Road and Acton Lane, where by 1893 there were more than 40 bay-fronted terrace 'houses' with double entrances for upper and lower flats. Reverend Dunn, who was committed to promoting better housing in South Acton, developed four plots at 39-55 Newton Avenue from c.1890 as rather better quality maisonette flats. Significantly, plans for single-family houses in Berrymead Gardens were altered to provide flats that were built in 1894.<sup>32</sup> Dunn bought considerable land on the former Royal Society estate and, after having left South Acton to become the bishop of Quebec, saw to its development from Canada. From 1902 36 more maisonette flats were built on his property at 36-74 Brouncker Road, 62-80 Newton Avenue and 84-90 Bollo Bridge Road, and named Alexandra and Coronation Flats (fig. 16).<sup>33</sup> Further similar groups of maisonette flats were built nearby, sometimes adjoining earlier house



Fig. 16 - Alexandra Flats, maisonette flats of c.1902 on Brouncker Road, part of a development initiated by the Reverend Andrew Hunter Dunn (English Heritage, 2004).



Fig. 17 - Owen Villas, 66-72 Bollo Bridge Road, maisonette flats of 1902 (English Heritage, 2004).



Fig. 18 - 80-94 Park Road North, more maisonette flats of c.1900 (Ealing Local History Centre).

developments that had been labelled 'villas', as in 1902 in Owen Villas (a *reductio ad absurdum* of this word) at 62-76 Bollo Bridge Road (fig. 17), and neighbouring developments at 50-60 and 59-71 Bollo Bridge Road. Other such flats went up c.1900 at 80-94 Park Road North and 2-14 Osborne Road, latterly parts of the infant school site (fig. 18). Further south some developments were rather tighter. Palmerston Mansions, on the site of Maugham Court, was a flat speculation that had been built by 1893, comprising nine flats on three house plots, providing small homes that were far from being mansions. Even meaner and a bit later were twenty flats on five plots in Roslin Road, built with open stairs to the front, as in blocks of artisans' dwellings like those built by the Improved Industrial Dwellings Society and others in central London districts. Slightly further afield Southfield Road was largely lined with maisonette flats in this period.<sup>34</sup>



## Social housing arrives, consolidation and infill: 1900 to 1940

In the new century ambitious developments in London's western suburbs signalled new idealistic, even utopian, approaches to the improvement of working-class housing. A famously progressive local model was the Brentham Garden Estate in north Ealing, begun in 1901 by a co-operative society, Ealing Tenants, as self-help housing for working people, and lifted from 1907 through the design involvement of Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker. The new role that local government was taking in mass housing was also soon locally evident. Just outside Acton to the east the pioneering authority in this field, the London County Council, built the Old Oak Estate around East Acton Station from 1911 onwards. These were among the best of the picturesque cottage estates that grew out of Arts and Crafts and garden city ideals and which came to be admired throughout Europe. Immediately after the 1914-18 war housebuilding was given new stimulus in a campaign to provide 'homes fit for heroes'. England's first large-scale programme of state housing was initiated by the Addison Acts of 1919. These required local authorities to survey and provide for housing needs, and allowed central government to give financial assistance to local-authority building programmes, adopting the low-density (12 houses/acre (30/hectare)) principles and generous standards for living space recommended by the Tudor Walters Report of 1918, much of which had been written by Unwin, appointed Chief Housing Architect at the Ministry of Health. From 1919 the Wormholt Estate succeeded the Old Oak Estate to the south, deploying a similar architectural idiom. Acton Urban District Council, which had succeeded the Local Board in 1895, and built itself Municipal Offices (Acton Town Hall) on Winchester Street in 1908-10, began building working-class housing after 1918, but not in South Acton, and only until housing targets and subsidies were cut in 1921, in which year it was reformed as Acton Borough Council. Amid an early council development the Ministry of Health itself built some constructionally innovative houses on The Long Drive in North Acton in 1920-1. In general, however, it was left to private builders to follow on from these early initiatives. Little changed in South Acton, though many local residents did move a few miles to these new developments, somewhat easing overcrowding. Across Horn Lane in West Acton the Great Western Railway's garden village cottage estate of 1923-5 was built for railway workers to designs by T. Alwyn Lloyd, who had been an assistant to Unwin, demonstrating the continuance of self-help or co-partnership approaches.<sup>35</sup>

Coming back towards South Acton, another illustration of this kind of social housing through what were then generally termed 'public utility societies', which would now be classed as housing associations, was the development from 1927 of a site on the west side of Gunnersbury Lane near Mill Hill Park (Acton Town) Station by the United Women's Homes Association (latterly Women's Pioneer Housing Ltd) (figs 14, 15 and 19). The good transport connection here was undoubtedly, as ever, a primary factor in this development. Since 1889, when Ladies Residential Chambers Ltd had begun to build blocks of flats in the West End, the provision of housing for single professional



*Fig. 19 - Helen House, Gunnersbury Lane, one of five blocks, each of eight flats, built for the United Women's Homes Association in 1927-8, Thomas Garrett and Son, architects (English Heritage, 2004).*



women had become an established movement. Lady Workers' Homes Ltd, founded by the prolific East End speculative builder Abraham Davis in 1914, led the move to suburban estates for women after 1920, as most notably realised in the Holly Lodge Estate in Highgate, where garden city principles were abandoned in 1925 when much denser housing was built in large and peculiarly mock-Tudor blocks of flats for independent working women seeking safe affordable homes in a pleasant environment.<sup>36</sup> This shift is evident in Acton at slightly later dates. In 1927-8 the UWHA built forty flats in five cottage blocks, with Thomas Garrett and Son of Brighton as architects. The white-stuccoed H-plan blocks, named Elaine House, Helen House, Beatrice House, Enid House and Virginia House, were laid out in front of and beside a landscaped courtyard. The development was extended to the south just five years later in a very different and denser form, Brook House providing 32 flats (latterly 20) in a single Moderne or Art Deco block, again white stuccoed, but in four storeys with balcony access (fig. 20).



Fig. 20 - Brook House, Gunnersbury Lane, flats built for the United Women's Homes Association in 1932-3 (English Heritage, 2004).

Acton's population had risen to 70,510 by 1931, with a density of 30.2 people per acre, which figure would have been considerably higher in South Acton. Housing was becoming a major concern. The Borough Council began to build again in 1930, with design being the responsibility of William George Cross, Borough Engineer. First activity was again in North Acton, four four-flat blocks going up on Perryn Road. These were all but copied in 1932 in South Acton in two four-flat blocks at 81-95 Brouncker Road (fig. 21), infilling an enduring gap in development. In 1931 a site at the corner of Bollo Lane and Enfield Road that had

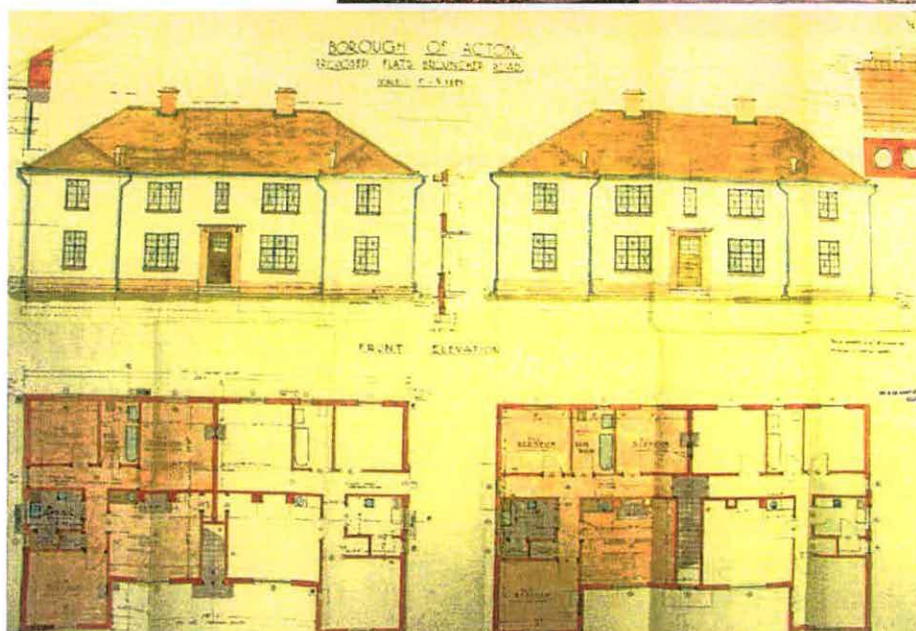
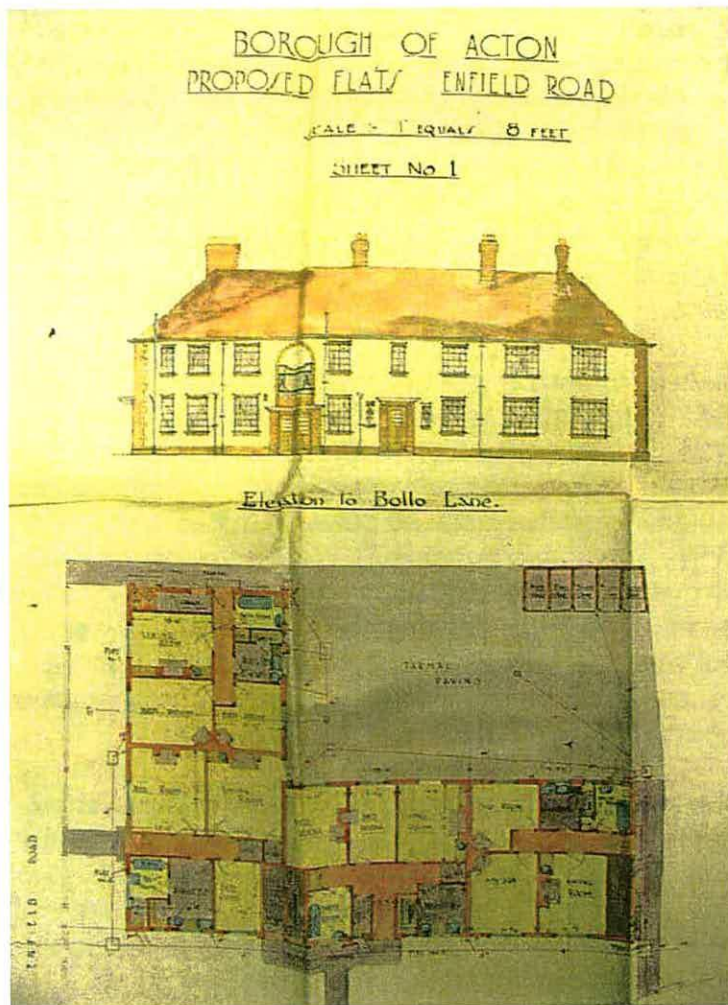


Fig. 21 - Acton Borough Council flats of 1932 at 81-95 Brouncker Road (English Heritage, 2004, D. Kendall), with contract drawing (Ealing Local History Centre).



Fig. 22 - 363-371 Bollo Lane and 79-83 Enfield Road (formerly Enfield Road Flats), built in 1931 for Acton Borough Council (English Heritage, 2004), with contract drawing (Ealing Local History Centre).



been used as a council depot since c.1908 was redeveloped as a block of eight flats, known at first as Enfield Road Flats, later as 363-371 Bollo Lane and 79-83 Enfield Road (fig. 22). All these stuccoed 'cottages' had simple neo-Georgian detailing, reflecting wider shifts in architectural taste. In their appearance and accommodation (two-bedroom flats having about 576 sq ft (52 sq m) and three-bedroom flats about 800 sq ft (72 sq m)) they reflect the standards that had been prevalent since Tudor Walters, but which had not necessarily been followed in meaner private developments for working-class housing.<sup>37</sup> With inclusive weekly rents of 15s 5d and less, these flats were cheaper than the relatively expensive LCC estates, but not for the poor. There were 'living rooms', not the 'parlours' that a superior Tudor Walters type and speculative builders provided, and which were widely deemed pretentious. There were also indoor bathrooms, then a rarity, but no more than smallish sculleries for kitchens, as was then usual. In the absence of indoor bathrooms 'You used to have to have a long tin bath. They used to bring ours in from the garden on a Friday night, put it in what we called the scullery, and you had had your baths then. That was one good thing that came out of it. When you got in the new flats you had bathrooms.'<sup>38</sup> Central

government subsidies were withdrawn in 1933 and no more council houses were built in South Acton until after the war. However, in 1938-9, Acton Borough Council built a new fire station on Gunnersbury Lane, beside and behind which one detached and nine semi-detached houses were provided as fire-brigade staff quarters, minimally 'neo-Georgian' red-brick cottages designed by Cross, densely lining a narrow cul de sac, latterly known as Marble Close.<sup>39</sup>

The rebuilding of Acton Town Station in 1932 for the Piccadilly Line appears to have stimulated private development of what had remained largely open ground on the other side of Bollo Lane. A scheme for this site was prepared in 1934 by John Stanley Coombe Beard (1890-1970), a specialist cinema architect, among whose works was the Forum Cinema in Ealing of 1934. He branched out here to design Central Parade, maisonettes over shops and kiosks, and Gunnersbury Court, three six-storey mansion blocks comprising 73 flats, all built in an assured if uninspired Art Deco style in 1936, sadly without an intended 'bathing pool in the centre'.<sup>40</sup> Another splash of the Moderne came to the area in the early 1930s at Ellerton Court, 9 Avenue Crescent, a white-stuccoed extension of a 19<sup>th</sup>-century house to provide 13 private flats. therehrough the interwar period the Mill Hill Park Estate saw much other infilling development, in small groups of private houses for the middle classes. In 1937 the estate company handed over responsibility for the upkeep of its poorly maintained private roads to Acton Borough Council.<sup>41</sup>

Contemporary private mansion or apartment developments in Bedford Park were, if anything, less elegant than these South Acton highlights. St Catherine's Court of c.1935 (Howis and Belcham, architects) and Ormsby Lodge of c.1937 (Anderson, Forster, Warren and Wilcox, architects),<sup>42</sup> both fronting onto The Avenue, are utilitarian, even 'dismal',<sup>43</sup> interventions paying no respect to the late-19<sup>th</sup>-century character of Bedford Park. Not far away garden city principles were thoroughly abandoned in the LCC's biggest housing project anywhere, the White City estate, a 52-acre development to house 11,000, begun in 1938-9. A tight array of five-storey brick blocks with balcony access and few amenities arose, providing 54 flats/acre, a world away from Unwin and Tudor Walters, inner London densities moving out to the suburbs to cope with overcrowding and huge demand for housing.

Meanwhile, laundries continued to dominate South Acton, still employing thousands, despite some decline. Across Bollo Lane London Underground's Acton Works opened in 1922, and there were numerous light engineering works scattered through the area, as on Strafford Road. However, there was much local unemployment during the interwar period, some of which slack was met by new factories at Park Royal. Many laundries installed power in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century: 'conditions in the laundries were like something out of H. G. Wells's futuristic visions of automated production, with water lying all over the place and steam hissing from leaking pipe connections to add to the deafening noise from the large washing drums revolving at varying speeds.'<sup>44</sup> There were still 60 laundries active in Acton in 1945, but only 28 in 1953. Even in 1956, after the arrival of the first launderettes and domestic washing machines, Acton claimed to be 'the largest laundry town in Britain' (figs 23, 24 and 25).<sup>45</sup>

Reg Dunkling, who grew up in South Acton in the 1930s, recalled 'The poet who wrote about England's "green and pleasant land" never lived in South Acton between the wars. Except for one small recreation area besides All Saints Church the green fields of yesteryear were covered by houses and laundries, and 'pleasant' would in no way be the word to described the life of the inhabitants. In the winter time, the smoke from industry and domestic chimneys added to the general gloom that existed in the area and even in the bright days of summer the grimy, featureless streets had little to commend them'.<sup>46</sup>



*Fig. 23 - South Acton from the air in January 1946 (English Heritage, National Monuments Record, RAF Photography).*



**HOUSING DEVELOPMENT  
IN SOUTH ACTON  
1935 to 1999**

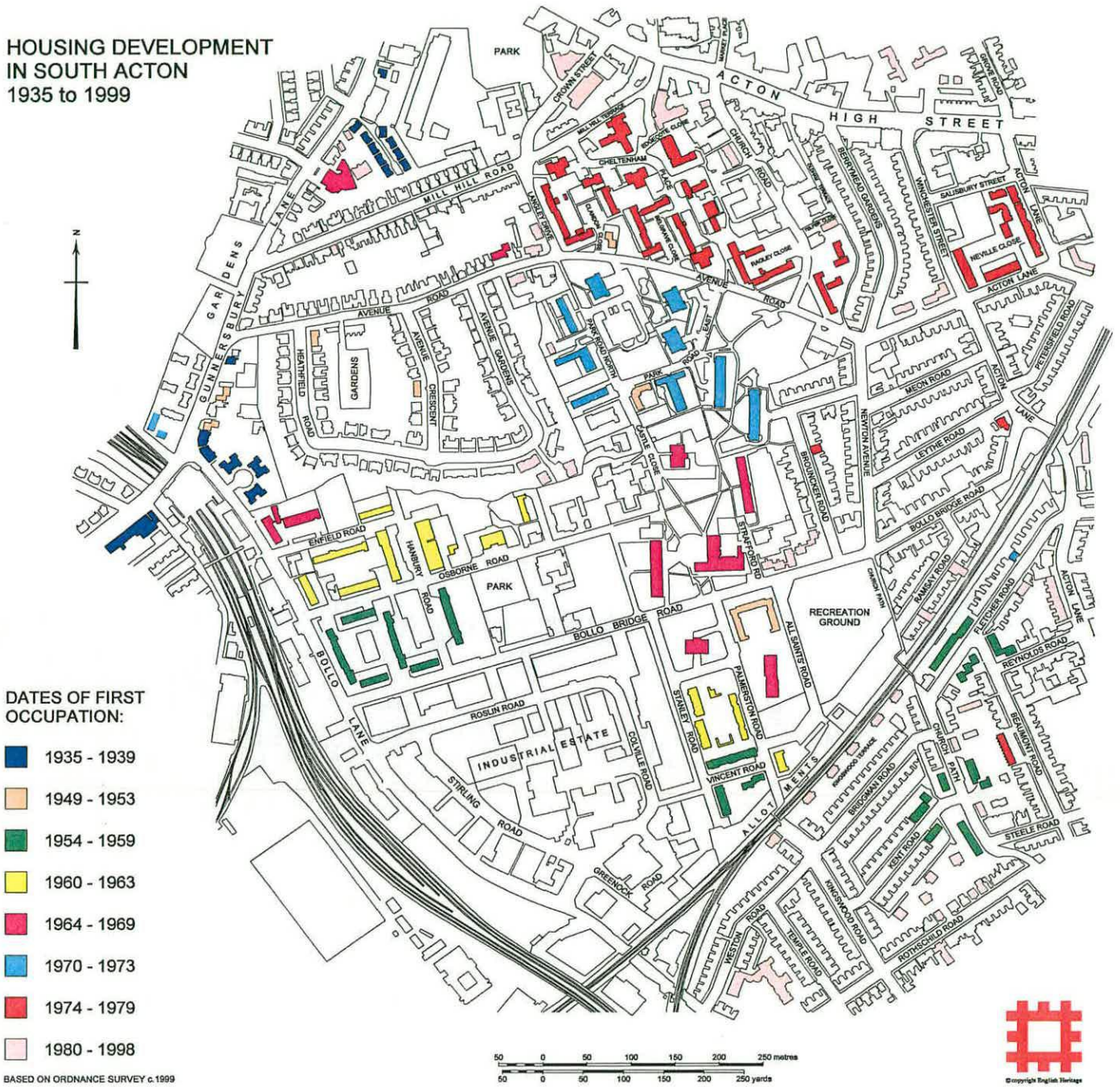


Fig. 24

**PUBLIC HOUSING  
IN SOUTH ACTON  
IN 1999**

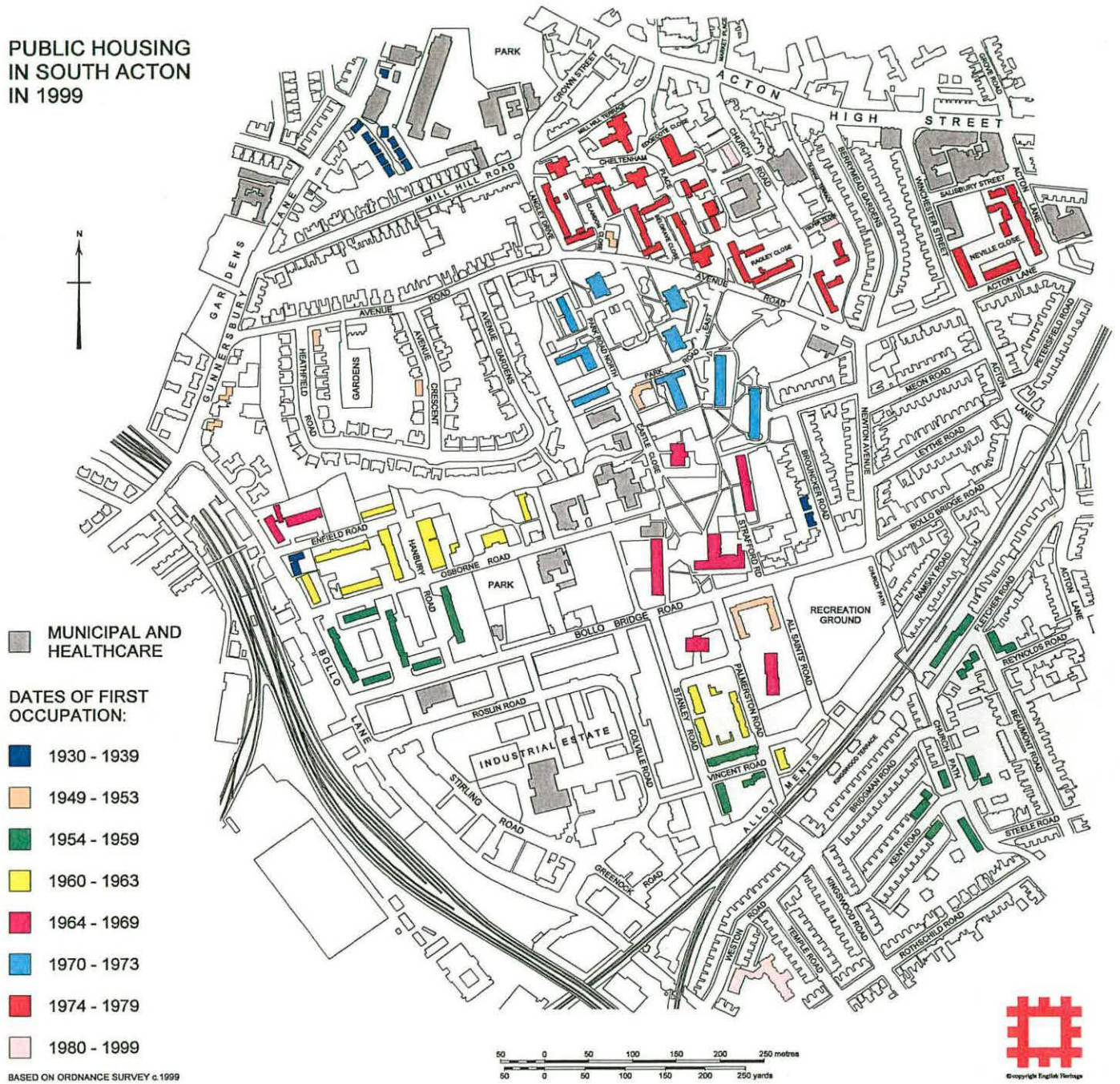


Fig. 25

## REDEVELOPMENT

### War and its aftermath

The war of 1939-45 and its bombs changed everything. It was not that South Acton was flattened, far from it. Damage was limited to a handful of sites, most near railway lines or armaments works. The west end of Kent Road was hit in the Blitz in September 1940. A huge landmine exploded on the site of St Margaret's Lodge in 1943, and V1 flying bombs hit the north side of Fletcher Road in 1944. Other bomb damage was incurred on the site of Bollo Court and at the corner of Heathfield Road and Avenue Road.<sup>47</sup> In March 1944 the Minister of Health authorised local authorities to provide emergency housing through the adaptation of existing buildings and temporary accommodation. Private houses were requisitioned and huts or prefabs were quickly put in place on bombsites (fig. 26). New gaps in the built environment and the experience and mobility of the war years helped to open minds to the possibility of clearance. Overcrowding and housing shortages were acute after the war, and not just because of returning servicemen. Private rents had often exacerbated poverty, landlords exploiting tenants in the 1930s by ramping up rents, forcing further subdivision and overcrowding.<sup>48</sup>

The Dudley Report of 1944 for the Ministry of Health put forward national standards for post-war houses, published in a new Housing Manual. The *Greater London Plan* of the same year, devised under the leadership of Sir Patrick Abercrombie from whom the *County of London Plan* had issued in 1943, proposed population dispersal and declining densities from centre to edge, from 200 persons per acre (ppa) at the centre to 50 at the periphery (implying roughly 83 to 21 homes per acre). It suggested 136ppa for inner suburban districts, which included



Fig. 26 - Prefabs on the west side of Park Road North, photographed in 1961 (Ealing Local History Centre).

much of the LCC area, rather more dense than South Acton then was, the area then having a population density of about 100ppa, having risen from about 70ppa in 1919. In Abercrombie's terms South Acton presented an interesting case, outside the County of London, and so subject to Middlesex County Council's plan, but entirely urban, and thus essentially 'inner suburban'. In a 'flats versus houses' debate it was clear that the former were inescapable for such densities, though prospective tenants generally always preferred the latter. Flats were also thought necessary to admit light and air, and to get away from the 'confined' limitations of streets. The new climate of centralised state planning represented a marked contrast to the uncontrolled speculative building that had failed to provide South Acton with amenities. But there was not yet a fundamental shift to planned as opposed to opportunistic development. Abercrombie knew that conservative flexibility and pragmatism was necessary, as well as that 'it is in relation to density that so many planning schemes tell the gaudiest lies'.<sup>49</sup>

A scheme to alleviate overcrowding in South Acton by building 300 flats at The Vale gave rise to controversy in 1944. Ministry of Health offers to begin work on the houses were rejected by Acton Borough Council, leading Joseph A. Sparks, a Labour Councillor in a cross-party administration, to resign as Chair of the Borough's Housing Committee. In 1945 Acton Council swung wholly to Labour, opposition in South Acton coming only from the Communist Party. Joe Sparks remained a councillor and also became Acton's newly elected MP, which he remained until 1959. Councillor Albert (Barry) D. Barwick became chair of the Housing Committee, and the Vale scheme was revived. Overcrowding across Acton and poverty in South Acton were the council's biggest problems. Acton needed 3,000 homes, and private housebuilding had all but ceased.<sup>50</sup>



For the building of new houses it was easiest and cheapest to start with bomb sites and other vacant and infill plots which, wherever possible, were quickly bought up through Compulsory Purchase Orders, initiated in 1946, though not, of course, without objections. Plans to develop the Mill Hill Park Gardens site had to be abandoned following a local inquiry. Labour and building materials were scarce and local private builders who could take on the building contracts few. It was 1948 before building work began in South Acton. By 1951 St Margaret's Lodge, Bollo Court, James Welch Court and Hatfield Court, the last two on the Mill Hill Park Estate, were complete. These relatively modest developments amounted to only 56 of the total of 606 homes that Acton Borough Council had built since the end of the war. This compared highly favourably with the 515 homes the authority had built between 1919 and 1938, but there were about 5,000 names on its waiting list in 1947.<sup>51</sup> To put this into perspective, Acton in these immediate post-war years built about 9 dwellings per thousand population, compared to the LCC rate of 9.3, the whole County of London rate of 13.6, and the Middlesex rate of 7.3. Other strong out-county housebuilding authorities in West Ham and Croydon managed only 7.2 and 6.2 respectively. With the introduction of 'targets' for house building for each local authority in 1951 such numbers carried great meaning and kudos.<sup>52</sup>

Acton Borough Council's post-war projects in South Acton were handled in house, architectural designs being the responsibility of the Borough Engineer, Stanley William Slight, appointed c.1940, having been employed by Acton Borough Council since c.1925, with R. E. Matthews as his chief architectural assistant in 1951. Their three- and four-storey brick blocks of 1948-51 are architecturally conservative. Indeed they could have been designed in the 1930s, incorporating classical detail, as in moulded floating cornices at Bollo Court. Hatfield Court and Bollo Court were given balconies off some living rooms (fig. 27), typical of the 'polite' post-war shift away from balconies linked to service (kitchen/laundry) accommodation. These balconies give the buildings some elevational life, though they face inwards at Bollo Court.<sup>53</sup> James Welch Court was given a pitched tiled roof to be more in keeping with neighbouring buildings, a surprising concession given the seeming disregard otherwise for the architecture of the house it adjoins.<sup>54</sup>



Fig. 27 - Hatfield Court, Avenue Crescent, Mill Hill Park Estate, six Acton Borough Council flats of 1950-1 (English Heritage, 2004).

Of these developments Bollo Court, built in 1949-50, was much the most ambitious new housing in South Acton (figs 28 and 29). It was, in fact, seen as the first building in the 'South Acton plan' (see below). Comprising 32 maisonettes it was novel in placing these in two tiers, making it an early example of a type, the four-storey maisonette block, that became widespread in the 1950s, the meaning of 'maisonette' in London shifting from indicating a flat in a house, to a 'house' (two-storey dwelling) in a block. Bollo Court was also among the earliest council house developments in England, and certainly the first in Acton, to have central heating. The immediate post-war years were a time of experimentation and investigation regarding efficient heating, but the actual application of central heating remained rare.<sup>55</sup> The coal-fired system deployed here was intended in due course to be connected to a district-heating scheme. For these and other reasons, including impressively large windows and extensive kitchen fittings, the new homes of Bollo Court were post-war marvels, described in detail in a headline article in the *Acton Gazette* – 'Almost the whole of one wall is covered with a kitchen unit'.<sup>56</sup> The other new blocks were no less desirable homes. But all was not sweetness and light. Within a year of moving in the ground-floor residents of St Margaret's Lodge complained that 'children threw rubbish through



*Fig. 28 - Palmerston Road from the north in 1961, with Bollo Court to the left (Ealing Local History Centre).*



*Fig. 29 - Bollo Court, 32 maisonettes in three ranges enclosing a courtyard, built by Acton Borough Council in 1949-50 incorporating an early application of central heating (English Heritage, 2004).*

where comparable low-rise housing was 'exhibited' as part of the Festival of Britain in 1951. Back in Acton a development closely similar to that on St Alban's Avenue followed on in the early 1950s, a bit further east, at 23-45 Southfield Road, where another bombsite was reclaimed for three three-storey blocks in Culpin's yellow-brick idiom, with proud affirmation of the council's role facing Bedford Park, in a panel bearing Acton's arms, 'Floreat Actona' (fig. 30). Bedford Park was at a low ebb in this period, and was reputedly referred to as 'poverty park'.<sup>60</sup> But this was



*Fig. 30 - The arms of Acton Borough Council on council flats of the early 1950s at 23-45 Southfield Road, Bedford Park (English Heritage, 2004).*

the lower windows and generally made themselves a nuisance'. In response the council urged the police to increase their efforts to prevent such behaviour. Another problem came when the already high rents at Bollo Court (the first residents had been selected on the basis of their ability to afford the rents) soon had to be raised, the costs of the central heating having been underestimated.<sup>57</sup>

Elsewhere in these years Acton Borough Council did employ outside architects. Arthur W. Kenyon introduced somewhat more refined yet still relatively unadventurous designs at Shalimar Lodge, Horn Lane (1947-8), and Creswick Court (1949-50), brick blocks of 24 and 20 flats respectively.<sup>58</sup> Opportunistic bombsite infill also occurred in Bedford Park, on St Alban's Avenue and Carlton Road, where in 1950-2 three elegant three-storey yellow stock-brick blocks were built to designs by Clifford Culpin, an architect with a strong municipal track record who also designed other contemporary flats for Acton on Western Avenue, and whose pre-war work had been heavily influenced by the geometrical brick Modernism of Willem Dudok, the Dutch architect who had been the Royal Institute of British Architects' gold medallist in 1935.<sup>59</sup> Culpin would also have been aware of and perhaps influenced by then fashionable Danish architecture, as well as by the beginnings of work on the Lansbury Estate in Poplar (1949-52),

not why Acton built council houses there. Redevelopment of bombsites happened opportunistically without regard to questions of social segregation or integration. Nonetheless, Acton councillors would no doubt have subscribed to the ideal expressed by Nye Bevan in 1948, 'We have to have communities where all the various income groups of the population are mixed'.<sup>61</sup>



## Going comprehensive

Bigger plans were afoot. In December 1945 Barwick was already saying that the council 'hoped to start pulling down and rebuilding in South Acton, leaving at the end more open space there.'<sup>62</sup> The first outline plans for 'comprehensive redevelopment' of about 182 acres were put forward in a public exhibition in May 1947. Crucially the Town and Country Planning Act of that year, in support of which Sparks spoke in the Commons, established a framework for central grants to help local authorities to buy land for rebuilding areas of 'obsolete development'. The *Acton Gazette* reported that 'squalid streets will be rebuilt or lost altogether in the parks and gardens to be made on their sites'.<sup>63</sup> Virtually everything south of the Mill Hill Park Estate and Acton High Street, and north of Bollo Lane and the North London line, was to be swept away. But existing roads were to be preserved, with no cul de sacs. The area between Park Road North and Newton Avenue was to be a playing field, and a small new park was intended for land between Palmerston and Stanley Roads. From this point onwards there were plans for a new health clinic and other buildings for social support to the north-east. A part of a kitchen and a communal washing machine, such as were being installed at The Vale, also featured in the exhibition. There was not universal applause. Residents of the Palmerston Road area, whose 20-acre neighbourhood was first in the redevelopment programme, said, as people always did, that they wanted to live in houses, not flats. Mr A. Chandler of 21 All Saints Road wrote, 'I keep a little garden here. I shall not be able to do that if I get a flat. It is better for the family and the neighbours if children are brought up in a house.'<sup>64</sup> Reverend Harry Nicholson, vicar of All Saints Church, commented in January 1947, 'We are already planning for a new South Acton. But it is the houses that want rebuilding, not the people. In the planning I hope this sense of belonging to a community will not be lost. South Acton was never planned – it just came like this. We should put that right. . . . Better houses are needed, but if the community sense is lost South Actonites might lose more than they gained. . . . There is something here of value which gives us a feeling of security and confidence. That must be preserved.'<sup>65</sup> Thus began a 30-year programme. A scheme for the first 1,000 new dwellings gained approval from Middlesex County Council in 1949.<sup>66</sup>

The concept of 'comprehensive redevelopment' was stressed in the 1951 *Administrative County of London Development Plan*, which was a statutory outgrowth of Abercrombie's 1940s guidance. The LCC had declared most of the East End a 'Comprehensive Development Area', and elsewhere begun to develop 'inner suburban' areas with much higher densities, as at Woodberry Down and Roehampton (see below), in what were widely recognised as pioneering housing developments. The LCC had no involvement with South Acton, and so there was no direct push for high densities from that source. However, while many suburban borough councils were politically hostile to the LCC, Labour Acton was not. For the integration of blocks of flats with new social amenities the LCC's late 1940s development of Woodberry Down was a model. But South Acton carried none of the social engineering tensions that applied to Woodberry Down, where working-class housing in 'Zeilenbau' (parallel 'slab' blocks) was introduced into a middle-class district to create a kind of mixed tenure, along the lines of that desired by Bevan. In South Acton the objective was the rebuilding of an already working-class area for a working-class population, though, as with all 20<sup>th</sup>-century council housing, the reform was imposed by one social group onto another.<sup>67</sup>

A revised layout for South Acton's 182-acre 'Redevelopment Area No. 1' was publicly exhibited in August 1951 (fig. 31). Criticisms had been taken on board; most of the buildings were to be houses with gardens, blocks of flats being confined to the fringes of a series of new public parks and playing fields, to create continuous green space from Acton High Street to Chiswick, for which the clearance areas extended north of Avenue Road. The separation of industrial and residential buildings, to remove noise and smells from the vicinity of homes, was to come about through the grouping of factories in an industrial zone around Stirling Road, south of Bollo Bridge Road and west of Stanley Road, so located so that residents would not need to cross it to get to

the High Street. Such zoning was a standard objective of town planning at this time, and South Acton's dense mix anyway forced some such solution. Compulsory purchase for clearance would make the relocation of numerous small local industries a necessity. Completion of the first 66 acres, everything south of the Mill Hill Park Estate and west of Park Road North and the Recreation Ground, was set for ten years time (1961), with 735 homes and 26 shops to be built in the first five years, and formation of the industrial estate to follow. There was opposition, principally from those with commercial interests in existing industrial premises. There was also support, Mrs Y. Hearn, a resident of Bollo Court, which novelty young people were using as an adventure playground, writing, 'Never has a re-housing plan been so desperately needed from the moral welfare point of view of the young teenagers of South Acton. Never have I seen so many youngsters with so much time to create so much noise, managing to break so many gas lamps and milk bottles and generally make such a nuisance of themselves.'<sup>68</sup> From the pulpit of All Saints Church, the Bishop of London, Dr J. W. C. Wand, warned that 'it did not matter how splendid the buildings were after redevelopment, if there was no centre around which the people could gather there would be no community spirit.'<sup>69</sup>

Progress was slow. Already in 1950 Acton had been obliged to slow down its housebuilding programme to cope with government restrictions arising from capital expenditure cuts. A political consensus had emerged as to the need for the state to build houses, local authorities generally being pressed by central government to do more. But Acton found its desire to press on quickly thwarted by Middlesex County Council and the Government, both Conservative controlled. In 1952 Acton pressed the Government to raise the allocation of houses it was permitted to build. Sparks and Barwick aside, other leading councillors in Acton's housing programme in the 1950s were Christopher T. Higgins, E. W. Paine, G. W. (Gerry) Reynolds, and John G. Telfer. There were still 5,000 on the waiting list in 1953, when the South Acton Redevelopment Scheme was reviewed as part of a public inquiry into the Middlesex Development Plan. Objectors to the planned open space in the Avenue Road/Mill Hill Road area, and the associated 'wasteful' demolitions, urged 'let us get away from idealism'.<sup>70</sup> Twenty two of the remaining 28 laundry proprietors came together to object to the planned industrial estate, valuing contiguity of homes and work, predicting loss of employment, and not wanting to be 'huddled together'.<sup>71</sup> Meanwhile the local 'flats versus houses' debate continued. Flats and maisonettes had to be preferred as developments of houses attracted less central subsidy. Then in 1954 subsidy rates were reduced forcing the projection of higher rents, obliging councillors to concede that many South Acton residents would be pushed to afford the new flats. Older residents of Hanbury Road who were now being displaced by the first clearances welcomed the provision of flats for young people, but did not want to lose their own houses. It had already become clear that there was at least a three-year slippage in the three-year old 10-year plan. The employment of outside architects and other consultants to speed progress was considered, but found to be financially inefficacious. Paine had to admit that completion of the whole plan might take 50 years. Finally, in June 1956 the Middlesex Development Plan, in which the South Acton Redevelopment Scheme was the biggest project of its kind, was approved by Duncan Sandys, Minister of Housing. Redevelopment of the Mill Hill Park area and eastern parts around Brouncker Road and Berrymead Gardens was to be deferred, shrinking the redevelopment area to that eventually carried through, 66 acres on which there were to be only about 1,100 dwellings (nearly 17 dwellings/acre or 42/hectare), to be complete by 1966. The rest would follow on by 1971.<sup>72</sup> There were already long-standing boundaries, even walls around the redevelopment area, but these were given further definition in relation to what Acton Borough Council could realistically contemplate acquiring through compulsory purchase.

Local redevelopment was not the only route to solving the housing problem in the 1950s. Acton escaped the 'land trap' that bedevilled urban housing policy in the 1950s by acquiring land and building elsewhere in Middlesex, in Northolt, South Ruislip and Yeading Green, 'decanting' people and alleviating overcrowding. There was also a link to the new satellite town of Hemel Hempstead (one of those arising from Abercrombie's plan), where Acton families were allocated

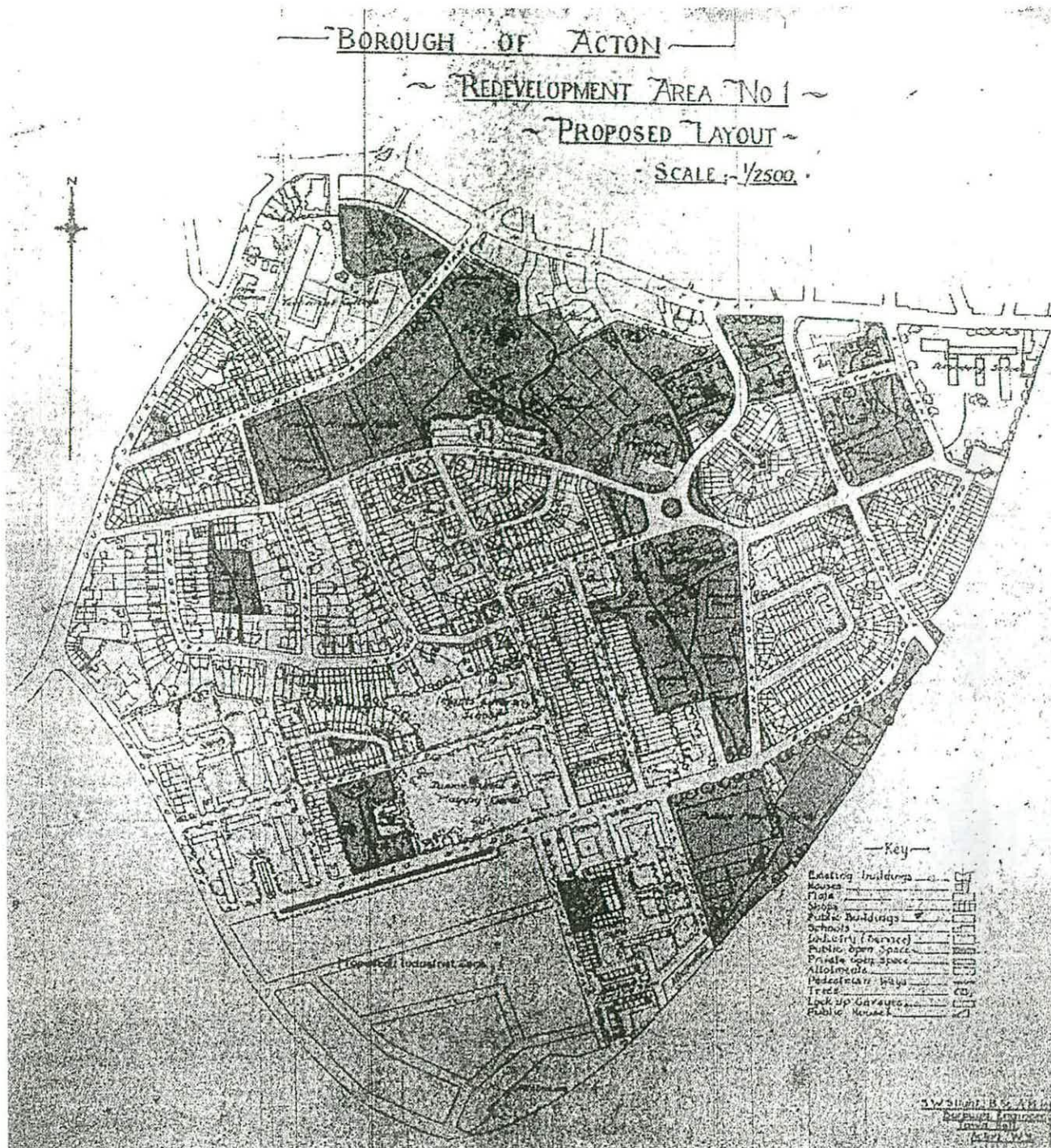


Fig. 31 - An early plan for the comprehensive redevelopment of South Acton, as publicly exhibited in August 1951 (The Acton Gazette).

places in 1947. South Acton's population was expected to shrink. There was, however, no significant decline. People moved out, but others moved in.<sup>73</sup>

The inquiry and other constraints notwithstanding the first steps in what soon came to be known as SACDA (South Acton Comprehensive Development Area) had been taken. Attention turned first to Junction Road near South Acton Station in 1952, with the first Compulsory Purchase Orders of occupied houses (fig. 6). This was the first focus for rebuilding because it was a place of abject poverty, known locally as 'the jungle', and regarded as the 'slum of the slums': 'The further down South Acton you went the worse it got.'<sup>74</sup> This north-south differentiation explains the broad direction of the whole redevelopment programme. Junction Road was renamed Vincent Road in 1953, presumably an attempt to try to change attitudes to the place.

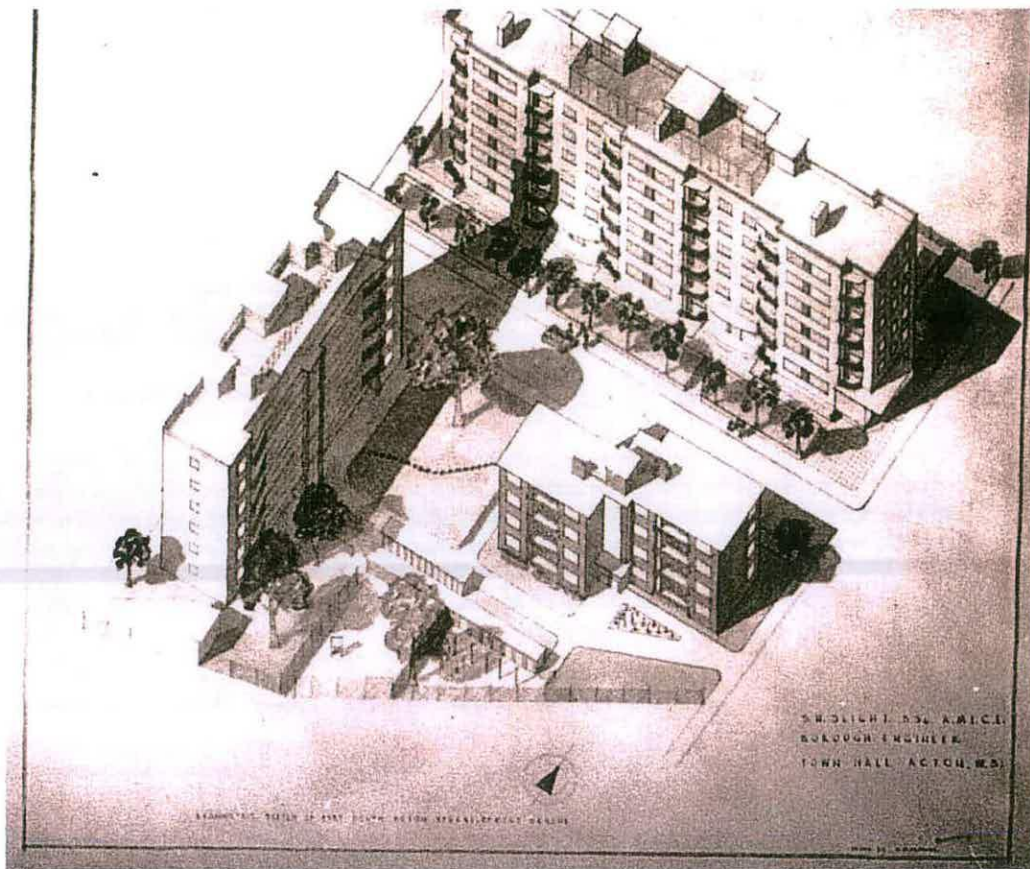


Fig. 32 - Axonometric sketch for redevelopment around Junction (later Vincent) Road, c. 1952, showing blocks of flats later known as Wodehouse, Woolf and Verne courts (Ealing Local History Centre).



Fig. 33 - Woolf Court, built in 1952-4 as 34 flats and an off-licence (English Heritage, 2004, D. Kendall).

The north side was redeveloped first, as 2-72 Vincent Road (latterly Woolf Court), completed in 1954. This six-storey block of 34 flats also incorporated a corner off-licence, replacing one on the south side of the road that was set for clearance, and thus avoiding the cost of compensation. This shop continued in use until the late 1990s, and its shopfront is an unusual survival. Inside the block there were two lifts and the flats were admired for their high ceilings, airy rooms and

kitchens fitted with double draining boards and cupboards with doors having press-button catches. This was the first Acton Council housing that did not fit gas coppers as standard, it having become evident that many tenants did not require them (figs 32 and 33).<sup>75</sup> In 1954 Sylvia Brooks and her husband moved from Packington Road to Woolf Court. On 'the day before you were moving the van came, and all your bedding, your bed itself, mattresses, sheets, pillows, everything, it went off in this van to be fumigated.' The next day 'we waited and we waited, and then suddenly the bedding arrived, and it was just thrown out from the lift onto the balcony. When we come to look at it all your bedding was muddled up with somebody else's. You had to go round and sort your own stuff out. When you got it inside it was all put in one bedroom and locked up, and you weren't allowed to touch that for 24 hours.'<sup>76</sup>

Architecturally the Vincent Road flats, as they were first known, mark a clear departure from the early post-war work undertaken by Acton, whether under Slight or by outsiders. Height is the principal and obvious difference, though Slight's team did not at this point break with constructional tradition, six storeys being at the upper end of what could acceptably be built in load-bearing brick. The building is well proportioned, and enlivened by angled balconies that give it presence from both the front and the back. The architectural vocabulary is entirely Modernist, with none of the classical mouldings seen at Bollo Court, designed just three years earlier. The shaped balconies and use of the flat roof as a clothes-drying space may indicate an awareness of Berthold Lubetkin and Tecton's Spa Green Estate, Finsbury of 1946-9, which derived in turn from design ideas conceived in the Bauhaus, Germany's inter-war nursery/academy of Modernism. However, the preponderance of brick and the overall shape and lines, as well as details like the projecting and diapered brick headers, suggest Scandinavian, particularly Danish, influence, perhaps direct, perhaps transmitted in part via Culpin's local work or the LCC's eight-storey blocks of the late 1940s at Woodberry Down and the Ocean Estate, Stepney. With its shop and forecourt brick planters Woolf Court has an air of civility, and the building has aged well.



*Fig. 34 - Wodehouse Court, Stanley Road, 24 flats built in 1954-6 (English Heritage, 2004).*

Stage 2 was on the other side of Vincent Road where redevelopment followed on in 1954-6. The two buildings (Wodehouse Court and Verne Court) here are less architecturally ambitious manifestations of the Scandinavian/Modernist vocabulary, the Stanley Road building (Wodehouse Court) having differently shaped angular balconies that are very like those used on one of the slab block types built at the Churchill Gardens Estate, Pimlico, from 1947, to designs by Powell and Moya for Westminster City Council (figs 32, 34 and 35). Verne Court comprises eight four-bedroom flats, the largest built in South Acton.



*Fig. 35 - Coleridge House, Churchill Gardens Estate, Pimlico, a slab block of the late 1940s designed by Powell and Moya for Westminster City Council (English Heritage, 1987).*

Alongside its commitment to the SACDA programme Acton Council continued to build houses wherever and whenever it could, infilling bombsites and other vacant or available land. Through most of the 1950s development as carried through rather than as planned remained essentially opportunistic rather than programmatic. Three more scattered three- and four-storey brick blocks providing together 21 more flats were completed in 1952 and 1954 at 98-100 Avenue Road, 91-103 Gunnersbury Lane and O'Day Court, also on Gunnersbury Lane. These were much like earlier small developments in architectural terms, the former having a new level of amenity with built-in refrigerators and private gardens, the latter showing a bit more dash in its prominent blue tile panels, artificial stone surrounds and porthole windows (fig. 36).<sup>77</sup> Through the mid 1950s Slight and his colleagues explored the Scandinavian idiom rather more systematically elsewhere in Acton, though aspects of this work would have been thought increasingly old fashioned. Across the North London Line from the SACDA there were some large bombsites where prefabs needed to be replaced, on Fletcher Road, Church Path, Kent





*Fig. 36 - O'Day Court, Gunnersbury Lane, eight Acton Borough Council flats, built in 1953-4 (English Heritage, 2004).*



*Fig. 37 - 1-15 Church Path, Acton Borough Council flats, 1952-4, one of eight blocks built in redevelopment of bomb sites south of the North London Line railway (English Heritage, 2004).*

Road and Beaumont Road. From 1953 to 1957 eight blocks were built on these streets, providing 139 flats and maisonettes in all, as much accommodation as had then been completed since the war in the rest of South Acton north of the railway. These three- to five-storey yellow-brick blocks followed existing streets and included playgrounds, clothes drying areas and some individual gardens. Their elevations and layouts very much followed on from the lead Culpin had given in his Bedford Park flats of 1950-2. Ornamental flourishes, in porthole openings, brick diapering and shaped entrance porches, are rather better than anything in South Acton (fig. 37).<sup>78</sup>

The first large-scale phase of redevelopment in South Acton was Stage 3, in which the western section of the land between Osborne Road and Bollo Bridge Road was cleared for what later became Grahame, Meredith and Conrad Towers, and Galsworthy, Chesterton and Carroll Courts. Compulsory purchase of what was a relatively lightly populated area began in 1953, with some of those displaced destined to be housed in Stage 1 (Woolf Court). The avoidance of massive displacement and the staggering of the decanting programme to maximise opportunities to use

new buildings to facilitate further phases of clearance was a constant and complex juggling act that taxed the ingenuity of officers and councillors. The plan was to build high (nine storeys) and, for the first time, in reinforced concrete, to permit the creation of ample space between the blocks. The existing street pattern and frontage lines were retained, and the new blocks were again given numbered street addresses, but they were laid out around large open spaces, addressing parkland rather than roads, to get away from what the great Modernist architect and utopian theorist Le Corbusier had called 'wretched corridors of streets'. The prevailing ambition was the freeing of people from the darkness of 'slums' through the creation of open space. Plans for all six nine- and three-storey blocks were ready by February 1953, but building work did not begin until 1955, specialist contractors for the taller blocks, the like of which had not previously been used in Acton, forming piled foundations and the reinforced-concrete 'box frames' that had been introduced to Britain in the late 1940s at Spa Green, Finsbury. Grahame Tower (93-205 Hanbury Road) was completed in 1958, the other five blocks in 1959, providing

*Fig. 38 - The former Hanbury Estate from the northeast, 'the Three Sisters' (Grahame, Meredith and Conrad towers) and their glazed access balconies being prominent, built 1955-9 (English Heritage, 2004, D. Kendall).*



225 new flats in a landscaped 'mixed development' that came to be known as the Hanbury Estate, its three towers colloquially as 'the Three Sisters' (figs 38, 39, 40 and 45).<sup>79</sup>

Post-war deliberations on the relative needs for houses, flats and maisonettes had resolved from about 1950 into a progressive consensus for 'mixed development', which term referred to variety in visual and architectural effect as much as to dwelling size, also carrying implications of social mix. The Dudley Report had provided an official basis for greater variety of provision, for 'mixed development' of houses and blocks of flats, but few people ever wanted flats, houses always being much preferred, a preference that density requirements and subsidy regimes over-rode. 'Mixed development' dominated by tall blocks and landscaped open space came to be seen as ideal for 'inner suburban' areas where densities of 136ppa were desired. It was most successfully realised by the LCC, with lesser densities



*Fig. 39 - Meredith Tower from the west, originally 58 flats, showing the reinforced-concrete box-frame construction, with part of 'The Green' in the foreground (English Heritage, 2004)*



*Fig. 40 - Chesterton Court from the south (English Heritage, 2004)*

of about 100ppa, at Roehampton (Alton East), designed from 1951 and begun 1953, and at the nearby Wimbledon Parkside or Ackroyden Estate, Wandsworth, of 1950-4. Through the 1950s the LCC, which published *Housing Type Plans* in 1956 and again in an enlarged edition in 1960, remained the biggest, even the only, architectural influence on smaller local authorities committed to house building. 'Mixed development' was accepted as legitimate, in part simply because of the evident quality of Roehampton.<sup>80</sup>

The Acton architects who worked under Slight remain anonymous. There appears to have been a fairly high turnover of staff,<sup>81</sup> and it seems likely that many who passed through were young and aspiring, keeping up to date with architectural fashions, if not actually at the cutting edge. The adoption of greater height and box frames in the three slab-block 'towers', the first buildings so designated in South Acton, meant moving on from Scandinavian sources. In a clear derivation from Le Corbusier, if via English intermediaries, the ground floors were left open between the supporting pilotis (columns or piers), providing covered play space for children and room for pram stores. The conversion was not total though, as the brick ends to the towers resemble earlier buildings, if on a larger scale. Through the group as a whole the attractive polychromy of the brickwork is again reminiscent of Churchill Gardens. External colour was becoming more popular in the late 1950s, and the facing panels on the towers were originally coloured, though they have long since been repainted. The orientation of entrances was not according to the street, but according to the direction of light, that is to the east in the towers, and to the north in the lower blocks. To the west and south were the private balconies, those of L-profile on the lower blocks seeming to be a quote from Tecton and Denys Lasdun's work at the Hallfield Estate in Paddington (1949-56), published in 1953. Throughout, glass was maximised for the sake of daylight levels. A particularly up-to-date feature was the inclusion of frosted and toughened glass on the east- and north-facing access balconies and weathershield panels or windbreaks, preventing the loss of light that had tended to cause balcony access to fall from favour. Powell and Moya had used such glass at Lambie Street, Gospel Oak, in 1952-4, as well as at Churchill Gardens.<sup>82</sup> Another novelty was the deployment of amplifiers or master aerials 'to eliminate the unsightly appearance of individual television and wireless aerials'.<sup>83</sup>

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Fig. 41 - Show flats in Grahame Tower advertised in 1958 (The Acton Gazette).

These 'multi-coloured "skyscraper" flats' were well received when new (figs 41 and 42). The kitchens were thought 'a housewife's delight' and 'bathrooms for several of the families were something they read about in glossy magazines: separate bedrooms for children and parents unknown; and as for central heating, well, it was a dream'.<sup>84</sup> As Alfred Harms witnessed 'Our rent has nearly doubled now, but we are glad to move'.<sup>85</sup> The new accommodation would have seemed spacious. A three-bedroom flat in one of the towers had 871 sq ft (78 sq m), more space than many of the area's late-19<sup>th</sup>-century houses, many of which had been divided, more even than Acton's Tudor Walters three-bedroom flats of the early 1930s (see above).<sup>86</sup> There were also refrigerators and 'caged' flat roofs for clothes drying on the taller blocks, though not on the lower blocks, to avoid unsightliness. The drying of clothes on balconies was strictly forbidden for this reason; 'if you dare hang one item on your balcony, she[council official]'d be up like a shot, and if you argued with her and said you weren't going to take it down you'd be threatened with eviction'.<sup>87</sup> The Parker Morris report in 1961 (see below) accepted that 'occupiers often use a private amenity balcony as a place for hanging washing', but it was not until 1971 that the

Fig. 42 - Contract drawings of 1955 showing layouts of flats in the Hanbury Estate, to different scales (Ealing Local History Centre).

rules were relaxed in South Acton to permit 'unobtrusive, collapsible clothes horses' on balconies.<sup>88</sup>

As 'mixed development' ideals dictated, particular attention was given to the layout of the central courtyard within the four more westerly blocks, a space that was called 'The Green'. There was an elaborate scheme for planting, unconstrained by pre-existing trees, as there were none, and a sunken playground that was given a concrete ship and play tunnel (fig. 43). Such concrete-ship playgrounds were all the rage, appearing at Churchill Gardens and elsewhere.<sup>89</sup> This one stayed in place until the 1970s: 'We lived in Meredith. My children could go down and play in that boat park.

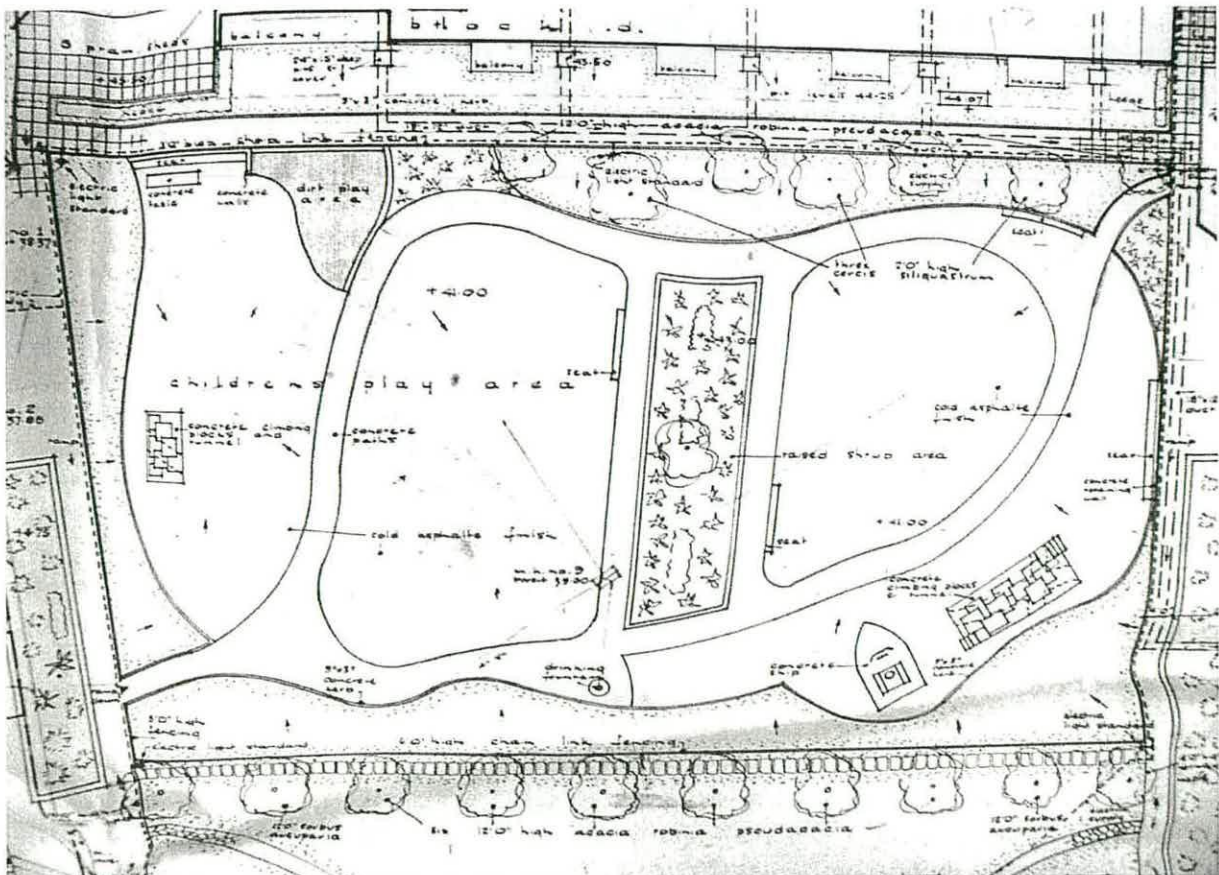
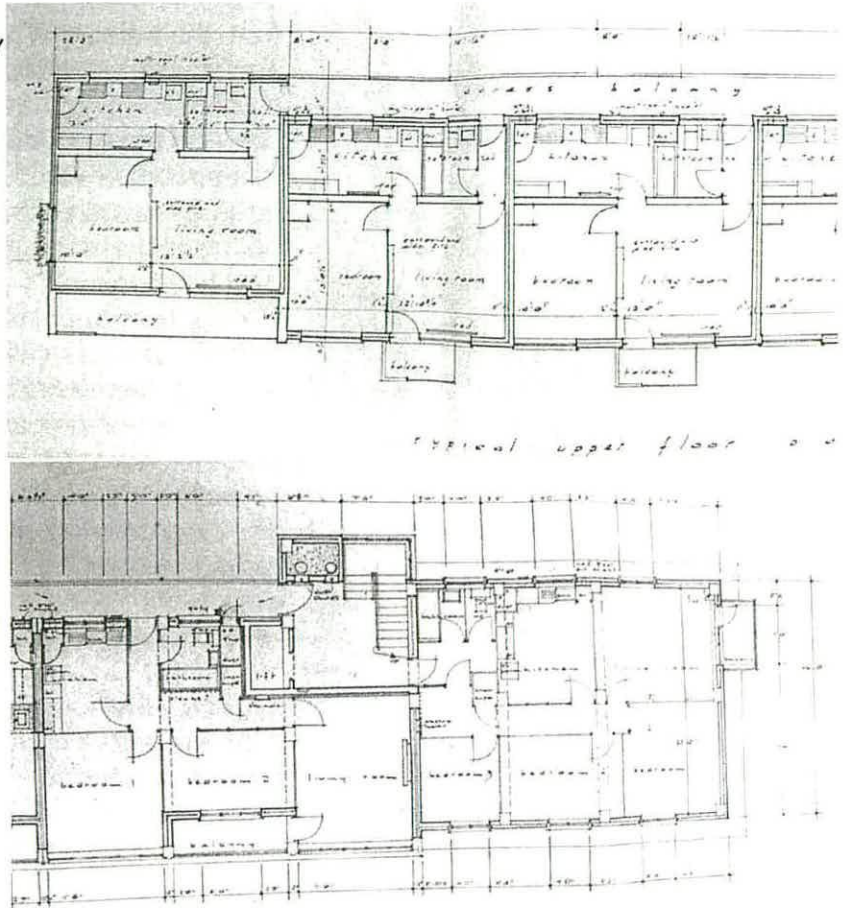


Fig. 43 - The original layout of the children's play area on 'The Green' at the heart of the Hanbury Estate, contract drawing of 1955 (Ealing Local History Centre).



Fig. 44 - Tennis court adjoining Grahame Tower (English Heritage, 2004).

They could crawl in the tunnels, and we could see them from the balcony.<sup>90</sup> A tennis court north-east of Grahame Tower was another part of the original layout. A conventional net has been replaced with a fixed metal net, and seats along the sides have gone in a space that has become overgrown (fig. 44).<sup>91</sup> There were no garages to start with, as it was thought that they would not be in keeping with the layout.<sup>92</sup> Not everyone liked the new buildings. Henry Lippiatt, age 76 in 1959 and a lifelong resident of Bollo Bridge Road, said 'I like to see trees, and not bricks and mortar right up to the sky. Nothing like the old days when you had the countryside at the bottom of the garden.'<sup>93</sup> This had indeed been true for some on his road until about 1900, when he was a teenager (fig. 7). But this seems to have been a minority view. Anticipating completion of this stage of redevelopment the *Acton Gazette* concluded that 'an area which for so many years has been an eyesore will thus become one in which Acton can take some pride.'<sup>94</sup>

Further advances were being made towards redevelopment of the north side of Osborne Road and the land between Stanley Road and Palmerston Road. But CPOs were held up until 1956 by questions as to the relocation of displaced industries.<sup>95</sup> There were objections too from residents of the Mill Hill Park Estate worried about the impact of a six-storey 'skyscraper block' immediately south of their gardens. At a public meeting Mr L. Castle of 50 Heathfield Road asked 'are we going to have a laundry on the top with washing flapping about?'<sup>96</sup> Slight, disingenuously perhaps, confirmed that there would be a rooftop drying area. The Ministry of Housing and Local Government intervened and the plans for the block that was to become Doyle House were reduced to four storeys, and the block re-oriented so that the gardens of houses in Avenue Gardens would not be overlooked.<sup>97</sup>

Poor housing conditions persisted in South Acton's older properties, particularly in houses long since earmarked for clearance, 'Rachmanism' (exploitative landlords taking advantage of decontrolled rents) joining blight and immigration in an intensification of pre-existing problems. Acton's waiting list had been halved to 2,500 by 1959, but 22% of dwellings in the Borough still lacked a fixed bath.<sup>98</sup> In response to criticisms of the council's housing policies Joe Sparks wrote in 1959, 'If it is a silly thing to knock down old houses and build flats upon the sites, perhaps you could tell the council how it is possible to provide the accommodation necessary for all the overcrowded and homeless families and those threatened with eviction in the near future.'<sup>99</sup> By this time central housing subsidies had been withdrawn, the Conservative Government having launched in its place a major slum-clearance programme in 1956, introducing a new subsidy system. Housing targets could only be met and subsidised via clearance and building high. Output was what counted. In lieu of the opportunistic infilling of available sites across all of Acton, the Borough's housing programme had by 1960 come to be virtually confined to South Acton. To some degree, therefore, the isolation or ghettoisation of the South Acton Estate arose from central policy changes. The intricacies of phasing removals and demolitions with completions made progress slow. However, Acton was fairly exceptional (Edmonton providing a parallel elsewhere in Middlesex) in having built up its out-borough outlets for decanting. In due course these enabled the building up of a surplus. Between 1951 and 1961 Acton built 1,573 new dwellings, that is 24 per thousand population, compared to rates for the 1950s of 21.7 for the LCC, 37 for the County of London, 13.8 for Middlesex, 28.3 for West Ham and 21.3 for Croydon.<sup>100</sup>

While Acton had little room for manoeuvre, the most was made of what opportunities there were to crack on with 'comprehensive redevelopment'. That there was a 'strategic' approach meant that there was something with which to persevere when reliance could no longer be placed on expediency and opportunism. By 1961 slightly more than £1m had been spent on 358 new dwellings in South Acton. However, despite adherence to strategy and persistence with 'comprehensive redevelopment' the slow speed of progress was tending to give the place a piecemeal appearance, as architectural thinking and the regulatory parameters shifted. As quantity became more and more the defining issue quality suffered. There were the beginnings of a decline in standards, corner cutting and shifts towards cheaper, more utilitarian and minimalist approaches to building and architecture. The LCC had lost impetus as a leader in housing by 1960, and output across most of out-county greater London in the early 60s was low. There was central guidance from the ministry, as in the Ministry of Housing and Local Government's, *Flats and Houses 1958: design and economy*, which presented some model options to achieve different densities, as well as less directly via the man from the ministry, A. W. Cleeve Barr publishing *Public Authority Housing*, also in 1958. Recent analyses differ as to the degree to which local groups were driving or being driven by the great housebuilding campaigns of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Clearly, nobody wanted to be left behind, and Acton Borough Council was certainly under pressure, not free to take other than certain roads. But its commitment to housebuilding was real, and pride in what was achieved genuine. 'The "housing problem" – or, rather, the unending effort to solve it – was the lifeblood of the mid-twentieth-century city in Britain, the stimulus of much of its municipal pride and sense of independence.'<sup>101</sup>

The Parker Morris report of 1961 for the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, *Homes for Today and Tomorrow*, was the most influential official attempt to raise housing standards since Tudor Walters in 1919. What came to be known as Parker Morris standards were informed by Modernist or Corbusian (Le Corbusier's) design principles, but the report was not a style guide. Its major emphases were on living space and heating (central heating henceforward becoming standard), also renewing stress on the importance of landscaping and play spaces for children. It aimed to ensure decent living standards and spacious interiors, advising minima of 642 sq ft (58 sq m) for three people, and about 800 sq ft (72 sq m) for four people, perhaps a family of four with three bedrooms, it being expected that children of opposite sexes would have separate bedrooms.<sup>102</sup> The result was that layouts just above these minima tended to become standards. By way of comparison Acton's south ward (essentially South Acton) in 1961 had a population of 7,309 in 2,788 households in 2,114 dwellings, still largely old houses, and 10,461 occupied rooms. That means 3.5 people/dwelling, and an average of about five rooms/dwelling.<sup>103</sup>



Fig. 45 - The scheme for the South Acton Comprehensive Development Area as revised in 1961 with an article from The Acton Gazette.

There was a step up in the volume and scale of development in South Acton in the early 1960s, general-needs subsidies having been restored in 1961. In Acton what Miles Glendinning has termed the municipal 'housing crusaders' were led by Joe Sparks, back from Westminster and chairing the Housing Committee, with Councillor Arthur C. Vinson chairing the Plans Sub-Committee from 1959, along with Reynolds and Higgins. The council set itself a target of 200 new homes a year, and at one November 1961 council meeting five South Acton blocks (Webb, Bennett, 2-16 Enfield Road, Blackmore and Kipling), to provide 238 homes for £673,000, were given the go ahead all at once (figs 25, 45 and 64). For the 'crusaders' housing development was about mitigating social problems, overcrowding, housing shortage and poor living conditions. The *Gazette's* waning coverage of new council housing, presumably decreasingly perceived as 'news', was attacked by the council in 1962, when the end-date of 1966 for SACDA's 66 acres and 1,110 dwellings was revised to 1971, with the possibility of a further 420 dwellings thereafter. There was public impatience, not least because of planning blight, and progress was further slowed by difficulties in finding technical staff; the engagement of private architects was again seen as prohibitively expensive. However, despite all the difficulties 2,159 council homes were built in Acton between 1945 and 1964, private builders putting up only 313.<sup>104</sup>

It is not necessary to do more than consider particular aspects of most of the South Acton blocks begun from 1958 and completed between 1960 and 1963 in Stages 4 to 9 of the redevelopment (for Jerome Tower see below) (figs 25 and 46). In so far as they were given attention in the local press they continued to be generally well received (they are identified here by their later names). Shaw Court was built in part on what had been railway land in 1959-60. Being just twelve maisonettes with individual gardens it had some amplitude. Among the first residents Mrs M. C. George found the new home to be, in the ultimate cliché of this genre of uncritical reportage, 'like a little palace'. Others were pleased simply to have hot water and electricity.<sup>105</sup>

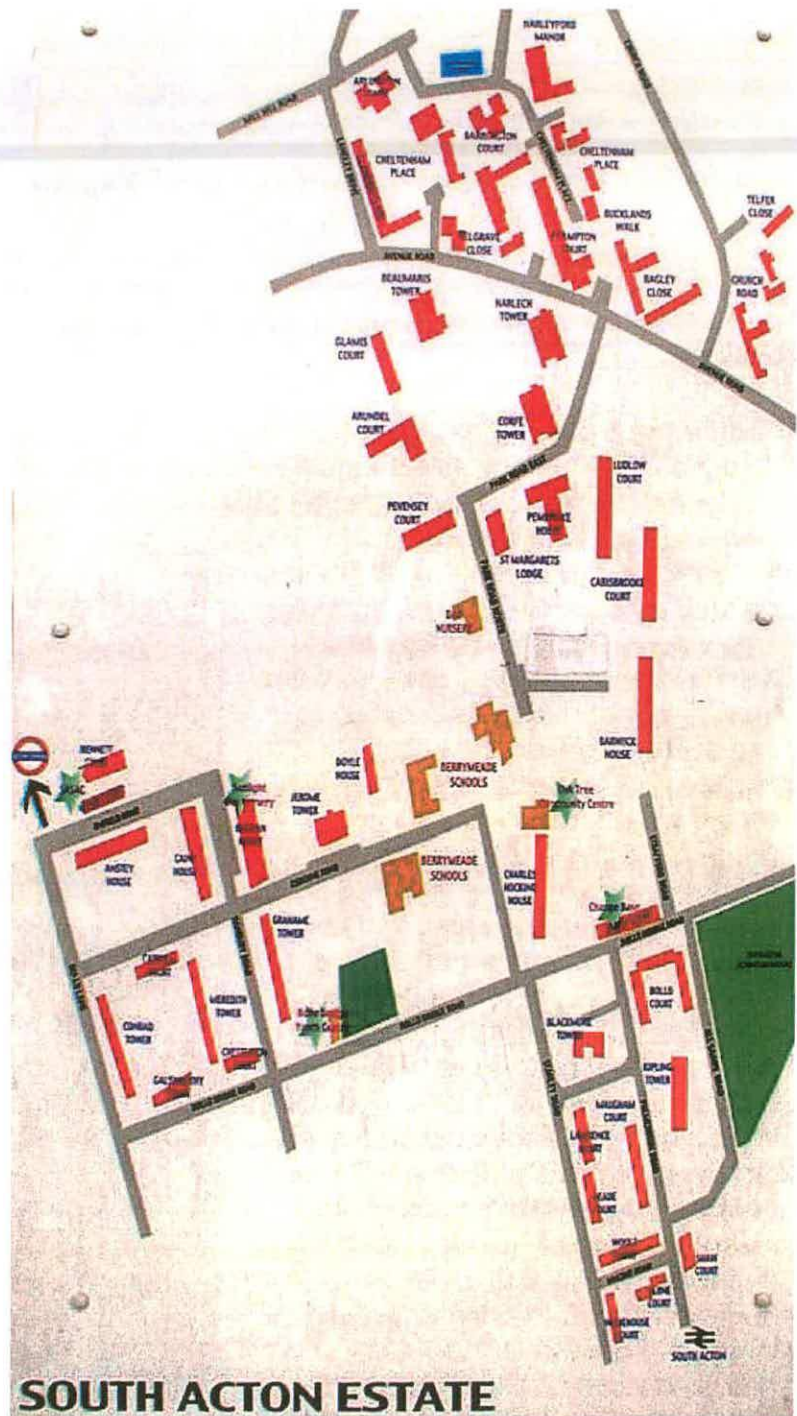


Fig. 46 - Map of the South Acton Neighbourhood on a London Borough of Ealing sign.

There was a general adoption of 'rational', that is undisguised, brick cross-wall construction except in the tallest buildings of this period. This constructional approach had become widespread in the 1950s, and was promulgated by Cleeve Barr. It is clearly manifest in the area's first terraces of houses, three-storey rows on Osborne Road, Enfield Road and Bollo Lane, built between 1958 and 1963 (fig. 47). Post-war guidance for mixed development had favoured three-storey terraced houses for high-density locations. Double front entrances in these houses were an innovation derived from Herbert Tayler and David Green's work for Loddon Rural District in Norfolk, picked up on and recommended by Cleeve Barr in 1958 and by Parker Morris in 1961. The point was to give service access and a direct link through to gardens, making the terraced house more permeable.<sup>106</sup>

In 1959-62 Caine House and Anstey Court mixed flats and maisonettes in six and seven storeys, introducing a new layout derived from Park Hill, Sheffield (planned from 1953, built 1957-9) (fig. 48). In triple stacked maisonettes the middle units were laid out with their bedroom floors below their living floors, the upper and lower maisonettes being more conventionally arranged. This meant that none of the units had bedrooms immediately below somebody else's living spaces, an ingenious attempt to mitigate noise nuisance.<sup>107</sup> The timing of the arrival of this idea in Acton can perhaps be gauged by the fact that it was not adopted in Buchan House in 1958-60 (figs 49 and 55). Another change of approach was the abandonment in 1961 of rooftop clothes drying areas in favour of communal coin-operated tumble dryers in basements, the plans for buildings as yet

*Fig. 49 - Buchan House, Hanbury Road, built 1958-60, 37 flats and maisonettes with 11 shops, Grahame Tower beyond (from Borough of Acton Guide, 1963, Ealing Local History Centre).*



*Fig. 47 - Three of a terrace of eight four-bedroom cross-wall-framed houses at 2-16 Enfield Road, built 1962-3 (English Heritage, 2004).*

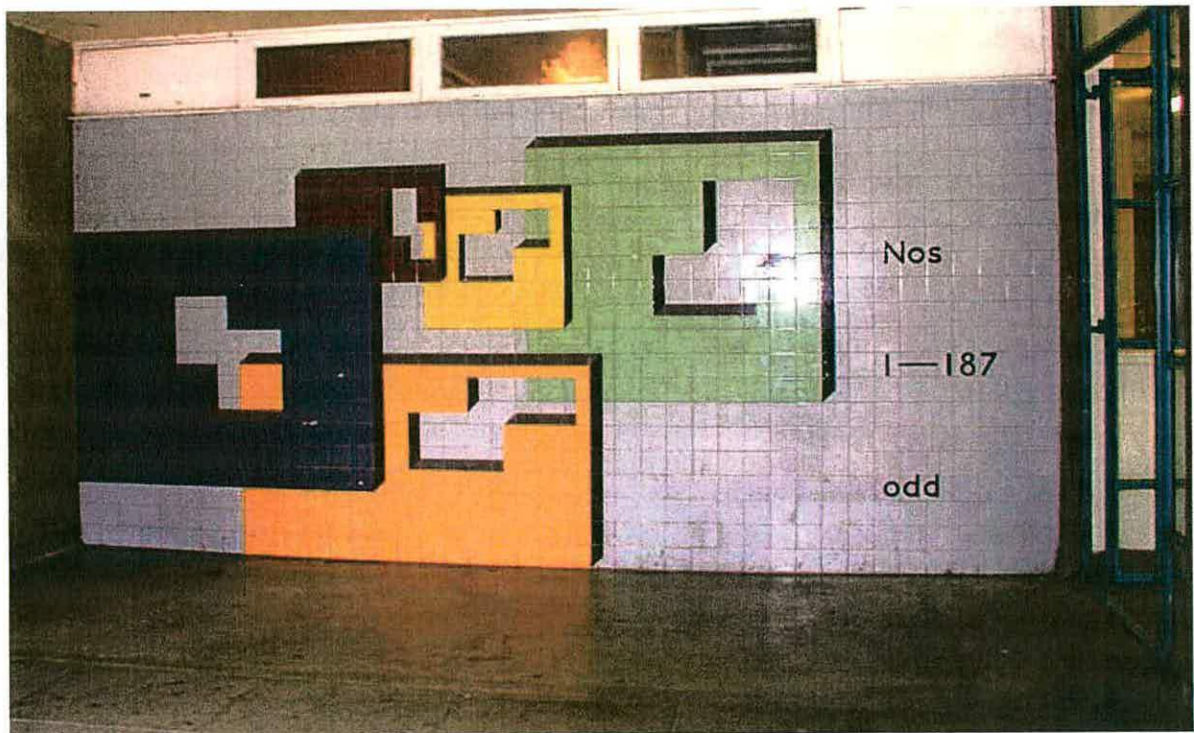


*Fig. 48 - Caine House, built 1959-62, 48 flats and maisonettes, the latter in the foreground, the middle tier laid out with bedrooms below living spaces to mitigate noise nuisance (English Heritage, 2004).*





incomplete being changed accordingly. Through these buildings a general and gradual falling off of design quality can be traced, particularly at Caine House. This block was subject to criticism from its opening, though this was in part because it did not have central heating. However, against later perceptions of such buildings, it must be noted that the *Acton Gazette* assessed Caine House as 'a credit to the planners'.<sup>108</sup> Maugham Court is an architecturally meaner version of earlier buildings, mixing elements from Wodehouse Court and the Hanbury Estate, but abandoning Corbusian principles, an open ground floor being sacrificed in a revision of plans in 1959 to squeeze three more flats out of a building that was put up in 1961-2. Its two-bedroom flats were unusually laid out with internal halls. Sustaining the principles of 'mixed development' landscaping remained important where there was scope for it, as can be seen behind Maugham Court where the open space was generously laid out. Modernism and the beginnings of imposed economies notwithstanding ornament was an integral part of these buildings. Typically and generally it was placed around entrances, as a humanising lift. Decorative panels of the early 1960s vary greatly, from the large-pattern yellow tiles on Reade and Lawrence Courts, a bit old-fashioned by 1960, to the jazzier black-and-white mosaic at Buchan Court, on to the abstract tile mural of 1964 at Blackmore Tower (fig. 50), comparable to work at Alton East. Buchan Court also has east-facing frosted-glass access balconies like those of the Hanbury Estate, the decorative effect of which, particularly after dark, was not unintended (see cover illustration). On balconies and elsewhere zig-zag railings continued to be used, and at Anstey Court, uniquely it seems, ball railings were used.<sup>109</sup> South Acton's housing is remarkable for its enormous variety. It can be criticised as incoherent, or appreciated for never having become formulaic. Slight's design team remained well informed, open to new ideas and up to date if not innovative, putting into practice what was invented elsewhere.



*Fig. 50 - Ornamental detail at the entrances to Buchanan House (1958-60), Reade Court (1961-2) and Blackmore Tower, originally 1-187 Stanley Road (1963-4) (English Heritage, 2004).*

## Social shifts: a moving backdrop

The building programme was continuous, there being no years between 1952 and 1972 during which new homes were not being built in South Acton. However, it is worth breaking the story in the middle to catch up with and hold in view the area's changing social, ethnic and economic character, and to consider how people were beginning to live in and react to the new housing. Reverend Nicholson's invocation of the word 'community' in 1947 (see above) is significant, but the usage was as conflicted then as it is now, seemingly meaning neighbourhood, but heavily laden with class overtones. Government stopped using the term 'working-class housing' in 1949,<sup>110</sup> reflecting Bevan's ideal of mixed communities, but working-class identity was South Acton's glue, even as clearances closed the laundries and displaced other local employment around which that identity had formed. Employment may have been shifting, but it was not scarce, unemployment being essentially unknown through the 1950s and 1960s.

In 1948 the *SS Empire Windrush* arrived at Tilbury with 492 migrants from Jamaica. Three years later Acton as a whole had only 2,385 foreign-born (born outside the British Isles) in a population of 67,471 (3.5%), with just 759 (1.1%) from the Commonwealth and colonies. By 1961 5,492 of 65,586 (8%) were foreign-born, with 3,381 (5%) from the Commonwealth and colonies, up 2,622 in a decade. Of these people 995 had come from the Caribbean, and 601 from India and Pakistan; Acton's longer-established group of Polish immigrants numbered 1,313.<sup>111</sup> In February 1956 the *Acton Gazette* reported a speech in the Commons by Joe Sparks with the headline 'We must welcome coloured people'. Behind that sentiment Sparks was objecting to provisions that would have obliged local authorities like Acton to support newly arrived families relocating to new towns. In 1958, the year of the Notting Hill race riots, tenants in the then new Grahame Tower raised a petition against the rehousing there of 'a coloured man and his wife', because they had only lived in England for two years. While claiming it was preferential treatment rather than race that motivated the objection an anonymous tenant urged action 'before the flats are flooded with coloured people'.<sup>112</sup>

Nationally immigration from New Commonwealth countries (the Caribbean, India, Pakistan, Cyprus) peaked in 1961 in a rush to beat the introduction in that year of strict immigration controls. There was considerable settlement from the Caribbean in South Acton, people coming to work for London Transport, a major local employer, and generally living in privately rented houses. Rents in 'comprehensive redevelopment' or clearance areas were affordable because of planning blight and associated strict rent control, and in many locales it would have been clear that the programmed redevelopment was still years away. The exposure of the exploitative slum landlord Peter Rachman in 1963 led to the Milner Holland inquiry and report in 1964. In that year Robert Mellish, Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, toured South Acton and Southall in one day, looking at new housing and considering the social problems arising from overcrowded immigrant populations in privately rented accommodation. Society was changing in other ways. The pews of All Saints Church were growing emptier, Reverend William Randall commenting in 1959, 'They are very friendly, happy people here, but it is a shame that they should have forsaken the church for the television.'<sup>113</sup>

A South Acton Tenants' Association was formed in 1960, galvanised by John MacRae of Colville Road, where properties had been blighted for years. He gained 200 signatures to a petition urging the speeding up of the development: 'The people round here just do not know what is happening'.<sup>114</sup> This Association did not last, but already in 1961 repair and maintenance was becoming an issue. The two- and three-year old lifts on the Hanbury Estate (in Grahame, Meredith and Conrad Towers) having needed many repairs through misuse. Other issues generated complaint in the early 1960s. Windows were not being cleaned, some untouched since new; the Council suggested tenants should clean them from the inside. Lifts were being used as lavatories, tumble dryers broke down and were left unrepaired, and there were cracked walls and leaky windows. There were also persistent complaints about anti-social and violent

behaviour, about litter and dogs fouling playgrounds. 'The Green has been left in a mess for six years. It is miserable to look out on'.<sup>115</sup> It came to be seen as unsafe at night. The Council acknowledged that additional supervision of the estate was needed, but did not provide it, beyond asking porters to be more vigilant. A series of fires in late 1963 brought things to a tipping point, dissatisfaction crystallising in the formation of the Hanbury Estate Tenants Association in September 1963, with guidance from Don Cook, an executive committee member of the Communist-inspired National Association of Tenants and Residents, and a veteran of the first large and sometimes violent post-war rent strike against private landlords, which took place in 1959-61 in St Pancras. Cook was impressed by the commitment of South Acton residents to the control and improvement of their living environment. This was the battleground. In spite of rising rents that reflected the increasing costs of redevelopment, and widespread disputes elsewhere through the 1950s and '60s over what constituted a 'fair' rent, it is not evident that rents ever became a primary cause of general dispute in South Acton. Already in 1963 South Acton was being reported in the *Gazette* as a problem more than as a place being renewed. Three years later 570 residents signed a petition protesting about the condition of the estate and the imposition of a charge of 2s 6d a week towards the cost of maintaining lifts.<sup>116</sup> 'The gardeners work very hard, . . . and I think Acton Town Council is doing their utmost to make the estate look very effective, but what's the use when the "little darlings" pull up the flowers by the roots. . . . I have seen mothers lift their children over the fence on to the lawns where it is clearly marked "Please keep off the grass", and leave the children there to play. . . . When the houses in Osborne Road were first occupied every front garden was laid out with a lawn, shrubs and a couple of trees, but now there is not a blade of grass to be seen, thanks again to their "little darlings". . . . Instead of living in pleasant and pretty surroundings the estate is being turned into slumland, caused by the "little darlings", after the hard work and money spent by the Town Council.'<sup>117</sup>

In 1964 the Hanbury Estate Tenants Association, which was enlarged to represent the whole estate in 1965, asked the Council to provide a community centre, something that had always been part of the long-term plan, but which was not yet on the horizon. In response a meeting room was provided behind Webb and Bennett Courts in 1964-6, but, away in the north-west corner of the estate, this was not initially well used. Laggardness of social provision in support of new housing was typical of many redevelopment areas in this period. It was housing output that counted. Nevertheless, a new health clinic, mooted since the late 1940s, was built in 1963-4 by Middlesex County Council. Latterly known as Avenue House this was built on Avenue Road, well to the north-east of then completed new housing, replacing an existing surgery, and anticipating later developments (fig. 51). Designed by Douglas Stephen and Partners, architects, this simple low-cost brick-clad concrete-framed two-storey building was set well back on its site because road widening was anticipated. It was devoted to ante-natal care and child psychiatric care, and the treatment of ophthalmic, dental and other minor ailments.<sup>118</sup>



*Fig. 51 - Avenue House, Avenue Road, health clinic built by Middlesex County Council in 1963-4, Douglas Stephen and Partners, architects (English Heritage, 2004).*

Railway land south of the Recreation Ground was opened up to the public in the early 1960s for a playground, allowing the lavatories to be replaced with a south-east corner 'clubhouse' in 1965 that only stood for about twenty years, used for youth groups and other community purposes.<sup>119</sup> The Bollo Brook Play Centre was planned in 1965 and formed in 1967-8, comprising a rest garden, an adventure playground and a single-storey bunker-like brick building for an indoor playroom, kitchen and toilets (fig. 52). The scheme was welcomed with the prevailing orthodoxy



*Fig. 52 - The Bollo Brook Play Centre (latterly Youth Centre), part of a garden and playground laid out in 1967-8 (English Heritage, 2004, D. Kendall).*

that 'play is almost more important than education'.<sup>120</sup> A local resident, then a child in South Acton, remembered the area's play facilities at the time: 'There wasn't any. But for youngsters this area was a playing area, but it was a dangerous playing area, because they were knocking down houses. There was all derelict places. It was a great place for children, but . . . it was one of the most dangerous places

anybody could ever mess around in. It was like playing in a minefield. Whole streets derelict. All windows smashed, because it was us, the kids, who smashed them. Any plain glass that's whole you pick up a stone and smash it, you see. We used to run in and out of the houses. We used to play run outs. No-one wants to be caught so you find any means of escape, so we were running around on the roofs.'<sup>121</sup> At the end of the 1960s the absence of infrastructure and the paucity of community services in South Acton was giving rise to growing concern.

Pubs were generally too expensive to be cleared through compulsory purchase, and they were anyway understood to be an important part of the social fabric, though, as J. T. Sweetenham of 27 Enfield Road pointed out in 1955, 'the people won't have any money left to buy beer with because they will be paying the money in council rents'.<sup>122</sup> Five that stood in the path of clearance in 1955 were then earmarked for retention: the Victory (Vic) and the Anchor (later Harbour Lights), both on Bollo Bridge Road; the Osborne (previously the Crown Prince of Prussia or Crown) and the Capel Arms (known as the Duck), both on Osborne Road; and the Bollo Bridge Tavern (known as the Top House) at the end of Enfield Road on Hanbury Road. However, thinking shifted and the last named was CPO'd and cleared in 1960, to provide a parking area to the north of Buchan House. Further east the Palmerston on Park Road East



*Fig. 53 - The Harbour Lights (previously the Anchor) Public House, Bollo Bridge Road, with lounge-bar additions of 1968-9 locally known as the 'oasthouses', demolished c. 1999, Jerome Tower to the right (Ealing Local History Centre).*

was cleared in the 1960s. The Victory was demolished in the 1980s, and the Anchor c.1999, having been enlarged in 1968-9, by the extraordinary addition of a Modernist lounge-bar extension that comprised two circle-plan blocks that were locally known as the 'oasthouses' (fig. 53), seemingly picking up on the spirit of South Acton's new architectural character. The Capel Arms, which had been built opposite Berrymede School in 1938, was converted to be six flats in 2001, leaving only the Osborne, which was closed to business in late 2004.<sup>123</sup>

In the 1930s 'Corner shops were still the mainstay of local families and although bigger shops like 'Hawkins' on the corner of Palmerston Road were perhaps taking trade away from the smaller establishments, there were no 'fridges' or 'freezers' to store food and most families resorted to the local shop daily. Where else but the little shop on the corner of Osborne Road and Hanbury Road could you buy your steaming hot pease pudding and faggots or a pennyworth of delicious chips from the Italian stall just a few yards down Hanbury Road. You had to cross the road for your two-penny piece of fried cod or rock salmon'.<sup>124</sup> These arrangements, including the allegedly delicious chips, held in the early post-war period as clearance and redevelopment began. It has been estimated that c.1950 there were 15 shops on Bollo Bridge Road, 10 on Avenue Road, and 33 lining both sides of Church Road. Across the railway line there was another run of shops along Kingswood Road serving the streets on the Acton Green side in what was still then considered part of South Acton. Early plans for redevelopment in South Acton took this level of retail provision into account. In 1952 it was intended that 26 shops would be built in the Hanbury Road area, and that in due course the Church Road area would be rebuilt as a shopping centre. In 1956 three replacement shopping centres were envisaged, on Hanbury Road, Bollo Bridge Road and between Avenue Road and Park Road East. The first of these was realised on Hanbury Road in 1960 as part of Buchan House, 11 shops let to a range of everyday provisioners (fig. 49). Five years later the second followed at Hardy Court, 12 shops similarly let, behind hexagon paving on a zig-zag railed forecourt (see Appendix 2 for first tenants) (fig. 54). For some these re-orderings represented great improvements. Doris Swinfield said of the Hardy Court shopping parade when it was new in 1965: 'It is one of the finest things that have ever happened down here in South Acton. The shops are clean and the service is much quicker now. I can remember queueing up for an hour in the old grocer's shop, but shopping takes no time at all in the supermarket. I have lived here for 15 years and it is only now with the new shops and flats being built that the terrible stigma that has been over South Acton for years is being lifted. The area is becoming so much cleaner and more respectable.'<sup>125</sup> Such thoughts had perhaps already receded when most of the Church Road shops were cleared c.1970 (fig. 4). Until the 1970s or later most people living south of Avenue Road would not have needed or troubled with everyday access to the High Street. The fact that it was a long and indirect walk from southern parts of the estate would not have mattered much.



*Fig. 54 - The parade of shops and raised forecourt at Hardy Court, built 1964-5 (English Heritage, 2004, D. Kendall).*

## Housing provided: tower blocks and the later 1960s

The housing described so far has all been either slab blocks or low rise. The important and obvious missing element in the story so far is the tower or point block. Pressures to confine housebuilding to clearance areas, and to increase housing output in general have already been described. The Housing Subsidies Act of 1956 institutionalised a preference for high-rise housing, introducing a multi-storey subsidy that increased with height. It was in any case natural to resort to height to attain in combination desired densities, Parker Morris space standards and intervening open spaces. It must have seemed that there was nowhere to go but up. The change was not a matter of architectural fashion, but emphasis on innovation and on the amenity of the new form defused opposition. Innovation was largely focussed on speed of construction and industrialisation, which rapidly led to a fall off in quality. All this helps to explain the turn to taller buildings in South Acton in the early 1960s, but this shift was encouraged not impelled, and, it should again be emphasised, there was pride, even idealism, behind the building of tower blocks. Alison Ravetz has summed up these clashing forces: 'The ultimate episode of utopianism in British council housing was the brief boom in high-rise housing from 1958 to 1968. . . [but] what in the end it delivered – forests of close-set towers in an unreformed urban environment – was precisely what Le Corbusier had warned against.'<sup>126</sup>

The 'point block' was essentially devised at the LCC's Alton and Ackroyden estates in the early 1950s, 11 storeys becoming an LCC standard. Among many other explorations of the possibilities of building tall in the 1950s a particular exemplar was Great Arthur House in the Golden Lane Estate in the City of London (1953-7), a 16-storey block designed by Chamberlin, Powell and Bon. The first LCC blocks to rise more than 20 storeys were built in 1961-2 on the Warwick Estate in Paddington.<sup>127</sup> The follow-on in South Acton was entirely typical.

*Their gardens will be nearly sky high*



*Fig. 55 - Bird's-eye sketch view of plans for the north side of Osborne Road in 1959, including South Acton's first tower block (Jerome Tower) (The Acton Gazette).*

Developed plans for the area's first tower were agreed and made public in March 1959 (fig. 55). At 16 storeys housing 94 flats it was intended to be the 'centrepiece' of the whole redevelopment, of which eastern parts had not yet been begun. What is now known as Jerome Tower was built as 34-220 Osborne Road in 1962-3 by Tersons Ltd, a London-based firm operating much more widely in this new specialist field. Its pre-stressed reinforced-concrete frame was designed by G. K. N. Reinforcements Ltd. Notably there was variable (thermostatically controlled) oil-fired central heating, based on a model in Camberwell, to which Vinson had led a visit in 1961. The tower was also double glazed, a novelty. From the outset it had its aerofoil roof, a feature derived from Great Arthur House, the initial intention having been that there would be a roof garden, clothes drying having been internalised. Access to the glass-railed roof did not extend under the aerofoils, so they were not for shade. Functionality was not the point; they were an architectural gesture, a mark of pride and of modernity. On a spring Saturday in 1964 Acton Borough Council issued tickets to the general public for access to the roof and its excellent views (figs 38, 56, 57, 60 and 61).<sup>128</sup> These views continue to be appreciated: 'it's quite nice to go up in the lift and then just see across London. I think that's one of the nice facts about the higher ones, the freedom of space.'<sup>129</sup>

A second 16-storey 94-flat point block, a replica of the first, was built in 1963-4 as 1-187 Stanley Road (Blackmore Tower). Its sameness extended even to having another glass-screened aerofoil roof, which enclosure here survives. However, this tower faced away from the street,



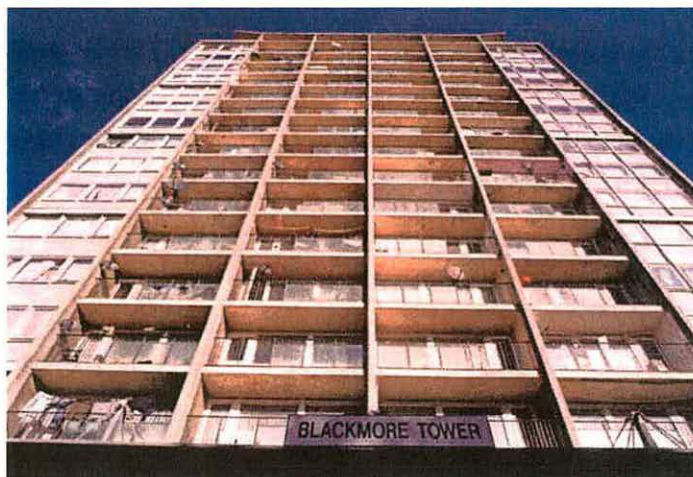
*Fig. 56 - Jerome Tower from the southwest, 94 flats in 16 storeys, built 1962-3 as 34-220 Osborne Road (English Heritage, 2004, D. Kendall).*

with which it is out of alignment (see below), for the sake of south-facing balconies (figs 50, 58 and 61). Similarly unrelated to the street is the double tower of 1963-5 across the road, originally 90 flats that became 1-179 Palmerston Road (later Kipling Tower, with five more flats inserted). It does without a roof garden or any architectural flourish (figs 29, 59 and 61). However, it is notable for its spacious corridors, as well as for the survival of an early

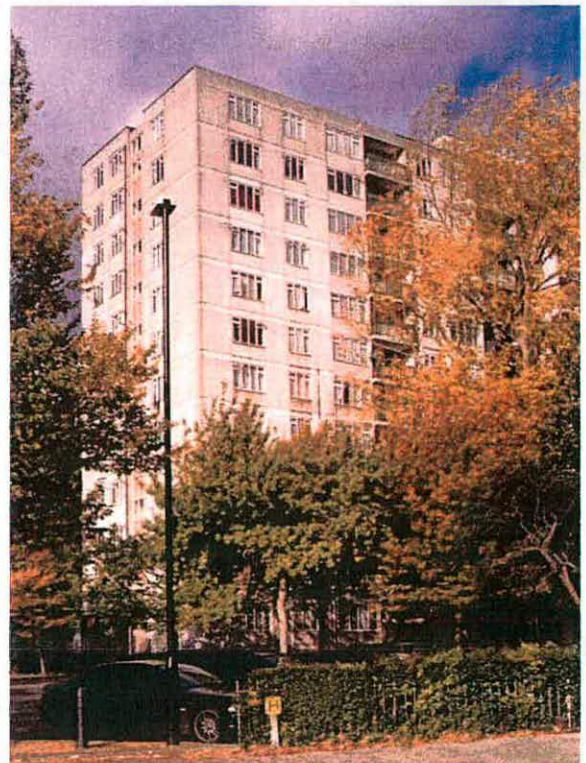


*Fig. 57 - Jerome Tower's aerofoil roof terrace (English Heritage, 2004, D. Kendall).*

drying room. Unique in South Acton the double-tower form conforms to a type published by the Ministry in 1958. Tersons built all three of these blocks, not 'system' building as such, but using their own 'rationalised traditional' method. They did not have to compete in tendering for Blackmore Tower, in an effort to simplify a



*Fig. 58 - Blackmore Tower, a replica of Jerome Tower, built 1963-4 (English Heritage, 2004, D. Kendall).*



*Fig. 59 - Kipling Tower, 90 flats (originally) in a 12-storey double tower, built 1963-5 (English Heritage, 2004, D. Kendall).*





*Fig. 60 - Barrie House, 100 flats in 21 storeys, under construction in 1967, with Barwick House, 99 flats and maisonettes in 13 storeys, built 1965-6, to the right, view from the roof of Jerome Tower with central London in the distance. Barrie House was demolished in 2001 (Ealing Local History Centre).*

process in which design as well as construction was being handed over to efficient contractors, all for the sake of speed, reliability, and the maximisation of output. The Ministry was increasingly interventionist, in 1962 persuading Acton to transpose the sites of Blackmore and Kipling Towers, and to raise Kipling Tower an extra storey to permit the replacement of some low-rise dwellings with car parking to the north of Maugham Court. In 1964 plans for South Acton's tallest tower, what became Barrie House (built 1966-7), again like Jerome only taller, were agreed, ignoring Ministry urgings to reduce its height to 16 storeys; 'we are satisfied that the proportions of the 20-storey block would afford a pleasing appearance and that a focal point in this part of the South Acton comprehensive development area would be appropriate' (fig. 60).<sup>130</sup> There was no imperative for such high density. The height was defended in subjective or aesthetic terms, no doubt reflecting local pride. From 1964 Robert Mellish was a 'progress chaser' for Richard Crossman, the Housing Minister, tasked with galvanising local authorities. When he visited South Acton he concluded that 'very good flats have been built',<sup>131</sup> Many ordinary local people would have agreed, envying the spacious new homes and their wonderful views. Yet amid the awe at the 'futuristic plans for sky-level living' there were, unusually in a national context, early hints of critical scepticism in the local press, where children in the tower blocks were called 'lonely prisoners of our modern architecture'.<sup>132</sup>

Eastwards extension of the estate across Park Road North and Trafford Road began with CPOs made in 1959-61. Plans for Stage 13, two enormous slab blocks, were approved in 1963, the blocks being built as Barwick House and Charles Hocking House in 1965-7, each 13 storeys high, with 99 and 96 flats respectively (figs 60, 61 and 62). These are slab blocks of more purely Corbusian form than those essayed locally in the 1950s, also originally having had open ground floors. In their severe purity they represent what in contemporary discussion was termed a carnivorous approach as opposed to the herbivorous approach of Scandinavian-influenced Modernism. The slab-block form and Corbusian ethic had been explored by the LCC in the 1950s, from Bentham Road in Hackney (1952-4), where an 11-storey concrete block was



*Fig. 61 (above) - Charles Hocking House, 96 flats in 13 storeys, built 1965-7, with Blackmore and Kipling towers and Wodehouse Court to the right, view from the roof of Jerome Tower in 1967 with central London in the distance. Note the laundry on the balcony (Ealing Local History Centre).*

*Fig. 62 (right) - Barwick House from the west (English Heritage, 2004, D. Kendall).*



clearly inspired by Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation in Marseilles (1946-52), to the Loughborough Estate, Brixton (1952-4), and on, more famously, to Alton West (1954-8) (fig. 63). The form is rarely as tall as in these South Acton blocks, which partake mildly of the monumental effect of Alton West for being set on slightly sloping ground and having some feeling of amplitude in their setting.

These buildings followed the later tower blocks in their absolute north-south orientation, set without regard to the pre-existing lines of streets. This change of approach, which may date from as early as 1961, was an attempt to maximise light in the new dwellings, closely following Ministry advice.<sup>133</sup> It is also evident that the 'mixed development' approach had broken down in the pursuit of volume. There are no more enclosed courts, rather a shift



*Fig. 63 (below) - Slab blocks at Alton West, Roehampton, built 1954-8 by the London County Council (English Heritage, 1990).*

towards parallel ranks, the 'Zeilenbau' approach, if rather heavily compromised by the block of shops and maisonettes at Hardy Court. Densities were increasing, by virtue of the sheer size of the buildings, but the spaces between the blocks had also increased. Otherwise the attempt to increase light would have been defeated. Open space was anyway still regarded as a virtue in and of itself.<sup>134</sup> These changes, as much as changes in the elevational design and materials of the buildings, undermined whatever residual coherence there might have been in the continuing staged comprehensive redevelopment (figs 25 and 64). A glance at a map, even without a visit to the place, reveals that South Acton was rebuilt with a variety of approaches. Changing policies and fashions played a part in this, but it is, above all, a reflection of timescale. The 'comprehensive redevelopment' of South Acton took 30 years, so a jumble of layouts and styles is hardly surprising.

All the while South Acton was undergoing broader topographical change (fig. 64). The 20-acre (8 hectare) industrial estate to the south-west had been intended from the outset, but the need to juggle clearances around completions meant that the relevant CPOs were not made until 1958. Elsewhere the LCC had taken up a recommendation from the County of London Plan and redeveloped areas of small-scale industry with flatted factories, multi-storey blocks of lettable small manufacturing units. A three-storey flatted factory was built at 17-23 Stirling Road in 1965, but the letting of sites on the estate was slow, development being far from complete even in the 1970s, and continuing since. Poores of Acton moved from the High Street to their Colville Road premises only in 1991. The remains of the laundry industry largely moved on, though two large laundries with South Acton roots, Mayfair and Sunlight, did relocate and still continue to operate from bases on the industrial estate. Other local light industrial enterprises were also relocated, Chase Signs for example. Many local jobs having been lost, with mobility and transport links having improved, the industrial estate, occasionally alternatively known as Rowley's Industrial Estate or the South Acton Trading Estate, has not had intimate links with the neighbouring housing. Since the 1960s, and increasingly, those working on the estate have not necessarily lived in South Acton, and relatively few of those living in South Acton have worked on the estate.<sup>135</sup>

As the new blocks of housing gradually took shape cars, parking, garages and roads gradually became more and more problematic. In the 1950s it had not been anticipated that council house tenants would own cars, and little provision was made on the Hanbury Estate. It came as a shock to many, in Acton and beyond, when the Parker Morris report of 1961 recommended that a garage or parking space should be provided for every dwelling. In the same year Acton Council minuted the understated observation that 'Some difficulty is likely to arise over the provision of adequate car parking facilities on the estate'.<sup>136</sup> Attempts to keep up were made with spaces for cars and garages north of Jerome Tower and east of Bennett Court, but provision always lagged behind demand. In 1964 there were only 16 garages for 361 dwellings south of Bollo Bridge Road. This was clearly insufficient, but it was thought likely to be some years yet before demand did approach the Parker Morris standard.<sup>137</sup>

Attitudes to roads were, of course, not unrelated to the impact of cars. Planning orthodoxy in the late 1950s was to reduce roads around houses and so to separate vehicles from pedestrians.<sup>138</sup> The planning of Charles Hocking and Barwick Houses and Hardy Court in 1962-3 provided for the stopping up of the south sections of Trafford Road and Park Road North. The implementation of this was altered by a scheme of 1965 that was carried forward in 1968, 'to separate vehicles and pedestrians for the sake of safety and amenity', effectively shutting down the heart of the estate to vehicles through the pedestrianisation of Park Road North at both ends, Trafford Road at its north end, and the junction of Osborne Road and Park Road North. These measures reflected the influence of Colin Buchanan's report, *Traffic in Towns*, published in 1963, the principal emphasis of which was safety, 'To be *safe*, to feel safe at all times, to have no serious anxiety that husbands, wives or children will be involved in a traffic accident, are surely pre-requisites for civilised life'.<sup>139</sup> The full consequences were not foreseen. Already in

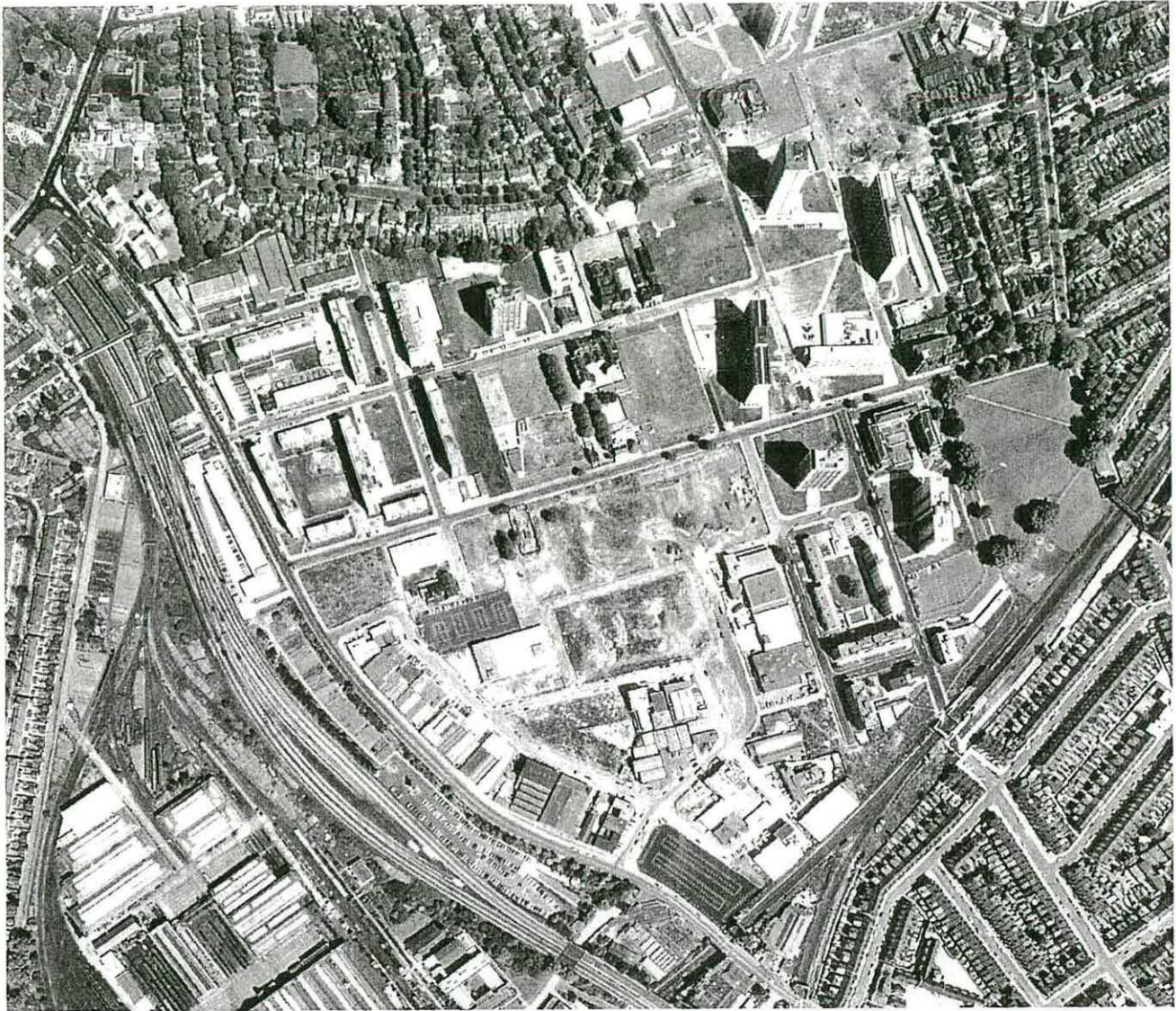


Fig. 64 - South Acton from the air in 1971 (English Heritage, National Monuments Record).

1973 a tenant commented 'Before the council in their wisdom blocked Park Road North up the law was able to cruise round the estate keeping the vandals in check, but since closing us off we seldom see a police car except when called by a neighbour.'<sup>140</sup>

Local government reorganisation in 1965 did not have a great impact on the redevelopment of South Acton. Clearly, the formation of the London Borough of Ealing meant some loss of identity for Acton and Actonians, but it was a change that was accepted at the time without institutional resistance. Housing policy was continuous, and there was no question but that the redevelopment of South Acton should be completed, though the other parts of the new borough, old Ealing and Southall, had not had vigorous housebuilding traditions. There was no real break in the South Acton programme, things simply carrying on, with the transition overseen by the Ministry. In the longer run the administration of a larger authority meant yet greater bureaucratisation of the housebuilding process, with fragmentation and committee-ification of responsibilities, slowing things down and reducing the agency of strong individuals.<sup>141</sup>

There were some significant changes of personnel, though Councillor Vinson shifted from having chaired Acton's Plans Sub-Committee to being the Chair of Ealing's Housing Committee. Stanley Slight had retired in November 1964, and his architectural responsibilities were transferred to Thomas Norman l'Anson, the London Borough of Ealing's first Borough Architect, who managed four architectural design teams, two of which dealt with housing. In the early

1960s l'Anson had been Chief Architect to Willesden Borough Council, a highly successful housebuilding authority that had been forcefully led by Reginald Freeson. It is not known whether l'Anson was a descendant of the notable Victorian architect Edward l'Anson (1812-1888), whose son was also an architect, but the surname is not a common one. Donald F. Johnson, who had been Slight's deputy for some years, succeeding him briefly, stayed on in Ealing until 1967 as an assistant to H. D. Peake, the Borough Engineer and Surveyor.<sup>142</sup>

Testing the water in 1965 the Hanbury Estate Tenants' Association, chaired by George Hearnden, threatened but drew back from 'war' with Ealing Council. It continued to press for improved maintenance, cleanliness, a permanent purpose-built community centre, more garages, and parking restrictions on roads. The Association also urged the naming of blocks 'to help postmen and ambulance drivers'.<sup>143</sup> This idea came from tenants, but it was Vinson and l'Anson who were directed by the Council to select names for the blocks from among late-19<sup>th</sup>- and early-20<sup>th</sup>-century authors. At the same time it was decided that two as yet incomplete blocks should be named after the late Charles Hocking (1886-1965), the former Acton Borough Librarian, and Alderman Barwick, then (unusually in this context) still alive.<sup>144</sup> The naming of the blocks and the abandonment of street addresses was thus more or less coincident with, as if consequent on, the completion of the first blocks that paid no heed to street frontage.

A financial squeeze and its architectural consequences had hit the building programme in 1964 when tenders for Bennett Court all came in too high. The contract had to be re-advertised, Bennett Court and Webb Court together being built for £197,000 when original estimates had been about £132,000. Resultant paring is evident, Webb Court being a crudely debased version of the Hanbury Estate slab-block type of the later 1950s (fig. 65). Similarly, the openwork concrete-block 'pattern' over the entrance to Bennett Court represents a falling off in the quality of ornamentation. These two blocks shared a lift and a heating system, housed in a linking tower, behind which was the meeting room that was the estate's first such purpose-built space (see above).<sup>145</sup> In October 1965 an anonymous South Acton resident wrote, 'To see a sheer waste of ratepayers' money you have to watch the painters on the outside of the council flats in Vincent Road. They are putting one coat of paint onto seven years of dust and grime. No cleaning down first. In a few months a row of old houses 50 yards away will be pulled down creating dust. Why paint now?' To this J. E. Verrinder, Chief Convenor of the National Federation of Building Trade Operatives for the London Borough of Ealing, responded that the council



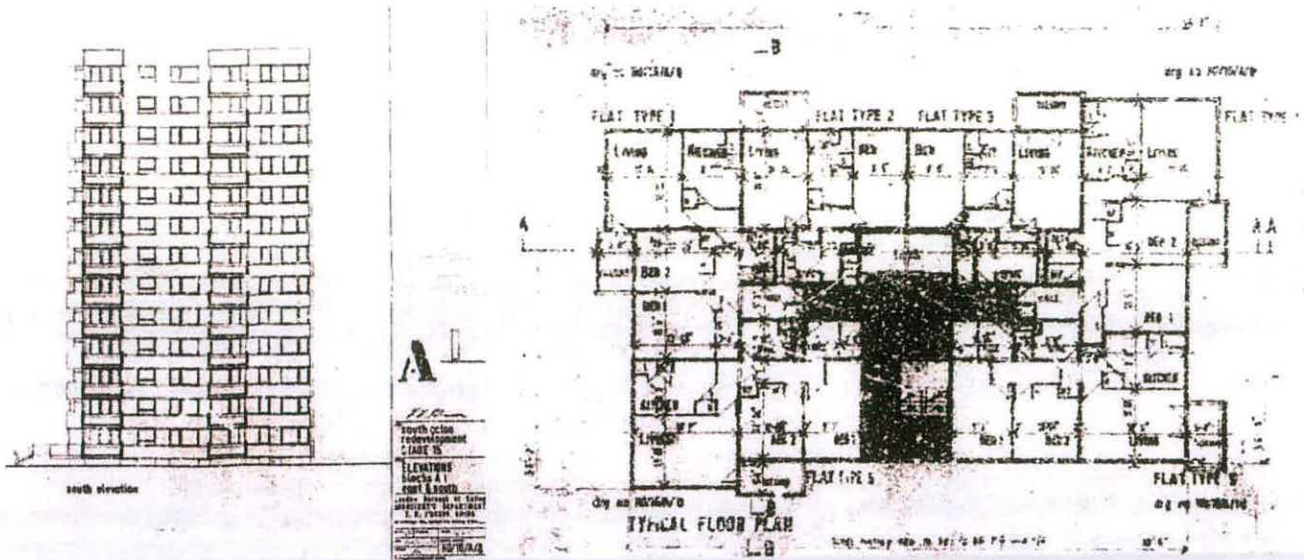
*Fig. 65 - Webb Court (above), Bollo Lane, and the entrance to Bennett Court, Enfield Road, both built 1964-6 (English Heritage, 2004).*

workers were 'unjustified villains' because the work was 'not being carried out by the Council's building maintenance staff, but is let out to contractors, the lowest tender gets the job. The borough architects department feel that their own staff, although they are good mechanics, would be too dear, so their policy is to give as much work as possible to contractors.'<sup>146</sup>

Inflation meant that cost cutting became general in 1967 when public housing budgets saw huge cuts. The Ministry introduced cost controls (known as yardsticks) for any housing where subsidy was payable, imposing cost ceilings on a sliding scale based on density and occupancy, separate elements being priced centrally. This was a further shift towards central control and standardisation, speeding a decline in the quality of council housing, and aggravating existing maintenance problems. Industrialised methods or system building were not adopted in South Acton, but Ealing did approve adoption of the London Housing Consortium's standard room height, 7ft 10in., only an inch more than that being built in South Acton through traditional methods. Parker Morris standards were made mandatory nationally from 1969, though Ealing was anyway trying to apply them. The squeezing of these space standards into the 'yardstick' constraints left architects with little room for manoeuvre. Minima became maxima. 'Yardsticks' favoured lower buildings and so tended to enforce the end of high-rise building. It is important to note that they were introduced before the famously symbolic end of high-rise building, the collapse at Ronan Point in May 1968.<sup>147</sup>

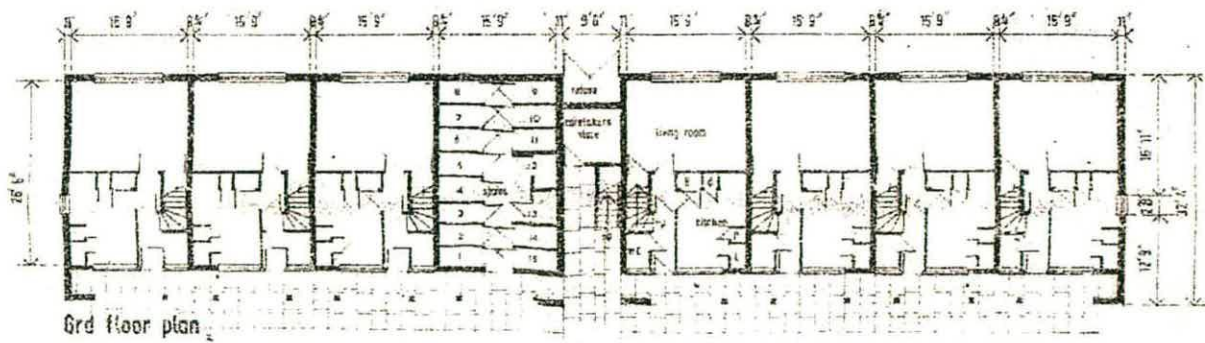
The redevelopment programme lumbered on to Stages 15 and 16 (six blocks named after and now known as castles), and the long envisaged move north towards Avenue Road. Compulsory purchase had been initiated by Acton Borough Council in 1963-4, but it was late 1965 before Ealing and l'Anson drew up plans for Stage 15, initially proposing two 12-storey towers, with two 4-storey blocks, and a block of dwellings for the elderly, to provide 188 homes. These plans were twice revised in 1966 to produce 280 homes, most in three 13-storey towers, and to cut down on costs. Corfe, Harlech and Beaumaris Towers, and Pevensey, Glamis and Arundel Courts were built in 1968-71 (figs 64, 66, 67 and 85). The entirely reinforced-concrete towers are relatively squat compared to their predecessors, but they are of a type that had been around for a long time, harking back to the LCC, particularly the Alton East type as it was developed at the Fitzhugh or Trinity Road Estate in Wandsworth in 1953-5. Still these towers were traditionally built, that is not to systems, somewhat against the grain for their time; in 1969 industrialized or system building accounted for 78% of all British high-rise.<sup>148</sup> The dark-brick low-rise maisonettes of Glamis and Pevensey Courts were built under the same contract, such mixed contracts being typical, though the contrast in both materials and scale within the single contract is striking. This contrast has perhaps grown over time, through differences in the way the materials have worn and been perceived, as well as differences in how the flats and maisonettes have been inhabited and altered. The low-rise blocks have clearly aged more successfully. The inclusion of a block of 20 flats for the elderly (Arundel House) was significant because Keith Joseph as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing had criticised Acton in 1961 for failing to provide appropriate housing for the elderly. This first move to meet this criticism came relatively late, but it was followed through in succeeding phases of redevelopment into the 1970s, in buildings that are generally outwardly indistinguishable from the rest of the developments of which they form parts, excepting in terms of height.<sup>149</sup>

Plans for Stage 16 were considered in 1968 and again in July 1969, medium or high rise being unavoidable simply because of the cost of the land. A 12-storey option was rejected, heights being kept down to seven storeys in two slab blocks of 54 flats each, along with a block of 40 flats for the elderly, again architecturally integrated. Ludlow, Carisbrooke and Pembroke Courts were built in 1971-2 (fig. 68). Despite the pressures densities were not significantly more than those recommended by Abercrombie for 'inner suburban' developments more than twenty years previously, coming out at 138ppa (345 persons/hectare), and two-bedroom flats here are relatively spacious at 750 sq ft (67 sq m). However, the rest of the estate was less dense and these are perhaps its least visually satisfying buildings. Cost cutting is evident in the use of



*Fig. 66 - The high-rise 'castles', Corfe, Harlech and Beaumaris towers, built 1968-71 (English Heritage, 2004, D. Kendall), with London Borough of Ealing contract drawings (above) (London Borough of Ealing).*

poor-quality Fletton bricks, in the utter plain-ness of elevations, and in the absence of balconies, though windows are large. The integration of garages into the lower storeys of the slab blocks is typical of work of this date, the need to provide for cars without losing open space driving one last nail into the coffin of Corbusian form. A large residue of land north of these buildings, what has become known as the 'Hill Park' was left open, with an artificial mound, a path to Church Road and, in due course, a small playground. This loose landscaping was a far cry from the elaborate laying out of 'The Green' of about fifteen years earlier.

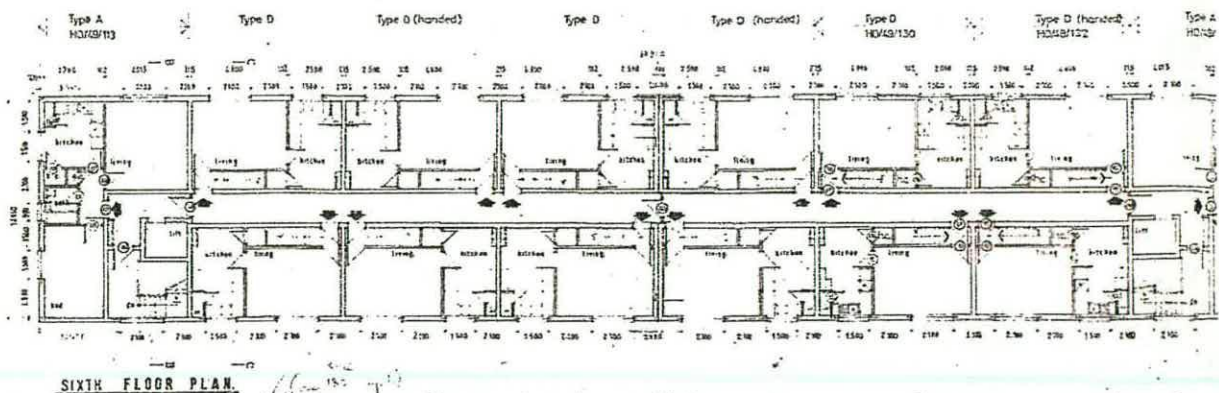


Grd floor plan



Fig. 67 - The low-rise 'castles' (above and left), also built 1968-71, showing Glamis Court from the rear (English Heritage, 2004), with London Borough of Ealing ground-floor plan (London Borough of Ealing).

Fig. 68 - Ludlow Court (right), with Carisbrooke Court beyond, 54 flats each, built 1971-2 (English Heritage, 2004), with typical floor plan (below) (London Borough of Ealing).



SIXTH FLOOR PLAN



## Phase II: South Acton spreads

In 1966 the Labour Government asked local authorities to review town-centre plans and priorities for urban renewal. When the results of this review were announced a year later the continuing redevelopment of South Acton emerged as one of Greater London's three biggest projects. In the interval Ealing had decided to abide with early intentions by extending the South Acton Comprehensive Development Area northwards across Avenue Road as 'South Acton Phase II', sometimes alternatively known as the 'South Acton Extension'. This was an important shift, in nomenclature as well as topographically. The area north of Avenue Road had not heretofore been thought to be part of South Acton. It had never had comparable poverty and its houses and gardens were larger, having been developed earlier and on more optimistic lines than in areas further south (see above). The CPOs that involved the displacement of 375 more families and 13 factories began to be issued in 1967, presaging the demolition of a number of substantial villas of the 1860s, some on the south side of Avenue Road having already gone for Stage 15. On the north side there were a number of long gardens extending back to the culverted Stamford Brook. There was resistance to this clearance, a 'sit-in' taking place at 106 Avenue Road in 1969, but the demolitions were carried through by 1971.<sup>150</sup> The extension of South Acton northwards, to an area that had been projected to be a park in 1951, was thought necessary 16 years later 'if [the] process of re-housing, demolition, and rebuilding in the area were to continue in a balanced manner.'<sup>151</sup> Juggling played a part, but densities also mattered; it would have been important simply 'to get the numbers up'.<sup>152</sup>

l'Anson's first scheme for the Phase II area was submitted in January 1968, envisaging 562 homes and including two 15-storey tower blocks. Six months later, and two months after Ronan Point, l'Anson had tickled the plans up to 575 dwellings, reporting that 'in future it would rarely be necessary to build over four storeys'.<sup>153</sup> He was taken up on this sooner than he must have expected as a year later, in July 1969, he presented a wholly revised scheme for only 282 homes, all in blocks of four storeys or less save for two six-storey blocks. By the end of that year he was able to submit an estimate of £1,397,400 for 292 homes. Further revision in 1970 took the scheme back up to 336 dwellings in blocks of three to seven storeys (fig. 73). But there was pressure on the numbers, forcing heights to creep back up to achieve the requisite densities in the limited space. The plans were not finally settled until July 1971 when the project came out at 405 dwellings, 193 flats in three 11-storey towers (called blocks rather than towers), and 175 more flats and 37 elderly 'units' in twenty three- and four-storey blocks, with an overall density of 40 dwellings or 116 rooms/acre (99 and 290/hectare).<sup>154</sup>

More than had previously been the case in Acton design and provision were being channelled by external dictates as to density. The shift to low rise was evidently the problem. The densities are in line with those of the whole redevelopment area, which, housing about 5000 people in 2000 dwellings on 50 acres (20 hectares), are also much the same as those of South Acton before redevelopment started; around 1950 there were about 100ppa in the 'overcrowded slums'. South Acton as a whole never came close to Abercrombie's 136ppa for an 'inner suburban' area, adhering to his lower ideal of 100ppa that allowed for generous open space, as was also realised at Roehampton. Post-war redevelopment in South Acton was not about increasing density. The trade off was open space for high living, and in these terms it was successfully and locally seen through until outside aegis enforced change in the 1970s. Housing policy was always politically driven, but implementation was decreasingly local or 'vernacular'.<sup>155</sup> Nevertheless, the shift to low-rise housing was publicly presented in the mid 1970s as a response to demands for public 'participation', and as a 'new vernacular'. This was grudging, as 'participation' was blamed for making projects take longer to realize; in any case, as a leading local authority architect tartly observed, 'the problem of consultation with the occupier seems to be insuperable since in most cases he is not and cannot be identified until the housing is virtually complete'.<sup>156</sup>

In 1973 tenders for building Phase II came in well above the 'yardsticks', but the Department of the Environment granted Ealing special dispensation to go ahead, and the main contract went to William Sindall Construction Ltd in 1974. Ealing's project architect was J. Gauci, and the complex was gradually completed in 1979, inflation having substantially raised the costs, and slowed progress, as was the case for most contemporary schemes, many of which had to be dragged to completion (fig. 69). Labour problems were a further cause of delay. Set diagonally to Avenue Road the blocks were grouped around the south end of Church Road, and Cheltenham Place, an extension of a pre-existing cul de sac off Mill Hill Terrace, also facing new cul de sacs, named Clandon, Belgrave and Ragley Close, and Buckland Walk. Housing for the elderly was in a block designated Harleyford Manor, near the slightly earlier and architecturally distinct Sycamore Lodge, a residential home. The three towers were called Arlington, Barrington and Frampton Courts, all the new names coming from 'an approved list of names of historic houses, to be used as street-names of new developments' that had no local significance.<sup>157</sup>



*Fig. 69 - The building of 'Phase II' or the 'South Acton Extension' in 1978, showing Frampton Court (the tower block) and adjoining closes on the north side of Avenue Road (Ealing Local History Centre).*

The South Acton estate north of Avenue Road soon came to be known as the red-brick area (figs 70 and 75). The concrete-framed buildings are all outwardly clad in red brick, distinguishing them sharply from the earlier concrete, and even earlier stock brick. The brick is a strong red, its use reflecting the turn away from Modernism in the 1970s through a revival of traditional materials for an 'urban neo-vernacular' style. The towers are plain, lacking balconies, perhaps simply to save on costs. They are made up entirely of one-bedroom flats, originally aimed at older couples rather than families. Six flats on each floor are laid out on a tripartite T plan, each arm having two flats, all grouped around the circulation core. The low-rise blocks of two-, three- and four-bedroom maisonettes have more complex massing, and a great variety of rectilinear layouts, stepping roof lines and heavily articulated elevations, with much shallow recession and projection. There is raised walkway access from the cul de sacs and from concrete decks or



*Fig. 70 - The 'red-brick' area ('Phase II'), built 1974-9, views to Frampton Court, showing the mix of low- and high-rise, with large windows and private gardens, entrances and circulation being on raised decks and walkways (English Heritage, 2004, D. Kendall).*



squares, on which there are brick pram and bin stores, all standing over garages, further and again typical internalisation of the parking/car problem. The tight planning was not simply a function of density, but very much part of a contemporary ethos that valued complexity of space, and the picturesque opportunities for exploration and discovery that intricate architecture can offer. The abandonment of landscaped 'mixed development' for concrete decks was in part a reaction to the failure that vandalism of planted areas represented. Instead there are private gardens, some on roofs. The concrete decks originally had children's play equipment. Parker Morris standards notwithstanding the accommodation in the red-brick area is said, perhaps unfairly, to be smaller than that in the earlier blocks. The fenestration is generous, the well-lit interiors originally having had underfloor gas central heating, and the gardens were a great attraction. The 'little palace' days had not entirely passed. The move into the 'red brick' in the late 1970s was largely welcomed, a few new residents having previously still lacked indoor baths and toilets.<sup>158</sup> However, drawbacks to the architectural approach embodied here had already begun to gain attention in the early 1970s (see below), and problems with ground water in basements, perhaps associated with the underlying brook, also soon emerged.<sup>159</sup>

This development was entirely typical of its time. A wave of comparable developments followed the lead of Westminster's Lillington Gardens Estate of 1964-72, designed by Darbourne and Darke. This most influential low-rise model is predominantly brown-brick faced, with complex articulations of its surfaces for visual effect. Despite high density (210ppa) it managed to keep ample space for landscaping, perhaps because Westminster City Council could, exceptionally, afford not to build to 'yardsticks'. Darbourne and Darke followed up Lillington Gardens with the darker brown-brick Marquess Estate in Canonbury of 1966-76 for Islington Borough Council. Another large and very high-density complex, these 'irregular ziggurats over garaging' proved rather less successful; a 'nightmare to manage' the estate has had its centre regenerated.<sup>160</sup>



*Fig. 71 - The Beaconsfield Estate, off Acton Lane, built 1976-9 for the Borough of Ealing (English Heritage, 2004).*

Again in Islington, Andrews, Sherlock and Partners built housing at Popham Street in 1970-4 that has 135ppa without rising above three storeys.<sup>161</sup> Of more local relevance, Darbourne and Darke also designed GLC housing in White City (south of South Africa Road on what had been the St Paul's School site) built in 1975-8 in regular four-storey brown-brick terraces, analogous to South Acton's 'red-brick' area in built form, but more closely following a conventional street pattern. Developments in South Acton continued to mirror the practice of the lead London authority, though, as ever, without direct involvement on the part of the larger body.<sup>162</sup> Elsewhere in Acton Ealing brought in outside architects for other housing projects. The Beaconsfield Estate (1976-9), 128 flats at the south end of Acton Lane designed by Hutchison, Locke and Monk, is in some respects analogous to the red-brick parts of South Acton, though with a more straightforward layout with front doors on streets that has better stood the test of time (fig. 71). Even closer to hand the Neville Close development of 1977-9 appears to have learned a similar lesson, having rectilinear coherence in a softer yellow-brick 'neo-vernacular' idiom (fig. 72).



*Fig. 72 - Neville Close, Acton Lane, built 1977-9 for the Borough of Ealing (English Heritage, 2004).*

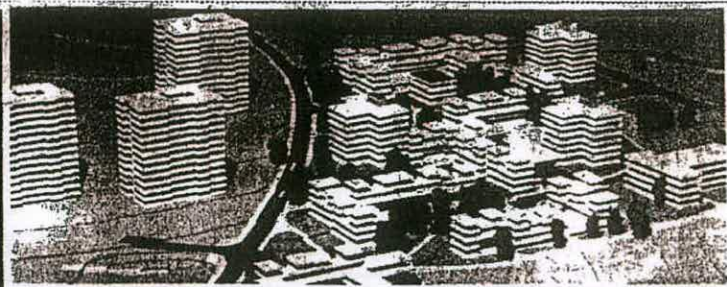
## Housing received: perceptions, occupancy and alterations into the 1990s

In contrast to all the effort that went into its design, little thought was given to what the management of council housing would involve.<sup>163</sup> The implicit contract with the future that the great post-war building programme had made was that the results of its housing crusade, its investment, would be appreciated and nurtured. But social and housing policies changed and this did not happen. Underlying this, the society in which the new homes were lived was different to that for which they had been built. 'All the assumptions of housing policy in the past have depended upon an image of grateful recipients who pay the rent but don't dream of making their own imprint'.<sup>164</sup> Following such assumptions, architectural histories of council housing have focussed on the buildings as designed and provided, rarely considering the buildings as occupied and altered, though use and alteration speak as much of underlying social phenomena as does original form. Perceptions have changed. Through the 1950s and '60s the task was seen as the simple 'provision' of housing for people who were regarded as essentially passive recipients. In the 1970s council tenants came gradually to be perceived as consumers, paying rent and rates in return for services. It grew increasingly evident that the local authorities that had been the instrument of provision were, being political entities, less than ideal as landlords. Responsibilities have become diffuse, whether sought or pushed away, from either side. The degree to which alterations to council housing might be understood as centrally imposed (provided), or locally generated as genuinely vernacular architecture remains a largely unexplored subject.

The turning tide of perceptions was evident in 1971 when James Utting from Thames Polytechnic's Department of Architecture initiated a survey of South Acton's 'tenants in the tower blocks regarding their feelings towards their residential surroundings', judging that 'The houses which used to stand where the tower blocks have been built, could – in our opinion - have been renovated and restored'.<sup>165</sup> Such polemic became political in 1973 when Sir George Young, then representing Ealing on the GLC (and to become MP for Acton from 1974 to 1997), sponsored a survey. Only just over 200 of about 1500 tenants responded, but of those who did 90% said that building tower blocks ('concrete monstrosities') was a big mistake. Young turned the successfully realised intentions of the redevelopment into criticism, observing 'The overall density is the same as normal houses, if you take into account the open space around each block.' The *Acton Gazette* splashed the headline 'The Awful Truth About Life in Acton's Tower Blocks – It's sheer misery, say tenants in shock survey'.<sup>166</sup> In 1974 Mrs Iris Fogelberg, the wife of the caretaker of Barwick House, said 'The problem with South Acton now is that the wonderful old friendship has gone. It couldn't have been kept, because when the council pulled down all the old houses, they had to build upwards on the space, to house the people. When that happened, you lost contact with your old next-door neighbours, the old pubs and shops disappeared, and everything changed. But what changed it all even more was that other people came to live in South Acton – people who weren't born and bred here, and weren't part of the community. That split it all up again and now there is very little community spirit'.<sup>167</sup>

In response to Young's survey the Labour ward councillor Glen Barnham acknowledged that South Acton was suffering from a 'lack of action over maintenance and repairs, . . . sluggish work by contractors, faulty lifts, landscaping problems, tenant behaviour problems and lack of play facilities. . . This is a never-ending task'.<sup>168</sup> There were gradual changes to improve the way the tall buildings were inhabited. In 1972 disabled access to Jerome Tower had been created, and 'vandal-proof' stainless-steel lifts were installed in Grahame, Meredith and Conrad Towers in 1975. Then in 1977 all families with young children living on the upper storeys of tower blocks were transferred to lower-level housing. But finding money for adequate expenditure on maintenance and management was increasingly difficult, it being a cruel irony for much of the nation's council housing that heavy maintenance costs began to kick in heavily in the 1970s just when there was a shift away from large-scale public investment. Barnham led a vigorous clean-

**Caretakers' wives tell of threats, filth and terrorism**



It all started off as a dream estate — even would-be tenants were impressed by this early model of proposed flats for the site in South Acton. The reality bears no resemblance to the dream. What happened?

## **It's hell — they want to get out**

*Fig. 73 - Stigmatisation of the South Acton Estate in The Acton Gazette in 1974, also illustrating a model of a scheme from c. 1970 for the 'South Acton Extension' across Avenue Road.*

up campaign in 1977, in which year government restrictions on public spending narrowed the scope for substantial refurbishment or other modernisation of public housing.<sup>169</sup>

Negative publicity was influential. An onslaught of criticism regarding the lack of facilities and poor living conditions in 1973-4 established South Acton's reputation as a 'sink estate' (fig. 73). But this reputation was largely externally imposed, and not recognisable to some who knew and lived in South Acton. In 1975 the Met's local Chief Inspector, Ronald Jordan, said 'The South Acton Estate is no worse nor better than any other place in London where the young people have not enough to do, but unfortunately it has been given a very bad name.'<sup>170</sup> Elizabeth Halpin of Anstey Court agreed, 'Why single out South Acton as if we have turned into some sort of a ghetto? It doesn't help to keep knocking one particular area and does tend to destroy any civic pride we may have.'<sup>171</sup>

Mrs Fogelberg's nostalgic testimony also needs to be looked at critically. It should first be recalled that the old houses had themselves been a locus of stigmatisation (see pp. 24 and 49). Through the transformations of the 1950s and 1960s people's neighbours did change, but, as has been argued in other historical contexts, density and permeability of spaces in housing tend to build solidarity and efface privacy.<sup>172</sup> Such conditions may well have helped to make neighbourhood life fundamental to identity in overcrowded pre-war South Acton, but the new domestic environments did not themselves necessarily atomise or alienate families. South Acton was, perhaps, in any case never understood by its residents as being a single 'community', but rather always as comprising a number of sub-, mini-, or micro-



*Fig. 74 - Shared indoor space in Harlech Tower, showing lifts serving alternate floors (English Heritage, 2004, D. Kendall).*

neighbourhoods. From the 1960s onwards these were in large measure separable into groups of buildings that reflected the phases of the post-war redevelopment. Deck access, as in the 'Three Sisters' (Grahame, Conrad and Meredith), fostered floor-by-floor communities, and the tower blocks also nurtured communality based either on shared common space on a single floor, or shared travel in lifts (fig. 74). The new buildings created mutually interdependent cells of people conscious of their common status. There has been enduring consciousness of South Acton as a place, but people have not lived in the

whole estate, sometimes perceiving their own immediate neighbourhood positively while viewing other localities negatively.<sup>173</sup>

The background of continuing social and ethnic change, Mrs Fogelberg's 'other people', is important. In Heathfield ward, about half of which is the South Acton Estate, the overall population declined by nearly a quarter between 1961 and 1976, from 16,730 to 12,885, with the proportion that were council tenants rising from 30% to 42% between 1971 and 1976, private renting declining from 46% to 21%. In 1966 only 1,055 (7%) of Heathfield ward's population were of Caribbean (680), Indian or African descent, which number rose to 2,125 (16%) in 1976, not far out of line with the equivalent statistic for London as a whole. The late 1960s and early 1970s saw a rapid change in South Acton's ethnic mix. In 1968 the minimum residence requirement for Ealing's housing list was reduced from five to two years, to help new immigrants. In the same year the National Front fielded a candidate in an Acton by-election, without success. Housing rules were again amended in 1975 to admit those with residential qualifications who were not British subjects. Then in 1977 the Homeless Persons' Act obliged local authorities to house others who had not previously been on their lists. The housing of single parents brought further stigmatisation.<sup>174</sup>

The variability of what can be meant by 'community' is a constant, from at least the late 1940s in South Acton. As elsewhere the word came to carry strong retrospective connotations, invoking something lost that was perceived as having been immutable and exclusive, built around common interests and experiences based in class and, often, race. There certainly were disruptions to community identities, and architecture can be understood as an accomplice in these, but South Acton has been no different to the rest of London where the essential experience of immigration over the long run (centuries) has been absorption and assimilation, as for the Irish in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, so for others in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. There has been a significant turnover rate in South Acton's population since the 1960s, but the impact of this, beyond the way it fed negative publicity, is easily exaggerated. There has always been a larger unchanging base to provide continuity, and it is often forgotten that staying put can be a positive, if silent, decision. For many in South Acton social and racial mix has been a source of security and safety rather than a threat: 'I've never felt threatened . . . if you're living in it you don't see it that way. You see it as your neighbours, friends . . . you don't see it as a place of danger . . . [it is] perceived in a horrible way by other people who don't live here.'<sup>175</sup> Looking back across the later decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, South Acton has had 'phases of different countries coming in. Every time a new country starts sending their people in the animosity changes to the next race.'<sup>176</sup>

Over the long run South Acton has transformed itself to become a successfully mixed community, but along the way there has been animosity. By 1975 racist graffiti, harassment, assaults and arson in South Acton had increased to the point that protective vigilante patrols had to be organised. A teenage gang known as SAM (South Acton Mafia) attacked black and 'foreign' people, and rising tensions between 'well over 100' teenagers in July 1977 led to arrests when a milk crate full of petrol bombs was discovered.<sup>177</sup> An Acton branch of the Anti Nazi League was formed, organising the painting out of racist slogans, resistance to the National Front and other action in South Acton. In 1979 the Ealing Community Relations Council took on the rent of the community centre with a view to building up 'togetherness' on the estate.<sup>178</sup>

Having become the local MP George Young followed up his earlier survey in 1977 by commissioning a report on South Acton from Simon Morris, a student member of the Tory Reform Group. This chronicled the extent of crime, vandalism, poor maintenance, anti-social noise and racial problems, though allegedly without interviewing either black tenants or council officers. The area's shopping parades were assessed as inadequate, already being dominated by wholesalers, with a carpet shop occupying three units. Though 'the flats are well fitted-out even by current standards' Morris recommended reducing the density. He concluded: 'The root



Fig. 75 - Circulation spaces in the 'red-brick' area  
(English Heritage, 2004, D. Kendall, above right and left).



cause of the estate's troubles appears to be that it is socially fluid, and does not form a community. The tower blocks do not possess the same social pattern or cohesion as the streets they replaced. The tenants do not feel responsible for the public areas, or what happens there, and those living on different floors are often strangers to each other. A family does not have its "own" area of road for the children to play in, and be watched over.<sup>179</sup> This report reflects the influential work of Oscar Newman, whose *Defensible Space: People and Design in the Violent City* was published in 1972. His study of cities in the USA was the first to point to communal and 'isolated' open space and entrances dissociated from streets as being the sources of problems in public housing.

Essentially he blamed poor architectural design for increases in criminal activity. Just as Newman's ideas were emerging South Acton's Phase II was being planned as an intricate array of highly impermeable and 'indefensible' spaces (figs 70 and 75). It is debatable whether architecture actually does cause crime, and South Acton's low-rise 1970s housing has remained relatively popular; people generally do prefer living close to the ground. Compared to tower blocks low-rise housing requires less management, and so survives a low-management regime better. However, it has come to be widely accepted that the 'red-brick' area is at least inconvenient, a warren through which there is confusion about what is public space and what private. 'There are many unsatisfactory features about the red brick, it is an almost impenetrable maze to those unfamiliar with it.'<sup>180</sup> It has also become conventional wisdom, despite growing evidence to the contrary, that flats and tower blocks themselves cause alienation. Viewed from the outside 'The community doesn't exist any more . . . Before when you got little communities and houses and so forth everybody knew each other. They used to be out in it, but with the flats there's hardly anybody saying anything there. The community's not there.'<sup>181</sup>

The nurturing of community had not been thought part of the local-authority housing function, and it was a role only reluctantly and gradually adopted. The problems of 'community building' had already become starkly evident in South Acton in the 1960s (see above), and earlier than that elsewhere in large inter-war developments. But the warnings from the pulpit had not been heeded. While new forms of community identity may have been emergent, much of what did bind people was adversarial, in part a reaction against external perceptions, those who participated in tenants' associations finding common purpose in disdain for the landlord. Ghettoisation happened in many estates, becoming a vicious circle whereby poverty led to

abandonment by the market, a gradual loss of shops worsening and mirroring the absence of other amenities.

Yet substantial efforts at improvement were made in South Acton in the 1970s. At the heart of the estate Berrymede Infant School and Heathfield Nursery School were built, and landscaping work nearby in 1971-2, just west of Charles Hocking House, included a grove of 150 trees. The circular court to the west of Hardy Court was laid out with radiating paving and a playground at its centre. A more significant initiative to help give the estate a centre was the commitment at last to build a community centre in 1972, there still being nothing more than the meeting room of 1966 behind Webb and Bennett courts. This was built in 1974-5 immediately north of Charles Hocking House. When it opened, the moribund Hanbury Tenants' Association was reformed as an 'Action Group', the South Acton Tenants' Association. However, this quickly declined and there were problems establishing a framework for the use of and responsibility for the community centre, tenants having difficulty raising the rent for the premises. The windows were broken within six months of its opening, and after seven break-ins and a fire over 18 months the centre had to close. It did re-open after alterations in 1979-80 (see below), then being named the Oak Tree Community Centre, which name derives from Acton's arms, Acton meaning oak farm, but there was further fire damage and repair in 1982-3. Fittingly, the Centre's small meeting room was named after Councillor Barnham. Among other uses the Centre came to be used for worship by a range of Christian denominations. Other social provision arrived at the north and south ends of the estate. Following clearances for Phase II, the Church Road Social Centre (Michael Flanders Centre) and the Acton British Legion Clubhouse (latterly used as the Hawkesbrook Social Club) went up on Church Road in the early 1970s (fig. 76), as did Sycamore Lodge. Opposite these a new health centre followed in 1975-8, in the same red-brick idiom as the contemporary Phase II housing, amid which No. 2 Cheltenham Place was built as a children's home. To the south a training centre for the disabled was built at the centre of the industrial estate, and the allotments alongside the railway were reformed and extended in 1973 as 'leisure gardens', part of a wider landscaping scheme (fig. 77).<sup>182</sup>



Fig. 76 - The Acton British Legion Clubhouse, Church Road, built in the early 1970s, with a market stall (compare fig. 4) (English Heritage, 2004, D. Kendall).



Fig. 77 - Allotments to the south of Wodehouse Court (English Heritage, 2004, D. Kendall).

There were other attempts to generate 'community'. In line with Oscar Newman's recommendations controlled entry systems were installed from 1976 onwards, not just to protect against vandals, but also because it was felt it would help build community spirit. However, resources for management were squeezed and the loss of resident caretakers in the late 1970s was an important shift that tended to undermine cohesion. An attempt in 1977 to set up a tenants' management co-operative in the newly completed flats at 81-139 Church Road





Fig. 78 - Outward personalisation of homes, through the naming of houses, on Osborne Road, and floral display, in the 'red-brick' area (English Heritage, 2004).

had foundered by 1979.<sup>183</sup> The stuttering early life of the community centre further indicates that there was not a significant shift away from the passivity of the 'recipient' mode among South Acton's tenants in the 1970s. The tenant activism of the early 1960s had not been sustained, and there was no meeting of minds between the tenants and the council over shared responsibilities for housing. When local activism revived in the late 1970s its focus was on social transformations, that is racial conflict, rather than on housing conditions as such. The absence of any single identity forestalled collective engagement and further impeded what narrow opportunities there were for natural or vernacular architectural evolution. The Housing Act of 1980 introduced 'Right to Buy' legislation. Response to this in South Acton was limited, and disproportionately, though typically, concentrated in the estate's few rows of houses. This enabled some architectural personalisation, 'removing the stigmata of council housing'.<sup>184</sup> By 1999 207 (12%) of the South Acton Estate's 1,799 dwellings were leasehold.<sup>185</sup> The personalisation of space, of course, largely happens indoors, effectively beyond the scope of this survey, but its external manifestations are by no means restricted to the homes of leaseholders, ranging elsewhere from elaborate floral displays (fig. 78) to prominently draped flags of St George.

The dramatic change in Britain's political climate in 1979 brought huge cuts to housebuilding programmes, and Parker Morris standards were abandoned in 1981. With the exception of a pair of bungalows for the elderly near Arundel Court, and two short rows of small houses for disabled tenants on Church Road and Telfer Close (fig. 79), Ealing built no further new housing in South Acton, though a small number of extra flats for the elderly and disabled were created by



Fig. 79 - 1-6 Telfer Close, six houses for disabled tenants, built c. 1990 for the London Borough of Ealing (English Heritage, 2004).

the infilling of previously open ground floors through the 1980s. South of the railway line Garden Court was built for the 'very frail elderly', on a site behind Rothschild Road that had been occupied by a primary school. Council housing became social housing as the initiative passed to what had been the 'voluntary' sector, housing associations and others. By 1980 most new housebuilding in South Acton, as everywhere else, was being undertaken by private developers, through the gradual infilling and replacement of small industrial and other redundant buildings, including All Saints Church, replaced in the 1980s by the 39 flats that make up Sunninghill Court. Earlier examples of private speculations in the wider area include the extraordinary late 1960s above-the-



*Fig. 80 - 43-9 Gunnersbury Lane (left), flats oversailing a former petrol-station forecourt in a private speculation of the late 1960s, and Leythe Court (right), housing association flats of the late 1970s (English Heritage, 2004).*

petrol-station-forecourt flats at 43-9 Gunnersbury Lane, which have architectural similarities to the low-rise 'castle' blocks of 1968-71, and Leythe Court, a late 1970s housing association development, in the then prevailing red brick idiom (fig. 80).

Consultations by Ealing with NACRO (the National Association for the Care and Rehabilitation of Offenders) in 1979 led to the formation of the Acton Community Tenants Scheme, to devise collaborative community-based approaches to the reduction of vandalism. This can be related to the formation of the Land Use Research Unit in 1979, headed by Professor Alice Coleman of King's College, who constructed, in a British context, a new and polarising polemic based on Oscar Newman's work on 'defensible space'.<sup>186</sup> NACRO advised and monitored the ACT scheme and in 1980-2 a £2m 'facelift' improvement plan was implemented. This (again following Newman) included painting the 'castle' towers (Beaumaris, Corfe and Harlech) in colours chosen by a committee of residents, with alteration of the entrances from what had been open recessed spaces to secure enclosed foyers, built in brick, which by this date was generally perceived as a more attractive and therefore 'safer' material than despised concrete (fig. 81). The choice of NACRO as a partner had offended some residents, tending, as it did, to entrench perceptions of criminality. In 1982 Kenneth Campbell took a positive view, witnessing

*Fig. 81 - Entrance to Harlech Tower, built 1968-71, enclosed 1980-2, and further altered in 1989-90 and 2002-3 (English Heritage, 2004, D. Kendall).*



to changing attitudes and what was reported as 'a new sky rise dream': 'Before conditions were just deteriorating, you had graffiti and people sleeping on the stairs. With the entry phones all that has been stopped. And people are beginning to feel proud to live in the blocks. If they see things dropped on the floor they will stop and pick them up – there is now motivation to keep the place clean. . . . This place has been mismanaged and neglected. People should start looking at it and saying this estate is ours.'<sup>187</sup> A second phase of the NACRO project was carried through in 1982-5, with several million pounds more spent on repairs, entrance area and other environmental improvements. Through the 1980s many blocks had their windows replaced, which was generally necessary maintenance, and there was some replacement of problematic flat roofs. The task was, as Barnham had recognised, 'never ending'. In 1986 a Steering Committee was formed, tenants, councillors and council officers coming together 'to improve the quality of life on the Estate'.<sup>188</sup> This committee underwrote the formation of the South Acton Residents Associations' Federation in 1988 to develop and support tenant activism, in keeping with the spirit of the Housing Act of 1988 which introduced 'Tenants' Choice', a failed attempt to separate tenants from local authorities. The Housing Acts of 1988 and 1989 also aimed to establish housing associations as successors to local authorities as the prime instigators and managers of social housing. Attempts to transfer responsibility for the management of housing were becoming gradually more coercive. As government backed away from control of housing in the 1980s 'tenants were increasingly looked to by governments to take on the rescue and regeneration of their estates'.<sup>189</sup>

By 1991 74% of Heathfield ward's now numerically stable population of 12,400 defined themselves as white, 13% as black, and 7% south Asian; 39% of households were rented from the council (from 42% in 1976), 16% privately rented (from 21%), and 36% owner occupied (from 30%). The ward's population began to grow again in the 1990s, rising by 12% to 13,900 by 2001, still dividing as 74% white, 13% black and 7% south Asian. On the South Acton Estate itself in 2002, which then comprised 2,152 addresses or homes in 51 blocks of flats and maisonettes and 27 houses, only 46% of a population of about 5200 defined themselves as white, 26% as black (including 6% Somali) and 14% as south Asian.<sup>190</sup> This simplistic statistical breakdown disguises enormous ethnic and linguistic diversity: 'It is also very varied. There are so many different nationalities here anyway - many, many different nationalities. . . the wealth of nationalities is reflected in the schools and in the churches that people go to as well. . . newcomers to our neighbourhood will try to organise themselves into groups'.<sup>191</sup>

Refurbishment and small-scale adaptation of the built environment continued in the 1990s. In the 'red brick' many of the underground garages, a feature Coleman strongly deprecated as a gift to vandals, were sealed off in 1990. Steel canopies were erected to shelter entrances to Jerome and Kipling Towers in 1991-2, possibly reflecting perceptions as much as necessity in relation to the protection of approach routes (fig. 82). The 'Three Sisters' were brightly repainted and there was further re-landscaping of playgrounds, with some removal of garages. Jerome Tower, with perhaps the worst reputation of any block in South Acton, had its entrance area refitted c.2000 introducing a concierge to control access, an experiment that is said to be seen as having failed.<sup>192</sup>

The building of private and social housing flats in the wider area continued, ranging from a gated ('defensible' in Newman's terms) private development of the early 1980s at Cromwell Place, on the north side of the High Street, to flats over shops in Sidney Miller Court on Crown Street in 1989 for the Notting Hill Housing Trust, the replacement of one of the area's last laundries on Avenue Road with the Grange c.1990, and the rail-side blocks of Kingswood Terrace of the mid 1990s (fig. 83). The 12% increase in the area's population through the 1990s reflects the piecemeal infilling and replacement of small industrial premises with new housing, and higher densities. The *Buildings of England* could report in 1991 that 'Around Acton Lane something of the old character of the area remains, a haphazard muddle of low housing and backyard industry'.<sup>193</sup> This no longer seems true.



*Fig. 82 - Entrance to Jerome Tower, built 1962-3, disabled ramp added 1972, canopy added 1991-2 and further altered c.2000 (English Heritage, 2004).*



*Fig. 83 - The Grange, 114 Avenue Road (left), 17 flats on what had been a laundry site, and Kingswood Terrace (right), 20 flats in five rail-side blocks, both private developments of the 1990s (English Heritage, 2004).*

## REGENERATION

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The drive against local-authority dominance of social housing continued in the 1990s through a succession of central government initiatives. Councils were encouraged, even expected, to divest themselves of their housing stock, and in some places there were wholesale transfers to social landlords. The number of council houses in Greater London declined from 840,000 in 1984 to 500,000 in 2004, a statistic that motivated an exhibition called 'Whatever Happened to Council Housing?', mounted at the Museum of London through the summer of 2004. Such change imposed huge expectations on tenants, as regards self management, process and participation.

Against a background of population growth the New Labour Government and the newly formed Greater London Authority began from 2000 to seek to establish a framework for higher densities in London locations near town centres and with good transport. This had come to be seen not simply as a practical necessity, but also as a desirable means of achieving a better urban environment, higher densities being understood as bringing their own benefits in terms of community building. The London Plan suggests densities of up to 175 dwellings/hectare (70/acre) for such places, as compared to the 100 dwellings/hectare (40/acre) of South Acton as it was redeveloped in the post-war period. Further, there was new emphasis on the desirability of mixed tenure, to combat the perception of council estates as separated enclaves, and the wider negative consequences of 'social exclusion'. In this battle of perceptions the word neighbourhood came to be preferred to the word estate. In addition councils were expected to maintain, refurbish or replace their housing stock to attain a centrally devised 'decent homes standard' by 2010. Central investment again became a possibility, but given emphasis on increased density and mixed tenure, it tends to be available for replacement rather than for refurbishment.<sup>194</sup>

In an earlier climate, in 1992, Ealing had recognised the need for concerted investment to improve the social, economic and environmental conditions of South Acton. A £24m strategy was devised in 1993, seeking 75% support from the Department of the Environment. At the same time, and reflecting differing fortunes, proposals for the formation of the Mill Hill Park Conservation Area were put forward. The latter initiative fared better than the former. A more radical approach to South Acton came to seem necessary. This arrived in a report to Ealing in 1996 that sought 'to begin the process of involving the Council in developing a comprehensive regeneration plan for the South Acton Estate'.<sup>195</sup> The huge costs of continuing and catch-up repair and maintenance were estimated at £49m in 1999. For tenants the dominant issues remained anti-social behaviour, security, caretaking, cleaning and grounds maintenance. 'There were too many false starts in the past and not surprisingly, residents became cynical.'<sup>196</sup>

A new perception that the estate could and should be re-integrated into wider Acton began to take hold. Local interests allied with the London Borough of Ealing in 1996 to form Action Acton, to stimulate regeneration in Acton. This initiative gained a Single Regeneration Budget grant for 1999-2004, managed by the London Development Agency, which, with other investment, was geared to pump prime regeneration. The South Acton estate was designated a major focus for Action Acton investment, though the funding regime specifically excluded housing. South Park was formed between Grahame Tower and Berrymede School on the south side of Osborne Road, and the decline of the area's shopping facilities provided an opportunity for change through the adaptation of redundant units. The Sunlight Community Nursery was formed from four former shops at Buchan Court, with another shop unit becoming the Tallo Centre for refugees. Two shop units at Hardy Court were made into a language resource centre and another became an office for Acton Community Forum.<sup>197</sup>



*Fig. 84 - 170A-F Bollo Bridge Road, a terrace of six four-bedroom houses built in 1999-2000 for the Ealing Family Housing Association with involvement from SARAG, John Thompson and Partners, architects (English Heritage, 2004, D. Kendall).*

More fundamental change was in view. In 1997-9 John Thompson and Partners, architects, worked towards a masterplan for the regeneration of South Acton for the London Borough of Ealing and the Ealing Family Housing Association in partnership, and community consultation began. The tenants' association of earlier years having again declined, the South Acton Residents Action Group (SARAG) was formed in 1997 as a direct response to these new developments, with Sydoney Massop as its first chairperson.<sup>198</sup> Promise of what the future might hold came with the replacement of the 'Harbour Lights' (Anchor) pub on Bollo Bridge Road in 1999-2000 as 170A-F Bollo Bridge Road, a terrace of six four-bedroom houses with private gardens, built for the Ealing Family Housing Association to designs by John Thompson and Partners, architects, SARAG being involved in the design process. These well-proportioned houses in a 'domestic vernacular' style hold some resemblances to local-authority cottages of the Tudor Walters period (fig. 84).

Following a 'Master Planning Event' in August 2000 a mixed refurbishment approach to regeneration emerged as favoured, but funding was lacking. Barrie House, which was in need of considerable repair investment, was demolished in November 2001, the complexities of decanting residents resurfacing as a result. To open up further space 158 garages were also demolished and, in advance of a developed masterplan, what came retrospectively to be called 'Phase 1' of what was seen as a ten-year regeneration programme for the whole South Acton estate was carried through in 2002-4 (opening on 8 June 2004), £9m of Housing Corporation funding having been secured for the project. This provided 86 mixed-tenure flats and houses for the London Borough of Ealing and the Ealing Family Housing Association, in Appleby Court, a four-storey block of 48 flats, four short terraces of houses and flats to the north extending as far as Beaumaris Tower, and another terrace of five houses at 45-53 Brouncker Road (fig. 85). The designs were again by John Thompson and Partners, with Higgins Construction PLC as contractors. Residents having strongly represented that they wanted streets, to reconnect to the wider community, the scheme began to reconstitute some of the area's lost street pattern.<sup>199</sup> The sale of land to the Ealing Family Housing Association by the London Borough of Ealing for the 'Phase 1' development raised money towards the refurbishment of the castle towers (Corfe, Harlech and Beaumaris), Jerome Tower, Doyle House and St Margaret's Lodge. With the help of £7.7m funding from the Government Office for London (£7.7m) work on these 351 homes was set to begin at the end of 2004, to include new kitchens, bathrooms and windows, and further

improvements to the vexed and much-altered entrance areas, all to be carried forward by Higgins Construction PLC working to plans by Baily Garner.<sup>200</sup>

In the meantime steps were being taken towards the devising of a masterplan and a phased approach for the larger project, initiatives advancing from late 2002. A resident-led master planning study was commissioned by SARAG from a University of Westminster team led by Dr Marion Roberts and funded through the Neighbourhood Improvement Fund. The aspirations expressed therein included opening up the estate, giving new homes street addresses and front doors on an interconnected network of roads, and recognition of the distinct character of various neighbourhoods within South Acton, those identified corresponding loosely to the early, middle and late phases of post-war redevelopment, with a separate mixed area south of Bollo Bridge Road, and adjoining areas of separate character being the Mill Hill Park Estate, the former Royal Society estate and the industrial estate. Further, the study concluded, 'The history, continuity and community spirit of the area is important and should inform what happens and which buildings are retained.'<sup>201</sup>

For the local authority ECD Architects and Proctor and Matthews jointly prepared an Urban Design Framework, the London Borough of Ealing working with the Catalyst Housing Group (which incorporates Ealing Family Housing Association). Developed through 2003-4 this went further than earlier schemes and set out an outline plan for a five-phase 'fundamental overhaul' of the estate to make it a new high-density urban quarter of 864 new homes, retaining some existing blocks. The underlying aims of the plans are to increase densities to levels more typical of central London, to use redevelopment as an opportunity to mix tenure without reducing affordable rented housing, to integrate retail and other commercial and community facilities, to keep or extend green space, to improve permeability and to reshape the public realm, creating mini neighbourhoods with their own character and identity that integrate the 'estate' into a wider South Acton Neighbourhood.

In 2004 a further £9.2m of Housing Corporation funding was made available for more mixed-tenure high-density housing, and, following revision of the plans, work on Phase 2 was scheduled to begin in 2005. As in the 1950s, the early focus was to the south, involving the demolition of Bollo Court, Maugham Court, Lawrence Court and Reade Court for a largely reconfigured neighbourhood south of Bollo Bridge Road. Replacement of the Oak Tree Community Centre with funding from Action Acton and Sure Start was also set for 2005/6. Beyond South Acton, Ealing Homes (an 'Arms Length Management Organisation') was formed to manage all of Ealing Council's housing from September 2004.<sup>202</sup>

In South Acton the campaign for community governance continued, with the belief that 'People are willing to take a stand for making sure that this neighbourhood is going to thrive. . . . This community has a chance to manage itself.'<sup>203</sup>



*Fig. 85 - 'Phase I' of South Acton's regeneration (top to bottom): Newport Road with Appleby Court; 45-53 Brouncker Road; and looking down on Hope Gardens and Park Road North from the east, with Arundel Court, Glamis Court and the Mill Hill Park Estate beyond (English Heritage, 2004, D. Kendall, top and centre).*



## CONCLUSIONS

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It has become common to acknowledge the value of everyday urban landscapes as important parts of heritage or 'public history', as sources of identity and local pride, and as bases for sustainable communities.<sup>204</sup> To realise this value historical questions need to be addressed: how did a place become what it is? what constitutes its character? what is locally distinctive? and what of this is valued locally?

Participative regeneration intensifies the urgency of thinking about these questions. Effective participation presupposes knowledge, of places as well as of processes. This does not work only in a single top-down direction. All who are to participate need better knowledge, each of the other, comprehending what the historian Raphael Samuel characterised as 'unofficial knowledge' -- popular as well as professional understandings. In that spirit this 'academic' report is part of a bigger picture, another part of which is Fluid's 'South Acton Stories: Sharing Histories, Revealing Identity' report and digital documentary, the focus of which is the last of the above questions. These conclusions regarding the other three questions are not, therefore, and cannot be conclusive. They are merely the drawing together of some threads.

In thinking about how South Acton came to be what it is its history in the late 19th and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries -- the Soapsuds Island period -- has been widely acknowledged. There is also what has happened since, right up to the present day; that too is history. The story is a continuum and there are deep roots to some topographical separations, while some boundaries have shifted. The Mill Hill Park Estate boundary and the North London Railway line predate any housing in the area. Without a local station the railway provided no lift to private speculators and low-status character was set in the 1860s, early development south of Avenue Road being humble cottages which do not survive. South Acton as first built was dominated by densely built, poor-quality working-class housing on a grid layout that was only partially realised, compromised by differing speculative ambitions, and sealed off from other parts of Acton. Changes in the availability of transport altered the nature of housing development after 1880, and of later 19<sup>th</sup>-century 'commuter' houses much more has been allowed to survive, south of the railway and from Brouncker Road eastwards as far as Acton Lane.

It is an obvious point that suburban housing is as it is because of the presence or absence of transport links or access routes, but it needs to be qualified here because what defined late-19<sup>th</sup>- and early-20<sup>th</sup>-century South Acton was a kind of impermeability that transcended the arrival of improved transport. From its beginnings South Acton was a self-contained and relatively self-sufficient place where local employment (production), shops and pubs (consumption), and housing were intimately integrated. Latter-day understandings of sustainability in terms of access to employment through transport did not apply. Pre-war South Acton was thus itself a kind of 'ghetto', in which the late-19<sup>th</sup>-century speculative developments lasted about 80 years, more or less. There was a wide consensus that the poorly maintained 'slums' needed redevelopment, to improve the lives of their poor and exploited residents. It is open to question as to whether or how far early identities carried the seeds of the different ghettoisation that followed from the 1960s. Certainly, redevelopment hastened the end of self-sufficiency, industry and jobs moving away, and in some respects it intensified the area's impoverishment as other, often poorer, people arrived, and shops and pubs declined, for local and wider reasons. The strangulation of streets in the 1960s, intended to make the area safer, has helped to keep the area relatively quiet and traffic free, but ensuing change has made the loss of streets unpopular with local residents.

The formation of a new kind of topographical impermeability did not preclude boundary changes. There was a significant identity shift through South Acton's annexation of the land north of

Avenue Road in the 1970s. Prior to that Acton and its High Street had been another place, South Acton's dependence on the High Street being a product of its own commercial decline since the 1970s. People living south of Avenue Road had not generally needed to get to the High Street, and there had not been an everyday flow across the whole area. It is only the loss of local shops and pubs that has made such access an issue. Historically, even latterly, people have not known the whole of South Acton as home.

The heart of this study is the post-war housing of what was known until recently as the South Acton Estate. The chronological history of this housing has clarified what is evident on the ground and on maps, that a large district of considerable diversity can be legitimately divided into several smaller neighbourhoods or 'character areas', between which there were differences in architectural motivations, in approaches to ensemble grouping and landscape, and in subsequent perceptions of success and consequent degrees of alteration. At the risk of oversimplification a few concluding remarks may help draw out some aspects of physical distinctiveness.

### **South of Osborne Road (Hanbury Road and 'the Three Sisters')**

The six residential blocks in this area are coherent mixed development of the 1950s, good architectural design to which generous open spaces and relatively formal grouping along pre-existing street frontages are fundamental. Minor alterations have not significantly compromised the quality of the buildings, manifest in overall massing and in numerous details. The initial formality of the landscaping has not endured, but the open spaces remain an important amenity.

### **North of Osborne Road (Enfield Road and east to Doyle House)**

Mixed development here in the early-to-mid 1960s was less coherent, but these 11 residential blocks are considered as one area because, with the exception of the Enfield Road/Bollo Lane flats of 1931, they were conceived broadly together. The 19<sup>th</sup>-century street pattern has been retained, reinforced by the presence of terraces of houses. The intermixed taller blocks are not otherwise well set off against open space, and they sometimes suffer further from relative mean-ness of design. Jerome Tower was conceived as a centrepiece, but subsequent change has left it seeming isolated.

### **South of Bollo Bridge Road**

The buildings between Stanley Road and All Saints Road are highly various, not mixed development, but a more serendipitous assemblage, unity deriving from the survival of streets, mature trees and the frame of the very different spaces of the industrial estate and recreation ground. Several of the buildings have strong individual presence that is enhanced by space and a general sense of openness. Behind Bollo Court and Woolf Court there are pleasant semi-formal three-sided courtyards. These early post-war blocks have seen less alteration than later and generally taller neighbours.

### **North of Bollo Bridge Road (central area south of Park Road East)**

The abandonment of the street as a frame for development in the mid 1960s gives this area much of its character. Behind Hardy Court tall slab blocks that are strong Modernist architecture frame a large open area. Beyond, the 'Phase I' buildings of 2002-4 combine with St Margaret's Court to reduce the scale and reintroduce a street pattern. The later 'castles', Carisbrooke, Ludlow and Pembroke, seem to fall between various stools, lacking visual attraction or spatial order and being crammed together behind a large open area to the north. These large and irregular central open spaces are not well used and so seem accidental. This has led to a perception that they are redundant, though they are, in fact, real amenities.

### **South of Avenue Road ('the castles' north of Park Road East)**

These six residential blocks, also all named after castles, are a single development of 1968-71. Though conceived as mixed development the group does not cohere as a whole, seeming to be two quite distinct entities. Three low-rise brick blocks line up on Park Road North and, in so far as they have been altered, seem to have been enhanced by time. The three concrete tower blocks to their east have no clear relationship to intervening spaces, which have been repeatedly recast, as have the entrances to the buildings, in attempts to mitigate anti-social behaviour and negative perceptions.

### **North of Avenue Road ('the red brick')**

The northwards extension of South Acton in the 1970s created a large and highly distinctive 'character area'. A retreat from earlier ideals and a shift to predominantly low-rise 'neo-vernacular' development brought greater density on the ground. Consequent complexity of massing and access was deliberate, but the intricacies have come to seem simply confusing. Historically this area was more a part of Acton than South Acton. The absence of any clear street pattern leaves ambiguity as to which way these blocks do face.

The clear differences between these 'character areas' and the absence of overall integration arose from the protracted and stuttering realisation of post-war comprehensive redevelopment. The extension of what was meant to be a ten-year programme over thirty years, for reasons that are not peculiar to South Acton, increased the impact of changes in the parameters of central regulation and architectural design. South Acton was thus transformed from a place that had been characterised by diversity of use in a relatively uniform built environment that incorporated houses, laundries, shops, pubs and chapels, to a highly diverse built environment with uniformity of use, public housing becoming overwhelmingly dominant, other uses being pushed out or retreating. Such uniformity of use was never intended and, it is generally agreed, is undesirable. Attitudes to the architectural variety are largely a matter of taste. Disjunctions of scale, materials and forms can be enjoyed for their drama, or decried for their dissonance. The substantial difference in scale between pre-war and post-war buildings is not, however, fundamentally a matter of taste or style. It arises from consistent commitment through the comprehensive redevelopment period to the introduction to South Acton of open space, created without any reduction in population density. This was a difficult trick, slowly and painfully achieved. It will be yet more difficult to achieve an increase in density alongside the maintenance of green spaces and a re-integration of architectural scale.

In considering adaptations and alterations to buildings it needs first to be remembered that an absence of alterations tends to reflect a kind of sustainability, or at least inhabitability. This can be seen in different guises, in Bollo Court, Woolf Court, the three terraces of houses, the low-rise 'castles' and the 'red brick'. However, on the other side of this coin, interventions, sometimes serial in nature, as in many of the tower blocks and the spaces between, do not necessarily reflect more than perceived failure or uninhabitability. It is hard to disentangle adaptability from acceptability, negative perceptions regarding tower blocks having tended to undermine sustainability. Inadequate maintenance and management, through lack of investment, have created an impression of inflexibility, and a vicious circle wherein alteration became an inadequate solution to problems that need not have arisen. This is a widespread problem for late-20<sup>th</sup>-century public housing, but it is not universal. Differently managed and properly maintained South Acton's post-war housing could have been much more successful. Many of the constraints on the future adaptability of South Acton's building stock are not architecturally or constructionally inherent. In bouncing back from the post-1980 retreat from interventionism it is vital to balance what was achieved against what was not achieved, and 'it didn't work' against 'it wasn't permitted to work', weighing carefully both utopian and dystopian visions.

The redevelopment of South Acton through state intervention, which took thirty years, has lasted only about forty years, poor maintenance being a crucial factor, as it was in the pre-war 'slums'. The nature of this kind of 'failure' has been much analysed, but it is too recent for it to be possible to say that it has been well understood. It is also too easy to look back to what preceded post-war redevelopment and to see it as holding the answers to the questions that are now being posed in the context of regeneration, questions regarding matters such as density and mixed tenure that are in fact remarkably similar to those that were posed half a century ago. A central, and easily overlooked, point in any characterisation of South Acton is that the area has been in almost constant flux. The early 20<sup>th</sup> century aside, the place has been a scene of development, redevelopment and now regeneration.

Despite this South Acton has always kept a distinctive and separate identity. Analysis of the area's historical character makes it clear that a forward view might be better conceived in terms of integration rather than as *re-integration*. The creation of a newly permeable neighbourhood, or set of neighbourhoods, however desirable, ought not to be understood as a re-creation of something lost. In that there would only be spurious continuity. At the same time it has to be recognised that much of the area's historical identity and many of its perceived strengths derive from relative isolation and long-standing impermeability, enduring even through periods of clearance, decanting and social fluidity. The notion of community can be rooted in class or ethnic identities, but underneath such perceptions the word frequently has a topographical sense, a community often having a location where history has been shared. If strongly understood this last sense of community can supersede other more divisive senses, and cope with social fluidity. That has happened in South Acton, in part precisely because of outside stigmatisation or ghettoisation. Identity rooted in place is a kind of social glue, a source of pride, common cause or community cohesion. If the history of a place stops being understood, valued and shared, perceptions of community will abandon topography and retreat to other identities. This is why the continuity of shared history in South Acton is vital if aspirations for higher density and mixed tenure are to be successfully met. It is crucial to make links across historical periods, to accept the inevitability of both change and continuity, and not to confuse one with the other.

The continuity on which the success of regeneration depends needs to be based in present physical reality, bricks and mortar, in the endurance of familiar and remembered places and spaces. Concrete reality provides a base for the reformulation of questions about the past, history being rendered heritage through imaginative re-presentation. Conservation in this context, and in the light of SARAG's aspiration, should be understood not as the preservation of isolated artefacts but as the mediation of change in everyday social environments. 'That which has framed the lives of a people, through the provision of a place and a context for action, for better or worse, lays upon us the burden and the privilege of inheritance. Artefacts do not merely represent the past, or our idea of the past. If they did, they would be merely an agreeable addition and backdrop to a life lived in a permanent, somatic present. In fact, they are fundamental to our sense of who we are and where we have come from, without which we can barely survive the present, let alone seek to plot the future.'<sup>205</sup>

## NOTES

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- 1 - Celestina Uzoka, Fluid interview, 1/11/04.
- 2 - Bridget Cherry and Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England, London 3: North-West* (London, 1991), 162.
- 3 - (intr.) Andrew Saint, *London Suburbs* (London, 1999), 191.
- 4 - See John Bold and Simon Grant, 'Contingent Boundaries – the Channel Tunnel Rail Link considered as an Architectural Ensemble', *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society*, **41** (1997), 59-73; John Bold and Peter Guillery, 'Historical Assessment of Suburbs', *Urban Design Quarterly*, **66** (April 1998), 24-7.
- 5 - Studies that provide different kinds of precedent include: 'Public Housing in Poplar' in (ed.) Stephen Porter, *Survey of London, xliii and xliv: Poplar, Blackwall and the Isle of Dogs, the Parish of All Saints, Poplar* (London, 1994), 21-54; the Tollington Initiative (the University of North London for the London Borough of Islington), 'Consultation and Proposals for Regeneration', incorporating Esther Caplin, 'Tollington: the contemporary history of a neighbourhood', 1998; Simon Taylor and David B. Lovie, *Gateshead: Architecture in a Changing English Urban Landscape* (London, 2004). Important milestones in English Heritage policy towards post-war housing are, *A change of heart: English architecture since the war, a policy for protection* (London, 1992), and Elaine Harwood, *Something worth keeping? post-war architecture in England: housing and houses* (London, 1996).
- 6 - Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* (London, 1994), 381-2.
- 7 - (ed.) T. F. T. Baker, *The Victoria History of the County of Middlesex*, vii (Oxford, 1987) (hereafter VCH), 2-4; A. & T. Harper Smith, 'Acton Farms & Farming 1: 1842 – the tithes' (Acton, 1989); A. & T. Harper Smith, 'Acton Farms & Farming 2: the common fields' (Acton, 1989); Jonathan Oates, *Acton: a history* (London, 2003), 22, 29, 37.
- 8 - Michael Jahn, 'Suburban development in outer west London, 1850-1900', in (ed.) F. M. L. Thompson, *The rise of suburbia* (Leicester, 1982), 94-156 (100-3); VCH, 11; A. & T. Harper Smith, 'Acton Farms & Farming 2: the common fields' (Acton, 1989).
- 9 - Francis Sheppard, *London 1808-1870: The Infernal Wen* (London, 1971), 156.
- 10 - Jahn, *loc. cit.*, 103-8; A. & T. Harper Smith, 'Acton Farms & Farming 2: the common fields' (Acton, 1989); A. & T. Harper Smith, 'Acton Farms & Farming 3: a new landscape' (Acton, 1990); VCH, 9, 11. The Middlesex Deeds Registry, housed at London Metropolitan Archives, contains details of the property transactions, but the research timescale of the present project excluded the possibility of consulting this important source.
- 11 - Jahn, *loc. cit.*, 108; also other sources as in note 10.
- 12 - Jahn, *loc. cit.*, 95; Oates, *op. cit.*, 52.
- 13 - Jahn, *loc. cit.*, 107.
- 14 - T. and A. Harper Smith, 'Soapsud Island: Acton Laundries' (Acton, 1988, revised 1997); T and A. Harper Smith, 'Directory of Acton Laundries 1843-1990' (Acton, 1992). David Knights has concluded that these sources considerably underestimate the actual number of laundry premises.
- 15 - Jahn, *loc. cit.*, 107-8; VCH, 12, 26-7; A. & T. Harper Smith, 'Acton Farms & Farming 3: a new landscape' (Acton, 1990); *Acton Gazette* (hereafter AG), 20/2/1953, 1.
- 16 - Harper Smith, 'Soapsud Island', 5-8, 20; Harper Smith, 'Directory', 30-1. 14 Mill Hill Road of c.1870 (see above) also incorporates a works bay, but it was seemingly not a laundry.
- 17 - T. and A. Harper Smith, 'Andrew Hunter Dunn (1839-1914), South Acton and Quebec' (Acton, 1995; www.churchplansonline, ICBS 07299 and M0455; Oates, *op. cit.*, 42; Ealing Local History Centre (hereafter ELHC), Averil Harper Smith, 'Account Book of Edward Monson, FRIBA'; VCH.
- 18 - VCH; Ordnance Survey map (hereafter OS) 1893.
- 19 - Royal Institute of British Architects/British Architectural Library, *Directory of British Architects 1834-1914*, 199; ELHC, Averil Harper Smith, 'Account Book of Edward Monson, FRIBA' and 'Acton Schools'. Monson also designed and enlarged Acton Green Schools in 1891 and 1898 (demolished).
- 20 - Cherry and Pevsner, *op. cit.*, 162.
- 21 - Susie Barson, 'Infinite Variety in Brick and Stucco: 1840-1914', in (intr.) Saint, *op. cit.*, 85-92.
- 22 - Jahn, *loc. cit.*, 114; see also VCH, 12.
- 23 - R. N. G. Rowlands, *An Acton A to Z* (Ealing, 1997), 15 and 47.
- 24 - Jahn, *loc. cit.*, 120; OS 1893; Harper Smith, 'Directory', 8, 13; Oates, *op. cit.*, 49; VCH, 12.
- 25 - A. & T. Harper Smith, 'Acton Farms & Farming 3: a new landscape' (Acton, 1990); Harper Smith, 'Andrew Hunter Dunn', 5; Oates, *op. cit.*, 42; OS 1893 and later editions.
- 26 - Jahn, *loc. cit.*, 141; VCH, 12-13.
- 27 - Acton Green Residents' Association website, history section.

- 28 - Jahn, *loc. cit.*, 141.
- 29 - VCH, 13.
- 30 - ELHC, Reg Dunkling, 'South Acton, 1929-1939: a personal view', 2003, 2.
- 31 - Stefan Muthesius, *The English Terraced House* (London, 1982), 130-7; Kenneth Campbell and GLC, *Home Sweet Home: housing designed by the London County Council and Greater London Council Architects 1888-1975* (London, 1976), 20-1.
- 32 - AG, 17/7/53, 5.
- 33 - Harper Smith, 'Andrew Hunter Dunn', 5-6; ELHC photos.
- 34 - ELHC, photographs.
- 35 - VCH, 13-14; *London Suburbs*, 94-110, 190-1, 198-9; Cherry and Pevsner, *op. cit.*, 68-9; Mark Swenarton, *Homes Fit for Heroes: the politics and architecture of early state housing in Britain* (London, 1981); Patricia L. Garside, 'Intergovernmental Relations and Housing Policy in London 1919-1970', *The London Journal*, **9/1** (1983), 39-57; Alison Ravetz, *Council Housing and Culture: the history of a social experiment* (London, 2001), 56-84; Alan Cox, *Sources for the Study of Public Housing* (London, 1993).
- 36 - Isobel Watson, 'Rebuilding London: Abraham Davis and his Brothers, 1881-1924', *The London Journal*, **29/1** (2004), 62-84; Ann Robey, 'The Holly Lodge Estate, Highgate', unpublished report for SAVE Britain's Heritage, 2003.
- 37 - The 1923 Housing Act had laid down a minimum of 550sq ft for local-authority flats.
- 38 - Sylvia Brooks, Fluid interview, 28/10/04.
- 39 - VCH, 14; Acton Borough Council Minutes (hereafter ABC Mins); ELHC, A/MB/H1/2 and 3; Oates, *op. cit.*, 88; Cox, *op. cit.*
- 40 - ABC Mins; Royal Institute of British Architects, British Architectural Library, Biography File. Information about Ealing's cinemas kindly supplied by Robert Gurd.
- 41 - ABC Mins.
- 42 - ABC Mins.
- 43 - Cherry and Pevsner, *op. cit.*, 410.
- 44 - ELHC, Reg Dunkling, 'South Acton 1929-1939: a personal view', 2003, 3.
- 45 - AG, 17/7/53, 1; *The Times*, 31 March 1956, 8; VCH, 26; Harper Smith, 'Soapsud Island', pp.13-17.
- 46 - ELHC, Reg Dunkling, 'South Acton 1929-1939: a personal view', 2003, 2.
- 47 - ELHC photos; Peter Kentish and Sylvia Brooks, Fluid interviews, 28/10/04.
- 48 - *Acton Citizen*, n.d. 1930s, as transmitted by Philip Portwood.
- 49 - Patrick Abercrombie, 14 March 1944, as quoted by Garside, *loc. cit.*, 46; see also Miles Glendinning and Stefan Muthesius, *Tower Block: modern public housing in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland* (London, 1994), 24-8.
- 50 - Cllr Philip Portwood, Fluid interview, 2/11/04; ABC Mins; AG, 24/3/44, 1; 19/10/45, 1; 2/11/45, 1; 14/12/45, 1.
- 51 - ABC Mins; AG, 21/2/47, 1; ELHC, 'Housing and Planning in Acton', 6 May 1947; VCH, 14.
- 52 - *Census 1951: County Report, Middlesex* (1954); Glendinning and Muthesius, *op. cit.*, 331.
- 53 - Information kindly supplied by Elain Harwood; Glendinning and Muthesius, *op. cit.*, 27.
- 54 - ABC Mins; AG, 7/9/51, 1.
- 55 - Glendinning and Muthesius, *op. cit.*, 19.
- 56 - AG, 28/7/50, p.1.
- 57 - ABC Mins; AG, 21/7/50, 1.
- 58 - *The Architect and Building News*, 3/11/50, 482-9.
- 59 - *The Builder*, 1 August 1952, 165-8.
- 60 - Information kindly supplied by Kenneth Campbell. The turning of this tide was signalled by the formation of the Bedford Park Society in 1963, which led to the then extraordinary listing of 356 houses in 1967. (Cherry and Pevsner, *op. cit.*).
- 61 - As quoted by Simon Parker, 'From the Slums to the Suburbs: Labour Party Policy, the LCC, and the Woodberry Down Estate, Stoke Newington 1934-1961', *The London Journal*, **24/2** (1999), 63.
- 62 - AG, 21/12/45, 1; also 18/1/46, 1; 22/7/49, 7; ABC Mins.
- 63 - AG, 25/4/47, 1.
- 64 - AG, 30/5/47, 1.
- 65 - AG, 10/1/47, 2.
- 66 - ABC Mins.
- 67 - Parker, *loc. cit.*, 51-69.
- 68 - AG, 1/8/52, 4; also 31/8/51, 1; 28/12/51, 1; 27/6/52, 1; 1/8/52, 1.
- 69 - AG, 3/10/52, 1.
- 70 - AG, 10/7/53, 10; also 20/2/52, 1; 23/1/53, 1; ABC Mins.

- 71 - AG, 10 and 17/7/53, 1.  
72 - ABC Mins; AG, 23/4/54, 10.  
73 - ABC Mins; AG, 7/2/47; 20/8/54, 1; 22/6/56, 1; 14/9/56, 1; 7/11/63, 3; Glendinning and Muthesius, *op. cit.*, 157-61.  
74 - Peter Kentish, Fluid interview 2/11/04; AG, 18/7/52, 4.  
75 - ABC Mins; AG, 18/4/52, 1; 20/8/54, 1 and 6.  
76 - Sylvia Brooks, Fluid interview, 26/10/04.  
77 - Information kindly supplied by Lucia Otto; the residents of Bollo Court gained Electrolux refrigerators in 1953-4, paying an extra 2s/week rent (ABC Mins).  
78 - ABC Mins.  
79 - ABC Mins; AG, 20/2/53, 1; 31/12/54, 4.  
80 - A. W. Cleeve Barr, *Public Authority Housing* (London, 1958), 35-7; Glendinning and Muthesius, *op. cit.*, 29-33; GLC, *Home Sweet Home*, 48-61; Parker, *loc. cit.*, 54; Garside, *op. cit.*, 49.  
81 - ABC Mins.  
82 - Information kindly supplied by Elain Harwood; Ministry of Housing and Local Government, *Flats and Houses 1958: design and economy* (London, 1958), 80-1.  
83 - ABC Mins.  
84 - AG, 7/2/58, 14.  
85 - AG, 21/2/58, 7.  
86 - ELHC, A/MB/H1/176.  
87 - Sylvia Brooks, Fluid interview, 28/10/04.  
88 - Ministry of Housing and Local Government (hereafter MHLG), *Homes for Today and Tomorrow* (London, 1961), 30; London Borough of Ealing Minutes (hereafter LBE Mins).  
89 - Cleeve Barr, *op. cit.*, figs 7, 10 and 12.  
90 - Anne Bonner, Fluid interview, 28/10/04.  
91 - *Ibid.*  
92 - ABC Mins; ELHC, A/MB/H1/176.  
93 - AG, 11/9/59.  
94 - AG, 7/2/58, 14; also 21/2/58, 7; 20/6/58, 7; 26/9/58, 1; ABC Mins.  
95 - ABC Mins.  
96 - AG, 17/6/55, 1.  
97 - ABC Mins; AG, 23/3/56, 1.  
98 - *Census 1961: County Report, Middlesex* (1963).  
99 - AG, 1/5/59, 8; also 24/6/60; 19/4/62, 7.  
100 - ABC Mins; AG, 28/10/60, 1; ELHC, 'The Redevelopment of South Acton', minutes of public meeting, 28 June 1961; Anne Power, *Hovels to high rise: State housing in Europe since 1850* (London, 1993), 192-5; *Census 1961*; Glendinning and Muthesius, *op. cit.*, 271, 331.  
101 - Glendinning and Muthesius, *op. cit.*, 218, 271; Power, *op. cit.*, 198-9; ABC Mins.  
102 - MHLG, *Homes for Today and Tomorrow* (London, 1961), 35; see also Cleeve Barr, *op. cit.*, 54.  
103 - *Census 1961: County Report, Middlesex* (1963).  
104 - ABC Mins; AG, 6/7/61, 4; 23/11/61, 4; 26/4/62, 1; 19/11/64, 3.  
105 - AG, 8/12/60.  
106 - Cleeve Barr, *op. cit.*, 62, 96-103, 260-3; MHLG, *Homes for Today and Tomorrow*, 39.  
107 - AG, 14/11/1958, 1; Glendinning and Muthesius, *op. cit.*, 131.  
108 - AG, 10/5/62, 3; ABC Mins.  
109 - ABC Mins; Information kindly supplied by Elain Harwood.  
110 - Glendinning and Muthesius, *op. cit.*, 95.  
111 - *Census 1951: County Report, Middlesex* (1954); *Census 1961: County Report, Middlesex* (1963).  
112 - AG, 10/2/56, 4; 12/9/58, 1.  
113 - AG, 11/9/59; also *The Times*, 8/12/64, 7; Power, *op. cit.*, 191; Anne Bonner, Fluid interview, 28/10/04.  
114 - AG, 30/9/60, 11; also 7/10/60, 1; 4/11/60, 6.  
115 - anonymous resident, AG, 1/8/63, 2.  
116 - ABC Mins; LBE Mins; AG, 26/9/63, 6; 19/12/63, 9; 23/1/64, 1; 19/3/64, 7; 24/12/64, 1; Ravetz, *op. cit.*, 151.  
117 - Anonymous resident, AG, 22/8/63, 2.  
118 - AG, 23/1/64, 1; *The Architect & Building News*, 23 June 1965, 1177-80.  
119 - ABC Mins; Anne Bonner, Fluid interview, 28/10/04.  
120 - AG, 23/12/65, 7; LBE Mins.  
121 - Fluid interview, 2/11/04.  
122 - AG, 17/6/55, 1.

- 123 - ABC Mins; LBE Mins.
- 124 - Reg Dunkling, *loc. cit.*, 5.
- 125 - AG, 1/7/65, 12; also 27/6/52, 1; 14/9/56, 1; Notes by Kenneth Elliott, as supplied to Fluid, 26/10/04.
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- 143 - AG, 30/9/65, 3; also 27/5/65; 24/6/65, 3; 12/8/65, 1; 28/10/65, 7.
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- 145 - ABC Mins.
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- 149 - AG, 16/3/61, 4; LBE Mins; LBE Mins Building Control, LB 5273/1.
- 150 - Information kindly supplied by Kenneth Campbell: Peter Kentish, Fluid interview, 2/11/04.
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- 152 - Cllr Philip Portwood, Fluid interview, 28/10/04.
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- 167 - AG, 17/10/74, 5.
- 168 - AG, 22/3/73, 1.
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- 176 - Anne Bonner, Fluid interview, 28/10/04.
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## APPENDIX 1: SOUTH ACTON CHRONOLOGY

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1853 – railway (North London Line), Acton (Central) Station opens

1859 – British Land Company buys and begins to develop Osborne Road/Enfield Road/Hanbury Road area, also Mill Hill Road/Avenue Road, former with smaller plots/frontages, unrestricted development, mixing residential and industrial

1864 – British Land Company buys Park Road North area, development follows

1864 – Baptist Church, Church Road, W. Mumford, architect

1865-7 – St Mary's Church, King Street, rebuilt, H. Francis, architect (tower replaced 1875-6)

1866 – Acton Local Board formed

1867 – British Land Company buys area south of Bollo Bridge Road to railway and Turnham Green east land (Rothschild Road and to south), development follows

1869 – Acton Local Board inquiry into poor housing and living conditions in South Acton

1872 – over 60 laundries in area, also pig-keeping with numerous slaughterhouses (178 laundries in area by 1899)

1872 – All Saints Church opens (Reverend Andrew Hunter-Dunn), and South Acton Working Men's Club formed

1877 onwards – Mill Hill Park Estate development begun by William Willett, deliberately isolated from South Acton

1878 – trams begin to run from High Street/Acton Lane junction to Shepherd's Bush (extension of Acton Vale service of 1874)

1879 – Mill Hill Park Station (Acton Town) opens on District Railway Ealing extension (early signal box survives at Bollo Lane Junction - listed)

1880 – South Acton Station opens, Acton Local Board builds Osborne Road (Berrymede) School (enlarged 1897-8 and 1903), Edward Monson junior, architect

1882 onwards – Royal Society (South Acton Station) estate and Beaumont Park estate developed to east of Palmerston Road, Trafford Road and Church Road – maisonette flats on Petersfield Road – some laundry-houses built, as surviving at 61-3 Brouncker Road (Southfields Laundry by 1893)

1884 – Parish Hall, Bollo Bridge Road, Edward Monson junior, architect

1885 – Laundry Proprietors' Association formed

1889-90 – South Acton Recreation Ground formed (Acton Local Board via Reverend Hunter-Dunn)

c.1890 – Railway Automatic Electric Light Works, Mill Hill Park Station, Bollo Lane

1891 – Acton Green Schools, Edward Monson junior, architect (extended 1898, renamed Beaumont Park Schools, demolished 1990s)

1895 – Acton Urban District Council formed

1897-8 – Passmore Edwards Cottage (Acton) Hospital, Gunnersbury Lane, Charles Bell, architect (extensions of 1920s demolished)

1898-9 – Passmore Edwards (Acton) Library, High Street, M. Adams, architect

1898-9 – rail link formed between District Line and South Acton station (opened to passenger traffic 1905, used only as a shuttle ('ginny') from 1932-59)

1899 – Fire Station, High Street (replaced 1939, converted to be a centre for elderly 1990-1)

c.1900 – Rev Hunter Dunn builds cottage or maisonette flats at 37-55 Newton Avenue

1901 – Carlton House Laundry, 78 Bollo Bridge Road

1902 – Our Lady of Lourdes Roman Catholic Church, High Street, E. Goldie, architect

1902 – Owen Villas, maisonette flats on north side of Bollo Bridge Road on Royal Society estate

1902 onwards – Reverend Hunter-Dunn buys and develops maisonette flats on Brouncker Road/Bollo Bridge Road/Newton Avenue

1903-4 – King's Parade, 241-67 High Street, shops, A. H. Sykes, architect (listed)

1904 – Public Baths, Salisbury Street, D. J. Ebbets, architect

1907 – Magistrates Court, Winchester Street, H. T. Wakelam, architect

1908-10 – Municipal Offices (Acton Town Hall), Raffles & Gridley, architects (extended in 1926 and along High Street in 1939)

1910 – Mill Hill Park Station rebuilt and renamed Acton Town Station

1911 – Crown Cinema opens at 191 Acton High Street (closes 1939, converted for use as aeronautic works)

1919-23 – Memorial Plaque Factory, Church Road, on site of former Acton Brewery

1921 – Acton Borough Council formed

1922 – Acton Works (Central Repair Depot for London Underground) opens

1927-8 - United Women's Homes Association (Women's Pioneer Housing Ltd), Gunnersbury Lane, five cottage blocks, Thomas Garrett, architect

1931 - Acton Borough Council builds 363-371 Bollo Lane and 79-83 Enfield Road (Enfield Road flats), eight flats, William George Cross, Borough Engineer

1932 – 81-95 Brouncker Road, eight flats in two cottage blocks (Acton BC, W G Cross, Borough Engineer)

1932 – Acton Town Station rebuilt for Piccadilly Line extension, London Underground, Charles Holden, architect (listed)

1932-3 - United Women's Homes Association, Brook House, 100 Gunnersbury Lane, block of 32 flats

early 1930s - Ellerton Court, 9 Avenue Crescent, 13 flats, Moderne style

1936 - Gunnersbury Court, 73 flats, and Central Parade, flats over shops, Bollo Lane, J Stanley Beard, architect, Moderne/Art Deco style

1936 – Employment Exchange, Oldham Terrace (on site of St Mary's National School, latterly National Childbirth Trust premises)

1938 – Capel Arms Public House, Osborne Road (converted to hostel 2001)

1938-9 – Acton BC Fire Station, 23, 29 and 31 Gunnersbury Lane and Marble Close, one detached and nine semi-detached houses, fire brigade staff quarters (W G Cross, Borough Engineer)

1939 – Acton County (High) School, Gunnersbury Lane, W. T. Curtis, architect (to be rebuilt 2005-6)

1945 – Labour control of Acton BC for first time

1947 – public exhibition of 'comprehensive redevelopment' plans for South Acton

1948-9 – St Margaret's Lodge, 12 flats (Acton BC)

1949-50 – Bollo Court, 32 maisonettes, centrally heated (Acton BC)

1950-1 – Hatfield Court, Avenue Crescent, six flats, and James Welch Court, Heathfield Road, six flats (Acton BC)

1951 – Acton BC launches redevelopment of South Acton

1951-2 – 91-103 Gunnersbury Lane, seven flats, built-in fridges (Acton BC)

1952 – 98/100 Avenue Road, six flats (Acton BC)

1952-4 – Acton BC South Acton Redevelopment Stage 1: Woolf Court, 34 flats and off-licence, well-appointed kitchens

1953-4 – O'Day Court, Gunnersbury Lane, eight flats, also 10-48 and 1-31 Church Path, 39-49 Kent Road and Holmes Court, Fletcher Road, 74 flats and maisonettes (all Acton BC)

1954-6 – SA Stage 2: Wodehouse Court, 24 flats, and Verne Court, eight flats; also 67-113 Fletcher Road, 38-60 Kent Road and 33-43 Church Path, 47 flats and maisonettes (all Acton BC)

1955-9 (first planning 1953) – SA Stage 3: Grahame Tower (1955-8), Meredith and Conrad Towers, Galsworthy, Chesterton and Carroll Courts (drawings dated 1955, built 1957-9), 168 flats and maisonettes (soon known as Hanbury Estate, includes landscaping and playground)

1955-7 - 10-44 Reynolds Road, 18 flats/maisonettes (Acton BC)

1958 – Acton College, Middlesex County Council (including former school buildings of 1906 on Crown Street)

1958-60 – SA Stages 4 and 5A: 274-292 Osborne Road and 347-361 Bollo Lane, terraces of 10 and 8 houses; Buchan House, 11 shops, 37 flats/maisonettes and 15 garages, eight storeys

1958 onwards – gradual formation of industrial estate on area south of Bollo Bridge Road and west of Stanley Road

1959-60 - Shaw Court, 12 maisonettes

1959-62 – SA Stage 5B: Caine House, 46 flats/maisonettes, seven storeys

1960 – South Acton Tenants Association formed

1960-2 - Anstey House, 39 maisonettes, six storeys

1961-2 (planned 1959) - Maugham Court, 41 flats, seven storeys, Lawrence and Reade Courts, 12 flats each

1962-3 (first planning 1956) – SA Stage 6: Jerome Tower, 16 storeys, 94 flats (South Acton's first tower/point block – public given one-day access to roof terrace), and Doyle House, 16 flats; SA Stage 9A: 2-16 Enfield Road, terrace of eight houses

1963 – Palmerston Road railway bridge for former shuttle (ginny) removed

1963 – Hanbury Estate Tenants Association formed

1963-4 – SA Stage 10: Blackmore Tower, 16 storeys, 94 flats (as Jerome)

1963-4 - Clinic (Avenue House), Avenue Road, for Middlesex County Council, Douglas Stephen and Partners, architects

1963-5 – SA Stage 11: Kipling Tower, 12 storeys, 90 flats in a double tower

1964-5 – Recreation Ground – early-20<sup>th</sup>-century public lavatories to northwest demolished and replaced in a pavilion to southeast

1964-5 – SA Stage 12: Hardy Court, 12 shops and 22 maisonettes

1964-6 – SA Stage 9B: Bennett Court and Webb Court, 20 and 24 maisonettes, with meeting room

1965-6 (planning from 1963) - SA Stage 13A: Barwick House, 99 flats, 13 storeys (named after A. D. Barwick, former Alderman and active promoter of redevelopment of South Acton through the 1950s)

1965-7 (planning from 1963) – SA Stage 13B: Charles Hocking House, 96 flats, 13 storeys (named after former Acton BC librarian)

1965 – local government reorganisation – Ealing Borough Council formed (Thomas Norman l'Anson, Borough Architect from 1965 through 1970s)

1965-6 – South Acton Tenants' Association urges naming of blocks 'to help postmen and ambulance drivers'; Councillor Arthur Vinson, Chair of Housing Committee and I'Anson select names of late-19<sup>th</sup>- and early-20<sup>th</sup>-century authors

1966-7 – SA Stage 14: Barrie House, 100 flats, 21 storeys (tallest South Acton block, dem. 2001)

c.1966 - 118 Avenue Road, private speculation of nine flats

1967-8 - Bollo Brook (Hanbury) Day Nursery, Park Road North (dem. c.2003)

1967-8 - Bollo Brook Play (Youth) Centre (including rest garden and adventure playground)

c.1967- South Acton Working Men's Club, Strafford Road, rebuilt after a fire

late 1960s - 43-9 Gunnersbury Lane, private speculation of 16 flats over garage/petrol station

1968 – road closures (Strafford Road, Osborne Road, Park Road North and Park Road East)

1968-9 - Anchor Public House, Bollo Bridge Road, Modernist lounge bar extension, two circle-plan blocks known as 'beehives' or 'oasthouses'

1968-71 (planned 1965, drawings 1966-7) – SA Stage 15: Corfe, Harlech, Beaumaris Towers, 75, 76 and 77 flats, 13 storeys; Pevensey and Glamis Courts, 16 maisonettes each; and Arundel Court, 20 flats for elderly

1971– trees planted to west of Charles Hocking House

1971-2 (planned from 1968) – SA Stage 16: Ludlow and Carisbrooke Courts, 54 flats each, seven storeys, and Pembroke Court, 40 flats for elderly

1971-4 - Acton British Legion Clubhouse (Hawkesbrook Social Club), Church Road (on former brewery/plaque factory site)

1972-4 - Church Road Social Centre (Michael Flanders Centre), day centre for elderly and handicapped; Berrymede First (Infant) School, open-plan layout; Heathfield Nursery School, Park Road North

early 1970s – training centre for disabled, Stirling Road

early 1970s - Women's Pioneer Housing Ltd, 100 Gunnersbury Lane, 16 flats in two blocks

early 1970s - 33-5 Fletcher Road, private housing

1973 – Sir George Young's survey critical of tower blocks and South Acton Estate

1973 – allotments (called 'leisure gardens') remade and extended alongside railway near South Acton station

1974 - Sycamore Lodge, Cheltenham Place, housing for elderly

1974-5 (altered/rebuilt 1979/80 and 1982-3) - Oak Tree Community Centre

1974-9 (planned from 1967, revised 1969-71) – South Acton Extension or Phase II: Belgrave Close, Buckland Walk, Cheltenham Place, 81-139 Church Road, Clandon Close and Ragley Close, 178 maisonettes in 18 low-rise blocks; Barrington, Frampton, Arlington Courts, 193 flats in three 11-storey towers; Harleyford Manor, 37 flats for the elderly

c.1975-8 - Acton Health Centre, Church Road

1976-9 (planned from 1972) – Beaconsfield Estate, 128 LB Ealing flats, Hutchison, Locke and Monk, architects

1977-9 - Neville Close, Acton Lane, 70 LB Ealing flats and houses on site of H. W. Nevill Ltd's bakery, which also occupied Berrymead Priory

1977 – report on South Acton Estate by Simon Morris for Sir George Young

late 1970s - Leythe Court, 2A Leythe Road, 11 flats (housing association)

late 1970s (b/w 1972 and 1987) - 29-45 Beaumont Road, nine houses

late 1970s – 24 and 26 Brouncker Road, two houses (private)

1980-2 – consultations by NACRO, improvement to entrances etc at Beaumaris, Corfe and Harlech (further alterations in 1989-90)

1982-3 - Grahame, Meredith and Conrad ground floors infilled

1983 – Bollo Book adventure playground formed

c.1982-7 - Garden Court, Rothschild Road, 42 flats for frail elderly, LB Ealing (on site of Rothschild Primary School)

early 1980s - Beaulieu Place and 22-24 and 30-32 Rothschild Road, 32 flats (private)

early 1980s – 1-7 Roman Close, and 49/51 Avenue Gardens, 13 houses (private)

early 1980s - Cromwell Place, off Acton High Street, 56 flats in three blocks, gated private development

mid/late 1980s - Sunninghill Court, Bollo Bridge Road, 39 private flats on site of All Saints Church (dem. 1982); Copenhagen Gardens, Southfield Road

1984 – Berrymead Priory demolished

1985 - All Saints Church Centre replaces Parish Hall across Bollo Bridge Road

1986-7 – Bungalows for elderly to west of Arundel House (LB Ealing); Barwick and Charles Hocking ground floors infilled

1986-c.1994 - 1-6 Telfer Close and 20-24 Church Road, nine houses for disabled (LB Ealing)

1987-8 – Carisbrooke and Ludlow given pitched roofs

late 1980s (b/w 1977 and 1987) - De Courcey Court, 117 Avenue Road, eight flats (private) on the site of a detached house; Chapter Close and 50-54 Church Path, six houses (private)

c.1987-c.1991 - The Grange, 114 Avenue Road, 17 flats in two private blocks on site of last laundry not on the industrial estate

1989 - Sidney Miller Court, Crown Street, flats over shops, five storeys, Notting Hill Housing Trust, Lanchester & Lodge, architects

1990 – ‘Red brick’ area underground garages sealed off

c.1990 - 2-28 Avenue Road and 33-8 Winchester Street, 18 flats and two houses

1991-2 – Maugham and Verne given pitched roofs; entrance alterations at Kipling, Blackmore and Jerome

1991-2 – Safeways, King Street, Miller, Bourne & Partners, architects

early 1990s - Baron’s Gate and 33-35 Rothschild Road, eight private houses

c.1995 – Oaks Shopping Centre, arcaded complex replacing an open shopping precinct of the 1960s

mid/late 1990s - Lombard Court, Crown Street, flats over shops; Kingswood Terrace, 20 flats in five blocks; Amelia Close, Gunnersbury Lane, three blocks; 83 Mill Hill Road and 42 Fletcher Road, single houses (all private)

1996 – LB Ealing first discusses ‘comprehensive regeneration’ of South Acton

1997 – South Acton Residents Action Group (SARAG) formed

late 1990s - Cooper’s Court, off Church Road and Edgecote Close (former site of Co-op), flats; 2-8 Church Path and 17-25 Scott Court, Acton Lane, houses, all private

1999-2000 - 170A-F Bollo Bridge Road, six houses on site of Harbour Lights (ex-Anchor) Public House (Ealing Family Housing Association), John Thompson and Partners, architects

1999-2000 – Jerome Tower gains a concierge; Shaw Court refronted

1999-2001 - Langford Close, Mill Hill Road, three private houses

c.2000 – 47-9 Ramsay Road, two private houses

2001 – Demolition of Barrie House

2001 – Padilla Place, Acton Lane and Fletcher Road

2001-2 – Acton Hospital, Gunnersbury Lane, rebuilt as nursing care home, 124 beds in two units, Ealing Family Housing Association, HTA Architects Ltd

2002 – Ealing City Learning Centre (Ron Greer Centre, after former head of Acton High School)

c.2002-3 – Holland Court, Langley Drive, house rebuilt as housing association flats

2002-4 - Phase 1 of South Acton regeneration: 86 mixed tenure homes for LB Ealing and Ealing Family Housing Association, John Thompson and Partners, architects



Appleby Court, 48 flats; 1-17 Newport Road, nine houses; Flats 1-6 and 1-7 Park Road North, six flats and seven houses, 1-11 Hope Gardens, six flats and five houses; associated and more extensive boundary walls; 45-53 Brouncker Road, five houses

2003-4 - Acton Housing Association development of former Crown Cinema site behind 191 Acton High Street on Mill Hill Terrace

2004 – Planning for Phase 2 of South Acton regeneration for LB Ealing and Catalyst Housing Group, ECD Architects and Proctor and Matthews, architects; Ealing Homes (Arms Length Management Organisation) formed

## APPENDIX 2: GAZETTEER OF PUBLIC HOUSING IN SOUTH ACTON

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Unless otherwise indicated all designs were prepared by Acton Borough Council (to 1965) and Ealing Borough Council (after 1965), under Borough Engineers, William George Cross in the 1930s, and Stanley William Slight from 1948 to 1964, and the Borough Architect, Thomas Norman I'Anson, from 1965.

Sources: Acton Borough Council and London Borough of Ealing Minutes and as specified

**Anstey Court/House**, 1-77 Enfield Road, 1960-2, 39 flats and maisonettes in a six- and seven-storey slab block, built by W. J. Marston and Son Ltd for £104,268 12 10 of an estimated total of £122,580, reinforced-concrete and brick cross-wall frame with pile foundations (made by Soil Mechanics Ltd), middle level of maisonettes has bedrooms on lower floor to avoid any living spaces being directly over any sleeping spaces, toughened and frosted glass access balconies to front, flat roof, ornamental ball railings to forecourt, named after Thomas Anstey Guthrie (aka F. Anstey) (1856-1934), novelist who also wrote for *Punch*

**Appleby Court**, 2002-4 (Phase 1 of South Acton Regeneration), 48 flats in a four-storey U-shaped range, mixed tenure homes for LB Ealing and Ealing Family Housing Association, John Thompson and Partners, architects, Higgins Construction PLC, contractors, yellow-stock brick, inner entrances to north, outer steel balconies to south, monopitch roofs

**Arlington Court**, Mill Hill Terrace, 1976-9 (SA Extension or Phase II, planned from 1967, revised 1969-71), 66 one-bedroom flats in an eleven-storey tower of tripartite form, built by William Sindall Construction Ltd, red brick on a reinforced-concrete frame, no balconies, flat roof (LBE Building Control 3850)

**Arundel Court/House**, Park Road North, 1968-71 (SA Stage 15, planned from 1965), 20 bedsit and one-bedroom flats for the elderly in a two-storey L-plan block, built by Thomas McInerney and Sons (total for Stage 15 contract £1,200,800), brown brick on reinforced-concrete frame, balcony to north, flat roof, named after Arundel Castle. Pair of one-bed bungalows for elderly added to west in 1986-7, for estimated £69,250, brick with hipped roof (LBE Building Control, LB 5273)

**98/100 Avenue Road**, 1952, six two-bedroom flats in two linked three-storey blocks, built by G. Ward (Ealing) Ltd for £10,092 4 8, red brick with hipped tiled roofs, no balconies, rents 27s8d (ELHC, A/MB/H1/132)

**Barrie House**, 1966-7 (SA Stage 14, planned 1964), 100 (19 one-bedroom, 61 two-bedroom and 20 three-bedroom) flats in a 21-storey tower (tallest block in South Acton), built by Y. J. Lovell for £391,622, pre-stressed reinforced-concrete frame on pile foundations (designed and made by G. K. N. Reinforcements Ltd), recessed balconies, aerofoil roof, windows replaced 1982, demolished 2001, named after Sir James Matthew Barrie (1860-1937), author of *Peter Pan*

**Barrington Court**, 1976-9 (SA Extension or Phase II, planned from 1967, revised 1969-71), 63 one-bedroom flats in an eleven-storey tower of tripartite form, built by William Sindall Construction Ltd, red brick on a reinforced-concrete frame, no balconies, flat roof, named after Barrington Park, an early-18<sup>th</sup>-century house in Gloucestershire (LBE Building Control 3850)

**Barwick House**, 1965-6 (SA Stage 13A, planned from 1963), 99 dwellings (six one-bedroom and nine two-bedroom flats, 28 one-bedroom maisonettes, 28 two-bedroom maisonettes and 28 three-bedroom maisonettes) in a 13-storey slab block, built by Y. J. Lovell for an estimated £330,000 (and with Charles Hocking House for a total £776,562), pre-stressed reinforced-

concrete frame on pile foundations (made by Holmpress Piles Ltd), end wall brick facings, recessed balconies, open ground floor, flat roof, ground floor infilled and windows replaced 1986, named after Albert (Barry) D. Barwick, Acton Borough Councillor and leading promoter of South Acton's redevelopment through the 1950s

**Beaconsfield Estate**, 1976-9 (planned from 1972), 128 flats in low-rise blocks, Hutchison, Locke and Monk, architects, red brick, pitched roofs, front doors on streets

**Beaumaris Tower**, Park Road North, 1968-71 (SA Stage 15, planned from 1965), 75 flats in a 13-storey tower, built by Thomas McInerney and Sons (total for Stage 15 contract £1,200,800), reinforced concrete, projecting balconies, flat roof, named after Beaumaris Castle; consultations by NACRO, improvement to entrances etc 1980-2, further alterations in 1989-90 (LBE Building Control, LB 5273)

**Belgrave Close**, off Avenue Road, 1974-9 (SA Extension or Phase II, planned from 1967, revised 1969-71), 45 maisonettes in four low-rise blocks of three and four storeys laid out in an irregular U plan (including 26-74 Cheltenham Place), built by William Sindall Construction Ltd, red brick on reinforced-concrete frame, balcony access, private gardens, flat roofs (LBE Building Control 3850), named after a seat of the Duke of Westminster in Cheshire

**Bennett Court**, 18-56 Enfield Road, 1964-6 (SA Stage 9B, planned 1961), 20 two- and three-bedroom maisonettes in a four-storey block, built by Joseph Cartwright Ltd with Webb Court for a combined total of £196,540 12 5, load-bearing brickwork, cross-wall construction, openwork concrete blocks in entrance bay, recessed balconies, flat roof, link to Webb Court with shared lift tower, thermostatic central-heating system and meeting room, windows replaced 1984-5, named after Enoch Arnold Bennett (1867-1931), novelist

**Blackmore Tower**, 1-187 Stanley Road, 1963-4 (SA Stage 10, planned 1961), 94 (30 bedsit and 64 two-bedroom) flats in 16 storeys (a replica of Jerome Tower), built by Tersons Ltd for £270,457, pre-stressed reinforced-concrete frame (designed by G. K. N. Reinforcements Ltd) on pile foundations (made by Soil Mechanics Ltd), recessed balconies to south, aerofoil roof, geometric decorative tile panel beside entrance, windows replaced 1978-9, entrance alterations, 1991-2, named after Richard Doddridge Blackmore (1825-1900), novelist, author of *Lorna Doone*, and poet

**Bollo Court**, Bollo Bridge Road, 1949-50, 32 maisonettes (28 3-bedroom and 4 2-bedroom) in a four-storey H-plan block, built by John Lewis Building Ltd of Marylebone for £57,103 6 3, red (Dorking) brick with darker brick dressings, window reveals, moulded cornices and white painted balconies, hollow-block floors and concrete staircases, hipped tiled roofs, yard for clothes drying and playground, early instance of central heating which was included in rents of from 32s 10d to 41s 9d, Electrolux refrigerators installed in 1953-4 for additional 2s rent, windows replaced 1983-4 (ELHC, A/MB/H1/89; AG, 28/7/50, 1)

**363-371 Bollo Lane and 79-83 Enfield Road (originally known as Enfield Road Flats)**, 1931, eight two-bedroom flats in a two-storey L-plan cottage block, built by James Alexander Perriss of 156 East Acton Lane for £4007 18 7, rents 13s 3d to 15s 5d, stuccoed brick, hipped tiled roof (ELHC, A/MB/H1/2)

**347-361 Bollo Lane**, 1958-61 (SA Stage 4), terrace of eight four-bedroom three-storey houses, built by Perrys (Ealing) Ltd, double front entrances in recessed ground floor to keep utility access away from garden, brick cross-wall construction, pitched copper-clad roofs, windows replaced 1986-7

**81-95 Brouncker Road**, 1932, eight 3-bedroom flats in two two-storey cottage blocks, built by Ernest Robert Hoad (Hoad & Son) of Wembley for £3,449 10 0, stuccoed brick, hipped tiled roofs (ELHC, A/MB/H1/3)

**45-53 Brouncker Road**, 2002-4 (Phase 1 of South Acton regeneration), five two-storey houses for LB Ealing and Ealing Family Housing Association, John Thompson and Partners, architects, Higgins Construction PLC, contractors, stock brick, pitched roofs, ground-floor bay windows

**Buchan House**, 5-25 Hanbury Road, 1958-60 (SA Stage 5A), 37 flats and maisonettes and 11 shops in a seven- and eight-storey slab block, built with 15 garages, pile foundations by Expanded Piling Co Ltd, built by Rush and Tompkins for an estimated £158,915, reinforced-concrete frame with brick cross walls, mosaic panel at entrance, lift, access to rear from balconies with toughened frosted glass fronts with windbreaks, recessed private balconies to front, first shop tenants: A. E. Toye, grocer; A. T. Darrington Ltd, butcher; G. T. Richards, newsagent, tobacconist, confectioner and stationer; E. A. Drewett (Hazelwood greengrocers); M. A. Pascall, radio and TV; M. T. Birken, ladies' clothes; R. B. Sillett, ladies' hairdresser; F. A. Walker, dry cleaner; J. C. Burns and J. F. Gardner, bedding and furniture; V. G. Beatty, chemist; an un-specified launderette, named after John Buchan (1875-1940), author of *The Thirty-nine Steps*

**Buckland Walk**, off Cheltenham Place, 1974-9 (SA Extension or Phase II, planned from 1967, revised 1969-71), 20 maisonettes in four small low-rise blocks of three and four storeys laid out irregularly (including 11-29 Cheltenham Place), built by William Sindall Construction Ltd, red brick on reinforced-concrete frames, access from raised terrace over car parking, flat roofs, probably named after Buckland Abbey, Devon (LBE Building Control 3850)

**Caine House**, 2-88 Hanbury Road, 1959-62 (SA Stage 5B), one bedsit, three one-bedroom and thirty two-bedroom flats and twelve three-bedroom maisonettes in a six- and seven-storey slab block, built by W. J. Marston and Son Ltd for £115,681 2 3, with pile foundations by Soil Mechanics Ltd, in an estimated total cost of £138,455, reinforced-concrete frame with brick cross walls, recessed balconies to maisonettes at north end with middle level bedrooms on lower floor to avoid any living spaces being directly over any sleeping spaces, flat roof with shaped heads to lift shafts, windows replaced 1978-9, named after Sir Thomas Henry Hall Caine (1853-1931), novelist

**Carisbrooke Court**, off Park Road East, 1971-2 (SA Stage 16, planned from 1968), 54 (18 one-bedroom and 36 two-bedroom) flats in a seven-storey block, built by A. E. A. Prowting (total for Stage 16 £793,750), Fletton brick walls with reinforced-concrete framing and floor slabs, no balconies, projecting stair turrets, ground-floor integral garages on west side, flat roof, named after Carisbrooke Castle, pitched and tiled roof added in 1987-8 by W. S. Try Ltd (LBE Building Control 11679)

**Carroll Court**, 101-139 Osborne Road, 1957-9 (SA Stage 3, first planned 1953, drawings dated 1955), 20 flats in a four-storey block, built by Rush and Tompkins Ltd of Westminster as one of five blocks for a total of £379,865, load-bearing Sussex Grey and Tuscan red bricks, cedarwood shingle panels, recessed balcony access with toughened and frosted glass, projecting asymmetrically railed living-room balconies to rear, kitchens and bathrooms to front, flat roof, rents 30s 5d to 57s 2d including central heating, part of Hanbury Estate, with landscaped courtyard and playground to rear, windows replaced 1983-4, named after Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (aka Lewis Carroll) (1832-98), author of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*

**Cheltenham Place**, 1974-9 (SA Extension or Phase II, planned from 1967, revised 1969-71), ten maisonettes in a low-rise block of three and four storeys (see Belgrave Close), built by William Sindall Construction Ltd, red brick on reinforced-concrete frames, flat roofs, named

after small court that antedated redevelopment. No. 2 Cheltenham Place built as a children's home (LBE Building Control 3850)

**Chesteron Court**, 206-236 Bollo Bridge Road, 1957-9 (SA Stage 3, first planned 1953, drawings dated 1955), 16 flats in a four-storey block, built by Rush and Tompkins Ltd of Westminster as one of five blocks for a total of £379,865, load-bearing Sussex Grey and Tuscan red bricks, cedarwood shingle panels, recessed balcony access with toughened and frosted glass, projecting asymmetrically railed living-room balconies to rear, kitchens and bathrooms to front, flat roof, rents 30s 5d to 57s 2d including central heating, part of Hanbury Estate, facing landscaped courtyard and playground, windows replaced 1983-4, named after Gilbert Keith Chesteron (1874-1936), essayist, novelist and poet

**10-48 Church Path**, 1952-4, 20 (one bedsit, ten two-bedroom and nine three-bedroom flats) in two five-storey blocks, built by Wesley Builders Ltd for £37,998 7 9, brown brick, lift, rents 17s 2d to 36s 1d

**1-31 Church Path**, 1952-4, 16 (four two-bedroom and 12 three-bedroom) flats in a four-storey block, built by J. A. Tyler and Sons with 39-49 Kent Road for total £42,707, brown brick with diapering, shaped porches, rents 30s 2d and 36s 1d

**33-43 Church Path**, 1953-6, eight (four two-bedroom and four three-bedroom) flats in a four-storey block, built with 38-60 Kent Road by C. Royal and Co Ltd for total £35,409 9 4, brown brick, windows in projecting reveals, shaped porch, flat roof, rents 33s and 38s

**81-99 and 101-139 Church Road**, 1974-6 (SA Extension or Phase II, planned from 1967, revised 1969-71), thirty maisonettes in four low-rise blocks in two T-plan pairs of three and four storeys, built by William Sindall Construction Ltd, red brick on reinforced-concrete frame, access balconies to rear, private gardens, flat roofs (LBE Building Control 3850)

**20-24 Church Road**, 1986-c.1994, three three-bedroom bungalows for disabled built for an estimated £157,095, red brick, pitched roofs

**Clandon Close**, off Avenue Road, 1974-9 (SA Extension or Phase II, planned from 1967, revised 1969-71), 33 maisonettes in two low-rise blocks of three and four storeys on an L plan, built by William Sindall Construction Ltd, red brick on reinforced-concrete frame, access on inner sides from raised terraces, flat roofs, named after Clandon Park, an early-18<sup>th</sup>-century country house in Surrey (LBE Building Control 3850)

**Conrad Tower**, 231-345 Bollo Lane, 1957-9 (SA Stage 3, first planned 1953, drawings dated 1955), 58 (ten one-bedroom, thirty-one two-bedroom and seventeen three-bedroom) flats in a nine-storey slab block, 231ft (69m) long by 80ft (24m) high, built by Rush and Tompkins Ltd of Westminster as one of five blocks for total £379,865, reinforced-concrete frame (designed by Reinforced Concrete Steel Co Ltd) on separately contracted 30ft (9m) pile foundations (made by Simplex Concrete Piles Ltd), open ground floor and flat roof with drying areas/rooms, pram stores and amplifier, Golden Buff brick ends and tile facings, mosaic panel at entrance, toughened and frosted glass access balconies and wind breaks to east, private balconies with zig-zag railings on other elevations, recessed to west, two lifts, kitchens fitted for refrigerators, rents 30s5d to 57s2d including central heating (part of the Hanbury Estate, facing a landscaped courtyard and playground), ground floor infilled with four more flats and windows replaced 1982-3, roof terrace enclosed, named after Joseph Conrad (1857-1924), author of *Lord Jim*, *Heart of Darkness*, etc.

**Corfe Tower**, off Park Road East, 1968-71 (SA Stage 15, planned from 1965) 77 flats in a 13-storey tower, built by Thomas McInerney and Sons (total for Stage 15 contract £1,200,800),

reinforced concrete, projecting balconies, flat roof, named after Corfe Castle, consultations by NACRO, improvement to entrances etc 1980-2, further alterations in 1989-90 (LBE Building Control, LB 5273)

**Doyle House**, 222-252 Osborne Road, 1962-3 (SA Stage 6, first planned 1956), sixteen (twelve one-bedroom and four three-bedroom) flats in a four-storey block, built by Tersons Ltd for an estimated £39,000, load-bearing pinkish brick with concrete floors, projecting access balconies to front, flat roof, heated via Jerome Tower's system with which it was built, named after Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930), author of the Sherlock Holmes stories

**2-16 Enfield Road**, 1962-3 (SA Stage 9A), terrace of eight four-bedroom three-storey houses, built by Circle Construction Co Ltd for £34,317 8 4, double front entrances in recessed ground floor to keep utility access away from garden, brick cross-wall construction, cedar-wood shingle panels, flat roof, windows replaced 1986-7

**67-113 Fletcher Road**, 1953-6, 24 three-bedroom maisonettes in two linked four-storey ranges, built by Orchard and Peer (London) Ltd for £49,985, brown brick, recessed balconies, tall entrance and staircase bay reveals, flat roofs, rents 34s 9d (ELHC, A/MB/H1/160)

**Frampton Court**, off Avenue Road, 1976-9 (SA Extension or Phase II, planned from 1967, revised 1969-71), 64 one-bedroom flats in an eleven-storey tower of tripartite form, built by William Sindall Construction Ltd, red brick on a reinforced-concrete frame, no balconies, entrance to rear, flat roof, named after Frampton Court, an early-18<sup>th</sup>-century country house in Gloucestershire (LBE Building Control 3850)

**Galsworthy Court**, 300-330 Bollo Bridge Road, 1957-9 (SA Stage 3, first planned 1953, drawings dated 1955), 16 flats in a four-storey block, built by Rush and Tompkins Ltd of Westminster as one of five blocks for a total of £379,865, load-bearing Sussex Grey and Tuscan red bricks, cedarwood shingle panels, recessed balcony access with toughened and frosted glass, projecting asymmetrically railed living-room balconies to rear, kitchens and bathrooms to front, flat roof, rents 30s 5d to 57s 2d including central heating, part of Hanbury Estate, with landscaped courtyard and playground to rear, windows replaced 1983-4, named after John Galsworthy (1867-1933), novelist and playwright

**Garden Court**, Rothschild Road, c.1982-7, 40 one-person and two two-person flats for the 'very frail elderly' in one- and three-storey ranges, built for an estimated £1,407,000 (on site of Rothschild Primary School), brown brick, pitched roofs

**Glamis Court**, Park Road North, 1968-71 (SA Stage 15, planned from 1965), 15 three-bedroom maisonettes and a one-bedroom flat in two four-storey blocks linked by lower staircase bay, built by Thomas McInerney and Sons (total for Stage 15 contract £1,200,800), brown brick with a reinforced-concrete frame, entrance levels recessed, as access balconies for upper maisonettes, named after Glamis Castle (LBE Building Control, LB 5273)

**Grahame Tower**, 93-205 Hanbury Road, 1955-8 (SA Stage 3, first planned 1953), 57 (nine one-bedroom, thirty-one two-bedroom and seventeen three-bedroom) flats in a nine-storey slab block, 231ft (69m) long by 80ft (24m) high, built by Perrys (Ealing) Ltd for £139,212 of an estimated total £152,656, reinforced-concrete frame (designed by Reinforced Concrete Steel Co Ltd) on separately contracted 30ft (9m) pile foundations (made by Simplex Concrete Piles Ltd), open ground floor and flat roof with drying areas/rooms, pram stores and amplifier, Golden Buff brick ends and tile facings, mosaic panel at entrance, toughened and frosted glass access balconies and wind breaks to east, private balconies with zig-zag railings on other elevations, recessed to west, two lifts, kitchens fitted for refrigerators, rents 30s 5d to 57s 2d including central heating, ground floor infilled with five more flats and windows replaced 1982-3, roof

terrace enclosed, named after Kenneth Grahame (1859-1932), author of *The Wind in the Willows*

**91-103 Gunnersbury Lane**, 1951-2, seven (six two-bedroom and one one-bedroom) flats in L-plan three- and four-storey blocks, built by Circle Construction Co Ltd of Wembley for £13,111 11, red brick, originally with flat roofs, rents of 28s 6d and 22s 6d, built-in fridges, altered with hipped roofs (ELHC, A/MB/H1/131)

**Hardy Court**, 96-162 Bollo Bridge Road, 1964-5 (SA Stage 12, planned 1962), 12 shops and 22 three-bedroom maisonettes in a L-plan block, five-storey front range, with single-storey shop range to rear, built by Tersons Ltd for £131,600, reinforced-concrete and brick cross-wall construction, recessed balconies, end stair turrets, flat roofs, part open ground floor, raised and railed forecourt with patterned paving, and later circle-pattern courtyard to rear, first shop tenants (as agreed in 1964): Kenbury Engineering Ltd, laundry receiving office; J. Dortort, coin-op laundry; J. Miller Ltd, baker, confectioner and pastry cook; Roberts and Thomson Ltd, newsagent, confectioner and stationer; F. Hawkins and Co. Ltd, self-service grocery and provision (2 units); G. A. Osborne, greengrocer; W. H. Hunt, butcher; Joseph Dwane, men's hairdresser; Leonard Hendy Ltd, ladies' hairdresser, windows replaced 1982 and 1988-90, named after Thomas Hardy (1840-1928), author of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, etc.

**Harlech Tower**, off Park Road East, 1968-71 (SA Stage 15, planned from 1965), 76 flats in a 13-storey tower, built by Thomas McInerney and Sons (total for Stage 15 contract £1,200,800), reinforced concrete, projecting balconies, flat roof, named after Harlech Castle, consultations by NACRO, improvement to entrances etc 1980-2, further alterations in 1989-90 (LBE Building Control, LB 5273)

**Harleyford Manor**, Cheltenham Place, 1974-9 (SA Extension or Phase II, planned from 1967, revised 1969-71), 37 bedsit and one-bedroom flats for the elderly in a four-storey L-plan block, built by William Sindall Construction Ltd, red brick on reinforced-concrete frame, balconies, flat roof, named after Harleyford Manor, a mid-18<sup>th</sup>-century country house in Buckinghamshire

**Hatfield Court**, Avenue Crescent, 1950-1, six two-bedroom flats in a three-storey block, built by Circle Construction Co Ltd of Wembley for £9,032 3 10, red brick with stuccoed balconies, hipped tiled roof, rents 26s 5d (ELHC, A/MB/H1/109)

**Charles Hocking House**, off Bollo Bridge Road, 1965-7 (SA Stage 13B, planned from 1963), 96 (34 one-bedroom, 34 two-bedroom and 28 three-bedroom) flats in a 13-storey slab block, built by Y. J. Lovell with Barwick House for a total of £776,562, pre-stressed reinforced-concrete frame on pile foundations (made by The Cementation Co Ltd), recessed balconies, end wall brick facings, open ground floor, flat roof, ground floor infilled with five more flats and windows replaced 1986, named after Charles Hocking (1886-1965), Acton Borough Council librarian

**Holmes Court**, Fletcher Road, 1952-4, 12 three-bedroom flats in three linked four-storey blocks, built by G. Ward (Ealing) Ltd for £24,244 15 5, brown brick, porthole windows, rents 36s 1d, hipped tiled roofs added, named after H. Holmes, an Acton Borough Council Conservative councillor (ELHC, A/MB/H1/150)

**1-11 Hope Gardens**, 2002-4 (Phase 1 of South Acton regeneration), a terrace of six flats and five houses in two and three storeys; mixed tenure homes for LB Ealing and Ealing Family Housing Association, John Thompson and Partners, architects, Higgins Construction PLC, contractors, red brick and stucco, pitched roofs

**Jerome Tower**, 34-220 Osborne Road, 1962-3 (SA Stage 6, first planned 1956, drawings prepared 1959), 94 (30 bedsit and 64 two-bedroom) flats in 16 storeys, built by Tersons Ltd for

an estimated £264,000, pre-stressed reinforced-concrete frame (designed by G. K. N. Reinforcements Ltd) on pile foundations (made by Soil Mechanics Ltd), recessed balconies to south, aerofoil roof terrace originally enclosed by a glass screen, originally heated by hot air circulated by electric fans thermostatically set and variably paid for by tenants, communal coin-op clothes drying, workshop and play rooms in basement, South Acton's first tower/point block; the public was given one-day ticketed access to the roof terrace in the spring of 1964, disabled access ramp added 1972, windows replaced 1974-6, entrance alterations 1991-2, named after Jerome K. Jerome (1859-1927), author of *Three Men in a Boat* etc.

**39-49 Kent Road**, 1952-4, six three-bedroom flats in a three-storey block, built by J. A. Tyler and Sons with 1-31 Church Path for total £42,707, brown brick with diapering, shaped porch, rents 36s 1d (ELHC, A/MB/H1/152)

**38-60 Kent Road**, 1953-6, 12 flats (three one-bedroom, three two-bedroom and six three-bedroom) in two three-storey blocks, built with 33-43 Church Path by C. Royal and Co Ltd for total £35,409 9 4, brown brick, windows in projecting reveals, flat roof, rents 21s to 38s (ELHC, A/MB/H1/163)

**Kipling Tower**, 1-179 Palmerston Road, 1963-5 (SA Stage 11, planned 1961), 90 (44 one-bedroom, 22 two-bedroom and 24 three-bedroom) flats in 12-storey double tower, built by Tersons Ltd for £319,800, pre-stressed reinforced-concrete frames on pile foundations (made by Soil Mechanics Ltd), projecting balconies, central lifts, end entrances and staircases, flat roof, communal spaces converted to five more flats, windows replaced 1986-7, entrance alterations 1991-2, named after Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), author of *Kim*, *Just So Stories*, etc.

**Lawrence Court**, 189-211 Stanley Road, 1961-2 (planned 1959), six one-bedroom flats and six three- and four-bedroom maisonettes in a three-storey block, built by W. J. Whittall and Son Ltd with Maugham and Reade Courts for total of £158,889 6 6, brick cross-wall construction, yellow and black tile panels to entrance bay, first-floor recessed balconies, flat roof, named after D. H. Lawrence, author of *Sons and Lovers* etc

**Ludlow Court**, off Park Road East, 1971-2 (SA Stage 16, planned from 1968), 54 (18 one-bedroom and 36 two-bedroom) flats in a seven-storey block, built by A. E. A. Prowting (total for Stage 16 £793,750), Fletton brick walls with reinforced-concrete framing and floor slabs, no balconies, projecting stair turrets, ground-floor integral garages on west side, flat roof, pitched and tiled roof added in 1987-8 by W. S. Try Ltd, named after Ludlow Castle (LBE Building Control 11679)

**Maugham Court**, 24-104 Palmerston Road, 1961-2 (planned 1959), 41 (bedsit, two- and three-bedroom) flats in a seven-storey block, built by W. J. Whittall and Son Ltd with Lawrence and Reade Courts for total of £158,889 6 6, reinforced-concrete frame on pile foundations (made by F. C. Construction Co. Ltd), brown brick ends, two lifts, mosaic panels, balconies, those to front angled, flat roof, hipped gambrel roof added in 1991-2 by BASM, windows replaced in 1995, named after William Somerset Maugham (1874-1965), author of *Cakes and Ale* etc.

**Meredith Tower**, 90-204 Hanbury Road, 1957-9 (SA Stage 3, first planned 1953, drawings dated 1955), 58 (ten one-bedroom, thirty-one two-bedroom and seventeen three-bedroom) flats in a nine-storey slab block, 231ft (69m) long by 80ft (24m) high, built by Rush and Tompkins Ltd of Westminster as one of five blocks for total £379,865, reinforced-concrete frame (designed by Reinforced Concrete Steel Co Ltd) on separately contracted 30ft (9m) pile foundations (made by Simplex Concrete Piles Ltd), open ground floor and flat roof with drying areas/rooms, pram stores and amplifier, Golden Buff brick ends and tile facings, mosaic panel at entrance, toughened and frosted glass access balconies and wind breaks to east, private balconies with zig-zag railings on other elevations, recessed to west, two lifts, kitchens fitted for refrigerators,



rents 30s 5d to 57s 2d including central heating, part of the Hanbury Estate, with a landscaped courtyard and playground to rear, ground floor infilled with four more flats and windows replaced 1982-3, roof terrace enclosed, named after George Meredith (1828-1909), novelist and poet

**Neville Close**, Acton Lane, 1977-9, 70 flats and houses in low-rise ranges, yellow stock brick, balconies, pitched and mansard roofs. Named after W.H. Nevill Ltd's bakery which had previously occupied the site, at the rear of which stood Berrymead Priory.

**1-17 Newport Road**, 2002-4 (Phase 1 of South Acton regeneration): a terrace of nine houses of two and three storeys, for LB Ealing and Ealing Family Housing Association, John Thompson and Partners, architects, Higgins Construction PLC, contractors, red brick and stucco, pitched roofs

**O'Day Court**, Gunnersbury Lane, 1953-4, eight (four one-bedroom and four two-bedroom) flats in two linked four-storey blocks, built by E. J. Lacy and Co Ltd for £15,636 11 6, red brick, artificial stone window surrounds, porthole windows, recessed balconies, blue-tile panels, hipped tiled roofs, rents 24s 10d and 32s 2d, named after Charles O'Day, a long-serving Acton Borough Councillor (ELHC, A/MB/H1/149)

**274-292 Osborne Road**, 1958-61 (SA Stage 4), terrace of ten four-bedroom three-storey houses, built by Perrys (Ealing) Ltd, double front entrances in recessed ground floor to keep utility access away from garden, brick cross-wall construction, pitched copper-clad roofs, windows replaced 1982

**Flats 1-6 and 1-7 Park Road North**, 2002-4 (Phase 1 of South Acton regeneration), terraces of six flats and seven houses in two and three storeys, for LB Ealing and Ealing Family Housing Association, John Thompson and Partners, architects, Higgins Construction PLC, contractors, red brick and stucco, pitched roofs

**Pembroke Court**, Park Road East, 1971-2 (SA Stage 16, planned from 1968), 40 one-bedroom flats for elderly in a four-storey block with single-storey common room and warden's flat ranges to north forming a T on plan, built by A. E. A. Prowting (total for Stage 16 £793,750), Fletton brick walls with reinforced-concrete framing and floor slabs, no balconies, flat roof, named after Pembroke Castle (LBE Building Control 11679)

**Pevensey Court**, Park Road North, 1968-71 (SA Stage 15, planned from 1965), 15 three-bedroom maisonettes and a one-bedroom flat in two four-storey blocks linked by lower staircase bay, built by Thomas McInerney and Sons (total for Stage 15 contract £1,200,800), brown brick with a reinforced-concrete frame, entrance levels recessed, as access balconies for upper maisonettes, named after Pevensey Castle (LBE Building Control, LB 5273)

**Ragley Close**, off Avenue Road, 1974-9 (SA Extension or Phase II, planned from 1967, revised 1969-71), 40 maisonettes with three shop units in three U-plan low-rise blocks of three and four storeys, built by William Sindall Construction Ltd, red brick on reinforced-concrete frames, balcony access on raised terrace over car parking, flat roofs, named after Ragley Hall, a late-17<sup>th</sup>-century country house in Warwickshire (LBE Building Control 3850)

**Reade Court**, 213-235 Stanley Road, 1961-2 (planned 1959), six one-bedroom flats and six three- and four-bedroom maisonettes in a three-storey block, built by W. J. Whittall and Son Ltd with Maugham and Lawrence Courts for total of £158,889 6 6, brick cross-wall construction, yellow and black tile panels to entrance bay, first-floor recessed balconies, flat roof, named after Charles Reade (1814-84), novelist and dramatist

**10-44 Reynolds Road**, 1955-7, eight one-bedroom flats and ten two-bedroom maisonettes in two linked L-plan four-storey blocks, built by J. A. Tyler and Sons Ltd for £35,190, brown brick with some cross-wall construction, some balconies, porthole windows and diapering, rents 30s 10d and 37s 8d, hipped tiled roofs added (ELHC, A/MB/H1/172 and 178)

**St Margaret's Lodge**, corner of Park Road North and Park Road East, 1948-9, 12 flats in a three-storey L-plan block of two one-bedroom, seven two-bedroom and three three-bedroom flats, built by Alec A. Shaw and Co. Ltd. of 105A Mill Hill Road for £16,332 13 0, rents 17s 11d, 22s 2d and 26s 6d, red brick with flat roof, inner elevation brick access balconies, named after St Margaret's Terrace that was formerly a westwards extension of Park Road East (ELHC, A/MB/H1/75)

**Shaw Court**, 27-49 All Saints Road, 1959-60 (drawings prepared 1957), 12 two-bedroom maisonettes in a four-storey block, built with 17 garages for £30,454 11 4 brick cross-wall construction, entrances and balconies to rear, built with private gardens, rents £3 7s 1d, playwright, street elevation refaced in 1999-2000, named after George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950)

**Sycamore Lodge**, Cheltenham Place, 1974, nursing home for elderly people in irregularly laid out one- and two-storey ranges, brown brick, pitched roofs

**1-6 Telfer Close**, 1986-c.1994, six houses for disabled people in a two-storey terrace, red brick, porches, pitched roof, named after Councillor John G. Telfer (d.1986), who served both the Borough of Acton before 1965, and the London Borough of Ealing thereafter

**Verne Court**, 1-15 Vincent Road, 1954-6 (SA Stage 2), eight four-bedroom flats in two linked four-storey blocks, built by George Young (Floriston) Ltd with Wodehouse Court for a total of £60,937 10 8 (estimate for this block £18,950), red brick with stuccoed stair tower, rear balconies, windows replaced 1988, pitched roof added in 1991-2 by BASM, named after Jules Verne (1828-1905), French author of *Around the World in Eighty Days* etc.

**Webb Court**, Bollo Lane, 1964-6 (SA Stage 9B, planned 1961), 24 one- and three-bedroom flats in a six-storey block, built by Joseph Cartwright Ltd with Bennett Court for a combined total of £196,540 12 5, reinforced-concrete frame on pile foundations (made by Cementation Co. Ltd) with brick ends, recessed balconies, flat roof, link to Bennett Court with shared lift tower, thermostatic central-heating system and meeting room, windows replaced 1984-5, named after Mary Webb (1881-1927), novelist

**James Welch Court**, Heathfield Road, 1950-1, six two-bedroom flats in a three-storey block, built by Circle Construction Co Ltd of Wembley for £8,364 10 7, sand-faced Fletton bricks, hipped tiled roof, no balconies, rents 26s 8d, windows replaced 1987-8, named after Acton's first Labour mayor, in office 1942-3 (ELHC, A/MB/H1/116; AG, 7/9/51, 1)

**Wodehouse Court**, 17-63 Stanley Road, 1954-6 (SA Stage 2), 24 (seven one-bedroom and 17 two-bedroom) flats in a six-storey block, built by George Young (Floriston) Ltd with Verne Court for a total of £60,937 10 8 (estimate for this block £48,600), Blaby brick, angled balconies, window reveals, lift, flat roof with drying areas, rents 26s and 32s 6d, windows replaced 1988, named after Sir Pelham Grenville Wodehouse (1881-1975), novelist

**Woolf Court**, 2-72 Vincent Road, 1952-4 (SA Stage 1), 34 (four one-bedroom, 20 two-bedroom and ten three-bedroom) flats and an off-licence in a six storey block, 192ft (58m) long and 58ft (17m) high, built by George Young (Floriston) Ltd of Greenford for £75,807, load-bearing Blaby brick, angular balconies, window reveals, asphalted flat roof with drying areas, two lifts, well-appointed kitchens, rents 26s 8d to 35s 6d, windows replaced 1988-90, named after Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), novelist and essayist (ELHC, A/MB/H1/140)