



ENGLISH HERITAGE

The Modern House and Housing Selection Guide Domestic Buildings (4)

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Selection Guide

The Modern House and Housing (Domestic Buildings 4)

I INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITIONS

The development of houses and housing from the late Victorian period onwards is sufficiently complex to warrant a separate selection guide. Domestic buildings constitute the largest single category of designated structures, so greater detail is required in this area.

Domestic architecture of the twentieth century can claim particular significance. The Arts and Crafts Movement is the one international trend begun in England, and the private house lay at its heart. Public housing in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, especially in London, was widely admired worldwide. The modernist house is represented in England by works of international significance. Post-war housing, too, had its international admirers for its imaginative use of materials, planning and landscaping. Our understanding of the field is growing steadily, but it is clear that the post-war years are also one of the most exciting and imaginative periods for private house building in English architectural history.

This selection guide concentrates on the twentieth century, but look back to the later nineteenth century in some regards. For earlier periods, see the other domestic selection guides.

2 SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS WHEN SELECTING MODERN HOUSING AND HOUSES FOR DESIGNATION

Houses and housing developments of the period rank among the masterpieces of English architecture. The traditional stylistic approach of the architectural historian has particular value here. Imagination and ingenuity together with the quality of craftsmanship or the striking use of materials (not least concrete) are the principal benchmarks. Planning and lay-out, decoration, relationship with setting, reputation of the designer: these too are considerations, as is the extent to which the original design has survived unaltered.

With regard especially to social housing, constraints of funding and legislation need to be understood if the historic significance of a building is to be properly understood. Buildings need to be judged against their original brief: their fitness of purpose relates to what was expected of them then, rather than what they are capable of providing now. Because we are dealing with people's homes, it is imperative that the special significance of a building is clearly identified along with those parts that are of lesser, or of no, interest. For enclaves of housing, conservation area designation may sometimes be a

more appropriate response than the listing of individual houses or blocks. Much will depend on how desirable a close level of control is for the management of change.

3 HISTORY

This selection guide deals with houses first, by style, and then looks at mass housing (public and private).

A Houses

The Arts and Crafts Movement brought together all the arts and crafts, especially those connected with the home and garden. Its influence was widely felt internationally and this earns it a special significance. Architects of the Arts and Crafts Movement saw it as an art form in which they co-ordinated craftsmen and artists and attention was focussed on high quality detailing, both inside and out, as much as plan. Decoration was based on natural elements or old English traditions as exemplified by William Morris's seminal Red House, Bexleyheath (1859, designed for him by Philip Webb and decorated by Webb, Morris and their friends). Red or brown bricks and tiles and sash windows were preferred along with clearly expressed construction, such as relieving arches and honest timber joinery. The architecture owed much to the traditional buildings of south-east England of around 1700, the same elements that had inspired the 'Queen Anne' style of Norman Shaw and W. Eden Nesfield, precursors of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Leading architects (some of whom produced relatively small numbers of buildings) include the founders of the movement - W.R. Lethaby, E.S. Prior, Mervyn Macartney, Gerald Horsley and Ernest Newton - together with Mackmurdo and Voysey: most were equally versatile as designers of furniture, textiles and much else besides. M.H. Baillie Scott continued the approach well into the inter-war period, by which time some of the features of Arts and Crafts architecture had entered the vocabulary of the mainstream house-builder.

In addition to the great names there were many local architects who designed exceptional buildings that made a distinctive contribution to Edwardian towns and suburbs. A return to traditional forms and materials characterised one strand of suburban development, which was taking place on a massive scale during this period as cars grew in number. Architect-builders such as Ernest Trobridge created cottage designs in outer London in the 1920s using much unseasoned timber, tiling and leaded lights to create reassuringly organic developments; more commonly, half-timbering ('Stockbroker Tudor', as Osbert Lancaster quipped) became a standard approach. On a larger and wider scale, the garden suburb and Garden City movements also embraced the Arts and Crafts. The particular interest here is not the set-pieces, but the wealth of artisans' houses in twos and fours, such as those by Raymond Parker and Reginald Unwin (e.g., at Welwyn Garden City) or the model village built by George Cadbury for his workers at Bournville in Birmingham (1894 into the 1920s, much by W.A. Harvey). Such developments had a deep influence on low-rise council housing across Britain after 1920. Erected in considerable quantity, such housing can possess an understated quality that has often been overlooked.

Neo-Georgian and historicist architecture While Edwardian Baroque dominated public building, a strong neo-Georgian revival emerged in domestic architecture that

owed something to the purity and clean proportions so admired by Lutyens and others in the work of the Arts and Crafts, but also to the classicism of Sir Christopher Wren. The success of Hampstead Garden Suburb (Lutyens; Parker & Unwin, 1907-12), where the larger individual houses were neo-Georgian, was widely imitated. By the 1920s and 1930s, art deco and a whole range of historicist styles became popular including 'Spanish Mission' and 'Cape Dutch', with their curly gables and neat brickwork. Oliver Hill worked in any style a client wished, including neo-classical, old English or modernism. Modernism was in part a reaction against this stylistic eclecticism, but eclecticism was also in part a reaction to modernism – a search for 'synthesis' that would preserve beauty whilst enabling homes to be as simple and comfortable as possible.

Many architects who designed houses in traditional styles in the 1930s continued to work in the same vein into the 1960s, including Clough Williams-Ellis and Albert Richardson. A younger generation of classicists emerged who specialised in houses that looked more to Soane than Wren (e.g., Raymond Erith and Quinlan Terry). Sometimes they took the ideas of the modern movement and re-interpreted them in a traditional manner (e.g., Erith and McMorran and the small-scale rural housing developments of Tayler and Green in Norfolk).

The modern movement Although a small number of modernist buildings preceded it, many consider the movement's true arrival in England came in 1929 with Amyas Connell's High and Over at Amersham (Bucks.), with its concrete walls, flat roofs and unmoulded window openings. Modernism in the 1930s was chosen wherever an avant-garde and scientific image seemed appropriate – for laboratories, factories and zoo buildings - and for private houses for adventurous clients. The vanguard of modernist architects was made up largely of émigrés from both central Europe (Erich Mendelsohn, Walter Gropius and Bernard Lubetkin) and the Dominions (Connell, and his subsequent partner Basil Ward, from New Zealand; Raymond McGrath from Australia; Wells Coates from Canada).

Much of the best work (both houses and flats) was small and compact and exemplified a modern way of living which discouraged reliance on servants, lavish possessions (or 'clutter'), and encouraged style and sociability: this approach was reflected in planning, fixtures and the overall approach to design. Le Corbusier's five key elements - the raising of the building on *pilotis*, a roof garden, free plan, strip windows and a free facade - influenced young architects working in Britain but, by the middle of the 30s, they were broadening the language of modernism and producing work of international importance. Some responded to the damp British climate by eschewing concrete in favour of stone or brick. The trend away from purist modernism was hastened by the realisation that modern construction and finishes had less margin of safety against weather and decay than more traditional materials. By the late 1930s, modern houses could even have pitched roofs as demonstrated at Overshot, Hinksey Hill, outside Oxford (Valentine & Harding, 1938), which proved widely popular in the decade after the Second World War. The planning of this house, however, with its separate rooms set off a corridor, was conservative and the '30s saw the gradual move towards a single large living room – a fashion that became the norm after the Second World War.

Post-war modern houses The three chief influences on post-war house planning were the availability of large sheets of plate glass, central heating and the absence of live-in servants.

After the Second World War, private house building was limited (until the mid 1950s) by complex controls on building materials and taxes on site development. Because of this, many houses were designed so that they could be built in phases when conditions improved. Steel and softwood were in short supply: hardwood less so, resulting in even very small houses having parquet floors and handsome fitted units.

Contrary to popular impressions, post-war architects had what has been called a 'reverence for materials' (Alison and Peter Smithson). This included non-traditional materials such as concrete being used in a 'natural' way, with board markings, or shuttering, revealed. There was a fashion for modern materials, including large plate glass windows, built-in hardwood fixtures like dividing units and shelving, brightly coloured wall panels and contrasting flooring (e.g., slate and concrete) to denote different areas of use. Various influences, but particularly that of Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth House, outside Chicago (1946-51), created a fashion for the welded steel frame, something only possible in Britain when steel became affordable in the 1960s. Entirely steel-framed houses are rare and are often particularly elegant and a handful of architects came to specialise in them. Brick and timber were frequently used, for concrete shuttering and with some exuberance on small projects that did not need to be built of concrete or steel. Materiality was pushed in the mid-1960s towards an earthier vernacular as in the work of architects such as Edward Cullinan and Peter Aldington, who adopted a 'hands on' approach and built their own houses at weekends. Sometimes these 'romantic pragmatists', a phrase used to describe Ralph Erskine, pushed different materials together in different planes or picked up references to local traditions. Another distinctive group of architects (including Leslie Martin and Colin St John Wilson) who taught at Cambridge University adopted simple brick exteriors that concealed complex plans with double-height interiors and top lighting.

House plans of the period eliminate corridors and conventional room divisions, a difference marked sometimes only by a planting trough. There was a strong emphasis on the imaginative use of space and light. Staircases rise from the living room. Open-plan living areas – sometimes partly sunken to give extra floor-to-ceiling height, full-height doors and plate glass windows - became popular after around 1954. Larger houses also embraced the open plan, sometimes including a double-height living room, with more private rooms to either side. Even in the largest houses there was rarely a separate dining room; entertainment in the post-war period was dominated by drinks parties and buffets rather than sit-down dinners, which returned to popularity only in the late 1970s.

B Public and private housing

The term social or public housing extends to housing designed to ameliorate poor living conditions, financed either by charitable bodies or public authorities. There is some overlap with the selection guide **Domestic (2): Town Houses**.

To 1939

The origins of public housing lie in private philanthropic initiatives. 'Improved housing societies' (really companies) attempted to combat the mid-nineteenth century scourges of poor sanitation and recurrent epidemics whilst at the same time offering their shareholders a dividend. They targeted the wage-earning 'deserving poor' rather than the destitute. The earliest surviving social housing of this sort dates from the mid-1860s and includes the institutions established in London by the wealthy American, George Peabody (1864-6, by architect Henry Darbishire), which follow a repetitive formula of storeyed blocks around squares. After 1875 housing by these companies proliferated as local authorities were able to offer them slum clearance land at preferential rates. High land values meant that most developments were flats, but some terraces were developed on green-field sites.

Some enlightened employers built housing for their workers: most spectacular are the tenements by the Barrow Iron Shipbuilding Company in Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria (1881-4, Paley and Austin); a more suburban pattern can be seen at the Bolsover and Creswell Colliery Company's New Bolsover, Derbyshire, (1888-93) with houses built around three sides of a green.

England's first local authority housing was built by the Corporation of the City of London (1863-9) and the oldest council housing to be designated are semis built by J. Butterfield for Doncaster Corporation (1867). The 1890 Housing of the Working Classes Act made it easier for local authorities to acquire land and erect or convert dwellings for the working classes and was quite successful in cities like London and Plymouth. Even so, public authority housing accounted for only some 5per cent of the total built between 1890 and 1914. The 1890 Act also applied to the countryside, but was adopted by just eight rural authorities. The earliest rural council housing that is designated is at Ixworth, Suffolk (1893-4). Twentieth-century suburban council and new town housing was influenced by the pioneering work of Parker and Unwin, particularly at Letchworth Garden City (Herts.), with its mix of the formal and picturesque and, particularly, the grouping of cottages in pairs and short terraces with the living rooms facing south. The semi became the standard form for rural housing until after 1945.

In 1918 the Tudor Walters Committee recommended new standards for working-class housing, based on those of Letchworth (Unwin was on the committee) and the Local Government Board. It recommended building no more than twelve houses per acre, with three rooms per floor, plus a larder and bathroom. The standard informed the Addison Act of 1919, which finally made it mandatory for local authorities to have a housing programme to meet the estimated need for 500,000 new homes.

Economic crisis and high inflation in the 1920s led to shortages. This stimulated enterprising authorities and private investors to experiment with new building techniques such as steel panels, or revive old ones such as unfired clay 'lump' bricks. The 'Nissen Hut', first imported from Canada in 1917, influenced some public housing in the West Country in the 1920s, an adoption of prefabricated methods that was to become widespread during and after the Second World War. Another lasting result of this shortage of materials was the establishment of the metal window as an alternative to wood, pioneered by the family firm of Francis and W. F. (Pink) Crittall.

Public housing took a back seat in the inter-war period. The original initiative having been made in England, these ideas went to Vienna and Germany, and came back again: Viennese models directly influenced both London County Council (LCC) and Leeds City housing in the 1930s. Relatively little social housing was built by private charities in the inter-war period.

Private Flats England had no recent tradition of apartment living prior to the middle years of the nineteenth century. In London, there was the bachelor flat, (epitomised by the Albany in Piccadilly), which continued to be built in numbers in the 'clubland' of St James's in the decades before 1914. Blocks of middle-class flats begin to appear in the 1850s (along with a literature that places the inspiration for them as being Scotland and the Continent). The earliest surviving flats in London are in Carlisle Place, Victoria (1860-1).

Flats became widespread across central London during the last years of the century. They were often promoted by the major estates, redeveloping late eighteenth-century terraces whose leases were falling in, or on sites of large town houses. They became common around Mayfair, Victoria, Regent's Park and Kensington, and particularly grand examples fronted Battersea Park and Hampstead Heath. The generic term 'mansion flat' identified the target market. Planning became sophisticated, with suites of reception rooms and separate servants' areas with their own circulation and entrances. Most adopted a robust red brick style, articulated by high roofs and oriels. Flats became more popular in the inter-war years. Most people rented, and flats were ideal for single people and newly-weds who were tending to start their families later. This category also includes hostels, which contained rooms, rather than flats, for individual occupancy: the emergence of single professional women at the close of the Victorian period made this an area of particular need, to which various philanthropic responses were made. As the numbers of servants declined, so the serviced flat, with facilities from shoe cleaning to a swimming pool, became more popular: Pullman Court, Streatham (Frederic Gibberd, 1934) is an exemplar of this trend. The common rooms could be quite grand, but in most cases the actual flats were very small indeed, a sort of 'minimum dwelling'. Key modernist buildings like the Lawn Road flats (Wells Coates, 1932-4) and Highpoint I (Lubetkin & Tecton, 1933-5) offered a new way of middle class living with its mix of simple practicality and sociability. Others like Highpoint II (Lubetkin & Tecton, 1936-8), with their larger units and absence of communal areas, were intended for luxury living from the first.

After 1939

Structure The acute shortage of accommodation for farm workers in the late 1930s and during the war, together with the displacement of large numbers of evacuees, led to several programmes for low-cost homes. Churchill promised 'up to half a million' prefabricated houses in 1944: eventually 156,623 single-storey houses or 'prefabs' were built, based on a standard government design but using asbestos panels, timber and aluminium. Shortages of materials and skilled labour resulted in the erection of many other types of prefabricated bungalows and semis - 'permanent prefabs' - which are now becoming rare. Many of the building firms who experimented with these houses in the 1940s went on to build the big system blocks of flats in the 1960s.

For more permanent buildings, there are two basic forms of construction for post-war housing. The simplest is cross-wall construction, where the block of flats or terrace is supported on the walls set at right angles to the main facades. This allows the latter to be relatively lightweight, often largely glazed. The other is box-frame (egg-crate) construction, where the party walls and the floors are bonded as a single structure of great strength, allowing the structure to be strongly expressed.

Funding and densities The most progressive of inter-war housing introduced two features that became important in the post-war period: the provision of central (also known as 'district') heating in flats for people on low wages, and of a clean refuse system (though this was rare before the 1960s). Such facilities raised expectations – and costs. Cost constraints are the leitmotiv of the period and it is important to understand both the availability and the nature of public funding when assessing buildings for designation.

Under Aneurin Bevan at the Ministry of Health and until around 1950, the standards for public housing were very high, despite the shortages of materials and rising inflation. Cuts kicked in as early as 1947 and got progressively worse. In 1951, Harold Macmillan (Minister of Housing and Local Government) introduced a 'crusade' to build 300,000 new homes, but compromised on space standards. His two-bedroomed 'People's House' had, by 1960, been superseded by three-bedroomed council houses, but these averaged less than 900 square feet. The Parker Morris Report (1962) recognised that full employment and rising real incomes since the war required higher standards of housing provision with more space for more activities: his minimum standards, which were not lavish, quickly became a maximum, but his recommendation that central heating be installed to give greater use to all rooms, gradually took on.

As to funding, most public housing was built by local authorities (or a development corporation in the case of New Towns) and depended upon a combination of long-term loans and grants from central government. This involved close central controls over costs and densities. Funding constraints, always tough, became severe after 1967. The use of prefabricated systems, usually using concrete panels, was encouraged after 1965 to help accelerate the housing programme, but the collapse of Ronan Point, London Borough of Newham, in 1968 effectively brought their use in tall buildings to an end. Systems continued to be used extensively for houses, bungalows and low 'slabs'. Despite the iconic image of the high-rise block of flats, funding regimes in fact favoured low rise throughout the period. Also, building activity was not restricted to the cities: before 1958, proportionately more housing (per head of population) was provided in the countryside, the Green Belt Act of 1955 notwithstanding.

Policies of *mixed development*, mixing houses, bungalows and flats in one scheme, enabled land to be used to relatively high densities, and by mixing cheap but low-density houses and expensive but denser flats an economic balance could be reached. It also satisfied demand from the increasing numbers of single people and childless couples as well as conventional families. With its varying heights and types of dwelling, mixed development changed the appearance of public housing, moving away from the authoritarian rigid blocks of the nineteenth century, and making it suitable for middle-class families. The idea of public housing being only for the working class was removed in post-war legislation.

Building tall was the usual way of providing high densities to keep the population in the city (although most large authorities also had a dispersal programme of building in the suburbs or surrounding countryside). Single blocks of flats (or 'point blocks') were sometimes built alone on small or sloping sites but more often than not formed part of a mixed development (e.g., Trellick Tower, in London's North Kensington, 1968-72, Ernö Goldfinger). In the 1960s tall blocks were superseded by slab blocks and by 'low-rise high-density' developments – complex patterns of flats and houses that achieve high densities without rising more than about seven storeys. The planning of housing estates became more complex as the need for integral car parking, play areas, shops and boiler houses increased. Lillington Gardens, Westminster (1964-70, Darbourne & Darke), with its humane use of medium-rise, irregularity of plan and context-friendly dark red brick, is the model for this type of development all round the country.

4 SPECIAL INTEREST OF PRIVATE HOUSES AND PUBLIC HOUSING OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Private houses

Given the redevelopment pressures on detached houses, this area of the built environment is particularly under threat. Their architectural quality was not always fully appreciated when many of the lists – especially in the south-east - were prepared in the 1970s and early 1980s, so there may be omissions.

Arts and Crafts movement houses Guidelines for assessment are difficult to provide since interest lies in the quality of composition and detailing: the traditional stylistic approach of the architectural historian has particular value here. Houses by the principal architects of the Arts and Crafts movement are likely to be listed although some selection may be required for the more prolific among them, such as M.H. Baillie Scott who designed many modest neo-Georgian houses with A.E. Beresford after 1919. Relative date may thus be a consideration: an innovative design of 1900 is one thing; a conventional variant of the 1920s is rather another. While these major architects are well known, regional practices are less so and it is important to gain some overview of their work in order to set individual houses in context. These architects looked to a generic 'past' but were aware of continental parallels: their work is often extremely accomplished. Birmingham had a strong Arts and Crafts tradition between 1890 and 1910 that owes much to an indigenous local craft revival (e.g., Joseph Ball, C.E. Bateman, W.H. Bidlake); so did Leicester (the Goddard company had many able assistants), Nottingham (Brewill and Baily), Norfolk (George Skipper), York (Walter Brierley), Manchester (Edgar Wood), the Cotswolds (Sidney and Ernest Bamsley with Ernest Gimson) and many more. Architects continued designing both Arts and Crafts and neo-Georgian houses through the 1920s and 1930s.

With houses, simplicity is a virtue: beauty was implied in the perfection of proportion. Care was taken with local materials, sparing ornament, neatly detailed door cases, picture-rails and cornices, together with fireplaces, and a good staircase, and some limited use of panelling and built-in fittings. However, some architects (e.g., Prior and Lethaby) were happy to use steel and concrete.

Other common ingredients can be seen in the planning of the house. Long plans are distinctive, with an entrance hall that serves also as a room for entertaining, a large

fireplace and perhaps an inglenook; the other principal rooms are set to either side of corridors, with a service wing providing well-lit and comfortable working accommodation. Occasionally the hall contains the staircase, making for a more imposing first-floor landing than is customary. Some houses adopt a butterfly plan around the hall.

It is also important to look carefully at the setting of these houses - the integration of house and garden is an important feature of the time. Gates, terraces, garden buildings and early garaging are an integral part of many of these works. Garden design was as inventive and as internationally influential as house design in these decades, and many architects combined both with great skill, welding an underlying architectural structure with exceptional plantsmanship that combined cottage species and exotics. This reaches a high point in the work of Sir Edwin Lutyens and Gertrude Jekyll.

Neo-Georgian and historicist houses are often understated, carefully planned to provide a formal, symmetrical, front. A feel for materials - usually brick perhaps with simple stone dressings - and the sparing use of detailing are the key qualities for designation, refinements that make them more vulnerable to alteration and addition than houses whose design springs from a variety of sources. Again, too, the real place for this invention is on the principal elevations: interiors will be simple but complete, although staircases and mouldings should be elegant. Applied decoration can be of significance too. 1920s eclecticism is no longer seen as a joke and can be considered on its own terms: it is quality and completeness, not the polemics of style that concern us here.

Modernist and post-war houses There is an extensive literature about modernist and post-war houses in England, and the celebrated houses of the 1930s have long been accorded considerable respect. However, many excellent houses remained unpublished, especially for the post-war period. Not all clients wanted their homes publicised and the lack of publication is no reason not to investigate a house. This privacy makes private houses the area of twentieth century architecture where there is most still to discover. Give credit where architects are designing for themselves, or for a relative or friend, as here they could express their ideas most freely. Do not worry if the architect is not a household name. Some had better-known partners and their own name was rarely published. Other interesting houses were designed by architects employed by local authorities.

Exteriors should be little altered. Materials are simple, usually brick and timber, less often concrete especially after around 1962. Look for the unusual, particularly for the post-war period: a steel frame, an ecological grass roof, use of zinc, aluminium or tile hanging. An internal inspection is very important to ascertain the full claims to significance. Lack of alteration to the principal spaces is a key factor in determining designation, as is plan. Consider how the plan flows: spaces should relate to each other and not be simply rooms behind doors. Joinery, internal finishes and built-in furniture are often extensive and of high quality and/or invention. Look at the use of levels - whether there are sunken areas or double-height spaces, the latter often with a balcony.

Garden features, such as related walls, pools and sculpture, may be important parts of the original design. The ideas governing post-war private gardens range from the sense

that a house should make as little impact on the surroundings as possible to a strong sense of garden 'rooms' coupled with rich plantsmanship.

Important note: for listing purposes, buildings erected after 1947 have no curtilage, so everything that is of special interest within the property boundary, such as garden features, has to be itemised.

Pre-1939 social housing Criteria for designation concentrate on early dates, completeness, rarity and exemplars of early town planning. The earlier (nineteenth-century) blocks of model dwellings have a powerful simplicity that gives them architectural and historic interest. In London, post-1875 model dwellings are quite common and selection should be rigorous; outside London, rarity suggests that those pre-dating 1890 surviving in good condition may be candidates for listing. More difficult to assess are the very large numbers of cottages, semis and short terraces that characterise the garden suburbs of such as Parker and Unwin (and their derivatives in countless towns throughout the country). Many cottage estates have been seriously compromised by new windows, render and other alterations, but those that survive from before 1914 warrant very careful consideration and later examples down to the 1920s may be candidates for area designation.

Pre-1939 private flats The icons of the modern movement such as Lawn Road and Highpoint are already listed in high grades. But there are many lesser examples in art deco and moderne styles, and most towns will have at least one, sometimes situated on an arterial road. Candidates for designation should survive reasonably intact, especially externally. The ingredients of horizontal windows and balconies and vertical emphasises, usually at the doorways or if there is a step in levels, should work together as a composition: the massing of blocks can be of importance too. Flats might be standard in design, but look for foyers lined with figured panelling, original doors and moderne style staircases with a jazzy balustrade. If there is an internal courtyard its elevations, too, should be treated coherently. It is also worth noting examples that have swimming pools, garden terraces and/or courtyards and treat garaging in an architectural way.

Post-war housing It is particularly difficult to establish criteria for the listing of post-war housing, as an understanding of the resource continues to develop: but benchmarks have been identified. Key considerations will be architectural interest; intactness of design; whether the design was influential; or a particularly good example of a development in housing. Standards are set high, and remember that the important factor for any post-war building is whether it fulfilled its original brief. It is important to know what the original intentions were, and what the estate originally looked like. Public housing is often well documented, illustrated in contemporary architectural magazines and with good surviving council records. Interiors will be very simple, and only the earliest, or model estates such as the City of London's Golden Lane Estate or Barbican, will have internal fittings worthy of mention in a description. This should be made clear in the designation documentation.

One-off blocks or towers require individual assessment. Levels of alteration are important but tall blocks can more easily withstand the impact of new glazing because it is more subsidiary to the impact of the overall design. As with inter-war blocks, these one-offs have to integrate strong horizontal bands of glazing and balconies with vertical structural elements.

Larger estates, whether of high flats, low houses or a mixture, lend themselves to a holistic approach. Developments of the late 1940s and early 1950s are generally more generous in their planning and elegant in their detailing than those that came later. Mixed development means that individual elements can be recommended for listing while the estate, as a whole, may be more suitable for area designation. Low-rise developments, whether public or private (such as Span), are very difficult to assess as their simple virtues are easily taken for granted. To be listable, they have to survive reasonably intact, show special spatial imagination in the layout of roads and buildings, and in their hard landscaping and planting. Elevational treatments can be quite simple but they should be immaculately detailed.

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