

THE SOCIAL ROLE OF THE ARCHITECT  
Homelessness in London



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## Homelessness in London



Note to the reader:

The bibliographic references follow the 6th edition of the APA style.

The present dissertation is written in English by choice of the writer. It is my will to continue to study this subject in London, and I believe that writing this dissertation in English, as a research work that I can present in the future, will help me achieve it.



No final desta etapa, não podia deixar de agradecer a quem me acompanhou nesta viagem. O percurso nem sempre foi fácil, mas isso só contribui para um maior orgulho de o ver concluído. No fim, só tenho a agradecer a quem esteve sempre presente, que me foi ajudando ao longo do caminho.

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*Aos colegas de curso, porque só eles viveram e conhecem o D'arq como eu conheci. Seria impossível avançar sem o companheirismo e amizades que este curso me trouxe.*

*Aos amigos de sempre, por me puxarem vezes sem conta para o fim, darem-me força para ultrapassar os dias mais difíceis e festejarem comigo todas as glórias.*

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## ABSTRACT

The *habitat* is a basic human right. The number of people without a home/proper home in the world has been increasing more and more. This is a social issue that is far from being exclusive to developing countries. The housing crisis has been accompanying London for more than two centuries and, consequently, the homelessness in the city has been rising exponentially until today.

In order to learn about the developing of the city, the housing crisis and homelessness *in loco*, research work and contacts were established in London. The journey was certainly a central point that made me experience the city, in each visit, in a more intimate way.

After selecting the case-studies, of small-scale architecture, that aim to answer to the homelessness issue in London, it is concluded that this model, opposed to big-scale social housing estates, has the characteristics to succeed in the city. However, in such a complex environment, it is necessary to conjugate the various agents to overcome this social crisis. The role of the architect is definitely a crucial factor in this issue, but is far from being its solution.

**Key-words: Housing, Homelessness, Architecture, London, Housing Crisis**



## RESUMO

O *habitat* é um dos direitos básicos do Homem. O número de pessoas sem habitação/habitação adequada no mundo tem vindo a aumentar e este problema social está longe de ser exclusivo aos países em desenvolvimento. A crise da habitação acompanha a cidade de Londres há mais de dois séculos e, por acréscimo, o número de sem-abrigos na cidade tem vindo a aumentar exponencialmente até hoje.

A fim de aprender sobre o crescimento, a crise da habitação e os sem-abrigo *in loco*, foi realizada uma pesquisa e foram estabelecidos contactos em Londres. A viagem foi certamente um ponto marcante no trabalho que, de resto, me fez sentir a cidade de forma cada vez mais íntima a cada visita.

Após a selecção de casos de estudo, de pequena escala, que procuram responder ao problema dos sem-abrigo em Londres, conclui-se que, este modelo, opondo-se aos grandes complexos de habitação social, possui características que lhe permitem ser bem-sucedidos na cidade. No entanto, numa cidade tão complexa, é necessária a conjugação de vários intervenientes para ultrapassar esta crise social. O papel do arquitecto é um ponto fulcral no problema, mas está longe de ser a sua solução.

**Palavras-chave:** Habitação, Sem-abrigo, Arquitectura, Londres, Crise Habitacional



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### **ABBREVIATIONS**

LCC – London County Council

GLC – Greater London Council

MARS - Modern Architecture Research Society

CIAM - Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne

GLA – Greater London Authority

CABE – Commission for Architecture and Built Environment

NLA – New London Architecture

CHAIN – Combined Homelessness and Information Network

RSI – Rough Sleepers Initiative

RSU – Rough Sleepers Unit

B&B – Bed and Breakfast



## INTRODUCTION

*A home is fundamental infrastructure for a decent life – it is as basic a human need as food and water. A civilised society would not accept people managed without these nutritional basics so why does it seem to put up with such stark inequality or shortage of accommodation in London? (BENNIE, 2015, p.07)*

Being a part of the G7, the United Kingdom is one of the seven countries with the wealthiest economies in the whole world. London is the biggest city in England and it represents a prosperous global metropolis that leads a booming hub of commerce, economy, education, culture and arts, architecture, innovation and research, fashion, etc.

<sup>1</sup> GLA (2013) Census Information Schemes Demography. *GLA Intelligence Infographic*. London: GLA. Retrieved from <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/2011-census-infographics>

According to the last Census, in 2011, over 8,17 million people live in the city. There are more than 3,37 million households and over 6,3 million communal establishments in London<sup>1</sup>. However,



1. TRIP TO CAMBODIA, PHNOM PEHN, JULY 2014



2. FIRST TRIP TO LONDON, OCTOBER 2016

<sup>2</sup> WILSON, W & BARTON, C (2018/03/23). Households in temporary accommodation (England) (Commons Briefing Papers SN02110) Retrieved from <https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN02110>

more than 8,100 people were registered rough sleeping in the city last year and more than 54,370 families live, today, in temporary accommodations<sup>2</sup>. This is a result of a major housing crisis and a consequent affordability issue in London that affects everyone, but is harsher to the poorest. The inability to keep up with its own growth led to the creation of a city without sufficient homes for its population and with huge inequalities, where the poorest slums coexist with the most luxurious architecture.

The commitment of this research is to find the purpose of the Architect, as a shaper agent of the society and its surroundings, in this housing crisis. The inhumane conditions where many homeless people live in London as consequence of the shortage of housing, serve as determination to invoke the social role of architecture, thus intrinsically connected with the responsibility of finding the balance between an unequal economic and social civilization and the environment that surrounds them.

Therefore, this dissertation aims to understand how the practice of architecture, as one of the key pieces of the problem, can influence and contribute positively to this economic and social issue. It is expected that the architectural approach of giving a home to someone who doesn't have one, demonstrates the delicate and perceptive gesture of thinking inherent to its practice.

As part of the subject *Architecture and Travel*, the motivation for this research arose from three main reasons. First, a personal passion for the social element of architecture and its obligations to society. Then, from two different travels. The first one to a developing country where I was confronted, for the first time, with extreme



poverty. Subsequently, the interest to talk about it remained inside me, as a student and a future architect. Moreover, a series of travels to London, one of the wealthiest places in the world. As I began to know and explore the city more and more I came across a reality that is far from understanding. The contrasts were evident and the inequalities astonishing. Beyond all of the 'splendour', there is a lot of poverty and misery across London. My motivation shifted from that third world country, as worthy as it remains to my eyes, to this rich metropolis where people sleep at the entrance of the fanciest skyscrapers in the world. The biggest question for me is how can one of the world's leading metropolis hold this major social problem of homelessness?

With this, my dissertation work was mainly influenced through my travels to London, where I could see *in loco* at least the most visible form of homelessness, and also conduct the major part of the research work at RIBA Library and Bartlett School of Architecture at the University College of London. These visits also allowed me to establish contacts with different organisations in the city, especially the New London Architecture, that consequently introduced me to a number of influent architects that are related to the housing crisis and homeless projects. Our conversations were essential to determine proper case-studies for this thesis as well as to understand their personal view and experience of the housing crisis issue, as architects.

Moreover, through the research of the city the structure of the dissertation was defined. In the first part, it was important to gather a history summary of the growth and the social housing evolution of London from the nineteenth century until nowadays, as a way to define that this is a problem that has been in the city since its expansion started. The second part intends to reveal the





homelessness issue in London - in its various forms and different causes -, as a consequence of the continuous housing crisis over the years, as shown in the previous part. Being the homeless the target group of this research - inside the housing crisis - it was important to understand the living standards in the existing and available accommodations for these people. Consequently, the presented case-studies intend to provide better solutions for them, from an architect's point of view. Finally, a personal opinion of the problem and its solution present itself as one of the most important components of this work, being the method of expressing critical sense and personal reflexion, as a future architect, in this matter. As an addition to the dissertation itself, a series of interviews are attached, in the end.



**PART I - HOUSING CRISIS IN LONDON**



3. INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION IN VICTORIAN LONDON

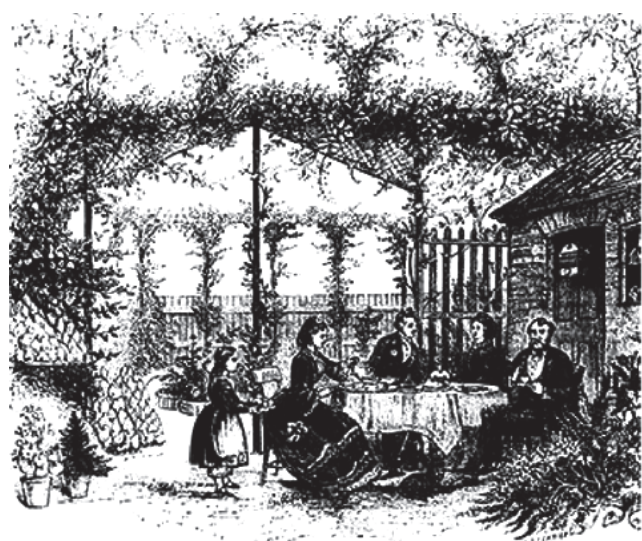
## A. SOCIAL HOUSING HISTORY IN LONDON

The housing problem is a subject that has been accompanying the history of England for more than two centuries. Even though we only started hearing about it since the Victorian Era, it's obviously been around for longer than that. We can't ignore that before that there were *inadequate and insanitary living conditions* (BURNETT, 1986, p.03) where a substantial amount of people lived together.

The Industrial Revolution had a major part when we try to uncover the sources of the housing issue. With the arrival of new manufacturing processes and production methods, there was a change in the balance of the economy and people started to come to the city from the country in the hope of having better-paid work and better lives. Soon London would become a *thriving national economy and an expanding worldwide empire* (KNOX, 2017, p.31). The City started to attract migrants, developing into the most populous city in the world in the nineteenth century. This demographic change caused a



4. LONDON'S SLUMS, 1878



5. 'MIDDLE-CLASS RUSTICITY', 1878

lot of pressure in the metropolis and with that, a huge social distress aroused. This was the fundamental cause of the housing question. Until this point, the demographic growing was regular through time, but the exponential increase of population in the turn of the century caused a problem of accommodation as people started to concentrate in cities, especially in London.

Overcrowding rapidly became one of the biggest problems of the city, but initially, the reality is that there wasn't much concern about it. London offered an uncertain state of employment for those who arrived to the city, resulting in low wages and poor labour conditions. Even though the housing question affected all levels of the working-class, the poorest and the casual workers were the ones that suffered the most. Housing the labouring poor was neglected by the government and the ones in higher social levels, since *the extremes of wealth and poverty meet in space, but, selfish indifference keeps them as far apart as the poles in their personal relation to each other* (KAUFMAN, 1975, p.07). Overcrowding became a concept seen by the middle-class as an intolerable conception that confronted their physical and moral values, their notions of decency, privacy and health. What was then ghastly to the middle-class was accepted as normal by the working man.

Although *the Victorian era left a scandalous legacy of slum housing* (HOLMES, 2006, p.01), it was also the time where the first housing reforms took place. It was the beginning of a problem, but also the foundation of the searching for its solution that as we will see, prevails until today.





6. KITCHEN OF A COMMON LODGING HOUSE IN LONDON, 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY



7. ROOKERY IN ST. GILES, LONDON, C. 1800



## NINETEENTH CENTURY LONDON

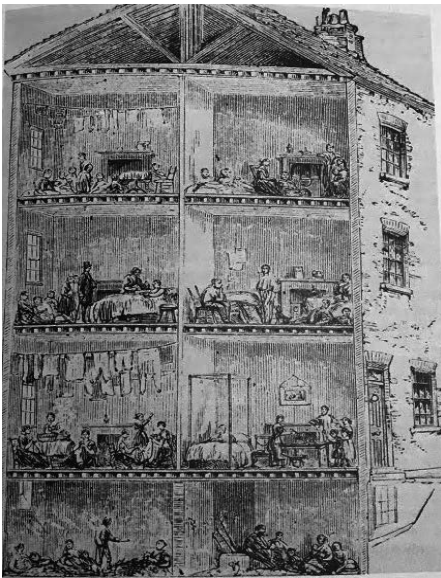
In the first half of the nineteenth century, London more than doubled its population, reaching over two and a quarter million inhabitants. People saw the city not only as a symbol of *change, excitement, new kinds of work and new kinds of pleasure* (BURNETT, 1986, p.08), but also as a symbol of liberty and emancipation. With the growth of the population came the evolution of the city in space. Since the city at this time wasn't planned, the expansion almost always pointed outwards and by infilling the existent gaps. This made the centres the most crowded part of London and consequently, the poorest too. As the working classes moved into the centres to live close to their work, the wealthier classes proceeded to occupy more enjoyable places, like the suburbs. To answer the demographic pressure in the centre of London, people started to divide the houses that were once occupied by superior classes, overcrowding them and forming rookeries - the first forms of *slums*<sup>3</sup> in London.

<sup>3</sup> "(...) it has been suggested that the word 'slum', which first appeared in Vaux's *Flash Dictionary* in 1812, is derived from *slumber*, and came to mean a *sleepy, unknown back alley*" WHOL, Anthony (1977) *The Eternal Slum, Housing and Social policy in Victorian London* (p. 05). London: Edward Arnold

To understand the different types of environments where the poor and working class lived, it is essential to consider the different types of accommodation that existed in this century.

The Lodging-Houses were amongst the worst places that served as shelter in the nineteenth century and were seen as an insult to decency and morality, often associated with crime, prostitution and disease. These places were supposed to serve as temporary accommodation, but often ended up becoming permanent homes for families during weeks, sometimes months. London had the biggest number of lodging houses, reaching 80,000<sup>4</sup> in total. The lodging-houses, due to its immoral status, were the first category of

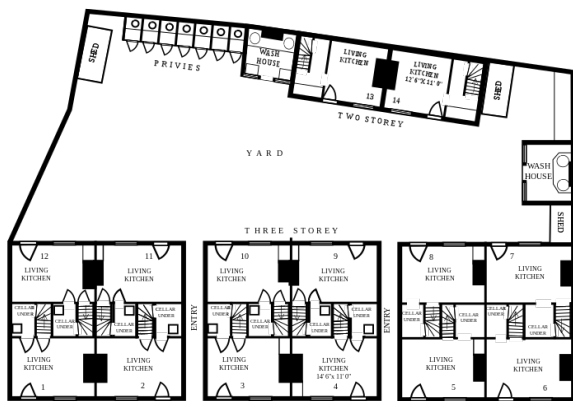
<sup>4</sup> BURNETT, John (1986) *A Social History of Housing 1815-1985* (p. 62). London : Methuen London and New York



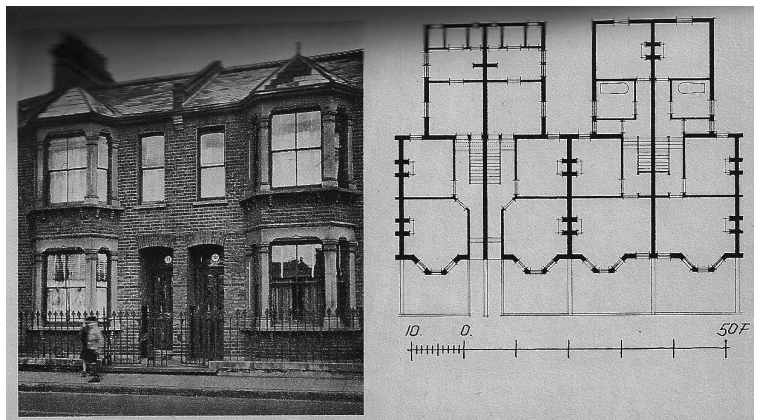
8. CROSS-SECTION OF A LONDON TENEMENT HOUSE, c. 1880



9. BACK-TO-BACK HOUSING



10. BACK-TO-BACK HOUSING PLAN



11. EXAMPLE OF A TERRACED HOUSE, WITH PLAN

working class accommodation to come under legislation, in 1851. The purpose was only to control the inhabitants in this accommodations, and separate them by reputation through *low lodging-houses*<sup>5</sup> to more respectable lodging-houses.

<sup>5</sup> Lodging houses occupied by the least respectable (BURNETT, 1986, p.63)

Tenement houses were another form of deprived accommodation in London. *Tenementing*<sup>6</sup> was, as we've seen, one of the responses to the demographic growth in central London. These houses where once the wealthier lived, were now divided and served as long-term accommodation for the poorer, that ended up living all together in just one room<sup>7</sup> because they couldn't afford more. Tenement houses were characterized by lack of sanitation, water supply, sewerage and proper cooking spaces. These houses represented the impeller of the city decay and the origin of some of the biggest slums that emerged in the nineteenth century.

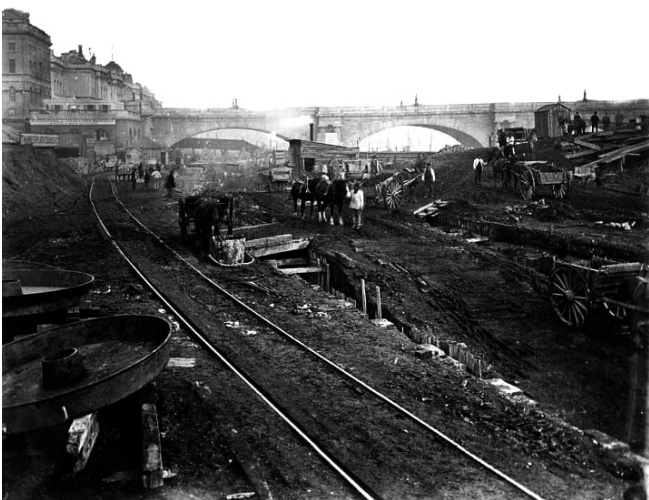
<sup>6</sup> "Tenementing – the subdivision of existing houses into separately-occupied floors or single rooms" (BURNETT, 1986, p. 64)

<sup>7</sup> "In one room, only 6ft by 5ft, eight people slept; in one house the average number of persons to a room was twelve, in another seventeen. In many rooms there was no furniture beyond a single bedstead for a family, and in some only a straw or shavings spread out for a bed." (BURNETT, 1986, p. 66)

The Back-to-Back was a model of housing presented by speculative builders to bring solution to the demand of working-class housing. It represented a cheap, easy and fast answer to this need and allowed the working-class to have better amenities in their homes than the ones found in the previous examples. Even though they were flawed, they gave their dwellers the notion of what it was to live inside a community.

Finally, the last example of accommodation for the working-class in London represented a luxury accessible only by the upper working-class. The through-terraced house was the best accommodation that they could afford. It was an evolution of the Georgian town terrace<sup>8</sup> and it was characterised by having more privacy, space and separation of functions. It also provided a private

<sup>8</sup> BURNETT, John (1986) *A Social History of Housing 1815-1985* (p. 77). London : Methuen London and New York



12 AND 13. URBAN IMPROVEMENTS - CONSTRUCTION WORK ON THE SITE OF BLACKFRIARS STATION (ON THE LEFT) AND CONSTRUCTION SITE, WEST TO WATERLOO BRIDGE, 1866-1870 (ON THE RIGHT)



space, often a garden, that gave access to the house. The terraced houses had a significant role in the privatization of life and in the social transformation in the Victorian Era.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, slums were spreading through the city of London. Overcrowding and sanitation problems were the main reality in the dwellings of the poor. It was just in the middle of the century that the desire to change this reality appeared for the first time and brought awareness to the existence of a housing problem, caused mainly by the growth of the city, immigration, high rents and public improvements. With the industrialisation, London went through a series of urban developments - railway construction and new streets and buildings were a few of the reasons that led to a huge demolition of the slums in order to reform the city as an urban space. Still, even though these improvements allowed slum clearance, this was not its main purpose. What would happen is that as one slum was being demolished and a huge amount of people would be evicted, they would move on to settle in the nearest overcrowded area. As one area was being developed, the next was becoming worse. These urban schemes soon uncovered the reality of the slums to higher classes and disclosure the differences *between the wealth and municipal progress on the one hand and poverty and stagnation on the other* (WHOL, 1977, p.32). Consequently, a series of surveys and popular protests started to give voice to the housing conditions of the working-class in London, making it the most important social issue of that time.

Between 1850 and 1880 there was an intensive legislative activity and it was during this period that the first serious efforts to change the housing issue were made. By this time, the housing



14. LONDON'S 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY SLUMS

legislation was treated by a Medical Office of Health, which meant that their main interest was to provide better sanitary conditions to improve the healthiness of houses and with this, give the poorer the opportunity to live in decent homes. In 1851, Lord Shaftsbury, a social reformer intimately connected with the housing reform, brought to discussion the deprived housing conditions where the poor lived. He aimed to establish better housing by directly relating the environment where people lived with the character of its inhabitant. He managed to get the approval of two acts that became known as the Shaftsbury Acts, where the inspection and legislation of lodging houses was established and the ability of vestries to build homes for the poorer was instituted<sup>9</sup>. The latter would be the first housing trust to help a minority.

<sup>9</sup> WHOL, Anthony (1977) *The Eternal Slum, Housing and Social policy in Victorian London* (p. 74). London: Edward Arnold

Until this point, people only hoped that the supply of houses built would reach the demand of the growing population but, with the clearance of slums, the government faced the reality of the obligation to house the working class. The problem was to find a way to provide them houses, so they started to think about who would want to offer the supplies needed to make new dwellings for the poor. This opened up the possibility to an amount of reformers and philanthropists to deliver decent homes for the poor. One of the most important housing reformers of this time was Octavia Hill. She believed that the ones living in slums had the power to restore their own life and therefore, she started to build cottages and manage slums as a way to teach the working-class how to administer their resources. These places were directed with strict rules and bad conduct was not tolerated. Her project was initially funded by a friend, John Ruskin, that would have a return of five per



15. FIRST PEABODY ESTATE, OPENED IN 1864 IN SPITALFIELDS



cent on capital. These types of schemes became known as The Five per Cent Philanthropy. Another of the well-known schemes that private societies developed in London was The Peabody Trust. This housing trust would become one of the biggest and oldest housing associations in London active until today. The Peabody Trust built a number of blocks of tenement flats and provided dwellings for the poor. Like Octavia Hill's dwellings, these also had strict rules to instore the good moral conduct and payment of rents. What would happen was that these strong policies would consequently exclude the poorest from the opportunity of living in these houses, most of the time because they couldn't afford even their low rents or always pay it on time. The multi-storey flats of the Peabody Trust would later be an influence to new housing solutions of the twentieth century.

Even though there were a number of charity societies interested on improving the housing conditions of the poor, these solutions would reveal themselves small in scale to solve the housing demand. Despite the public improvements in the city, together with the slum clearance programmes, the construction of a railway system and the evolution of standards of accommodation that allowed some people to move on to better houses in less cramped areas of London, *overcrowding*<sup>10</sup> still remained the most acute problem in the end of the century. Soon people started to realise that the prevention of *overcrowding was itself one of its aggravating conditions* (WHOL, 1977, p.ix). But, these primary legislative actions and social policies taken by reformers and philanthropists of the nineteenth century brought awareness to the housing problem, and marked the beginning of the involvement of the government in this issue. In 1890, local authorities were given, for the first time, the *statutory powers to build new housing*

<sup>10</sup> "Overcrowding first received a technical definition in 1891, as a room containing more than two adults, children under ten counting as half, and those under one year not counting at all. It was tolerant minimum, which allowed three-roomed house to contain four adults, four children and any number of babies without falling foul of the definition." (BURNETT, 1986, pp. 144-145)



16. TOTTERDOWN FIELDS, FIRST LCC'S COTTAGE ESTATE BUILT IN 1911, INFLUENCED BY THE GARDEN CITY MOVEMENT

(HOLMES, 2006, p.07), resulting in the first estates built by the London County Council, the primary local authority to cover the inner area of London.

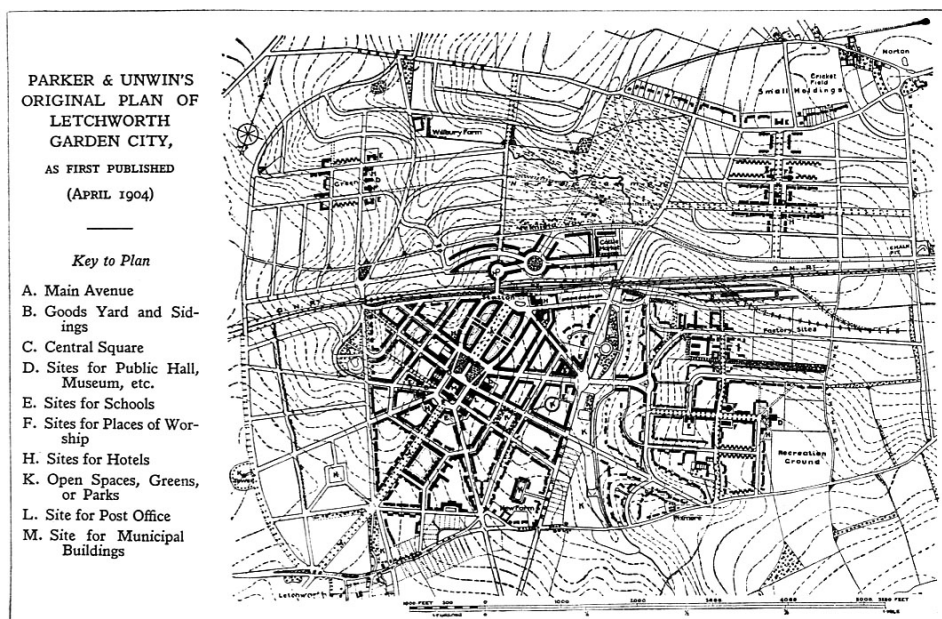
## TWENTIETH CENTURY LONDON

*It was not until the turn of the twentieth century that a real effort was made to deal with the huge legacy of poor housing handed down by the industrial revolution. (COLQUHOUN, 2008, p.03)*

In the beginning of the twentieth century, there was a lot of pressure for the government to act. The first housing estates built by the LCC were located in central areas of London and inspired by the blocks of multi-storey flats made in the previous century. Yet, this strategy would reveal itself inefficient, mainly due to the costs of land. Consequently, the LCC started a new strategy of decentralization by building small cottage estates in the periphery, the county estates<sup>11</sup>. This was made possible because of the new railway system and low fees charged on commutes, now accessible to the working class. By 1914 there was a new housing policy that turned planned solutions by reformers and architects into houses, applying new standards of accommodation. At this point there was already an attempt to town planning. By this time, also appeared some movements inspired by the utopian ideals already established in the end of the previous century. With the first publication of *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*, by Ebenezer Howard, and the foundation of the Garden City Movement, in 1899<sup>12</sup>, a new vision of sustainable city started to emerge. Howard's Garden Cities aimed to fulfill economic, social, physical and political

<sup>11</sup> KNOX, Paul (2017) *Metroburbia, The Anatomy of Greater London* (p. 74). London: Merrel Publishers Limited, London and New York

<sup>12</sup> COLQUHOUN, Ian (2008) *RIBA Book of British Housing: 1900 to the present day* (p. 03) Architectural Press



17. RICHARD PARKER'S AND RAYMOND UNWIN'S PLANS FOR LETCHWORTH, FIRST GARDEN-CITY, 34 MILES OUTSIDE LONDON

terms, in order to achieve a self-sufficient social city surrounded by green belts, that would serve as an attractive housing alternative to people and enable them to escape the urban slums. These settlements aimed to create self-contained communities where all social classes could coexist and where the land value and the rents returned to the community itself. Even though the materialization of these ideas intended to create a self-contained community, in practice the costs of living in these places made them reachable only to the middle-class<sup>13</sup>. However, these ideas were translated into architecture by Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker, with the establishment of the first garden city, in Letchworth, in 1902. Their plans avoided the uniform grid design of the previous century at the same time that the cottage designs send us to a romantic English era. The idea was to keep low densities in the city, as well as to preserve the quality of the design in houses and gardens<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> HOLMES, Chris (2006) *A New Vision for Housing* (p. 06). USA and Canada: Routledge

<sup>14</sup> COLQUHOUN, Ian (2008) *RIBA Book of British Housing: 1900 to the present day* (pp. 03-04) Architectural Press

<sup>15</sup> "While the housing of the working classes had always been a question of the greatest social importance, never has it been so important as now. It is not too much to say that an adequate solution of the housing question is the Foundation of all social progress..." (King's speech to the representatives of the local authorities and societies at Buckingham Palace; *The Times*, 12 April 1919) (BURNETT, 1986, p. 219)

<sup>16</sup> "To let them (our heroes) come home from horrible, water logged trenches to something little better than a pigsty would indeed be criminal' was the warning given by the local government minister that vividly expressed the popular mood." (HOLMES, 2006, p. 07)

With this, came the First World War and the production of houses declined as the destruction of the existing ones increased. By the end of the war there was a serious shortage of home supply but, in 1918, the government changed its view and established a new social policy<sup>15</sup>. A series of post-war policies were made with the ambition to build and reconstruct the city, as well as to establish recommendations for new housing.

The lack of housing accentuated the fact that the war soldiers would return to their country to live in poorer conditions than when they had left. Most of them were to be housed in shared rooms, tenement houses or temporary houses. This fact marked a huge change in the responsibility of providing houses<sup>16</sup>. The *Homes Fit For Heroes* plan, introduced by the Prime Minister David Lloyd George,



18. BECONTREE ESTATE, DAGENHAM, BUILT BY LCC TO REWARD THE WAR HEROES AND THEIR FAMILIES, 1921-32



promised a future with decent homes for everyone. The supply of housing for working-classes, now responsibility of the state, was materialized in the Housing Act of 1919. However, this came to be a failure as the government was unable to produce enough houses to fulfil the city needs. The budget for the housing programme was eventually cut and there was a setback on the provision of houses, as well as a decline in the architectural quality of homes, now far behind the housing ideals of Unwin and Parker.

Nevertheless, the houses built by local authorities became very popular. Initially, they represented the ideals of the garden suburbs and enabled a number of people to leave the inner city crowded areas to live in nice cottages and semidetached houses in the suburbs<sup>17</sup>. *The Garden City Movement rejected the city as it then existed and searched for better solutions based on the countryside and the village (COLQUHOUN, 2008, p.05)*. This decentralization started the growth of the suburbs and prolonged the expansion of the city outwards. These fringe areas of London had already begun to be taken in the nineteenth century by the middle-class and now, although the working-class had the possibility to move there too, they could still be easily differentiated by social status and incomes. But once again, even though the LCC's main purpose was to help the slum inhabitants allowing many working-class people to move away from the slums, this type of social housing was still unreachable to the poorer. To achieve an allocation to a dwelling, the applicants would have to prove regular incomes and capacity to pay the rents, but the reality of the worst slums was still far from these requirements, and so they persisted to exist.

By the end of 1920s, the general belief was that the LCC was still

<sup>17</sup> "(...) interwar development was dominated by low density garden suburbs in which the semidetached house was the predominant building type. Curved streets and cul-de-sac were common, and houses generally stood further back in their plots, to give larger front gardens." (KNOX, 2017, p. 81)



19. HIGH POINT 1, IN HIGHGATE, LONDON, DESIGNED BY BERTHOLD LUBETKIN IN 1935



20 AND 21. CHURCHILL GARDENS, DESIGNED BY POWELL AND MOYA, 1946-62 (ON THE LEFT) AND ALTON EAST, DESIGNED BY LCC ARCHITECTS DEPARTMENT IN 1958 (ON THE RIGHT)



not building enough homes to meet the social housing needs and the ones built were too far from the range of the lower-paid workers and the unemployed.

In 1930, once again, there was a new and different action to try to fight the poor conditions of the most needed. A new Act was approved and a new programme for slum clearance was presented. By this time the LCC started to build tenement-style multi-storey blocks of flats as an alternative to cottages in the suburbs. This new model of housing permitted them to house more people and specially to provide homes for those who couldn't yet afford the commutes to the suburbs. The turn to multi-storey flats started the density discussion, at the same time that architecture was being influenced by the modern theories of Le Corbusier, the Bauhaus and the CIAM. Housing was starting to be thought in an unornamented and functional perspective and these new ideals begun to appear throughout London, as it's shown in the example of High Point 1, in Highgate<sup>18</sup>.

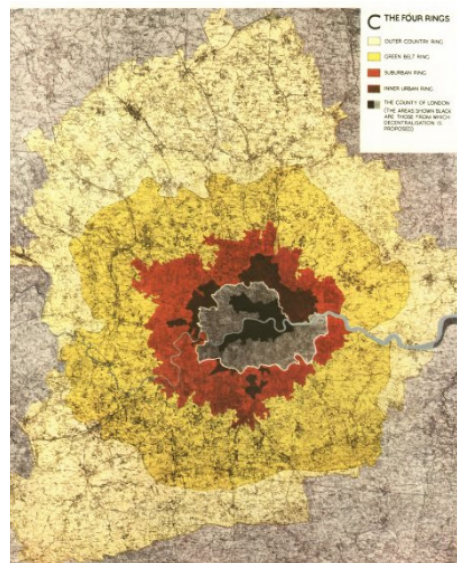
<sup>18</sup> COLQUHOUN, Ian (2008) *RIBA Book of British Housing: 1900 to the present day* (p. 06) Architectural Press

Even though the local authority built the majority of new homes between 1919 and 1939, a huge amount was still being provided by private companies and subsidized by the government. This facilitated the middle-class buyers to acquire homes at very good prices, resulting also in the growth of middle-class suburbs. With the increase of the incomes there was an increase on the living standards and some working-class people were able to move up in the social ladder and even become home-owners.

By 1945, the Scandinavian influence on housing in Britain was also significant as it can be seen in the Churchill Gardens, in



22. LONDON DOCK SITE DESTROYED DURING WORLD WAR II



23. ABERCROMBIE'S MAP, GREATER LONDON PLAN, 1944

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p. 08

Pimlico, or, more subtly, at Roehampton in the Alton East<sup>19</sup>. These schemes were part of the vision to redevelop the city of London with more rational lines. Built to replace terraced houses, the first is composed by multi-storey blocks connected by maisonettes and terraces, and it was very important in the establishment of a model for public housing. The second is a mixture of slab blocks and low-level housing, in an attempt to create a link with the modernist ideals to the traditional designs.

By this time, it is important to acknowledge that the expansion to the periphery in the Greater London area was only possible, and sometimes even motivated, by the developing of new rail and underground lines. *In total, between 1921 and 1937, 1.400.000 people moved to outer London, the population of the central area falling by 400.000. (BURNETT, 1986, p.258)*

After the World War II *half a million homes had been destroyed by bombing, and another half a million were severely damaged (HOLMES, 2006, p.15)*, but there was a willing to engage on an urgent housing programme, with the main purpose to lodge everyone in England as quickly as possible. Despite there weren't any additions of houses during the war years, towards the end of the war the government began to concern about the *uncontrolled expansion of London (Holmes, 2006, p.18)*. They started to consider that cities could be better planned and improved if they could self-contain them. The solution came in 1944 with Patrick Abercrombie's creation of the Greater London Plan and a green belt around the Greater London area, that would not only help to hold the growing of the suburbs but also allow local authorities to buy and develop land throughout this area and create new towns. This envisioned that local authorities could implement





24. TOWN SQUARE, STEVENAGE, 1950-60s



25. UNITÉ D'HABITATION, MARSEILLE, 1952, DESIGNED BY LE CORBUSIER

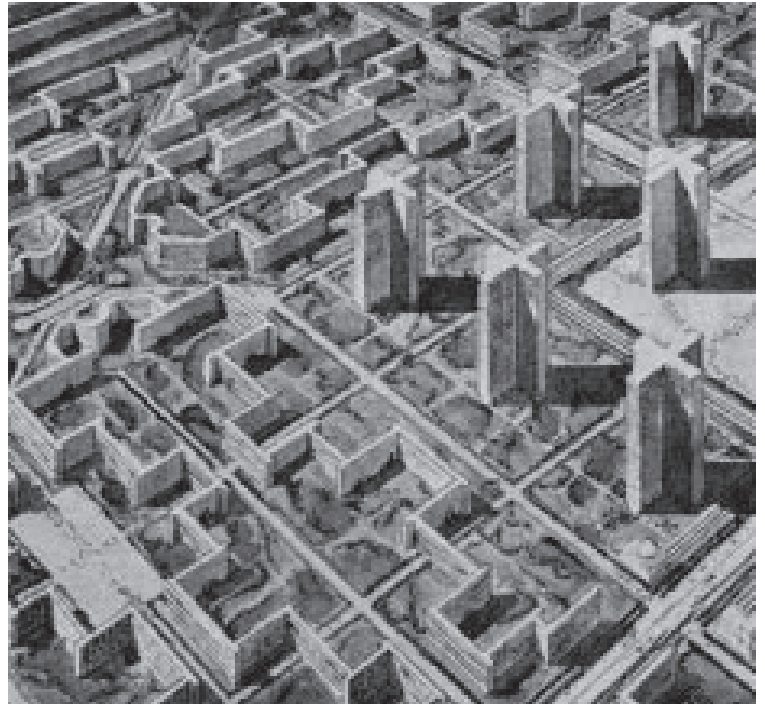
local urban plans and preserve historic places that would eventually be destroyed if the city continued to grow uncontrollably. The expansion of the suburbs was controlled by the implementation of the Green Belt that remains, until today, the limit of built-up suburbs in outer London.

These measures led to the creation of the New Towns programme in the mid-1940s, inspired once again by the garden cities, where local authorities would build new homes still focusing on the quality of standards of accommodation, to remove the pressure from overcrowded places in urban areas of the city. Abercrombie's suggestions for the new towns was that they should establish balanced communities, where all social classes would be able to live in equal ways and enjoy the same services, at densities from 50,000 to 100,000 inhabitants. The first New Town was announced in 1946, in Stevenage<sup>20</sup>. However, the New Towns solution proved itself too small to provide sufficient homes and, as new government initiatives and new requirements on the quality of housing appeared, the price of land, home and rents increased. In consequence, there was a rising number of homeless people and a shortage of homes to rent. The slum clearance programmes continued but with the lack of possibilities of the LCC to deliver new homes and the cuts in the construction of council houses, the government encouraged the private sector to both provide new homes to rent and buy and improve older ones.

Through the 1960s and 1970s, housing returned back to the inner city from the suburbs and the new constructions were mainly high-rise. By this time, architects, influenced by the modernist theories of Le Corbusier, embodied at the Unité d'Habitation in Marseille, 1952, turned to big concrete blocks for the solution to social housing.

<sup>20</sup> COLQUHOUN, Ian (2008) *RIBA Book of British Housing: 1900 to the present day* (p. 9) Architectural Press





26 AND 27. ALTON ESTATE, 1958-59, DESIGNED BY THE LCC ARCHITECTS DEPARTMENT (ON THE LEFT) AND THE PLAN FOR VILLE RADIEUSE, 1930, DESIGNED BY LE CORBUSIER (ON THE RIGHT)



28. HIGH-DENSITY HOUSING IN BROADWATER FARM ESTATE, BUILT IN TOTTENHAM IN 1967

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, p. 9

<sup>22</sup> In this concept, residential buildings could contain facilities that composed a city, like supermarkets, swimming pools, car parks, etc., through a zoning process, where buildings were divided according to different zones with different functions

<sup>23</sup> COLQUHOUN, Ian (2008) *RIBA Book of British Housing: 1900 to the present day* (p. 12) Architectural Press

For the first time since the Garden City Movement, there were new theories that questioned the housing problem in England<sup>21</sup>. Le Corbusier, with his visions for city planning and delivering proper standards of living, believed in the *vertical city*<sup>22</sup> as a way to create self-sustained communities.

These theories initiated the golden age of council homes inspired by Modernists designs and capable of delivering a large number of homes per year. These blocks were characterised by horizontal balconies envisioned to foster communication between residents, concrete frameworks and big gardens or public parks around them, as a way to contradict the negative idea of council housing. It is clear to see the modernist influence in early LCC schemes for high-rise towers, like the Alton Estate, previously mentioned above, where Le Corbusier's Ville Radieuse and Unité d'Habitation served as an inspiration for the composition of four-storey blocks and slab blocks, maisonettes and terraces, all surrounded by the Richmond Park<sup>23</sup>.

With this, high-rise construction was spreading through London as a solution for the increasing housing demand. Industrialised methods of construction allowed cheap and fast building and, with time, this became more important than the standards of living being delivered. Local authorities started to be pressured to use less attractive sites to build new homes and the high-rise tower blocks were treated as the only solution to keep up with the increase of the population in London. Therefore, the government started to subsidize buildings according to their height as the new council homes presented themselves as a 'home for a Modern Family'. In 1965, the LCC evolved to a new housing programme given by the, now called, Greater London Council, that offered independence to



29. RONAN POINT COLLAPSE, IN 1968



30. ALISON AND PETER SMITHSON



<sup>24</sup> "The new boroughs, larger and more financially powerful than their predecessor, announced their identity with new civic buildings and with increasingly ambitious tower blocks, centrepieces of mixed-development estates. (...) Modernism had become an everyday component of the landscape, a visible rupture with the suburban past." (KNOX, 2017, p. 144)

each local authority to plan their own urban and housing projects<sup>24</sup>.

Between 1950 and 1980 local authorities built more than three million homes (HOLMES, 2006, p.32). Yet, even though a vast number of people rented council homes during these decades, the high-rise towers of flats were not successful. They started to lose popularity and to be seen as 'new slums' built by the GLC. The tower blocks started to reveal lots of problems that resulted from industrialized building and cost cutting in construction as well as the lack of maintenance and management of the estates by the GLC. The number of homes built by the GLC reached its peak of 370,000 in 1968 (HOLMES, 2006, p.37), the same year that the Ronan Point Tower collapsed due to a gas explosion and defaults on its construction. The GLC stopped this high-rise construction trend leaving council houses as unpopular as ever.

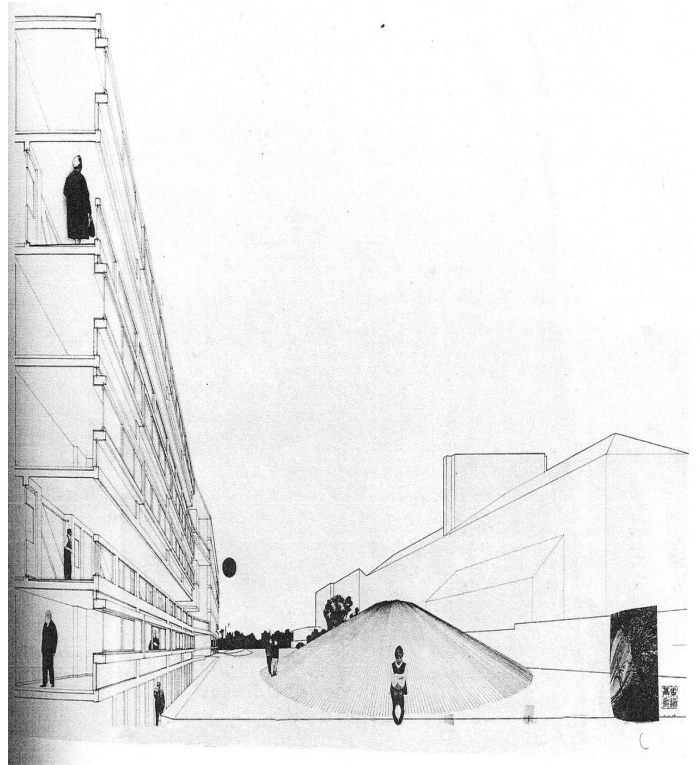
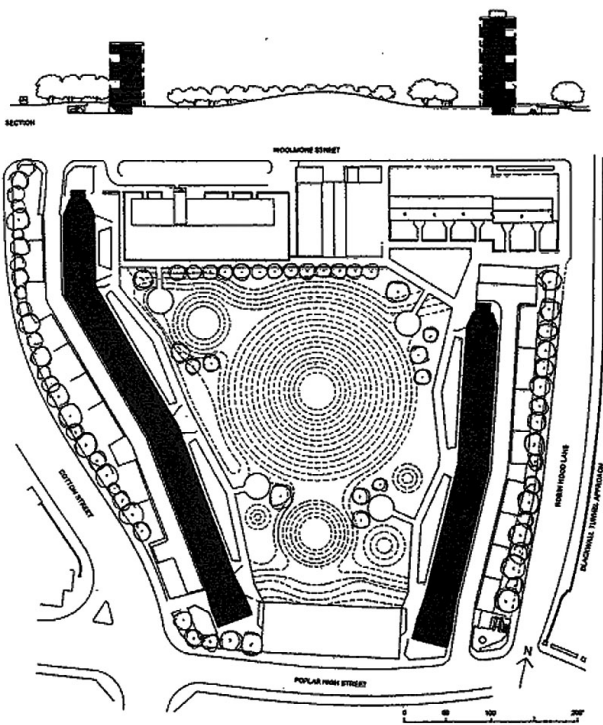
<sup>25</sup> O'BYRNE, Natasha (2013) *Architecture and Social Housing* (p. 13) . (Dissertation, University of Brighton) . Retrieved from <https://folio.brighton.ac.uk/>

<sup>26</sup> MARS - Modern Architecture Research Society - British group of prominent architects, founded in 1933 to represent the country in the CIAM, in CUNHA, Rui (2010) *Robin Hood Gardens: A condição paradigmática de uma ideia construída* (p. 8) . (Master's Dissertation, University of Coimbra) . Retrieved from <https://estudogeral.sib.uc.pt/handle/10316/14067>

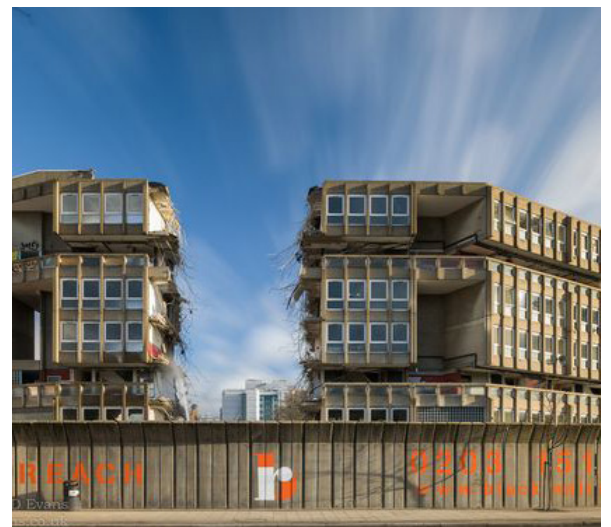
<sup>27</sup> CUNHA, Rui (2010) *Robin Hood Gardens: A condição paradigmática de uma ideia construída* (p. 3) . (Master's Dissertation, University of Coimbra) . Retrieved from <https://estudogeral.sib.uc.pt/handle/10316/14067>

The failure or success of the mass housing construction is not easy to explain. Many of the schemes, seen as the new slums of London, seemed like they were doomed to failure since the beginning and living standards were far away from the housing expectations after the war. One of the most polemic cases is the Robin Hood Gardens, designed by The Smithsons and completed in 1972<sup>25</sup>.

The Smithsons represent a turn in the Modern way of thinking about housing. As young architects that arose in the middle of the rationalists' vision presented at the CIAM, they criticised the artistic movement of the time and believed that architecture should be brought closer to man. Influenced by the Independent Group and Brutalist theories, they were invited to integrate the MARS Group<sup>26</sup> and participate in the CIAM IX, in 1953<sup>27</sup>. There, they present the



31 AND 32. ROBIN HOOD GARDENS' PLAN AND ELEVATION (ON THE LEFT) AND COLLAGE OF A SECTION IN PERSPECTIVE (ON THE RIGHT)



33 AND 34. 'STREETS IN THE SKY', ROBIN HOOD GARDENS (ON THE LEFT) AND ROBIN HOOD GARDENS DEMOLITION (ON THE RIGHT)

Urban ReIdentification grid, where the principles dictated by the Athens Charter - living, working, recreation and circulation - were redefined through concepts of human hierarchy of association - house, street, district and city, as a way to find a new model of housing that related to the common men<sup>28</sup>. The Smithson became members and a great influence inside the Team 10, that is inevitably connected with the end of the CIAM, and tried to break with the strict modern urban theories while their members presented themselves as a new generation of architects in the post-war scenario. Alison and Peter Smithson ideals will culminate in the Robin Hood Gardens project, built by the GLC, through their own visions for social housing. The estate was composed by two large blocks of concrete that surrounded a large lawn in the middle. This garden was intended to serve as a space protected from the noise and pollution that characterised the area. The height and position of the two blocks was carefully thought to respond as noise and visual barriers, and to allow the correct sun light exposure<sup>29</sup>. One of the main characteristics of the project was the concept of streets in the sky, embodied in the “balconies” designed for people to interact and children to play, like in a regular neighbourhood street. The design should create areas that people would appropriate and not just designed to serve a specific function<sup>30</sup>. However, this estate begun to be criticised since its construction and only a year after its completion there were already signs of vandalism and lack of maintenance. While the architects and their design were blamed for the problems of the estate, the shortage of maintenance from the council responsible for the building, led the Robin Hood Garden into a spiral of decline. People felt unsafe living there and, in 2008, it was taken the decision to demolish the estate<sup>31</sup>. The high

<sup>28</sup> BAÍA, Pedro . *A Propósito da demolição do Robin Hood Gardens* . Retrieved from [https://www.artecapital.net/arq\\_des-31-a-proposito-da-demolicao-do-robin-hood-gardens](https://www.artecapital.net/arq_des-31-a-proposito-da-demolicao-do-robin-hood-gardens)

<sup>29</sup> BALTERS, Sofia (2011) *AD Classics: Robin Hood Gardens / Alison and Peter Smithson* . Retrieved from <https://www.archdaily.com/150629/ad-classics-robin-hood-gardens-alison-and-peter-smithson>

<sup>30</sup> COLQUHOUN, Ian (2008) *RIBA Book of British Housing: 1900 to the present day* (p. 12) Architectural Press

<sup>31</sup> O'BYRNE, Natasha (2013) *Architecture and Social Housing* (p. 17) . (Dissertation, University of Brighton) . Retrieved from <https://folio.brighton.ac.uk/>





35. TRELICK TOWER - CONNECTION BETWEEN THE TWO TOWERS



36 AND 37. OUTSIDE OF TRELICK TOWER (ON THE LEFT) AND CORRIDOR INSIDE THE TRELICK TOWER (ON THE RIGHT)

costs of a possible renovation and the opinions of the inhabitants revealed themselves stronger than the petitions supported by names like Richard Rogers, Zaha Hadid, Norman Foster, among others, and the demolition of the building started in 2015<sup>32</sup>. Unfortunately, the Smithsons will to create an estate that could encourage a healthy community environment failed to result and the social problems that arose from it were blamed on its brutalist design.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, p. 17

Furthermore, it is important to find examples of mass housing in the city that overcame their bad reputation and manage to regenerate themselves into desirable buildings. Erno Goldfinger's Trellick Tower was built in 1972 in Kensington and Chelsea borough. Also commissioned by the GLC, the estate was completed in a time when people weren't accepting high-rise buildings anymore<sup>33</sup>. The estate was based on a previous design by the architect, the Balfron Tower. The Trellick Tower, although thinner than the previous, was much higher. The building is connected to a service tower through corridors, and contains the heating system of the building and other utility rooms, a waste chute system as well as lifts and stairs. All flats were designed to take advantage of sun light and each of them has a balcony. The idea in the Trellick Towers was also to create a community environment, as one would found in a regular neighbourhood. However, it also wasn't long before the estate turned into a place of vandalism, violence and crime. These events named the estate as *The Tower of Terror*<sup>34</sup> and soon the lack of maintenance work and unfortunate violent situations led the estate into deplorable conditions. Goldfinger's brutalist design was blamed for the fate of the tower but the truth is that many of the problems were a direct consequence of the lack of preservation of the building

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, p. 6

<sup>34</sup> WINSTANLEY, Tim (2011) *AD Classics: Trellick Tower / Erno Goldfinger*. Retrieved from <https://www.archdaily.com/151227/ad-classics-trellick-tower-erno-goldfinger>



<sup>35</sup> Grade II is a category of buildings with more than special interest in the listed buildings of historic importance.

<sup>36</sup> O'BYRNE, Natasha (2013) *Architecture and Social Housing* (p. 10) . (Dissertation, University of Brighton) . Retrieved from <https://folio.brighton.ac.uk/>

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, p. 11

<sup>38</sup> *"If necessary, social goals and regulatory standards must be sacrificed, it is asserted, to ensure that business has the maximus latitude for profitability. (...) Thus, rather than focus on social and environmental problems such as poverty, sprawl and traffic congestion, urban governance became more concerned with providing 'good business climate' and promoting self-reliant individualism."* (BURNETT, 1986, p.164)

from the council itself. By the beginning of the 1980's a tenants' association took care of the building and introduced new security measures. After a decade, the Trellick Tower became a desirable and fashionable place to live in. The building was listed as Grade II<sup>35</sup> in 1998<sup>36</sup> and today contains both social and privately owned housing. We can conclude that the success of this building, opposed to the failure of Robin Hood Gardens can be influenced by the area they were built in. Also, despite the loss of social housing, the 'Right to Buy' Act, that is explained further, allowed many people to buy and improve their homes. In this case, the investment and funding on the Trellick Tower resulted in an increasing valorisation and consequent popularity of the estate<sup>37</sup>.

In 1972 a new Housing Act was approved to bring major changes into the council houses rents, until now defined by local authorities. The main purpose of this Act was to unlink the income of tenants to the access of council homes by allowing people with lower wages to benefit a reduction on the level of rents and move into a new home subsidized by the government. In 1977, the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act required, for the first time, local authorities to have legal responsibility in the accommodation of homeless people and families and the inhibition of refuse to help them due to social judgements.

From the 1970's onwards the economy of the country started to change as a result of a weakened international financial system. House prices started to rise as house construction consequently fell. Neoliberalist policies begun to emerge from this weak state as the solution for a disrupted economy<sup>38</sup>. The limitations in the economy and industry in the beginning of the 1980's led to the





privatisation of many government services as well as reductions in welfare programmes, such as housing programmes. The state began to partner with private companies with bigger shares in business, at the same time that state houses, buildings and land were sold under free-market conditions. The biggest effect of these actions in social housing was the tremendous loss of council homes by the government, that followed the 'Right to Buy' legislation initiated by Margaret Thatcher. This measure enabled many council house tenants to buy their living homes at substantially reduced prices, which translated in the reduction of homes owned by local authorities, that weren't permitted to use the profits of this selling to buy new homes. As a consequence, the properties that remained in the GLC were separated by boroughs and the provision of houses was eventually diminished. Their part became solely to identify the social housing needs and to provide affordable housing funded by the private sector. Even though this Act had a massive influence in the supply of council houses, it also *enabled over 2 million tenants to become owners of their homes (HOLMES, 2006, p.27)* and represented an urban progress in most of the council estates in desirable places of London. The GLC itself ended in 1986<sup>39</sup>. It would not be until the year 2000 that the government would create a new authority committed to the provision of social and affordable housing in London, the Greater London Authority.

<sup>39</sup> KNOX, Paul (2017) *Metroburbia, The Anatomy of Greater London* (p. 170). London: Merrel Publishers Limited, London and New York

With this retrospect, it is impossible not to acknowledge that the economic and social changes throughout these two centuries dictated new types of housing and housing policies that shaped the history of social housing in London. The bottom line is that these solutions were almost always an answer to the market needs,



instead of the needs of the individuals, resulting in the persistence of problems like the shortage of accommodation, overcrowding and homelessness until today.

Rephrasing Chris Holmes (2006), *it is not possible to turn the clock back to the 'golden age' of council housing. Even if it were possible, we should remember that it was a golden age only for the more fortunate. Social housing will be a minority tenure in the future and almost all of those who can afford to will choose to buy. More controversially it means accepting that social housing is, and should be, the tenure of 'last resort'. That means not only giving priority to those in the greatest need who have no option, but also that exclusion is only acceptable in carefully defined and exceptional circumstances.* (p. 53)



## B. THE FUTURE OF THE CITY

As we've seen in the previous chapter, the new millennium brought a new hope for the city of London to continue to be seen as a world city. Since Margaret Thatcher's abolition of the GLC in 1986, London was in desperate need of a strategic plan to reshape the city.

<sup>40</sup> *Overcrowding – “households living at a density of more than one person per room” (HOLMES, 2006, p.142)*

<sup>41</sup> *Severe overcrowding – “households living with more than one and a half person per room” (HOLMES, 2006, p.142)*

The 2001 census showed that problems like *overcrowding*<sup>40</sup> and *severe overcrowding*<sup>41</sup> were rapidly increasing in London, at the same time that the housing provision was far from meeting its own demand. This was a step back in London's situation.

By the year 2000, the GLA was created and it introduced, for the first time, a position of a Mayor of London. Ken Livingstone was the first elected Mayor and his main objective was to provide a sustainable city with affordable housing. He immediately put together a Housing Commission with the purpose of evaluating the necessity of affordable houses in London and to make proposals to



<sup>42</sup> (Mayor's Housing Commission, 2000) as cited in (HOLMES, 2006, p.iii)

<sup>43</sup> "The Commission proposed that 35 per cent of all new homes should be socially rented housing for people on low incomes, and 15 per cent for intermediate market." (HOLMES, 2006, p.146)

<sup>44</sup> CABE – Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment -

"...charged with championing well-designed buildings, spaces and places." (KNOX, 2017, p. 173)

<sup>45</sup> "The urban Task Force was charged with identifying the causes of urban decline and establishing a vision for urban regeneration." (KNOX, 2017, p. 173)

<sup>46</sup> "This development succeeds on almost all fronts. It is beautifully designed, detailed and constructed. There is clearly a strong sense of community, with groups already chatting outside their doors." (HOLMES, 2006, p.85)

<sup>47</sup> "If social housing was scattered through the housing stock – say one home in four – the concentration effect which exacerbated the problems of social exclusion would evaporate. But the problems of residualization, coupled with spatial segregation, are creating a kind of social apartheid in this country, damaging life chances and educational opportunities." (HOLMES, 2006, p. 107)

<sup>48</sup> CLARK, Greg (2015) *The Making of a World City, London 1991 to 2021* (p. 75) Sussex: Blackwell Publishing

solve its shortage. The Housing Commission appointed *the importance of the connections between providing affordable homes and other key priorities – especially in health, education, transport and employment*<sup>42</sup>. In addition to this, their report showed that to correctly tackle the lack of affordable housing, the Mayor would have to focus on the backlog of existing unmet housing needs, to create different housing products addressed to people with different incomes and the introduction of a mandatory target of *50 per cent of affordable housing*<sup>43</sup> in all new homes. Additionally, the Housing Commission also highlighted the significance of sustainable communities in the developing of London. Learning from the past, the goal was to provide good quality homes for everyone in *socially balanced neighbourhoods* (HOLMES, 2006, pp.73-74) with various types of housing and people.

Furthermore, CABE<sup>44</sup> and the *Urban Task Force*<sup>45</sup>, led by Richard Rogers, were created. The first enhanced the importance of good quality housing and design and worked along with housing associations to show them how a good design can have a better influence in a social context<sup>46</sup>. The latter presented the concept of mixed communities as a way to reduce social problems, especially in poorer estates, by establishing a more balanced system throughout London's dwellings. In fact, it was previously established since the twentieth century that dwellings should settle in the concept of mixed communities, with a variety of social classes, to guarantee its own success<sup>47</sup>. By 2002, poverty was still spread through the City and it was directly related with both unemployment and ethnic/social minorities<sup>48</sup>.

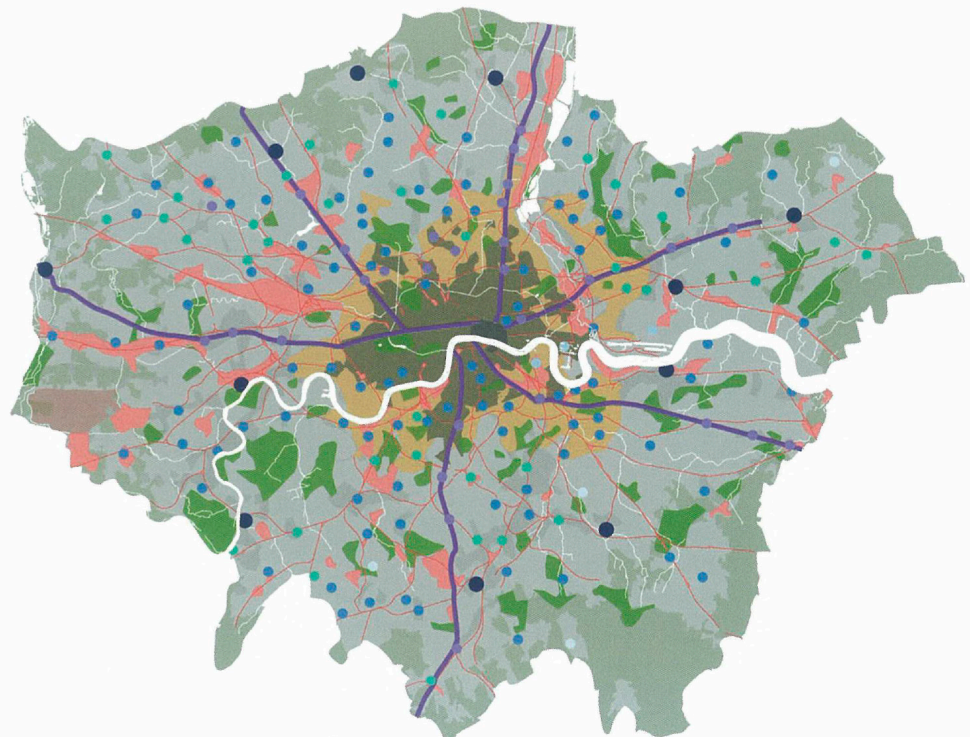
The will of urban regeneration led to the publish of the first London Plan, in 2004, committed to focus on the provision of

**Town Centres**

- 20th Century
- Industrial
- Railway Town Centres
- Historic
- Former Medieval Market Towns
- High road centre
- High roads

**19th Century Industry**

- Industry
- Infrastructure
- Waterways
- Green Spaces
- Green Belt
- Heathrow
- 20th century suburbs
- Victorian Suburbs
- Victorian Entrepreneurship
- Georgian Planning and Growth
- The Square Mile



38. LONDON'S CHARACTERIZATION MAP



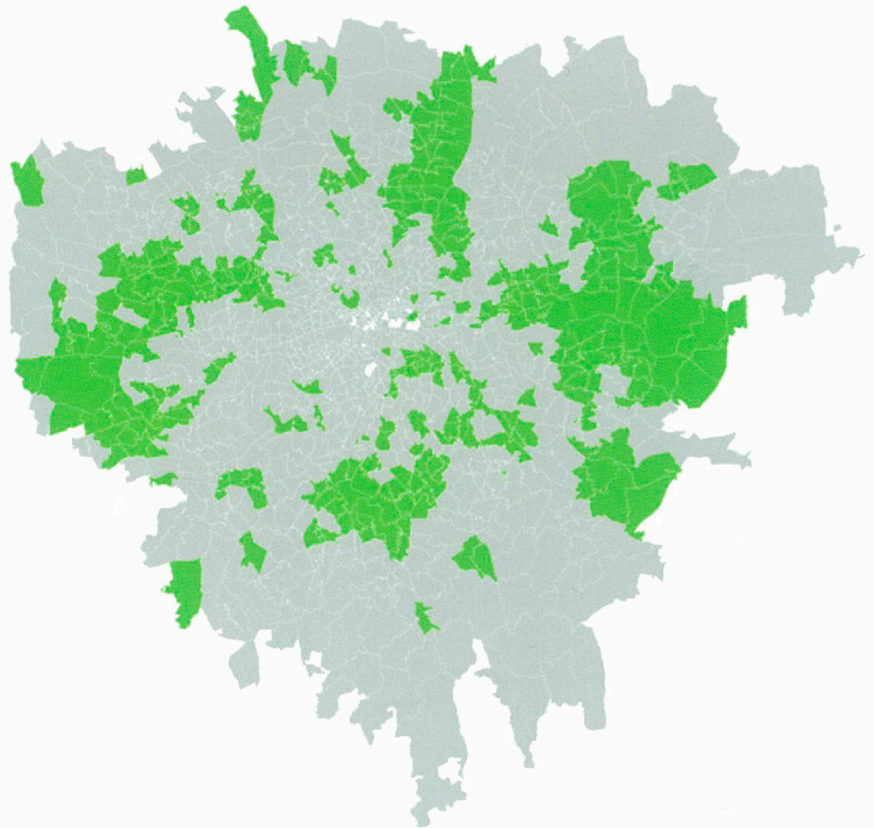
affordable housing and the conception of urban density as a way for a metropolitan improvement. The plan was elaborated to define targets for each of London's boroughs and introduced a number of ideas to try to achieve the making of a global city as well as a functional environment in terms of affordability, sustainably and expansion. With the previous recommendation from the Housing Committee, the count of the backlog of the housing need and the target of 50 per cent of affordable housing were, for the first time, implemented. A new target of 300,000 new homes to be built in the city brought concerns due to the fact that, in the past, high targets of new housing led to the failure of the large estates, poorly constructed and with lower design standards. As a consequence of a shortage in financial provision from housing associations and their ability to provide housing with good living standard, housing associations, developers and constructors were linked to provide high quality housing at the lowest price. Furthermore, with the evident need of land to build on, along with the restrictions from the Green Belt, there was also a high amount of people against constructing new homes near their own living space. Moreover, as absurd as it may seem, and even though people recognised the need for more houses, there was, and still is, a selfish concept of *nimbyism*<sup>49</sup> among Londoners.

<sup>49</sup> *Nimbyism – NIMBY “Not in my back yard”*. BENNIE, Claire (2015) *New Ideas for Housing NLA Insight Study* (p. 20) London: New London Architecture

<sup>50</sup> KNOX, Paul (2017) *Metroburbia, The Anatomy of Greater London* (p. 174). London: Merrel Publishers Limited, London and New York

With the election of a new Mayor, Boris Johnson, the London Plan was renewed both in 2008 and 2011, and introduced a new development strategy focused on Opportunity Areas, Regeneration Areas and Intensification Areas<sup>50</sup>. These envisioned the use of brownfield sites as sustainable opportunities, the intensification of town centres as shapers of the city and the benefit of the regeneration in existing areas of London.

- Largely affordable
- Largely unaffordable



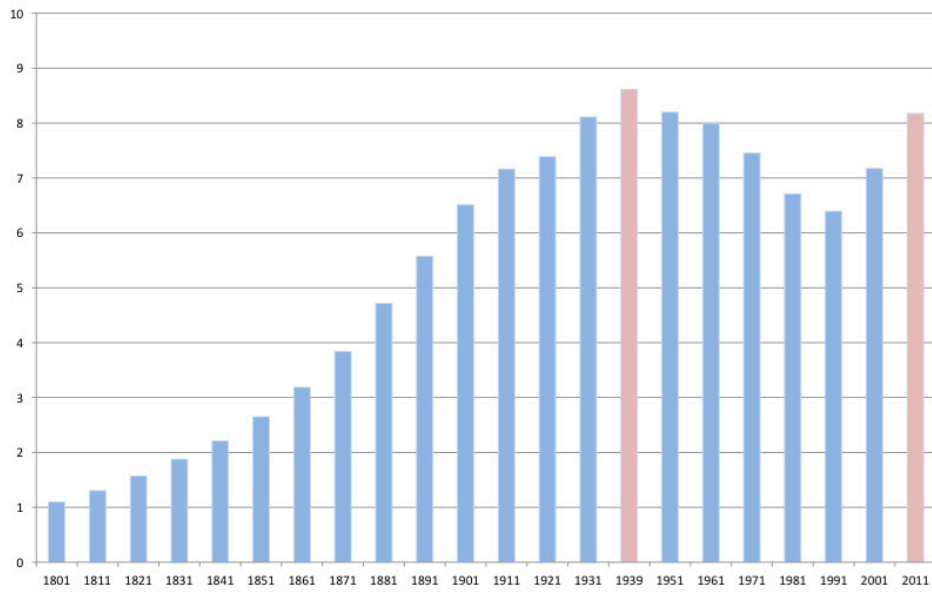
39. LONDON'S AFFORDABILITY MAP

The London Plan has the delivery of affordable housing in its main agenda since its start, and it aims to achieve a mandatory percentage of affordable housing in every development, even though this number has come to decline over the years. Much of this is due to the fact that boroughs have to partner with private companies to overcome their funding and financial problems in regeneration plans. The development projects, whether new or already built but in need of improvements, usually translate into more homes and socially balanced communities, but almost always mean the loss of affordable homes. Therefore, where previously existed a declined estate with a great amount of social housing, now stands a building with better living standards and a socially mixed community, but with less space for the most needed, either because of the reduction of social housing provided, or because of the increase of rents. This shows that there is a fine line between good estate regeneration and the delivery of affordable housing. Despite bringing successful improvements in the urban environment, this also results in a decline of social housing provision. Even though they always manage to negotiate the percentage of affordable homes delivered in each project, with their best interest in mind, private developers are the ones funding new developments in the city in partnership with local boroughs. Nevertheless, despite its variability, there has been a general increase on the number of affordable homes built in the city<sup>51</sup>.

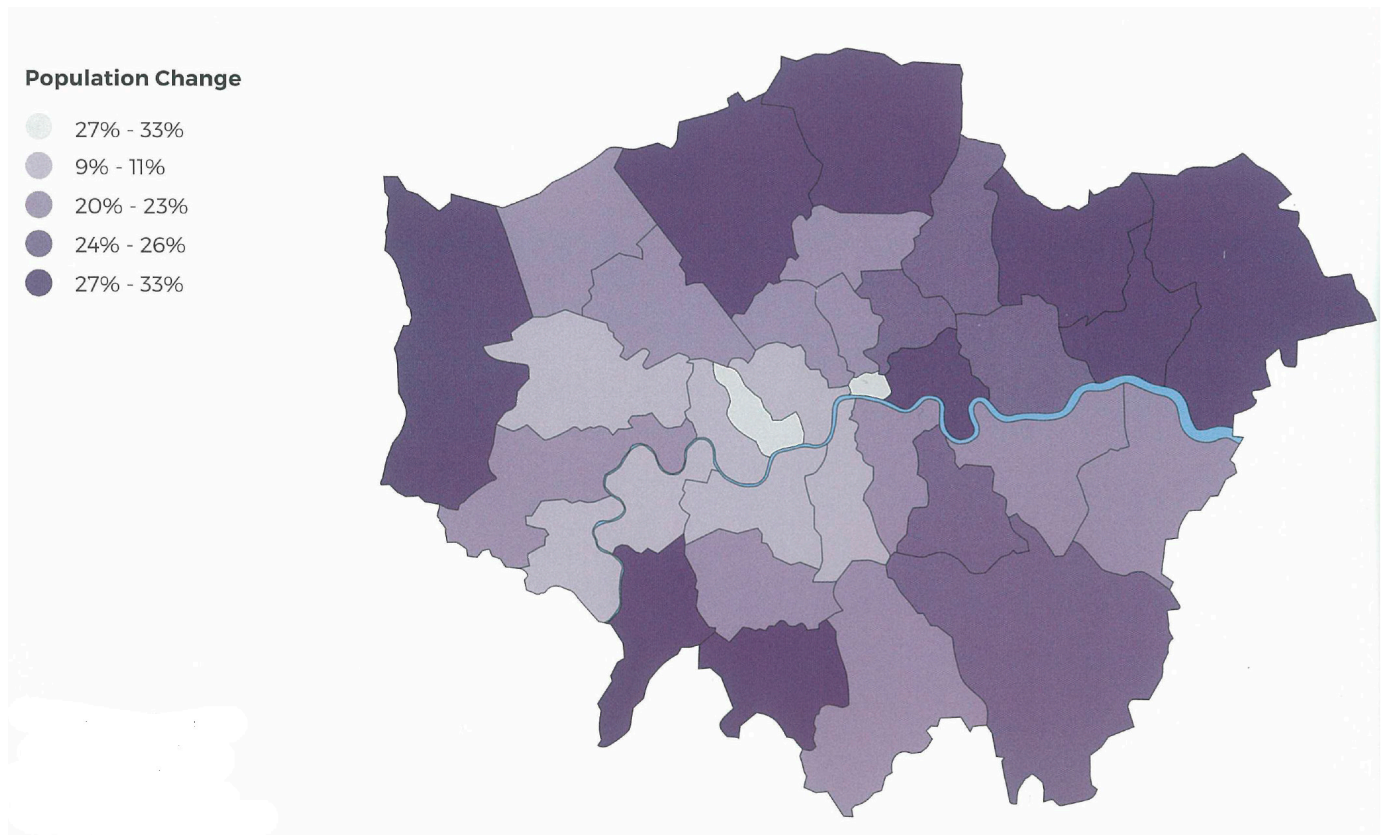
<sup>51</sup> CLARK, Greg (2015) *The Making of a World City, London 1991 to 2021* (p. 103) Sussex: Blackwell Publishing

<sup>52</sup> Mayor of London (2017) *The London Plan, The spatial Development Strategy for Greater London (Draft for public Consultation)*. (p.xiv). Retrieved from <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/london-plan/new-london-plan/draft-new-london-plan/>

But what does affordable housing really mean? Who can afford an affordable home? Counting that the city's population is likely to reach 10.5 million by 2041, the delivery of new homes would have to increase up to 66,000 every year to meet the demographic demand<sup>52</sup>.



40. POPULATION OF GREATER LONDON 1801-2011



41. POPULATION CHANGE 2016-2041 CENTRAL SCENARIO

How can the city support such growth, control the housing market, provide better jobs and infrastructures to support its own evolution and still ensure that real affordable housing and social housing doesn't get left behind? There are two main ideas to control this problem – *increasing residential densities within Greater London and/or abandoning the long-standing policy of containment (CLARK, 2015, p.208)*. To achieve higher densities in the city there has to be a new policy of regeneration and infill of London's existing towns and to change the policy of containment, there has to be a new evaluation of the Green Belt and an assessment of available land to build on.

A variety of strategies to tackle these problems were presented in the new London Plan, launched in 2017 by the new Mayor, Sadiq Khan.

### THE LONDON PLAN

*Many Londoners won't know about or have come across the London Plan, but it shapes their lives on a daily basis.*<sup>53</sup>

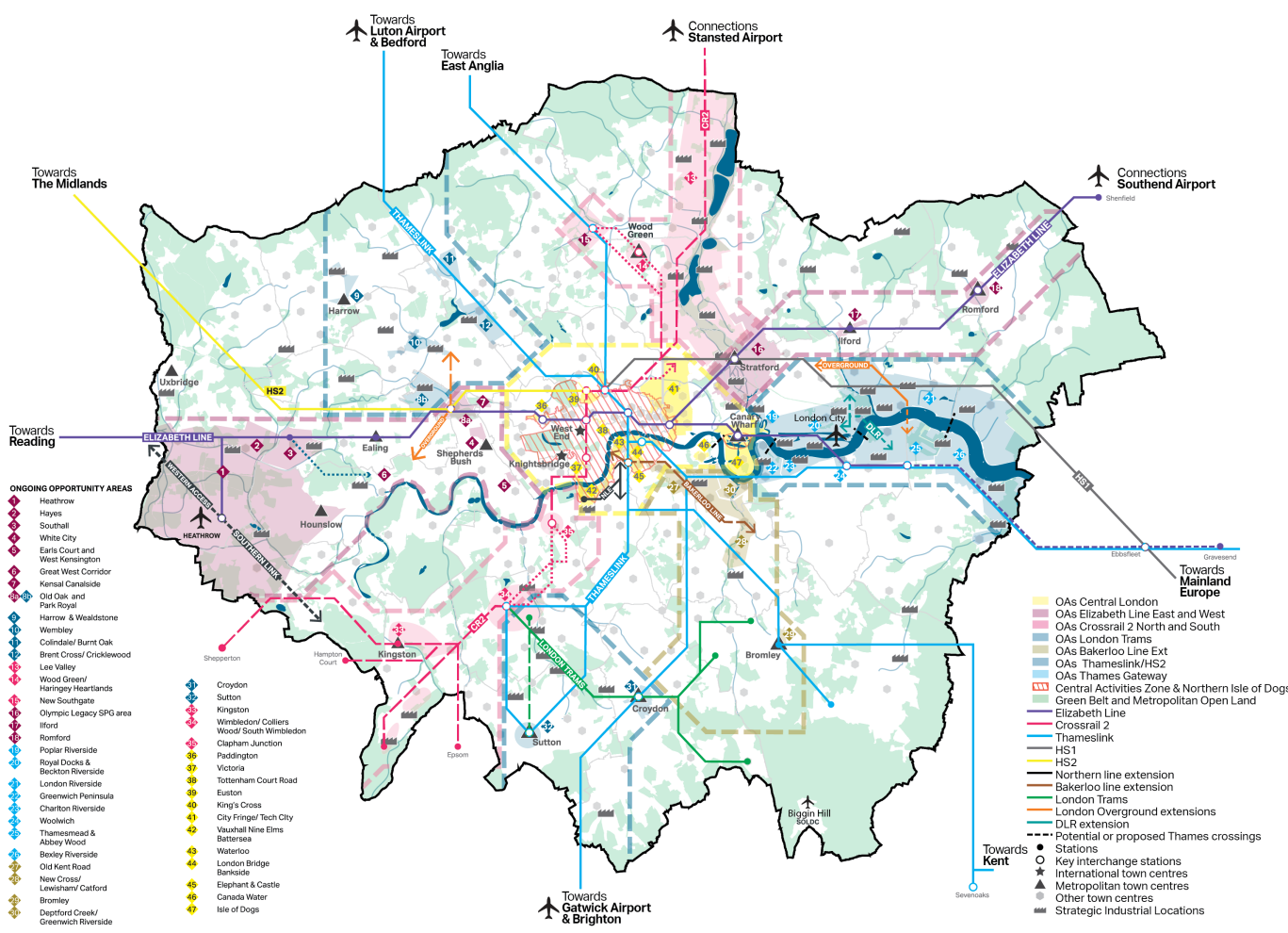
<sup>53</sup> Mayor of London (2017) *The London Plan, The spatial Development Strategy for Greater London (Draft for public Consultation)*. (p.xiii). GLA. Retrieved from <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/london-plan/new-london-plan/draft-new-london-plan/>

, *Mayor of London - Sadiq Khan in The London Plan*

The London Plan is a GLA document that demonstrates the Mayor's Spatial Development Strategy for the city of London. It translates the economic, cultural, health, environmental, transport and social plans for the next 20 to 25 years. According to the London Plan, when these strategies are being made, it is mandatory that they envision the equality of opportunities and health for all Londoners as well as the promotion of a sustainable development of the city<sup>54</sup>.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, p. 02





42. THE LONDON PLAN'S KEY DIAGRAM FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF LONDON

The new Plan is organised in 12 chapters divided between ‘good growth’ policies, spatial development, design, housing, social infrastructure, economy, heritage and culture, green infrastructure and natural environment, sustainable infrastructure, transport, funding and monitoring. The current Plan will function from 2019 to 2041, even though it establishes specific targets intended to be reached in a shorter-term period. One of those targets concerns the housing sector which determines objectives for the next 10 years<sup>55</sup>. For the purpose of this investigation, only design, housing, spatial development, growth and community issues will be approached.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, p. 04

<sup>56</sup> “Good Growth” - “sustainable growth that works for everyone, using London’s strengths to overcome its weaknesses” (Mayor of London, The London Plan, 2017)

<sup>57</sup> Mayor of London (2017) *The London Plan, The spatial Development Strategy for Greater London (Draft for public Consultation)*. (p. 14). GLA. Retrieved from <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/london-plan/new-london-plan/draft-new-london-plan/>

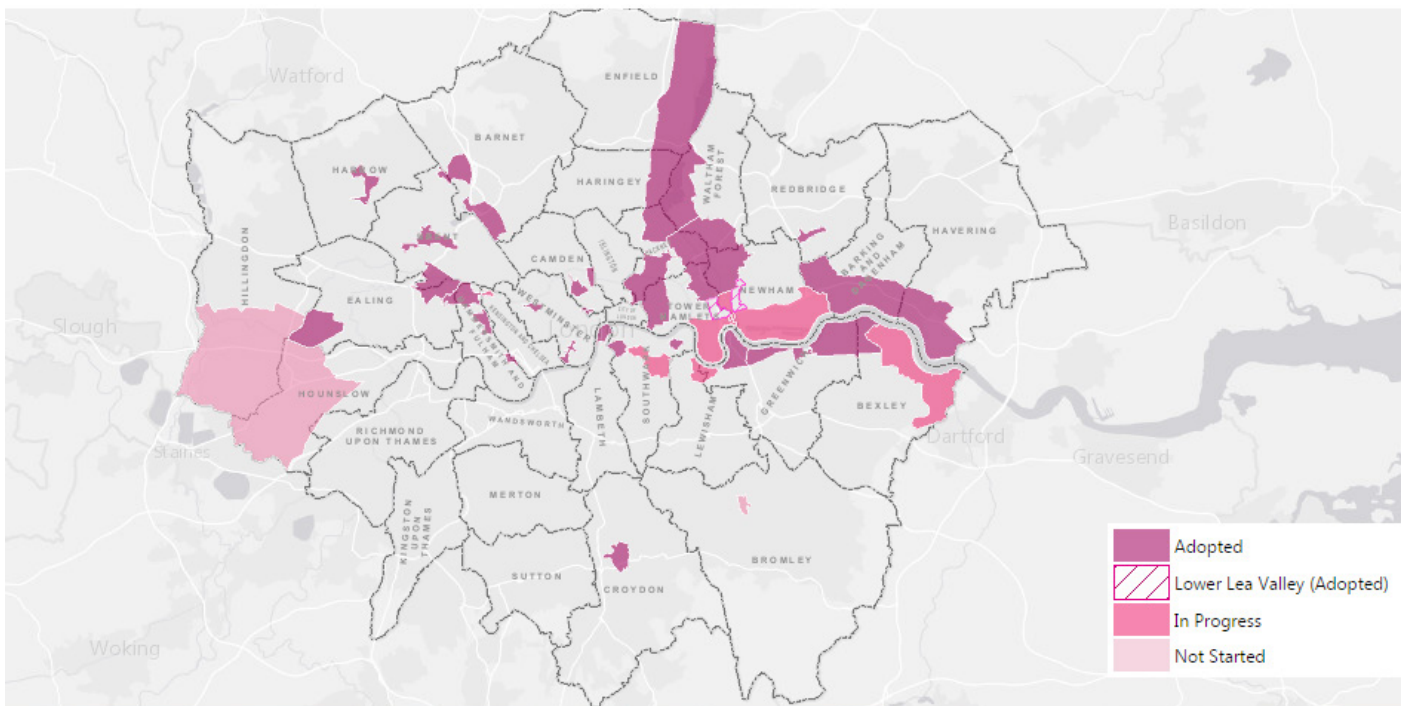
<sup>58</sup> Green Belt - “a designated area of open land around London (or other urban areas). The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open;” (Mayor of London, The London Plan, 2017, p. 513)

<sup>59</sup> Opportunity Areas – “London’s principal opportunities for accommodating large scale development to provide substantial number of new employment and housing, each typically more than 5,000 jobs and/or 2,500 homes, with a mixed and intensive use of land and assisted by good public transport accessibility.” (Mayor of London, The London Plan, 2017, p. 519)

Sadiq Khan, the present Mayor, points out that one of the biggest challenges of London concerns in its rapid growth, setting high levels of pressure especially in the availability of land and provision of housing. To be able to support the continuous evolution of the city, he proposes a new approach based on a *Good Growth*<sup>56</sup> policy – a set of actions that aim to make the city a more sustainable environment, socially steady and inclusive and formed by a strong community system. This translates primarily into a re-balance of the social situation and wellbeing of Londoners, promoting an equally healthy environment for all and, consequently, building *genuinely Affordable homes*.

Considering first, that it is estimated that the population of London will grow *from 8.9 million today to around 10.8 million by 2041*<sup>57</sup>, and second, the will of the Mayor to protect the *Green Belt*<sup>58</sup> - it being the major constrain in the urban sprawl of London, it’s necessary to implement high-density planning policies that settle in the identification and development of *Opportunity Areas*<sup>59</sup>. Many of these areas have already been identified and are being handled





43. LONDON'S OPPORTUNITY AREAS

with a strategic planning approach of development, regeneration and integration. This will generate a greater connectivity between London's existing town centres, its regeneration and intensification while it also delivers new infrastructures and housing supply.

The housing supply targets – for the next ten years – are set to meet the demand of London's increasing population. It is essential that the provision of new housing enables the creation of socially mixed communities and brings homes that are based on high quality architecture and design standards. Finally, it's vital to identify different sizes and types of sites in order to provide a mix of housing scales, integrate the existing surrounding communities and also bring opportunities to various agents in the housebuilding industry. It's still mandatory that all new constructions ensure a 50 per cent of *Affordable housing*<sup>60</sup>, following the strategy of creating socially inclusive communities.

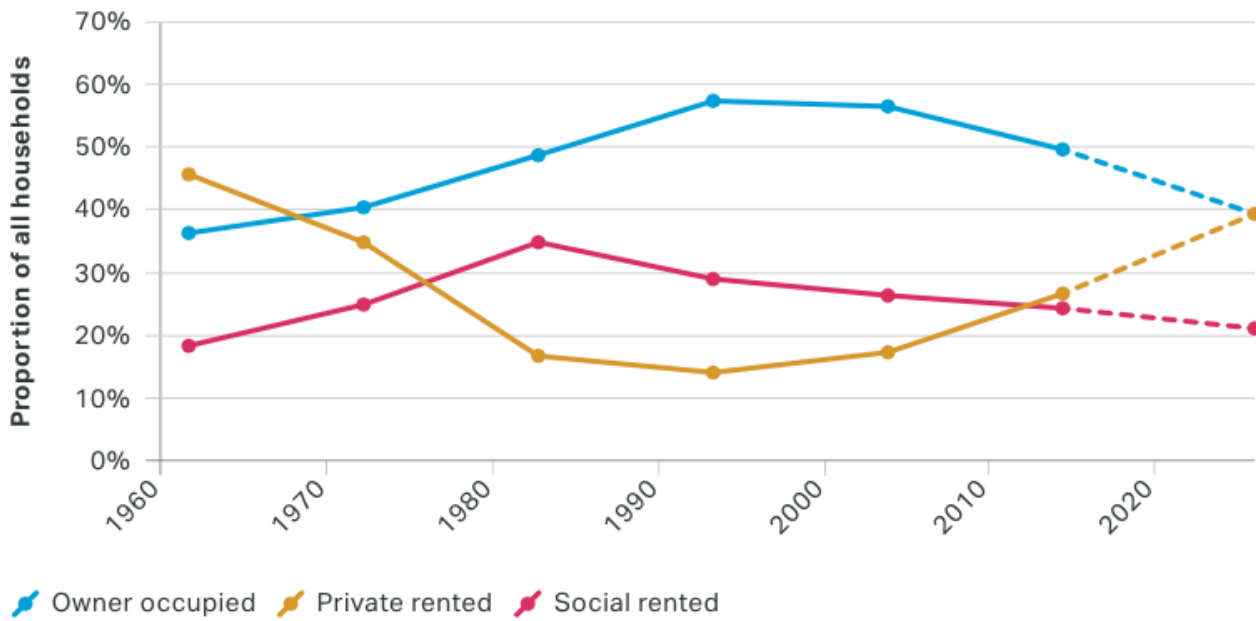
<sup>60</sup> "Affordable housing is Social Rented, Affordable Rented and Intermediate Housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices." (Mayor of London, *The London Plan*, 2017, p. 505)

### THE GLA HOUSING STRATEGY

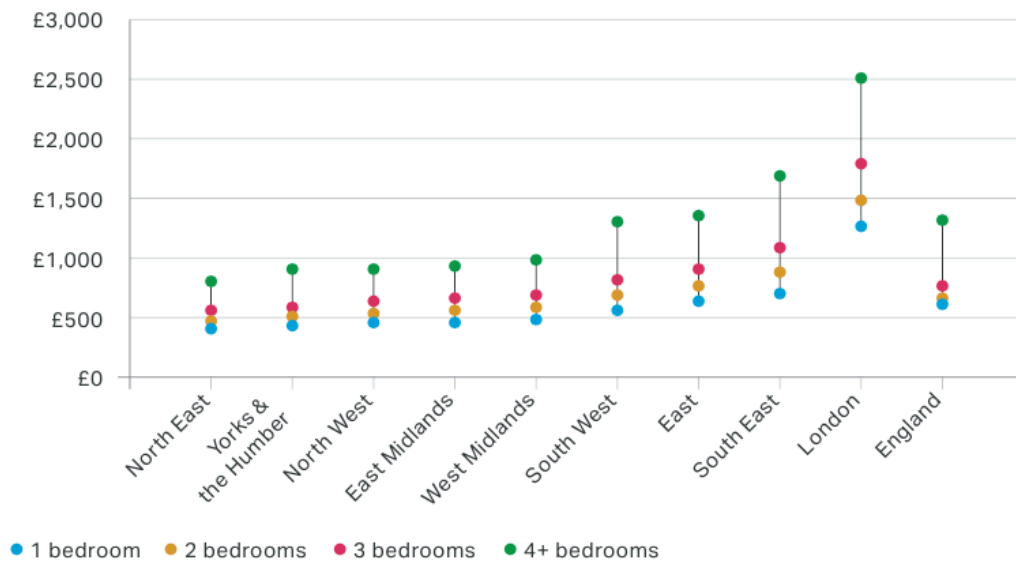
Following the London Plan, the Housing Strategy is a more detailed plan to address the demand of housing in London, giving special attention to the provision of affordable homes and the effects of the housing crisis on people. It also shows the importance of working with housing associations, local councils, community organisations as well as builders and investors to solve the housing issue. With this, the Mayor presents the concept of '*A City for all Londoners*', based on five key priorities to tackle the problem<sup>61</sup>.

<sup>61</sup> Mayor of London (2018) *London Housing Strategy* (p. 09). London: Greater London Authority. Retrieved from <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing-and-land/tackling-londons-housing-crisis>

The first strategy is to *Build Homes for all Londoners*, by



44. LONDON'S TREND IN HOUSEHOLD TENURES, 1961-2011



45. MEDIAN MONTHLY MARKET RENT BY REGION AND NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS, 2017

identifying and increasing the supply of land in London, promoting higher densities while still protecting the Green Belt.

Second, the *Delivery of Genuinely Affordable Homes* aims to fill the longstanding lack of housing for people with lower incomes. The Mayor will therefore ensure the provision of social housing, encourage shared ownership and continue to support policies and schemes that help people pay rents and buy houses.

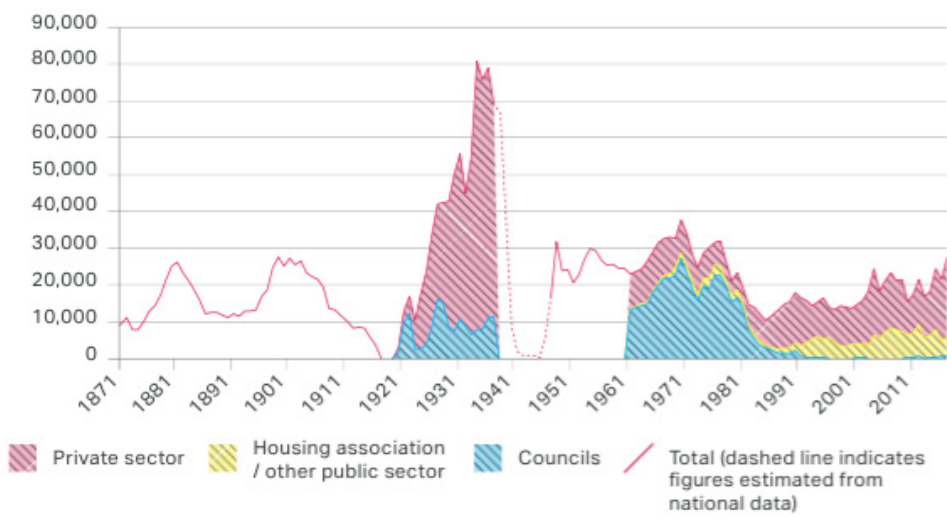
Third, it is important to produce *High Quality Homes and Inclusive Neighbourhoods*, certifying the sustainability of the living and working environment through good quality and good design, as well as being able to address the distinct necessities of all Londoners.

Fourth, the Mayor intends to create *A Fairer Deal for Private Renters and Leaseholders*, stimulating the quality of private renting as well as a safe and steady affordable private rented sector.

Finally, the last priority is to *Tackle Homelessness and Helping Rough Sleepers* in the city. *One in 50 Londoners is now homeless, including people who are sleeping rough and those living in temporary accommodation*<sup>62</sup>. Despite this number, the reality in the city is estimated to be much larger, due to the hidden forms of homeless that are not being taken in account by local authorities. There's a variety of motives that lead to homelessness - the most evident being the shortage of affordable homes - and so, this strategy stands on the prevention and support of homelessness through the construction of temporary accommodation, such as hostels, and the work of councils and local authorities to help lodging and take care of these people. Additionally, the number of rough sleepers in the city *more than doubled between 2009/10 and 2016/17 to over 8,000 last year*<sup>63</sup>. Thus,

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, p. 201

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, p. 202



46. ESTIMATED NUMBER OF NEW HOMES BUILT BETWEEN 1871 AND 2017 IN GREATER LONDON

the Mayor wants to make sure there are different choices for people sleeping rough, through the investment in hostels and other types of shelters.

To achieve all of these objectives, the Mayor is committed in working with councils, so that they compromise in planning and delivering more housing schemes, as well as with housing associations, them being *the main providers of genuinely affordable homes including those based on social rent levels*<sup>64</sup>. Finally, as we will see further ahead, the government also has to play his part on acting against the housing crisis, mainly through the release of more land, the funding of new housing schemes and more support to councils and housing associations.

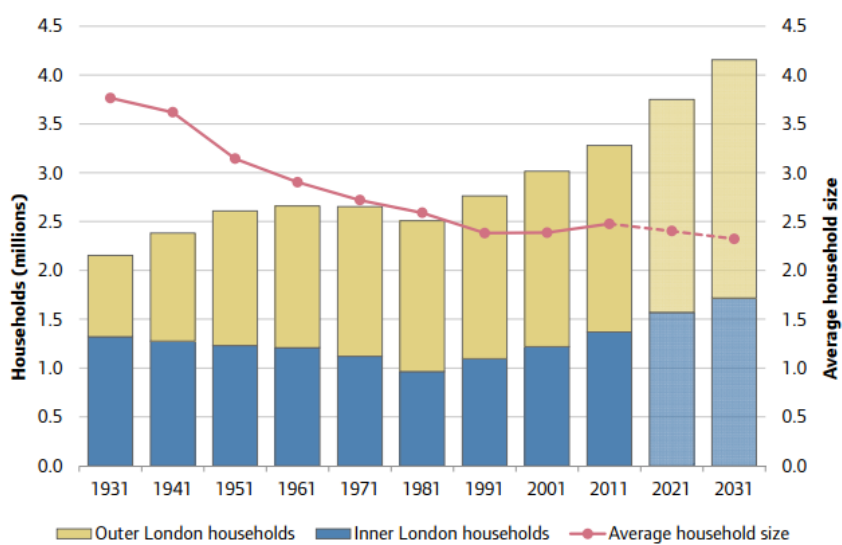
<sup>64</sup>*Ibid*, p. 16

We can conclude that the housing crisis is a consequence of the inability of the city to keep up with its own demographic growth through decades. This created a huge number of individuals that lost their houses over the years or became unable to afford a home or rent. There has been a strong confidence that the private sector would respond to the demand of new housing, but it isn't able to sustain the need for new homes to support both the backlog of people in need of affordable housing as well as the present needs of a city that continues to expand. These facts have a major influence in the increase of overcrowding and homelessness in London.

### THE HOUSING MARKET

The housing crisis is determined in the market essentially by two factors: supply and demand. For a long time in London, there





47. AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE IN LONDON FROM 1931 WITH PROJECTIONS UNTIL 2031

<sup>65</sup> MARSDEN, Joel (2015) *House Prices in London - an economic analysis of London's housing market* (p. 02). (Working Paper 72). GLAEconomics. Retrieved from <https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/house-prices-in-london.pdf>

<sup>66</sup> "On a very basic level, there is a shortage of private homes in London, with the properties that exist increasing in value at a greater rate than the earnings of those living and working in the capital, pricing out most of the market." (WALSH, Vincent Interview (13/06/2018) [by email] . [see attachments p. 197])

<sup>67</sup> Census Information Scheme (2012) *2011 Census First Results: London Boroughs' population by age and sex (Update CIS2012-01)*. (p.04). London: GLAIntelligence, Retrieved from <https://data.london.gov.uk/census/>

<sup>68</sup> GLA (2013) *Census Information Schemes Demography. GLA Intelligence Infographic*. London: GLA. Retrieved from <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/2011-census-infographics>

<sup>69</sup> Census Information Scheme (2012) *2011 Census First Results: London Boroughs' population by age and sex (Update CIS2012-01)*. (p.20). London: GLAIntelligence, Retrieved from <https://data.london.gov.uk/census/>

<sup>70</sup> BENNIE, Claire (2015) *New Ideas for Housing NLA Insight Study* (p. 12) London: New London Architecture

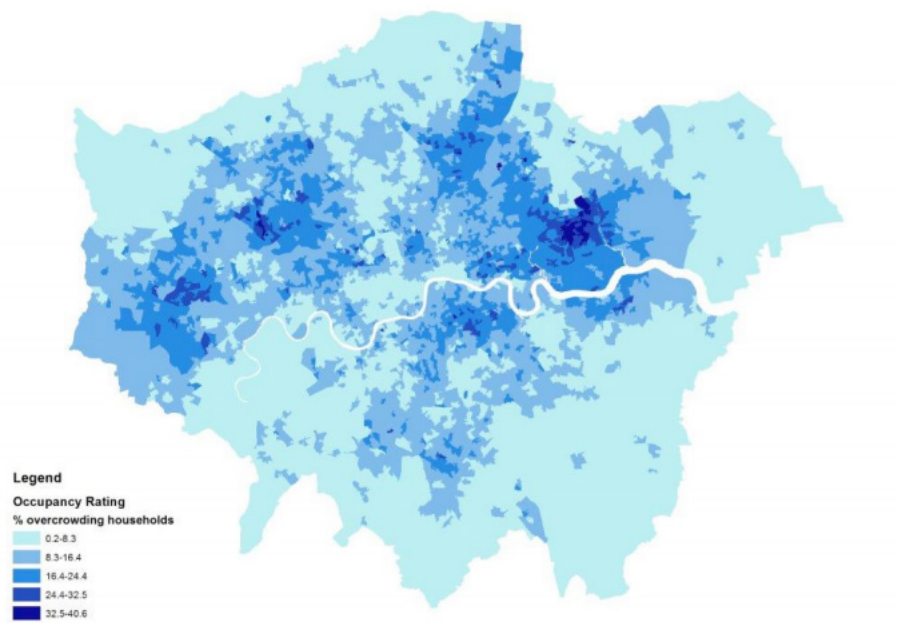
<sup>71</sup> "Greater London has 152,200 hectares (...) which means that there are just over 50 people, or 20 homes per hectare if all land is used. Lay out all London Residents in a grid and they would be spaced 14 meters apart. London is a relatively low density city." (BENNIE, 2015, p. 17)

has been a lack of balance between the two, which resulted in a number of ups and downs<sup>65</sup> that influenced the housing prices. Given that the trend is for them to increase, we can establish that London's housing prices are way above London's individual earnings<sup>66</sup>. Rapid demographic growth and job creation in the city were the main factors for the failure of addressing the housing demand. Since it is difficult to control the demand, the solution is obviously to create more supply.

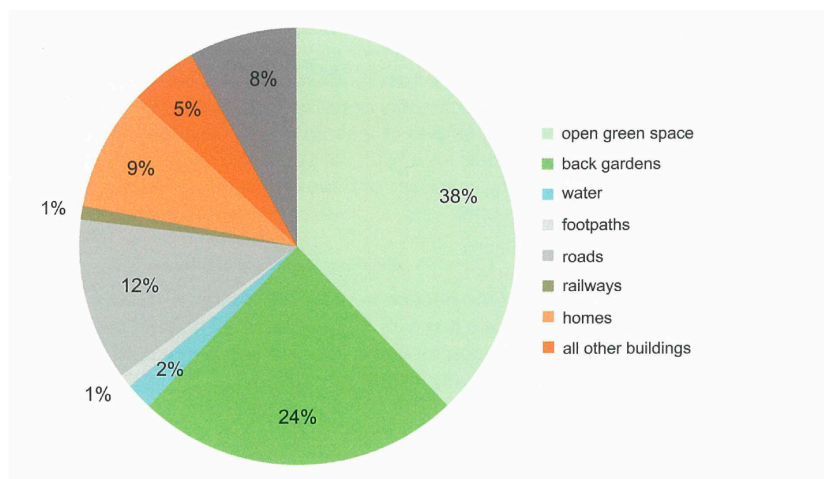
According to the last census, in 2011, London has a resident population of 8.17 million<sup>67</sup> people and it is estimated to reach 9.2 million by 2021<sup>68</sup>. Besides, there's also been a rise in the amount of households in the city, with an increase on the number of people per home, reaching 2.5 people per household<sup>69</sup>. This can be seen as a consequence of population growing faster than the housing delivery. Therefore, the current population in London is distributed both by new housing and spread by the existing homes, resulting in an aggravation of overcrowding problems<sup>70</sup>. Moreover, it has already been established that there's a lack of affordability in the housing stock and rents are rising faster than wages.

All of this factors determine the continuous increasing demand of new and affordable housing supply in London.

However, there's also a range of factors that influence the supply of new homes in the city. Since London expanded relatively organically, the amount of land available to build on, today, is scattered across the city<sup>71</sup>. This doesn't mean that there's a shortage of land, in fact, it's exactly the opposite. The problem is to identify the owners of all this land, acknowledge the restrains of the territory



48. OVERCROWDING IN LONDON, ACCORDING TO CENSUS 2011 DATA



49. GREATER LONDON LAND USE BY AREA

in question and ultimately, being able to buy it for development. As we can see on image 49, *in theory about 75,000 hectares are 'available' for new buildings* (BENNIE, 2015, p.18). So, first of all it all comes down to land and its value. As Catherine Staniland<sup>72</sup> (2018) points out, *all across London, it's the land that is incredibly expensive and so, that naturally creates a massive issue in terms of how you deliver any affordable housing*<sup>73</sup>. Additionally, there's also a number of planning regulations that determine whether each area is viable or not for development.

<sup>72</sup> Director of the New London Architecture

<sup>73</sup> NLA Interview with Catherine Staniland and Lucie Murray (11/04/2018) [In person]. NLA London [see attachments, p. 187]

Thus, another factor that influences the supply is the financial system. It has been laid out that the private market is the biggest supplier of new developments in the city but London shouldn't rely solely on it to sustain the market's demand. In addition to this, there's been a cut on public grants to help councils and housing associations to develop new housing. Nevertheless, the GLA has incentives that encourage investments in future developments both in private and public sector.

Therefore, even though smaller companies have more difficulties on accessing land and funding, they have lots of opportunities in the city, especially in *small sites*<sup>74</sup>. However, these types of small schemes are less available to develop affordable housing and still have a return on invested capital. On the exact opposite situation, large-scale builders, who are utterly money-driven, can access to big areas of land to construct larger developments. Still, usually these types of housing schemes produce houses at very high prices, not reachable to most of London's inhabitants. Even when it comes to large developments in public-owned land, councils and local authorities end up not having the necessary resources to guarantee that private developers will supply the proper number of social and

<sup>74</sup> A *small site* is defined by the GLA as "*anything below 2,000m<sup>2</sup>*" (WALSH, Vincent (13/06/2018) *Interview with Vincent Walsh* [by email] . [see attachments p. 198]



50. EXAMPLE OF SMALL SITES IDENTIFICATION THROUGH A SURVEY, IN HACKNEY BOROUGH, BY URBAN R+D

<sup>75</sup> WALSH, Vincent (13/06/2018) *Interview with Vincent Walsh* [by email] . [see attachments p. 199]

<sup>76</sup> “Place-making is the design of the interaction between the cityscape and its inhabitants.” (WALSH, Vincent Interview (13/06/2018) [by email] . [see attachments p. 197])

<sup>77</sup> Vincent Walsh - Architect, from KehoeWalsh Architects, that works with the identification and development of small sites in London

<sup>78</sup> (WALSH, Vincent Interview (13/06/2018) [by email] . [see attachments p. 199])

affordable housing<sup>75</sup>.

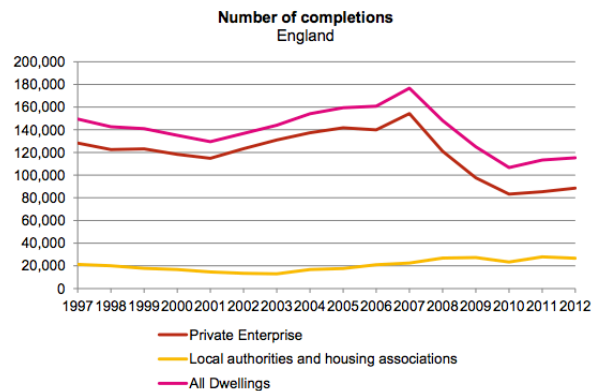
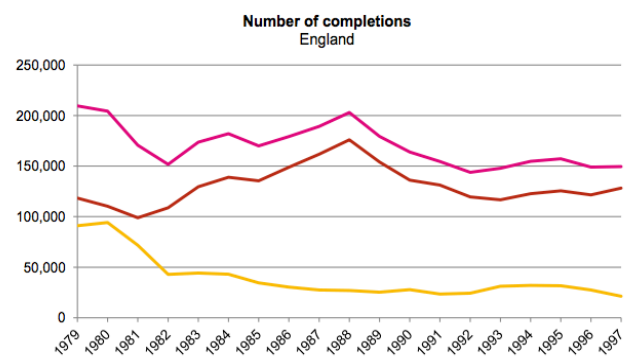
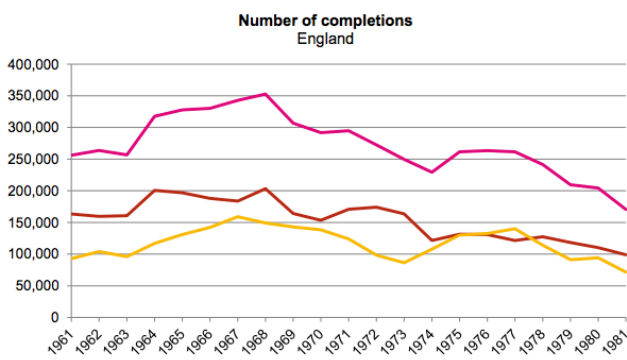
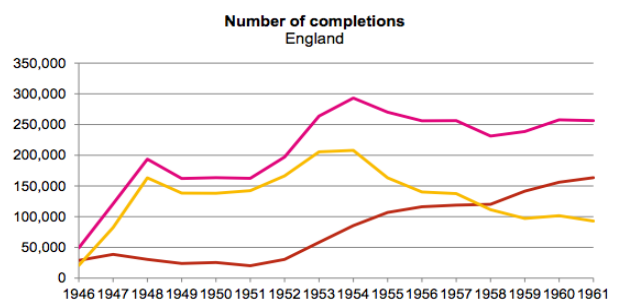
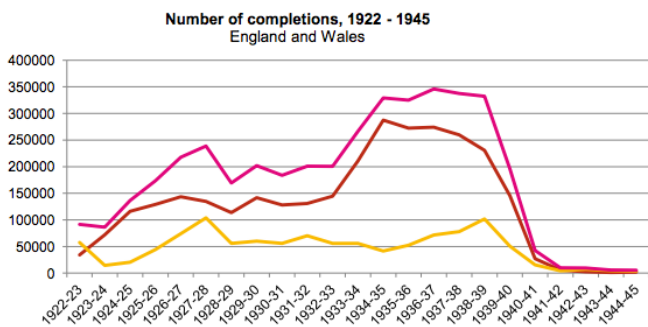
Finally, the housing market is also regulated by architecture and design. Architecture needs to be connected with the city planning. *Place-making*<sup>76</sup> policies need to be taken in account when we talk about planning and architects need to assume their role in shaping the city. As Vincent Walsh<sup>77</sup> (2018) properly points out, architects *work with the existing urban fabric, and (...) development opportunities should suit design solutions that fit neatly into the available space in a contextually appropriate way*<sup>78</sup>. Since London is dealing with a shortage of available land to actually build on, it should – in this subject – learn from its past mistakes and ensure that good design and architecture act as advocates of high standards of living, sustainable environments, correct densities and uses of land, inclusive communities and proper mobility systems.

### THE GOVERNMENT’S ROLE

By now, it’s clear to say that the housing crisis is a problem that has accompanied London in the last two centuries. Even though the housing policies started to be part of the government’s agenda a long time ago, their objectives weren’t always successfully accomplished. This is due to the rotation of government through the years, the changing of their policies and also, the market changes through time, many times faster than the ability of the government to control them.

First, it was about slum clearance and overcrowding, followed by the increase of households and the promotion of homeownership, and finally the burst of the housing market, resulting in the lack of





51 TO 55. NUMBER OF HOUSE COMPLETIONS IN ENGLAND, 1922-2012, BY PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTOR

social and affordable housing and the shortage of available homes. It's not that these problems weren't there before, but most times, it was the lack of public awareness that overlooked the problems until it was too late – and the government and politics obviously followed this trend. If we look through the last centuries, the public encouraged the housing policies through the government, simply by becoming conscious of their surroundings. Nonetheless, it's still up to the government to have a role in this matter.

*Housing supply is affected by decisions taken by central government, which set the overall agenda for housing policy, provide legislation and determine the level of funding*<sup>79</sup>. These are the main responsibilities of the government, to tackle the housing crisis. For many years they saw the housing market only as a way to boost the economy and relied on local authorities and councils to implement their housing policies but now, *the biggest turn was the Mayor and the London Plan, that changed how we approach the blueprint of the city and how we deliver housing*<sup>80</sup>.

<sup>79</sup> Social Market Foundation, *The Politics of Housing* (p. 13). Retrieved from <http://www.smf.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Publication-The-Politics-of-Housing.pdf>

<sup>80</sup>MURRAY, Lucie in *NLA Interview with Catherine Staniland and Lucie Murray* (11/04/2018) [In person]. NLA London [see attachments p. 188])

The government is expected to improve its planning policies so that it becomes easier to gain access to land, especially government owned land. This will allow the release and benefit of a lot of land that isn't being used according to its potential and will also facilitate the process of buying it. Moreover, the government should provide more funding for affordable homes, with returns through the fiscal system, while it also gives support to councils on planning and housing developments, allowing the construction of a mix of buildings and homes that meet all of Londoners needs. Representing a large portion of the market, the private sector should be redefined to help bring stability to the sector and also regulate excessive rents.



Finally, the government has the obligation to produce resources to address the real scale of homelessness and rough sleeping in London. It is unacceptable that insufficient actions in this field lead to a situation that cannot even be truly quantifiable in the city. With this, there should be a plan to uncover the causes of homelessness and rough sleeping, as well as a way to prevent it from happening.

### AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN LONDON

The concept of affordable housing in London tends to be rather hard to understand. *The definition of affordable housing is up to an income of a household to £90,000, which is about 95 per cent of Londoners*<sup>81</sup>. However, we can identify a small group of low to middle income earners that have more difficulties in access to various housing options. So when the Mayor talks about genuinely Affordable Housing, he means not simply housing that is just affordable, but housing that can actually fill this gap in London's population. To ensure that these types of housing are really delivered, along with the Housing Strategy, he came up with an Affordable Homes Programme, released in 2016 to be accomplished until 2021. *With this, the Mayor has secured £3.15 billion from the Government to fund new affordable homes for Londoners*<sup>82</sup> as a way to ensure his will of building 50 per cent of affordable homes in all new constructions.

The affordable homes programmes will deliver homes that fit into three different categories – *London Affordable Rent, London Living Rent* and *London Shared Ownership*. The first one refers to housing with a low cost renting value, to address the needs of people with lower incomes that cannot afford to live in a house in the open market.

<sup>81</sup>MURRAY, Lucie in *NLA Interview with Catherine Staniland and Lucie Murray* (11/04/2018) [In person]. NLA London [see attachments p. 189])

<sup>82</sup> Mayor of London (2016) *Homes for All Londoners: Affordable Homes Programme 2016-21 Funding Guidance* (p. 05) London: Greater London Authority. Retrieved from <https://www.london.gov.uk/file/11941201>

Bedroom size	2017-18 Benchmark (weekly rents, exclusive of service charge)
Bedsit and one bedroom	£144.26
Two bedrooms	£152.73
Three bedrooms	£161.22
Four bedrooms	£169.70
Five bedrooms	£178.18
Six or more bedrooms	£186.66

56. LONDON'S AFFORDABLE WEEKLY RENTS BENCHMARKS FOR RENT CAPS, 2017/18



57. AFFORDABLE HOMES FUNDED BY THE GLA, 2010/11 TO 2015/16

It is set that these rents are not to be above 80 per cent of market value rents, even though this still translates into high numbers in some parts of London. The second, is addressed to households with middle income wages, with a maximum income of £60,000, and it is calculated according to each borough average household income. The goal of this product is to encourage and, consequently, help people save money to eventually be able to buy their own home in a time period of 10 years through the Right to Buy policy. The last, will allow buyers to buy a share in a new home, fixed between 25 to 75 per cent of the home value, and pay a regulated rent on the remaining and unsold share. This product is addressed to people who have incomes at a maximum of £90,000 and can actually support the initial values of the purchase.

However, this programme also aims to deliver specialised housing products for older people, people who are disabled, people who are homeless or in chance of becoming homeless, and others. These types of accommodation are important to provide adequate shelters for a part of the population that is in special living conditions.

It is evident that social rent has a major history in London and so, the Mayor also encourages councils to build more council homes for Londoners. Councils were once the main providers of new homes in London but their housing deliver begun to decline over the late twentieth century. There is a need to replace the homes lost through the Right to Buy and gain ability to provide homes for a long waiting list of social rent appliers. Architecture and design have a huge part in this programme. It is imperative that the homes and hostels delivered through it respect high standards of quality of living set previously by the London Plan.





## FINAL NOTES

The housing crisis in London didn't appear overnight. It is a result of many years of policies that were never able to completely solve the problem. The population in the city keeps growing at a rapid rate along with the slow progress in the number of built houses. The fact is that London *now needs 66,000 new homes a year, of which around 65 per cent should be affordable to fully meet needs*<sup>83</sup>. This is already a higher number than the Mayor predicts as necessary in the London Plan. However, it reflects the decline of the housing situation over the years.

<sup>83</sup> Mayor of London (2018) *London Housing Strategy* (p. 29). London: Greater London Authority. Retrieved from <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing-and-land/tackling-londons-housing-crisis>

Still, we can conclude that there is a strong will in London to fight the housing crisis and its consequences. However, there's not one solution to solve it. It requires a commitment from all areas that are related to the industry. Even though it might seem that the architect's role is somewhat imperceptible in this matter, it is one of the most important ones since architecture has the ability of bringing creative design solutions to fight this crisis, as well as ensure that it is solved according to an objective of a sustainable, planned and healthy environment. Its commitment is what separates us from the horrible housing conditions that were the reality of the nineteenth century London, and therefore, their role becomes essential in this issue.

<sup>84</sup> KHAN, Sadiq in Mayor of London (2016) *Homes for All Londoners: Affordable Homes Programme 2016-21 Funding Guidance* (p. 05) London: Greater London Authority. Retrieved from <https://www.london.gov.uk/file/11941201>

As the Mayor (2016) says himself, *we won't be able to turn round London's housing crisis overnight. It'll be a marathon, not a sprint*<sup>84</sup>. (p.05)



**PART II - THE SOCIAL ROLE OF THE ARCHITECT IN THE  
HOMELESS CRISIS**



58. HOUSEHOLDS ACCEPTED AS HOMELESS, 1989/99-2016/17

<sup>85</sup> Housing Committee (2017) *Hidden Homelessness in London* (p. 02) London Assembly. Retrieved from <https://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/london-assembly/publications/hidden-homelessness-london>

<sup>86</sup> CHAIN - Combined Homelessness and Information Network – *A multi-agency database recording information about rough sleepers and the wider street population in London.* (...) It represents the UK's most detailed and comprehensive source of information about rough sleeping. (*Chain Annual Report, 2016/17*, p. 01)

<sup>87</sup> *Sleeping rough* – to sleep outside because you have no home and no money (*Housing Committee, 2017*)

<sup>88</sup> Mayor of London (2015-16) *CHAIN Annual Report: Greater London* (p. 03). GLA. Retrieved from <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/chain-reports>

<sup>89</sup> Mayor of London (2018) *London Housing Strategy* (p. 202). London: Greater London Authority. Retrieved from <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing-and-land/tackling-londons-housing-crisis>

## C. HOMELESSNESS IN LONDON

In 2017, 18,070 households were accepted as homeless by local authorities in the capital<sup>85</sup>. According to the last CHAIN<sup>86</sup> Annual Report from 2016/17, there were 8,108 people sleeping rough<sup>87</sup> in London<sup>88</sup>. This number more than doubled since 2009/10 and even though in 2017 it was the first time it didn't rise in a decade<sup>89</sup>, this report does not include numbers referring to *hidden* forms of homeless. This can make us conclude that the problem is much worse than it already seems.

Despite London being an attractive and wealthy metropolis, the inability to produce sufficient homes over the years has meant, for many people the loss of their own home. We can say that homelessness is a direct cause of the housing crisis.





## CAUSES AND FORMS OF HOMELESSNESS

<sup>90</sup> St Mungo's - a charity voluntary association that operates 'a range of accommodation services, from basic shelters to hostels, through supported and semi-independent housing, to help people at every stage of their recovery from homelessness.' (Mungo's, 2018)

There are many reasons that can lead someone into a homeless situation. According to St. Mungo's<sup>90</sup>, these can be divided into two big groups. On one hand, people's personal problems end up influencing their path and lead them into experiencing homeless. In this group we can distinctly identify:

- People who suffer from physical or mental problems
- People who deal with drugs or alcohol addictions
- People with history of suffering from violence, abuse or harassment
- People who have relationship problems, went through divorce or separation, suffered with the loss of someone, etc.

On the other hand, there are people who become homeless due to social and financial problems, those being:

- People who suffer with the housing crisis and become unable to pay rent in the private sector market, who are in debt, lost their jobs or have any other financial problem that can influence their economic stability
- People who are evicted or asked to leave their home due to rent arrears or others
- People who have already been in temporary accommodations but they expired their maximum stay period
- People who left institutions, like hospitals or prisons
- People who left their previous home because of the poor housing conditions, overcrowding, etc.

On top of all these reasons, the inability of the services to help everyone and the shortage in the availability and number of accommodations, also contributes to the increase problem. Nonetheless, not all of these people are entitled to have help from local authorities, and so, the real size of the homelessness situation



<sup>91</sup> John Greve - Writer that participated and published an investigation about the extent and causes of homelessness in Greater London, requested by the Department of Health and Social Security, in 1969.

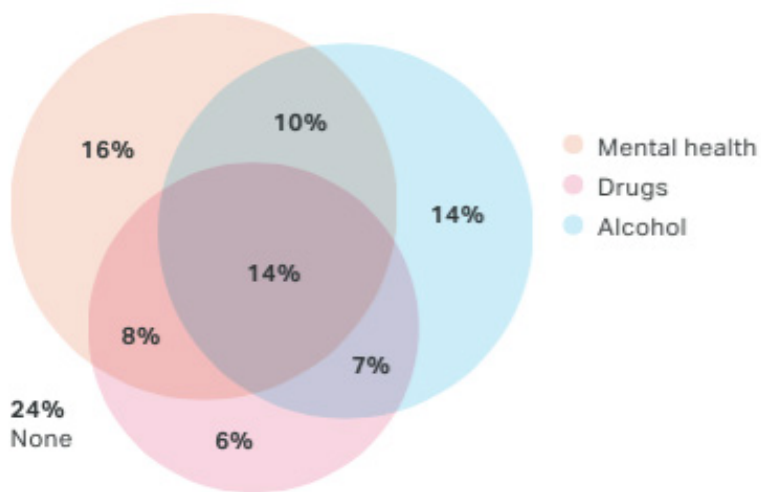
<sup>92</sup> *Sofa-surfing* - 'staying with a series of different friends or relatives, sleeping, for example, on their sofa, because you do not have your own place where you can stay' (Cambridge Dictionary, s.d.)

<sup>93</sup> *Squatting* - 'from the verb to squat; to live in an empty building or area of land without the permission of the owner' (Cambridge Dictionary, s.d.)

remains uncovered. In fact, this description of homelessness made by John Greve<sup>91</sup> (1977) in 1971 remains, still, very appropriate, since *nobody knows, or has ever known, how many homeless people there are, and there is no agreement about what, in fact, homelessness is. It is, as several London welfare departments defined it, being without shelter of any kind - 'being without a roof over one's head for the night' - or is being homeless being without a home?* (p.55) There are different forms of homelessness, and even though we might only relate the concept to people sleeping on the streets - since that is in fact the most visible form of homelessness -, the truth is much broader than that. If we think about it, sleeping in a friend or family's house, *sofa-surfing*<sup>92</sup> or *squatting*<sup>93</sup>, are all forms of homelessness. This uncountable form of homelessness is called *hidden homelessness* and even though there isn't an official government definition for it, it represents:

- People who cannot support rents to live in a permanent place or don't have a house at all to live in
- People who are unable to live in their own home due to practices of abuse, violence or harassment, or were thrown out of their home due to discrimination
- People who are not receiving statutory homelessness support from local authorities or others
- People who didn't apply at all for council or local authority's help
- People who are not living with their own parents or legal guardian
- People who don't have financial resources to avoid their housing situation, whether because they are living in an overcrowding situation or poor housing conditions

It is important to highlight that most of these don't see themselves as being homeless. Nevertheless, many of them are turned down for support because local authorities don't acknowledge them



59. SUPPORT NEEDED FOR ROUGH SLEEPERS IN LONDON

<sup>94</sup> The *priority need* group includes people who have dependent children under 16 or 19 years old - if they are unable to support themselves -, pregnant women, children under the age of 17, people between the age of 18 and 20 that were in social services care when they were younger, and people who became homeless due to some kind of disaster.

<sup>95</sup> SHELTER (2018) *Shelter, The housing and homelessness charity*. Retrieved from [https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing\\_advice/homelessness](https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/homelessness)

as being part of the *priority need*<sup>94</sup> group. However, a citizen might be eligible for 'priority need' if he has mental or physical problems, has suffered from any kind of abuse or violence or has spent time in some institution like hospitals, prisons or armed forces. Still, this is only likely to happen if the council approves it, by determining if they are incapable of managing their homelessness situation, have some kind of disease or disability than turns them unable of living a normal life, the amount of support given from friends, family or associations around them or if their homelessness status represents any risk of harm to themselves or others<sup>95</sup>.

Thus, as we've seen before, it's very difficult to quantify the number of people in an 'hidden homelessness' situation, but according to the Housing Committee (2017),

- *around 1 in 10 people will experience hidden homelessness in any one year*
- *225,000 young people in London have stayed in an insecure or unsafe place because they had nowhere safe to call home*
- *on any one night in London it is estimated a minimum of around 12,500 people are hidden homeless*
- *thirteen times more people are hidden homeless than sleeping rough in London (p.02)*

This form of homelessness is expected to be amended with the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 - that is explained below -, through the prevention and relief duty from local authorities to homeless people.

With this, it's almost inevitable to think that the degrading reality of living in deprived situations or the inability to cope their own lives and resources, leads someone into a homelessness state where they chose to leave their homes for temporary or emergency





accommodations or to sleep on the streets. As Chris Holmes (2006) appropriately puts out, *becoming homeless is a traumatic experience*(p.92). All these people deserve to be helped in an equal and compassionate way.

### HOMELESSNESS LEGISLATION AND POLICIES

As we've seen before, homelessness has been around London since Victorian times. Even though there were references about homelessness, there was no legislation referring to it specifically.

In the late 1940's, in London, there were a lot of families that lived in temporary accommodation as a result of the housing pressure after the war. The government provided 'rest-centres' as a way of emergency accommodation<sup>96</sup>, but faced the problem with a short-term solution for a situation that would soon disappear. However, by the 1950's there were still a great number of homeless families in the city and so, the government widened the services through the provision of accommodation in institutions, rest-centres and halfway-houses. Due to the lack of real statutory duties for local authorities to house these people, each of them made their own interpretation of the law and acted according to it. Moreover, the housing supply was declining and so was the number of available temporary accommodation.

By 1965, the responsibility for dealing with homeless people was shared with the London Boroughs and it became important to provide accommodation based on the principles of privacy, quality of living and family. However, this ephemeral way of thinking didn't

<sup>96</sup> GREVE, J., PAGE, D. & GREVE, S. (1977) *Homelessness in London* (p. 125) Edinburgh and London: Scottish Academic Press



apply and, in practice, this wasn't achieved because of the failure to deliver proper and sufficient accommodation for homeless families<sup>97</sup>.

<sup>97</sup> GREVE, J., PAGE, D. & GREVE, S. (1977) *Homelessness in London* (p. 126) Edinburgh and London: Scottish Academic Press

During these years, homelessness in the city was a problem that no one wanted to deal with for a number of practical and political reasons. Its responsibility was discussed between local authorities and local boroughs, as well as the Welfare Department and the Housing Committee. This separation of duties ended up hurting more than contributing to the problem and this was a direct cause of the lack of organisation and legislation in the system itself<sup>98</sup>.

<sup>98</sup> "...the division of responsibility again reflects a split in the service rather than a jointly-operated system." (GREVE, 1971, p.130)

Through the 1960's, a range of charities emerged to help find shelter for people without home. Around 1970 there was a will to substitute the institutions, that were used to lodge homeless families, for new hostels and housing projects according to people's specific needs.

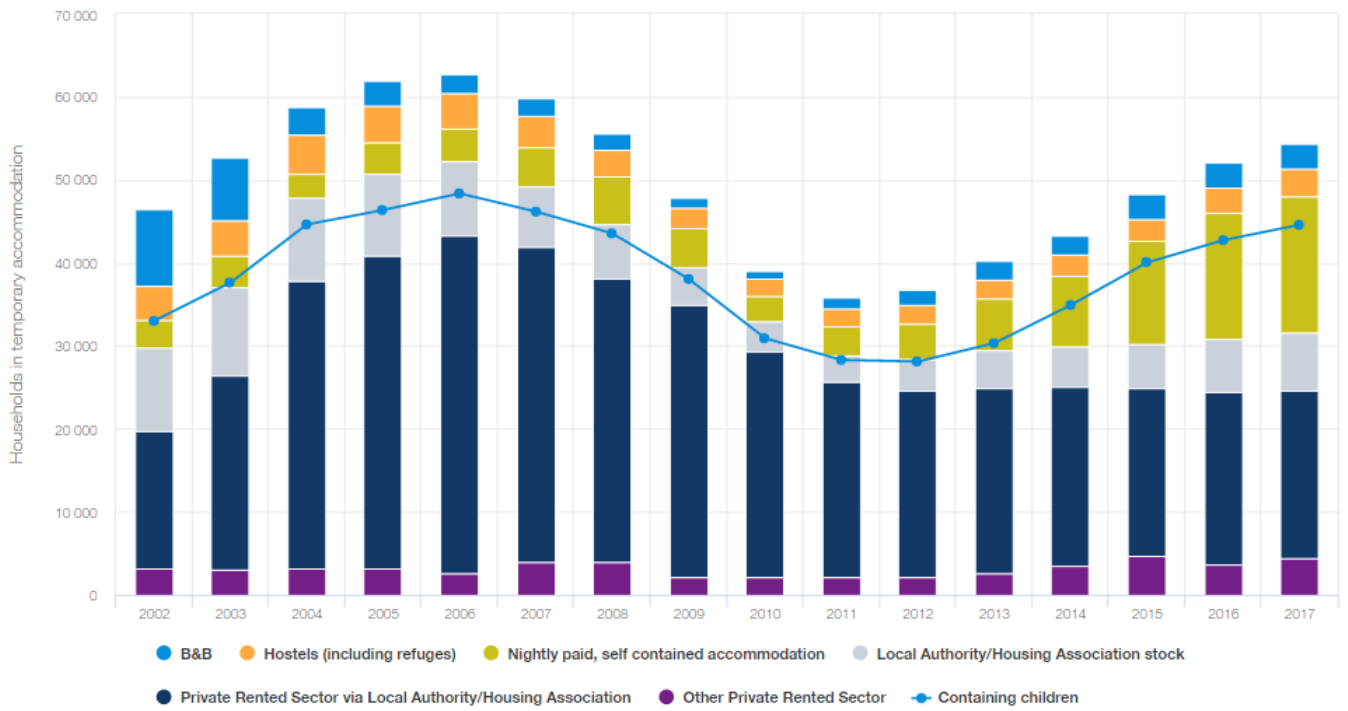
The first legislation would not come until 1977 with the Homeless Persons Act<sup>99</sup>. In fact, this was the first legislation of its kind, in the world, that assigned the provision of accommodation for homeless people as a legal duty of local authorities. By this time there were around 5,000 families in temporary accommodation. Through the 1980's and until 1990, it grew to more than 45,000 households, and by 2004 there were already over 100,000 families in temporary accommodation<sup>100</sup>.

<sup>99</sup> HOLMES, Chris (2006) *A New Vision for Housing* (p. 98). USA and Canada: Routledge

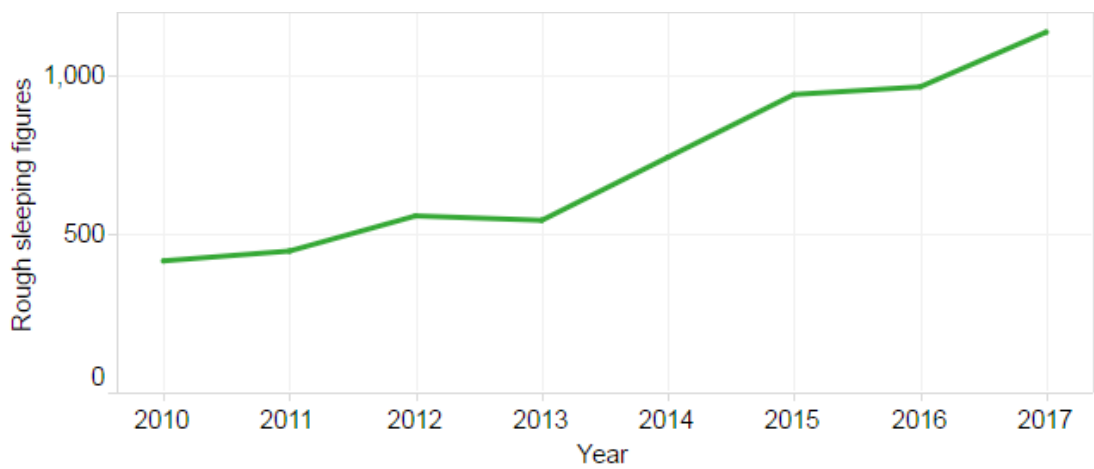
<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*, p. 89

During this time there was almost no change in the homelessness legislation. The local authorities accepted their responsibility but, as there were various specifications associated with each applicant for temporary accommodation, they weren't required to help everyone.

In 1980 people became aware of the increasing number of



60. TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION, 2002-2017



61. ROUGH SLEEPERS IN LONDON, 2010-2017

rough sleepers in the city. This led to the Rough Sleepers Initiative – RSI – launched by the government in 1990 with the purpose of offering funds to voluntary agencies to establish hostels and housing associations that enabled a way out for people sleeping on the streets<sup>101</sup>. This work was carried on by the new government, in 1997, with the Rough Sleepers Unit – RSU -, set up with the same purpose as the RSI, but with the objective of reducing the number of rough sleepers by 2,000 in three years. This process was made much more controversially, showing the harsh reality of people’s lives in the streets, and their targets for reducing the rough sleepers were met within schedule.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*, p. 100

In 1996, the government instituted the duty of local authorities to provide accommodation to homeless people only for 24 months, consequently cutting their rights in the system. This would not change until 2002, when the new government not only restored their rights, but also widened the ‘priority need’ groups for temporary accommodation. It also became mandatory for local authorities to work with social and health authorities, and required them to acquire strategies to prevent recurrent homelessness. Nevertheless, all of these measures were still based on the unchanged Homelessness Act of 1977 and its approach of dealing with homelessness, which protects the authorities in a way that they can choose whom to give support only if imminent risk of becoming homeless or being already homeless applies. They were not required to prevent the homeless situation in advance.

<sup>102</sup> GARVIE, Deborah (2018) *Briefing: Homelessness Reduction Act 2017*. Retrieved from [https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional\\_resources/policy\\_and\\_research/policy\\_library/policy\\_library\\_folder/briefing\\_homelessness\\_reduction\\_act\\_2017](https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/policy_and_research/policy_library/policy_library_folder/briefing_homelessness_reduction_act_2017)

Last year, in 2017, the government introduced the Homelessness Reduction Act. It’s the first attempt in 15 years<sup>102</sup> to fight homelessness and it represents a big change in this subject. It aims to fulfil the





**WE'LL NEVER TURN  
OUR BACKS ON  
ROUGH SLEEPERS**

**MAYOR OF LONDON**  
**BUILDING A LONDON**  
**FOR EVERYONE**

62. MAYOR'S CAMPAIGN TO PREVENT ROUGH SLEEPING IN LONDON

existing gap through prevention work and relief of homelessness and also acknowledges everyone in need of assistance as rightful of it. *The intention is to ensure that everyone threatened with homelessness, regardless of priority need status, is entitled to receive free information and advice to help them in their situation, and increased support if they become homeless*<sup>103</sup>. This Act came into force last April 2018 and it promises to end rough sleeping in ten years, but even though it means a great step in the homelessness crisis and has the general acceptance of the government, authorities, boroughs and people, it is too soon to see its influences in the current homelessness situation. Still, this will mean a higher number of applicants to local authorities that, consequently, will have higher expenses with these services.

<sup>103</sup> Housing Committee (2017) *Hidden Homelessness in London* (p. 10) London Assembly. Retrieved from <https://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/london-assembly-publications/hidden-homelessness-london>

The GLA and the Mayor of London approach to fight homelessness and rough sleeping sets in helping with the provision of *move-on* accommodation<sup>104</sup>, hostels and supported housing for rough sleepers and for people who were or are at risk of becoming homeless. The Mayor also wants to uncover the root causes of homelessness in London. By working with the government, councils and charities, he intends to assist in the funding of new affordable homes for homeless people and the prevention of homelessness through proper accommodation support. This will only be achieved if every agent fulfils their own obligations in the process.

<sup>104</sup> *Move-on* accommodation – “...properties specifically earmarked for people who are moving on from either hostels or refuges because they no longer require the support services offered in those types of accommodation...” (Mayor of London, *Affordable Homes Programme*, 2016, p.13)

Furthermore, the Mayor launched a campaign – ‘No One Needs to Sleep Rough in London’ – to raise awareness of this situation to the public, through social media and street campaigns. This campaign encourages the use of StreetLink<sup>105</sup> as well as inspires people to make donations to charities that help to deal with rough sleeping. Besides, the GLA and the Mayor provide a number of services to help fight

<sup>105</sup> StreetLink – “...is a website, mobile app and phone line that enables members of the public to alert local authorities and street outreach services in England and Wales about people they have seen sleeping rough.” (StreetLink, 2018)



<sup>106</sup> Complete information in Briefing on the Mayor's rough sleeping services, in [https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/mayor\\_of\\_londons\\_rough\\_sleeping\\_services.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/mayor_of_londons_rough_sleeping_services.pdf)

<sup>107</sup> Mayor of London (2018) *London Housing Strategy* (p. 207). London: Greater London Authority. Retrieved from <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing-and-land/tackling-londons-housing-crisis>

rough sleeping and support people in the path of restructuring their lives out of the streets<sup>106</sup>.

Moreover, the Mayor announced his support of the Homelessness Reduction Act as a way to help in the identification of all forms of homelessness and its prevention<sup>107</sup>.

### ACCOMMODATION FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE

Since the first Homeless Persons Act in 1977, there are different types of accommodation to address the people who become homeless. These go from longer-term accommodation – such as social housing or council housing - to emergency accommodation - through hostels, night and winter shelters, Bed & Breakfast. Besides, there are also shelters and day centres that provide homeless with food, shelter, housing advice, social support, etc.

<sup>108</sup> Shelter – charity organisation that helps people struggling with homelessness through advice, support and legal services. (*Shelter, 2018*)

Shelter<sup>108</sup> (2018) explains that to be qualified to a longer-term accommodation people need to be legally homeless, meet immigrations and residence conditions, have 'priority need' status, be homeless through no fault of its own or have connections to the area of residence. Additionally, people have to be homeless for more than 8 weeks and are obliged to have a housing plan set out with help from councils. This type of accommodation can be provided through council houses, private leases or rooms in shared houses<sup>109</sup>. If people are eligible, the council offers accommodation such as Bed and Breakfasts, homeless hostels or a council house.

<sup>109</sup> Shelter (2018) *Shelter, The housing and homelessness charity*. Retrieved from [https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing\\_advice/homelessness](https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/homelessness)

The most inadequate form of shelter is represented through Bed & Breakfasts accommodation. These have been used by local



63. INSIDE A HOMELESS HOSTEL

authorities since the early 1970's to shelter homeless families. In London, this type of accommodation expanded exponentially over decades until the 1990's, when local authorities started to control the living conditions in these places and arranged a grading system according to their standards. The focus then shifted to the use of private accommodation but in the beginning of the century, councils turned to B&B's again. According to Shelter, this type of emergency accommodation is used by families and single people and offers a private room and a shared bathroom, kitchen and laundry. It is advised that residents should try to find another alternative of housing as soon as they can as, by law, they can only stay for a period of a maximum of 6 weeks. However, due to the increasing use of this poor standard accommodation, the government advised local authorities to discard the use of B&B for homeless families and use it only as a last resort.

Likewise, hostels represent a huge number of shelters for people who are homeless and offers them a temporary accommodation. These institutions provide basic concepts of housing, with a room or a shared room as well as shared bathrooms, kitchen and laundry. In almost all situations, the hostel separates men and women. Many of the people living in hostels have personal problems such as mental troubles, substances abuse or violence history. The length of their stay is up to 6 months and hostels are supposed to help in the process of overcoming their problems and move on with their lives. Moreover, to be able to enter in homeless hostels people often need a referral from councils or voluntary agencies, or apply to a waiting lists<sup>110</sup>.

<sup>110</sup> PeopleFirst (2018) Supporting independent living and health . Retrieved from <https://www.peoplefirstinfo.org.uk/at-home/finding-somewhere-to-live/>

Finally, day centres and shelters offer basic need support such as food, clothes, laundry, etc., or a place to stay only for the night.





64. HOMELESS IN OXFORD STREET, LONDON



65. HOMELESS OUTSIDE THE WATERLOO STATION, LONDON



These represent temporary solutions to keep people away from sleeping rough.

Almost all of these facilities are paid for the night and for food and, if someone isn't able to support their value, the council is supposed to help them apply for housing benefits as a way to compensate their insufficient incomes.

However, the main problem with these accommodations is the lack of stability they offer to people, especially to those trying to find it. Many of them are trapped in these solutions and are placed in one after another temporary accommodation, ending up spending their whole lives in the system. Jon Sparks (2018), chief executive of Crisis<sup>111</sup>, said in an interview that *It's truly terrible that, across England, councils are finding it increasingly difficult to find homeless people somewhere to live. This means even more people are ending up trapped in B&Bs and hostels, with no stability and often in cramped conditions*<sup>112</sup>. In fact, some people dwell for decades in temporary housing as a consequence of the shortage of social housing. Moreover, it was stated in an English newspaper (the Independent) that *more than 100,000 families wait more than a decade for social housing*<sup>113</sup>. This endless waiting list forces thousands of households to stay trapped in temporary housing, many times into overcrowding conditions, poorly managed accommodations or unaffordable situations. This often leads to rough sleeping, the most visible form of homelessness. And with this, the inadequate temporary solutions that are offered to people, sometimes end up making the situation more unsustainable. It's an endless vicious circle.

<sup>111</sup> Crisis – national charity for homeless people (Crisis, 2018)

<sup>112</sup> BUTLER, Patrick (12/04/2018) England: Escalation in placement of homeless families in temporary housing. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/apr/12/england-homeless-families-temporary-housing>

<sup>113</sup> BULMAN, May (15/12/2017) Councils condemned after illegally placing homeless families in damp, infested accommodation. *Independent*. Retrieved from <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/council-accommodation-homeless-families-illegal-conditions-a8111206.html>



## LIVING CONDITIONS IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

London is an immense city and I believe it is not fair to make generalisations in this subject. However, a simple internet research about temporary accommodations in London uncovers the harsh reality where people are living in today. These environments send us to the beginning of this research, to *Dickensian*<sup>114</sup> surroundings where people lived in filthy conditions far away from humane. London is also a wealthy and powerful city, and so it's also not reasonable that there are, still, people living below acceptable standards.

<sup>114</sup>*Dickensian* – relating to or similar to something described in the books of the 19th-century English writer Charles Dickens, especially living or working conditions that are below an acceptable standard. (Cambridge Dictionary, s.d.)

A research conducted by Justlife<sup>115</sup> relates the effects of how places like hostels and B&Bs with poor conditions affect the health of people living in it. The results found along the way were shocking. Dwellings with infestations, lack of privacy, absence of electricity, hot water and security equipment, and unsanitary conditions are the most common situations. No one should live like this:

<sup>115</sup> Justlife – the only charity organisation specialising in working alongside those living in unsupported temporary accommodation. Retrieved from <https://www.justlife.org.uk/about-us/mission-and-vision/>

*'We're sharing a room, just a box room, single bed in it. Cold, damp everywhere...No heating on at all... There is a leak in the ceiling, I have told the landlord about that, I have told him to look at the hot water [there is none] but he has done nothing about that yet. And mites, bugs, whatever are biting me.'*

<sup>116</sup> Testimonies of people living in unsanitary conditions in temporary accommodation, in: Fleming, Alex (12/04/2016) Nowhere Fast: the reality of unsupported temporary accommodation. *Homeless Link*. Retrieved from <https://www.homeless.org.uk/connect/blogs/2016/apr/12/nowhere-fast-reality-of-unsupported-temporary-accommodation>

*'It was really dirty and violent, disgusting really, damp. I could even smell the damp really, I couldn't breathe properly in the night.'*<sup>116</sup>

These types of environments tend to worsen the situation of their tenants. The lack of support contributes to a state of chaos in these surroundings, allowing situations of abuse, harassment, violence, development of mental and physical health issues and other to occur. In the study made by Justlife, *several participants claimed they preferred to be on the streets*<sup>117</sup> than continue to live like this.

<sup>117</sup> FLEMING, Alex (12/04/2016) Nowhere Fast: the reality of unsupported temporary accommodation. *Homeless Link*. Retrieved from <https://www.homeless.org.uk/connect/blogs/2016/apr/12/nowhere-fast-reality-of-unsupported-temporary-accommodation>

Temporary supported accommodation is intended to help



66. OUTSIDE OF BROWNSWOOD HOSTEL

people put their lives together, but this is not very frequently the case. Another example is a story by BBC London, that shows the conditions in which a family lives in temporary housing. A woman with her 10 year old child live together in a small room, sharing a bed, even though the mother is ill:

<sup>118</sup> ROGERS, Chris (02/12/2017) Homeless: Temporary Accommodation. *BBC London News*. Retrieved from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dND\\_d7vI1DU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dND_d7vI1DU)

*'When I got here I said to them, I'm disabled, I have a pain condition. I really can't share a bed with my daughter. That's going to cause me a lot of pain and a lot of trouble. And they said, that's it, take it or leave it.'*<sup>118</sup>

They were evicted from their private rented house and now they pay £210 a week with the help of housing benefits to stay in 'Connect House', a hostel in South London used as temporary accommodation by four different London Councils. Many of the families have been staying there for more than a year. There are 200 children living in this hostel in cramped rooms and inappropriate conditions. Even though this is not the first time this news station uncovered this hostel situation, the councils assured that everything was running 'within regulations'<sup>119</sup>.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>120</sup> MANN, Tanveer (15/03/2018) Revealed: 'Shameful' hostel conditions where homeless sleep. *Metro News*. Retrieved from <https://metro.co.uk/2018/03/15/revealed-shameful-hostel-conditions-homeless-sleep-faeces-walls-7390644/>

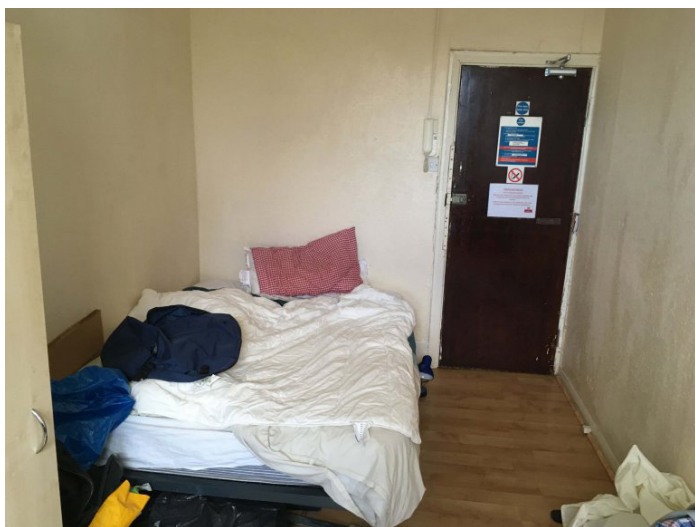
<sup>121</sup> YOULE, Emma (23/06/2016) Revealed: Shocking 'modern-day slum' conditions at Hackney hostel for homeless people. *Hackney Gazette*. Retrieved from <http://www.hackneygazette.co.uk/news/revealed-shocking-modern-day-slum-conditions-at-hackney-hostel-for-homeless-people-1-4589067>

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid*

Other reliable sources revealed another case of inadequacy of shelter. In Hackney, North East London, a place called Brownswood Hotel appears in several articles. This place is used by the Hackney Council as a temporary accommodation and it is also characterised by ghastly conditions. The residents claim to have leaking ceilings, unsanitary situations like excrements on the walls and urine on the floor, deprived rooms, etc<sup>120</sup>. Furthermore, in another hostel in Hackney, Shuttleworth Hostel, a man was found dead in his room, *three days after he last signed the register*.<sup>121</sup> The others living in the same place are sure that *'he was left to die'*<sup>122</sup>. This hostel also, is described as having *'cramped rooms, some rife with bed bugs, that are*



67. INSIDE OF A ROOM AT BROWNSWOOD HOSTEL



68 AND 69. INSIDE A ROOM AT BROWNSWOOD HOSTEL (ON THE LEFT) SHARED KITCHEN AT SHUTTLEWORTH HOSTEL (ON THE RIGHT)



*barely the width of two single' beds, with shared kitchen, toilets and showers. Still, the manager of the hostel claims to fulfil all laws and procedures. However, the people that live there say that 'these are not human living conditions'. This hostel costs £255 a week<sup>123</sup>. When confronted with these situations, Hackney Council stated – 'We always prefer to provide families with a modern, stable Council home but, with Hackney facing an unprecedented housing crisis and a continued lack of action from Government, hostel accommodation is often the only way of ensuring those in housing need can remain in Hackney while they await a more suitable place to call home. We work closely with all hostel providers to ensure they provide a safe and comfortable environment, and all hostels we use are inspected regularly and meet all statutory health and safety requirements. In the meantime we are working alongside our hostel providers to improve conditions and facilities, which has so far seen new on-site laundry services in three hostels and WiFi in two hostels, as well as upgrading rooms and communal facilities across hostels we use.'*<sup>124</sup>

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>124</sup> Councillor Rebecca Renninson, Cabinet Member for Finance and Housing Needs at Hackney Council, in: Cristodoulou, Holly (2018) 'Dickensian' filth. The Sun. Retrieved from <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/5819078/homeless-shelter-where-a-room-costs-taxpayers-1000-a-month-is-so-filthy-it-has-poo-smearred-on-walls/>





## FINAL NOTES

It is true that many of these places are privately own. Yet, there's a lack of care from the councils and local authorities that continue to use these accommodations as viable solutions for homeless people. Furthermore, the costs are also too high for the standards that are presented and many of them are funded by housing benefits through taxpayers' money. With a better management of these funds, wouldn't it be possible to assure better conditions for homeless people living in temporary accommodation? Then again, it seems to be an absence of monitoring to ensure the quality of the living standards offered in these kinds of houses.

Nevertheless, it's clear that the system is broken and the solution itself is not the proper answer to this homeless crisis. The problem continues to be the shortage of real social housing, that enables these people to have a real home. This is not just the councils, local authorities, governments, etc. fault and it doesn't mean that all these agents, along with charities and volunteers are not doing a good job. In fact, many of them are the only ones that contribute with help to this crisis through the years. The problem is a result of a deficient coordination of resources to assure the best solutions for homeless.



## D. THE SOCIAL ROLE OF ARCHITECTURE

Architecture deeply changed the cities in the twentieth century. It had a profound impact on the urbanisation process of the of the rural environment. This development was not always fully successful, mainly because of the unbalanced dichotomies that have always accompanied the subject - the natural and the built, the beauty and the aesthetic, the economic and the social... These two last factors are truly important to define the role of the architect. London couldn't be a better example on how economy and society influence architecture. If, on one hand, architecture presents itself as a subject for the elites, a way to show a city's wealth and power, on the other, it is a subject that works to and for a society. It aims to answer to the problems of civilisation and thus, to be appropriated by man through its materialization. We can say that, *architecture, as a product of man, accompanies and answers to the time in which it occurs*<sup>125</sup>. I believe that, today, architecture is trying to redefine its purpose on a

<sup>125</sup> Free translation from “*A arquitectura, como produto do homem, acompanha e responde ao tempo onde se insere (...)*” in GONÇALVES, António (2009) *Arquitectura de Causas: uma arquitectura social na era da globalização económica* (p. 11). (Master's Thesis, Darq, FCTUC) Retrieved from <https://estudogeral.sib.uc.pt/handle/10316/9914>



damaged world. It presents itself as a subject capable of responding to the current problems of society in a functional way, especially in terms of poverty, catastrophes, emergencies, sustainability, etc. It is able to bring solutions that serve humankind requisites but, as we've seen before, it isn't able to do it on its own, since its results are deeply influenced by politics, economics and culture. In the end it has to be a team work, in order to achieve a better society and better environments.

The case studies I am about to present are results that aim to answer to one problem: the homeless crisis in London. We've established the history, the current problem and now it's time to ask which solutions are coming forward to address it?

The next projects will be divided into two main groups, each one represents one different category of temporary accommodation, designed by different architects - the first group will exemplify solutions for the Hostels typologies designed by Peter Barber Architects, while the second represents a typology of transition accommodation to be used as a sort of *starter home* to when people are able to leave shorter-time emergency lodgings, designed by RSH+P – Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners.

### **PETER BARBER – HOSTELS**

According to Peter Barber, when it comes to homelessness, *not all boroughs in London take their responsibility seriously, but Camden is one of the ones that really does*<sup>126</sup>. In 2010, the Borough of Camden adopted a fifteen-year Community Investment Programme meant

<sup>126</sup> BARBER, Peter in *Peter Barber Interview* (22/05/2018) [over the phone][see attachments p.195]



70. HOLMES ROAD STUDIOS ELEVATION



71 AND 72. HOLMES ROAD COURTYARD SKETCHES BY PETER BARBER ARCHITECTS



73. SKETCH OF HOLMES ROAD STUDIOS BY PETER BARBER ARCHITECTS



<sup>127</sup> Camden (2018) Retrieved from <https://camden.gov.uk/ccm/content/environment/planning-and-built-environment/two/placeshaping/holmes-road.en>

to gather funds for buildings with a social character<sup>127</sup>. The next two hostels – Holmes Road Studios and Mount Pleasant – are the product of a borough strategy to improve the existing accommodation for the homeless. These projects are partly funded by the GLA and are planned along with different charities.

### HOLMES ROAD STUDIOS

<sup>128</sup> NLA Overall Building of the Year Award 2016, NLA Wellbeing Award 2016 and The Guardian Top 10 Buildings of 2016 . Retrieved from <http://www.peterbarberarchitects.com/holmes-road-studios>

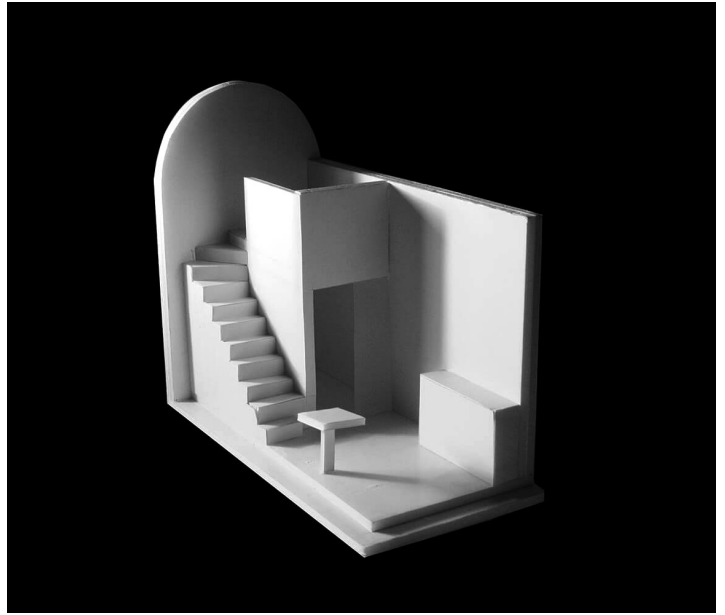
<sup>129</sup> *Alms-houses* – established in the 10th century, in England, by the Anglo-Saxon leader King Athelstan, represent some of the world's first form of affordable housing, designed as a shelter to the poor, elderly and disabled. Retrieved from <http://mentalfloss.com/article/award-winning-homeless-shelter-was-inspired-10th-century-almshouses>

<sup>130</sup> BARBER, Peter in *Peter Barber Interview* (22/05/2018) [over the phone][see attachments p.195]

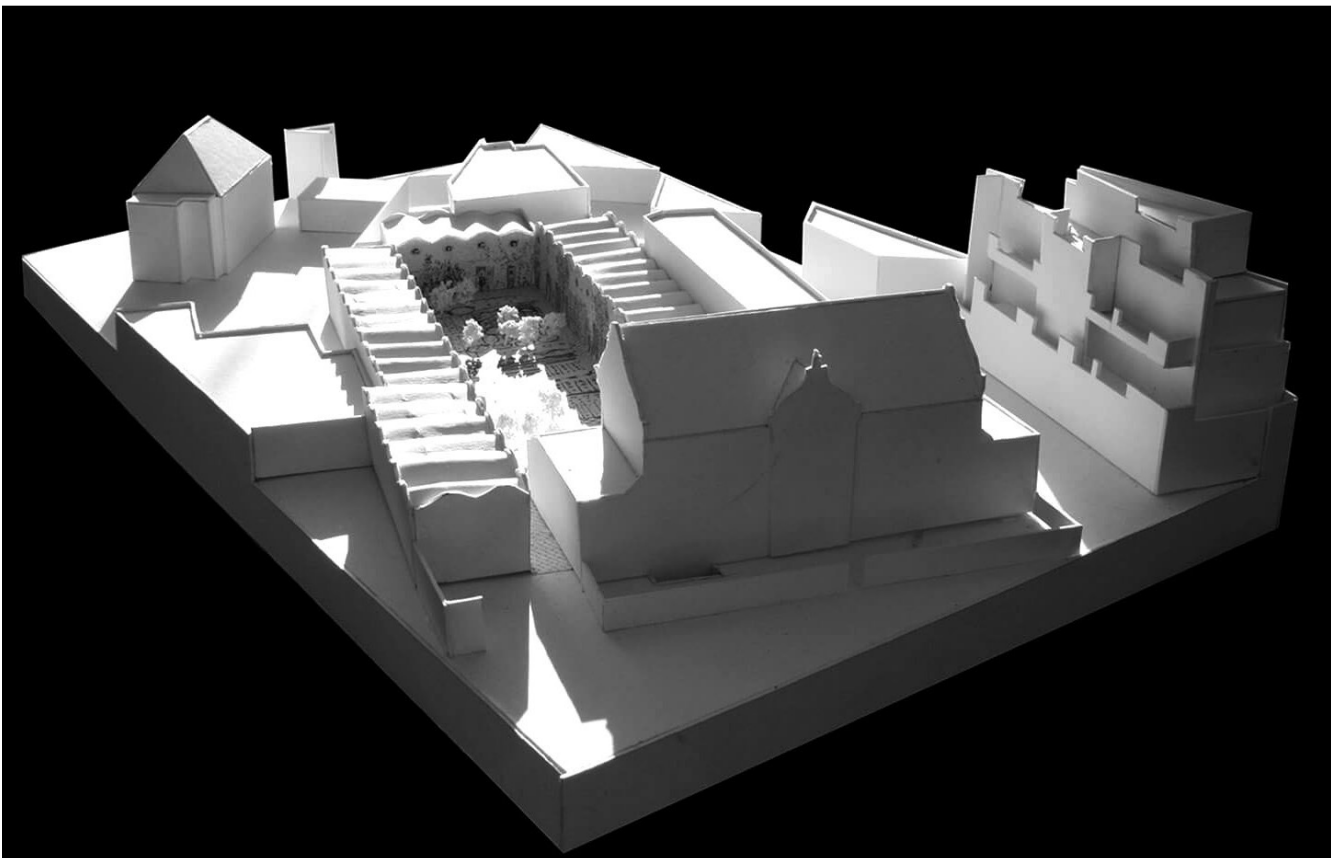
<sup>131</sup> *Ibid* [see attachments p.195]

<sup>132</sup> Peter Barber Architects (2018) Retrieved from <http://www.peterbarberarchitects.com/holmes-road-studios>

This project of the modernisation of an old hostel located in Kentish Town, in Camden, already an award winning homeless shelter<sup>128</sup>, is inspired by the 10<sup>th</sup> century *alms-houses*<sup>129</sup>. These were characterised as a multiplication of small terraced houses that enabled the living of just a reduced number of residents each. Holmes Road Studios uses this morphology of multiplication to provide accommodation for 59 homeless people, while it reinforces the concepts of privacy, by placing them behind the existing building that faces the street. The development of the project materialises around a courtyard garden, from where all houses have access, that promises to be one of the major influencers to the new inhabitants. For the architect, this is one of the key elements and starter points when designing this type of facilities<sup>130</sup>. Meant to enhance the domestic atmosphere, the courtyard space *makes it possible to unplanned encounters between clients and staff*<sup>131</sup>. The centre space serves as a shaper of a strong community environment that will foster the interaction of the residents, as well as the development of a *sense of belonging, self-worth and empowerment*<sup>132</sup>. The appropriation of this space will encourage the progress of different activities, like gardening, and allow the dwellers to *socialize, relax and learn in a*



74 AND 75. MODELS OF ONE APARTMENT UNIT, PETER BARBER ARCHITECTS



76. MODEL OF THE WHOLE PROJECT, INCLUDING THE PRE-EXISTING BUILDING ON THE FRONT, PETER BARBER ARCHITECTS

<sup>133</sup> SILVER, Johanna . *Beautiful London Homeless Shelter Inspired by 10th-Century 'Almshouses'* . Retrieved from <https://www.littlethings.com/beautiful-london-homeless-shelter/>

*beautiful environment that they helped create*<sup>133</sup>.

The concern to offer a friendly and domestic environment to the future occupants of this space means also the humanisation of these institutions, too often characterised as spaces without any design and even lacking the most basic forms of privacy.

However, this hostel promises to break with the institutional reality by designing each of these doubled-height vaulted micro homes as a single accommodation, emphasising the importance of privacy and dignity. Each of the studio houses are composed by a *ensuite bathroom at the back of the plan, and a mezzanine bed space raised above the bathrooms*<sup>134</sup>.

<sup>134</sup> Peter Barber Architects (2018) Retrieved from <http://www.peterbarberarchitects.com/holmes-road-studios>

Moreover, the use of different bright colour doors and the rustic brick on the exterior of the building strengthens the sense of individuality among residents, while it brings a domestic scale to the project and also allows it to blend into the existing environment.

Along with the creation of the residential facilities, other counselling and important services to have in this kind of institutions are laid around the building.

Holmes Road Studios proposes to be a model in temporary housing, delivering a modern and high quality residential accommodation, suitable for a 21<sup>st</sup> century standard society, where the humanization of the homeless and the feel of community have an important role on helping people gaining back control of their lives.

This project is still under construction.





77. MOUNT PLEASANT COURTYARD, WITH USE OF DIFFERENT BRICKS ON THE FAÇADES OF THE BUILDINGS



78. MOUNT PLEASANT ELEVATION, STREET SIDE

## MOUNT PLEASANT

Mount Pleasant Hostel is a shelter accommodation for the homeless located in Holborn, Camden. It is built in a conservation area of the Hatton Garden and it was a partly refurbished and new-built project. Its design takes into account the historical context where it is located. Originally a Victorian hostel, standing on this site since the 1900's, there was a will to preserve some of the existing red brick and stitch it to the new building that brings balance to the composition through the use of yellow brick and white walls. Inside, the demolition of the old three storey building allowed the removal of the existing small rooms and the construction of a new interior with four storeys. By the demolition of a central part of the existing 'H' plan - that was divided into two courtyards, one for men and other for women - a new courtyard was created by adding two new buildings around it. The architect describes this space as *almost like an outdoor room*<sup>135</sup>. The extension of the façades and addition of new volumes, together with the materials used, emphasise the traditional London buildings and present themselves as a *kind of palimpsest*<sup>136,137</sup> where the old and the new coexist.

The hostel has accommodation for 52 residents, divided into 14 rooms for eight-week period stay, 34 rooms for 12 to 18 months stay and the remaining for emergency accommodation. According to the different necessities of each, the accommodation is provided through independent apartments, flats and larger units, each with an ensuite bathroom.

However, one of the most important factors in this project was to create a *smart circulation system*<sup>138</sup> that opposed to the existing

<sup>135</sup> GRIFFITHS, Alyn (2014) Peter Barber uses a "collage of materials" in hostel for homeless people. *Dezeen*. Retrieved from <https://www.dezeen.com/2014/10/29/peter-barber-architects-collage-bricks-mount-pleasant-homeless-hostel/>

<sup>136</sup> *Palimpsest* – a manuscript or piece of writing material on which the text has been washed off so that the page can be reused. (*Cambridge Dictionary, s. d.*)

<sup>137</sup> Peter Barber Architects (2018) Retrieved from <http://www.peterbarberarchitects.com/mount-pleasant>

<sup>138</sup> BARBER, Peter in *Peter Barber Interview* (22/05/2018) [over the phone][see attachments p.196]





79 AND 80. DIFFERENT VIEWS FROM THE COURTYARD



81 AND 82. SITE PLAN (ON THE LEFT) AND GROUND FLOOR PLAN (ON THE RIGHT)

<sup>139</sup> PRITCHARD, Owen (2014) More Pleasant: Mount Pleasant Studio by Peter Barber. *Architects Journal*. Retrieved from <https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/buildings/more-pleasant-mount-pleasant-studio-by-peter-barber/8671175.article>

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid*

*oppressive maze of corridors*<sup>139</sup>. With this, the access to the building happens from an arched door to the courtyard - the social heart of the building. From this space, all the areas of accommodation, staff and others like laundry, kitchens, etc. can be accessed over the four blocks surrounding it. Peter Barber says that this courtyard brings a *sense of peace and calm, but also freedom to move unhindered between spaces*<sup>140</sup>. Once again, this space is also meant to stimulate social interaction between people while it helps deinstitutionalizing the hostel space.

With this, according to Peter Barber there are three major factors to take in concern while making a project like this: a good room, a smart circulation system and a good point of arrival. These interests are essentially fostered by the willing to provide a domestic environment, where people feel comfortable and free, as well as an atmosphere that can influence their social relations, enabling them to create a healthier connection with others and themselves.

Mount Pleasant opened in 2015 and it helps delivering accommodation and support for vulnerable people. The architect still visits the place from time to time and, even though he has more contact with staff, the response has been very positive.

*It's very strange, because we have this architectural way of talking about things, don't we (?), that doesn't necessarily take down on how other people see things. But it was very good to be there amongst people who work in that hostel, who were describing it exactly the terms I just described it to you, with the possibilities and the things that were made possible by this courtyard. That's how they talked about it, which surprised me, and I was pleased about it.*<sup>141</sup>

<sup>141</sup> BARBER, Peter in *Peter Barber Interview* (22/05/2018) [over the phone][see attachments p.196]





83. Y:CUBE

**RSH + PARTNERS – AFFORDABLE TRANSITION HOUSING**

*“...architecture is inescapably social and political. I have always believed that there is more to architecture than architecture. The first line of my practice’s constitution states: ‘architecture is inseparable from the social and economic values of the individuals who practise it and the society which sustains it’.” (ROGERS, 2017)*

One important step while overcoming homelessness is the transition from a hostel or a shelter to a permanent home. What often happens when people leave hostels, is that their options are reduced to a low standard shared and private accommodation, which often leads back to high rents and can even push them into a homeless situation again. The next two projects offer a different solution.

**Y:CUBE**

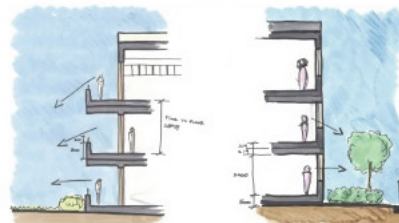
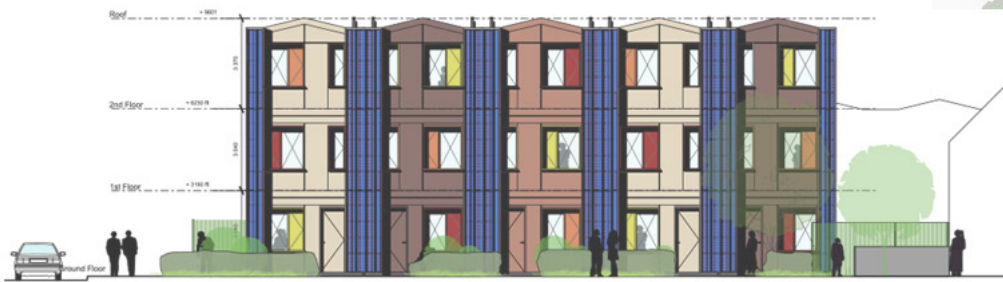
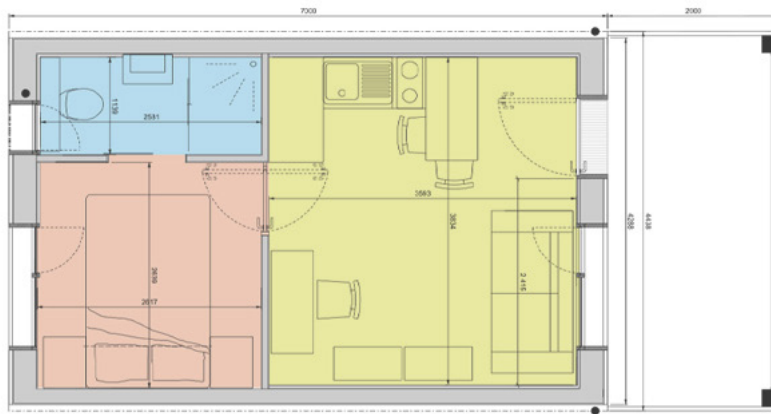
<sup>142</sup> YMCA LSW – is a registered charity, founded in England in 1844, that works across the London South West boroughs to provide local communities with a range of services. Every year, the YMCA LSW houses and gives support to more than 600 homeless people. Retrieved from [www.ymcalsw.org](http://www.ymcalsw.org)

Together with YMCA<sup>142</sup> London South West, these architects developed a low cost solution to provide a starter accommodation for young people who have left behind a homeless situation and are entering in the housing market. Located in Mitcham and completed in 2015, this solution is not intended to serve as a long term accommodation, but as a transition from shelters into the housing market that can last from 3 to 5 years, while it allows its occupants to save money to get one step ahead in the housing ladder. To move into this affordable housing, the inhabitants have to be either a previous resident in the YMCA or have a referral from the local borough.

*‘Even for a young person in employment, a combination of low wages*



84 AND 85. Y:CUBE MODULAR SYSTEM, MODEL CONCEPT (ON THE LEFT) AND CONSTRUCTION SITE (ON THE RIGHT)



86. Y:CUBE SKETCHES, BY RSH+P

<sup>143</sup> HATTON, Denise , Chief Executive of YMCA England, in [www.ymcalsw.org/ycube](http://www.ymcalsw.org/ycube)

*and high rents can quickly see them priced out of the market. We believe Y:Cube presents a significant opportunity to deliver genuinely affordable housing to meet the increasing demand'* <sup>143</sup>

<sup>144</sup> RogersStirkHarbour+Partners (2018) Retrieved from <https://www.rsh-p.com/projects/ycube/>

The concept reveals itself very simple. Characterised by the architects as a *'plug and play' housing system*<sup>144</sup>, it is a high-quality and sustainable construction, composed by pre-fabricated independent timber units that are assembled in a factory and then transported to the location. It is a rapid and effective solution that enables the stacking of units on top of another or side by side, revealing a highly flexible solution for different sites. The controlled environment where these houses are assembled enables the precision on quality, reduction of construction waste and obviously, on costs. Taking less than half the time of assembling than a normal construction, the Y:Cube entire project was built in a total of five months and with a total cost of £30,000 to £35,000 per unit. The units are fully dismountable, have a lifetime of 60 years and are built to be moved up to a total of five times.

<sup>145</sup> HARBOUR, Ivan in Mairs, Jessica (2015) Richard Rogers' prefabricated housing for homeless people opens in south London . *Dezeen* . Retrieved from <https://www.dezeen.com/2015/09/08/richard-rogers-prefabricated-housing-for-homeless-people-opens-in-south-london-mitchamerton/>

*'The word prefab is much maligned. In the commercial sector we're making prefabricated buildings all the time, but the conventional mass-market residential sector is working block-by-block and brick-by-brick so when it comes to quality, for low costs, there's a real opportunity to have off-site manufacture become very important'* <sup>145</sup>

The affordable method of construction translates into affordable rents, priced at 65% of the local market value, which is around £150 a week. This value is comparable to the rent of a single room in London.

The main advantage of this system, besides the low cost





87. INSIDE ONE Y:CUBE APARTMENT UNIT



88. BALCONIES IN FRONT OF EACH APARTMENT

<sup>146</sup> ROGERS, Richard *in* Mairs, Jessica (2015) Richard Rogers' prefabricated housing for homeless people opens in south London . *Dezeen* . Retrieved from <https://www.dezeen.com/2015/09/08/richard-rogers-prefabricated-housing-for-homeless-people-opens-in-south-london-mitcham-merton/>

construction, is that it allows councils to occupy brownfields sites until they are ready for development. Richard Rogers, in an interview, states that many brownfield sites across London have the capacity to build more than half a million houses. *'We need to let local authorities build more, to make the most of their land, create the communities that we need and put value back into building more affordable social housing. We need to unleash similar building innovation across the capital or the same old business model will cause us to stay in the same old housing crisis'*<sup>146</sup>

The housing itself is composed by 36 units, each being a furnished 26m<sup>2</sup> one-bed apartments with a living space and a kitchen, and a room with an ensuite bathroom. The large windows enable the entering of natural light. The dimensions of each unit are calculated according to the maximum load of the truck that transports them into the location. The outside is characterised by bright colours that aim the creation of a happy and friendly environment and the disposition of the units creates an internal courtyard that fosters social interactions. The circulation system also serves as balconies, wide enough to promote encounters and reinforce the sense of community.

<sup>147</sup> HARBOUR, Ivan (2014) *in* <https://ymcastpaulsgroup.org/ycube-housing/>

*'The Y:Cube delivers generous space, exceptional insulation, daylight and acoustics. We believe it holds many answers for well-designed and sustainable urban living and this approach of delivering fully kitted out units could change the way we think about our housing into the future. We look forward to working with the YMCA to help create homes for those most in need'*<sup>147</sup>

The Y:Cube success on delivering an affordable and flexible solution led to the proposal of seven other similar schemes on other





89. SKETCH OF PLACE / LADYWELL BUILDING, RSH+P

<sup>148</sup> Designing Buildings Wiki (2017) Y:Cube . Retrived from <https://www.designingbuildings.co.uk/wiki/Y:Cube>

sites across London<sup>148</sup>, while the GLA also demonstrated interest in this project and believes this kind of innovative solutions can help to fight the shortage of affordable homes in the city.

This multiple award-winning project shows a great potential to help not only homeless young people but also to be widened to other groups that struggle to find a home in London. Testimonies show the acceptance of the inhabitants of Y:Cube:

<sup>149</sup> Wendy Omollo, 24, previously homeless and rough sleeper testimony (2015) Retrieved from <https://www.rsh-p.com/news/ymca-and-rshps-innovative-factory-built-affordable-housing-scheme-welcomes-first-tenants/>

*'By having my own space with my own front door I will regain my independence. But it's not just that. As the rent is affordable and I can stay for up to five years, I'll also be able to save money for a deposit. Basically, when the time comes to move on from Y:Cube, I will be in a far better situation than today' <sup>149</sup>*

## PLACE/LADYWELL

<sup>150</sup> Lewisham Council . *PLACE/Ladywell* . Retrived from <https://www.lewisham.gov.uk/inmyarea/regeneration/lewishamtowncentre/Pages/placeladywell.aspx>

This project, located in Lewisham, is described as the *UK's first pop-up village*<sup>150</sup>. By 2015, this borough in South East London was facing an increasing of housing prices and rent values and, consequently, it accumulated a waiting list for council homes of 9,135 households and a total of 540 people living in temporary accommodation<sup>151</sup>.

<sup>151</sup> OSBORNE, Hilary (2016) Pop-up village in south-east London to house homeless families. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/mar/18/pop-up-village-in-south-east-london-to-house-homeless-families>

To try to address this growing demand, the London Borough of Lewisham, with the support of the Mayor of London, partnered with RSH+P Architects to come up with an immediate solution to occupy a site waiting for redevelopment, previously occupied by the former Ladywell Leisure Centre until 2014.

*'This scheme may offer a solution to an all too common problem that plagues many development sites, which often sit unused while complex*



90. SKETCH OF PLACE / LADYWELL BUILDING WITH A COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT, RSH+P



91. CONSTRUCTION OF THE BUILDING, BY STACKING PRE-FABRICATED MODULAR UNITS



<sup>152</sup> Sir Steve Bullock, Mayor of Lewisham in The Alliance for Sustainable Building Products (2018). Retrieved from <https://asbp.org.uk/case-studies/placeladywell>

<sup>153</sup> Lewisham Council . *PLACE/Ladywell* . Retrived from <https://www.lewisham.gov.uk/inmyarea/regeneration/lewishamtowncentre/Pages/placeladywell.aspx>

<sup>154</sup> OSBORNE, Hilary (2016) Pop-up village in south-east London to house homeless families. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/mar/18/pop-up-village-in-south-east-london-to-house-homeless-families>

<sup>155</sup> Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners (2018) Retrieved from <https://www.rsh-p.com/projects/placeladywell/>

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>157</sup> HARBOUR, Ivan, Partner at RSH+P in Designing Buildings Wiki (2017) *Lewisham Ladywell Temporary Housing*. Retrieved from [https://www.designingbuildings.co.uk/wiki/Lewisham\\_Ladywell\\_Temporary\\_Housing](https://www.designingbuildings.co.uk/wiki/Lewisham_Ladywell_Temporary_Housing)

*regeneration plans are put together.'*<sup>152</sup>

The project considered the borough residents' opinion on a participation event, where people highlighted the need for a *creative presence on this site*<sup>153</sup>.

Therefore, the architects proposed a dismountable structure that could address the community and borough needs until this vacant site had a definitive redevelopment plan. Following the Y:Cube constructions methods, the PLACE/Ladywell is *a step up from that design*<sup>154</sup>. The project was created with three main objectives: the use of the unfilled site to respond to the shortage of housing with a short-term solution, the construction of 24 houses for homeless families living in low standards temporary accommodation, and finally the creation of a community environment through the commercial spaces proposed on the ground level<sup>155</sup>.

Being also a pre-fabricated volumetric building, PLACE/Ladywell was constructed with reduced costs and in a short-time period. The total cost of manufacture is £1,200/m<sup>2</sup> and the construction time length corresponds to a month for building the unit in a factory and a week for one full floor installation on site<sup>156</sup>. The complete structure is composed by four storeys, three blocks and 64 units, with twenty-four 2 bedroom apartments on the upper floors and retail spaces on the ground floor.

*'this type of development can go up to 13 storeys and our real constraint is the volume you can get on the back of a truck and get round the country. By using the offsite construction, you can ship all the material and assemble it locally. It's all about the flexibility of people.'*<sup>157</sup>

The construction method, as in Y:Cube, allowed the building of



92 AND 93. UPPER FLOOR PLAN (ON THE LEFT) AND KITCHEN / LIVING SPACE INTERIOR (ON THE RIGHT)



94 AND 95. COLOURFUL OUTSIDE (ON THE LEFT) AND BALCONIES / CIRCULATION AREA (ON THE RIGHT)

a high-quality design, the use of sustainable materials, such as timber, the reduction of waste and low costs of construction developments. This building is meant to stay on this site from just 1 to 4 years. After that is expected to be deconstructed and moved to another site inside the borough. The total lifespan of the building is 60 years. This flexibility and ability to adapt to the present necessities and available spaces is one of the advantages of this prefabricated structures.

<sup>158</sup> PARTRIDGE, Andrew , Associate Partner at RSH+P in Offsite Construction Hub (2015-2018) PLACE/Ladywell - by SIG Offsite . Retrieved from <https://www.offsitehub.co.uk/projects/placeladywell-by-sig-offsite/>

*'When working with Lewisham Council on this Project we identified that a moveable structure would meet the needs not only of this area, but of any others that require temporary housing in the future.'*<sup>158</sup>

Moreover, the upper floors, which will accommodate families in homeless or poor temporary accommodation situations, are managed by Lewisham Council and include 24 apartments with two bedrooms, a fully equipped kitchen with a contiguous dining and living area and one bathroom. All units, unlike what happens in Y:Cube, exceed the space requirements of the GLA by 10%, which translates into 75m<sup>2</sup> apartments. Even though I couldn't find the rent value of each apartment, the council guaranteed, in an interview, that rents were set between social and market values, and paid through housing benefits<sup>159</sup>.

<sup>159</sup> OSBORNE, Hilary (2016) Pop-up village in south-east London to house homeless families. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/mar/18/pop-up-village-in-south-east-london-to-house-homeless-families>

Additionally, the balconies and the use of large windows allow the entrance of natural light and allow families to have a private space outside. The exterior colourful aspect aims to contribute to a community environment, alongside with the cafés, small stores and workspaces establish across the ground floor. *'By delivering well-designed, flexible and sustainable accommodation...we hope to change the way we think about house building in the future.'*<sup>160</sup>

<sup>160</sup> HARBOUR, Ivan, Partner at RSH+P in ARCILLA, Patricia (2015) RSH+P Reveals Plans for the "Ladywell Pop-Up Village" in Lewisham. Archdaily. Retrieved from <https://www.archdaily.com/590285/rshp-reveals-plans-for-the-ladywell-pop-up-village-in-lewisham>





## CONCLUSION

For more than two centuries, the city of London was unable to solve its shortage of housing. In my opinion, this is a result of a broken system and a number of policies and acts misapplied by the government, with their main interests in the economic growth instead of the creation of a healthy society environment. It is true that many attempts have been made over the years, but the failure to act with combined efforts between the authorities, as well as the lack of proper urban planning decisions in the housing sector is what led this city into this major crisis. The amount of social housing lost since the Thatcher's Right to Buy Act was never replied and this is one of the major influences in the huge existing backlog of people waiting for a proper home. It seems to me that, at least until now, there has been a policy of *supposed affordable housing delivery* that most Londoners cannot afford. This concept sort of masked an attempt to deliver a solution that wasn't real, since it was still set at high market



values. This happened too many times since the nineteenth century, where many solutions were presented, but none of them really met the need of the poorest. Today, the real need of London is the delivering of *proper social housing*, which meets the realistic values of people's incomes and that real people can afford to live in.

On top of this, it is unbelievable to think that the size of homelessness in London rapidly increased over decades and no one has ever thought of treating this as a genuine problem since then. It had to be necessary to pass by 40 years to think about what can be done to solve the homeless crisis. How can a modern society categorize people in a way to prove them worthy or not of a home? Isn't a home a basic human right? The huge amount of bureaucracy to deliver people homes created a situation that is far from easy to be solved. In the homelessness subject it is important that local authorities start recording the number of all appliances instead of just the ones they accept. This will show a more realistic size of homelessness in the city. With the new Homelessness Reduction Act, it is essential to create a new cultural way of addressing this problem, to gather efforts to prevent homeless situations before they happen and to dismiss an existing hierarchy of prioritizing each person's housing need.

Moreover, on my research, it didn't take too long to understand that the reality of homeless people, who live in poor temporary accommodation is still the payment of a weekly rent, many times supported by housing benefits from the government and taxpayers. However, the case studies presented as examples for temporary affordable housing, showed themselves cheaper than most of London's hostels and B&Bs accommodations. So if it's cheaper why



not opt for a more humane solution for homeless people?

In my opinion the presented case studies are a successful solution in an architectural point of view. In this city, it is impossible not to talk about the mass constructions for social housing of the second half of the twentieth century, as well as its consequent failure. I believe that this failure cannot be completely blamed on the architecture since, as we've seen, there were many factors aside that contributed to the decline of the estates. Despite this, I do think that high scale building can intensify a number of events and behaviours that will contribute to the deterioration of the buildings, not only due to its massive area of coverage and number of tenants living in it, but also the difficulty of preserving such large estates. To me, this makes small scale buildings a better solution for this social problem. It is important to highlight that small scale doesn't necessarily mean low densities. We can use this type of solutions to create high density areas that can respond to the demand of housing in the city without recurring to high rise constructions that can be more difficult to control and have a bigger impact in the city's character. This innovative constructions, in this case with pre-fabricated methods, allow the creation of *small pods* that can be sustained more easily due to its small scale, while they represent a cheap, fast and individual home solution. I also believe that the case studies are viable models for the homeless in London. However, once again, these will only prove themselves successful if rightly managed by government and local authorities. I have no doubt that the conditions given in these examples are far better than the reality where many people live in London. Despite all its urban growth and wealth, London is still a city with a big amount of low standards housing and hidden urban





slums and thus, these examples are definitely an upgrade on living conditions, on the humanization of an institutionalized sector and on the innovation of design and construction. In my opinion, in this case, the architect's role to find answers for a problem of today's society is evolving and it's successful in a design and innovative way.

However, I'm not sure these solutions will work in London with today's management methods. For what I've concluded, one of the biggest problems in the system is that the different structures don't all work towards the same objectives. If there isn't a compromise between government, local authorities and councils, the GLA, constructors, planners and architects, the problem will only get worse! A few of the things that I believe that can happen if there isn't a real commitment between these forces is, for example, in the hostels situations: even if one council, like Camden, has a real concern on solving the homelessness in the borough, it's not enough. What I think would happen is that, eventually, people will be attracted to the councils that actually solve the problems in hope of finding a good home and this will consequently put a huge pressure on the *good councils*, that will obviously not be able to deal with so many people alone. Thus, the success ends up turning into a failure once again, in a wider perspective of home delivery. On the other hand, concerning temporary accommodation, the main problem I see is: if local authorities start to think of these immediate solutions as a key to meet only the backlog of urgent housing needs and excuse themselves of providing longer-term housing solutions, as high-quality social and council housing, the problem will just be covered, but not properly solved. This could create a situation of an increasing number of people housed in temporary accommodation,



<sup>161</sup> [See pages 91 to 93 , Part I-B, *Affordable Housing in London*]

waiting to explode once again. The biggest risk of these solutions is if the *housing ladder*, previously explained in the *Affordable Housing in London* chapter<sup>161</sup>, isn't fulfilled, many people will see themselves stuck their all lives somewhere along the way. I believe that today, they have the social factors laid out and the architecture solutions needed to address the problem. But there is still a lack of coordination to achieve success.

Concluding, I trust that architecture CAN address the problem of homelessness in the city of London in an innovative way. The examples showed, for me, prove that architecture is capable of considering real situations and real social problems and address them to help create a more stable society, especially in a wealthy city like London. In a design and community approach, I do think these projects are successful. In my opinion, these architects were able to deliver a creative affordable high-quality and, most importantly, humane home as a rightful solution for London's homeless society. But architecture cannot solve everything. The city of London definitely has the means, the land, and the will for solving this problem. People are aware of the increasing homelessness situation and are willing to help. The Mayor set out a good strategy to tackle the housing crisis. But in the end it all comes down to one thing, money. There's a lot of other interests in the building sector and if people's interest's don't start to come first, and they don't start working together for the same purpose, the problem of the housing crisis will remain in London for a long time.

My experience with the city of London happened almost by chance. My interest developed around these series of visits that put me in touch with the housing crisis and the homelessness problem.



The new knowledge about London pushed me into this research work, since the social component of architecture was something that always interested me during my academic years. Moreover, this subject, compiled in this thesis, became sort of a resolution for my motivation to learn more about it as a student. However, at the same time, I see this work as the first step of a learning process about solutions for homelessness in developed cities, which I want to improve in a professional environment. I hope that I can continue this work in London and then, later on, it can help me bring back new knowledge and solutions for my own country. In the end, I believe that the learning process and the influences abroad will enrich my approach to this social problem, with new experiences and points of view. That's why I took this research to an international level – because I believe that I, as a future architect, must know more than my own reality to really succeed at understanding the social problems in the world, and how to deal with each one of them. Even now, when I'm only at the beginning, I think that this thesis has already changed me and my way of perceiving this subject.





## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

I went to London for four times since I started this work. The first time I went there, I had never heard about the housing or the homeless crisis. I just wanted to soak up every bit of this amazing city and enjoy every architecture and cultural landmark. I wasn't wrong, but I now think it also wasn't right. As I went there again and again, my passion for the city only increased, but I started to see it in a more authentic way. There is a lot of poverty in this rich city and if it's like this in one of the wealthiest places on earth, how are people living in the poorest? Maybe I was just naïve. But this pushed me into this investigation work and made me want to learn more about this problem and find out the answers that architecture can bring to it. I still think that I left a lot to see and learn along the way. One of the unachieved purposes of my trips was to experience and see for myself the true conditions where homeless people live. I couldn't get in touch neither with charity or voluntary societies nor with the actual people that live in these places. However, I believe that it had to be like this, because in the end these people are already going through so much that they need to be protected. Despite all this, I did see a lot of rough sleepers in the streets, underground stations, in the entrance of buildings... This shocked me so much! I want to believe that I've chosen a career that can help create a better world, that can provide solutions for everyone to have a roof over their heads. In the end, if these situations are not enough to motivate ourselves to find innovative solutions for today's society, then what is? If it's not up to us, architects, to think about providing people with a real home, then who will?



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## ATTACHMENTS

### **NLA Interview with Catherine Staniland and Lucie Murray, 11<sup>th</sup> April 2018, London**

*Rita Carvalho: Since I got to London I've been studying the evolution of housing, focusing mainly on social housing and in the lower classes. With this, it is impossible not to notice that the housing crisis is a problem that has accompanied London since before the eighteenth century. Why do you think that this problem hasn't been solved or at least followed other areas of developing in the city like economy, technology, society, and so on?*

Catherine Staniland: Well, one of the biggest challenges, as you've come across in looking at developed cities, is that because London keeps developing and becomes this amazing cluster of activities, people, things that are happening, it has huge land prices. So, all across London, it's the land that is incredibly expensive, because everyone wants to be here, because it's a successful city. And so that naturally creates a massive issue in terms of how you deliver any affordable housing. Because anyone delivering affordable housing has to be able to purchase the land and develop on that, and that creates some huge viability issues in the city. So in a sense is like being a victim of its own success, and so it actually makes it very difficult to solve these issues. That's kind of the crux of the issue. A lot of work happens to look on how you can speed up or improve the construction process, but actually the construction process isn't really the costly factor; it's always the land that's the most costly factor.

So, due to certain government rotation and changes over time, the public sector has taken a very goal in solving this issue over time - that's our Mayor of London, our local authorities, the 33 local authorities that look after different parts of the city; over the last twenty years or so, the public sector hasn't really had much of a role to play in delivering housing, they haven't actually had the funding to do so. So it's all been down to the private sector and they're battling the land costs. Now, with actually bringing forward lots of more development from the public sector,



that means that they're much more likely to own the land in London, and so they're able to do reduced rates to deliver housing, they're able to part with organisations to deliver the housing and starts to free up a lot more affordable housing in the city. So, it's a sort of pricing issue and who's taking a lead in delivering housing - what's the role of your government, and your private sector.

RC: *So, if it's a government issue, what do you think are the main lessons we can learn from the past?*

Lucie Murray: The biggest turn for London was, I think, the Mayor and The London Plan, and that really changed how we approach the blueprint of the city and how we deliver housing and so since that point there's been more power to London making planning decisions.

CS: One of the things you could pull it back to is, when London developed during that period, and I'm not sure you would necessarily learn from that because I don't think we had the solution then either, but we did have very large land owners who developed key parts of the city. So London developed by growing outwards with these developers that would take quite large areas of farmland and they would create a sort of pattern look and would deliver all housing, all the facilities, all the amenities in those areas, and that's why you see lots of areas of London having very different characters - you'll see that Fitzrovia here has a very different character to Bloomsbury - and so that all down to these individual land owners. Because they were looking at quite large areas, they were able to create a mix of housing, they were able to think about what they wanted there. And how did they make sure they had a mix of housing for people with different incomes, how did they make sure they're providing a school for the children there, and how did they make sure that they had health care facilities in site as well, so because they were looking at it in the round...

RC: *So it was almost like a small community?*

CS: yes, in a way, yes

LM: They could manage their own patch planned, and they all still manage those patches of land now.

CS: You still get a lot of those areas that are owned by the same people, so they've been able to manage that mix of housing, and many of them -I wouldn't say now, necessarily actually deliver many affordable housing - but probably at the time they were a lot more mixed then they are now, whereas I suppose one of the issues we have now is that a lot of development council own very small parcels of land so a development might only have access to a very small area and so they can't think about on how they deliver that whole mix, they just want to create a development that's viable. So what we lookout in some of the developers who are now looking at wider areas, in particular, - Lucie mentioned the London Plan - it sets out Opportunity Areas in London, many of which are owned by one land owner, and in those areas, those developers are able to think a lot more about the mix of housing, the mix of activities and uses that are need there, and lots of those are learning from those estates from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

RC: *What do you think are the main gaps today when we talk about affordable housing, social housing in London?*

LM: I think that the main gap is housing for middle income earners, like millennials, 20 to 35 or 40. There's a bracket, there's not enough options for those

sorts of people. There are options but the definition of affordable housing is up to an income of a household to £90,000 which is about 95 per cent of Londoners. So essentially everyone meets its requesting and so that's a completely unsustainable model, of course. And there's like layers of options but they're not enough to meet the demands of people who want to live in London, and essentially that's what creates such a vibrant city, and that's kind of the crux of the problem.

CS: And I think that's one of the key issues that we find when people talk about Affordable housing, they might be thinking of housing that's just *affordable*, but actually, our terminology for Affordable housing with a capital 'A', only meets a very small portion of people who meet those criteria. As, Lucie said, there's this massive group of people on low / middle incomes who have no access to any level of housing and aren't able to purchase.

RC: *And when we talk about social housing or state provided housing for the homeless, what do you think that's missing there?*

CS: It tends to be the local authorities who will take the real lead on housing for homeless people. There are some really interesting schemes, there's one in Camden, which was developed by Peter Barber Architects. It's not an area that I would say we've got specific expertise in...

LC: It's really vague, it depends on the boroughs, it depends on what the borough sets out, it's different. If you speak to some local authorities, it might be the best...

RC: *I've read your 'New Ideas for Housing' book and the projects presented are mainly small scaled projects and projects with different philosophies like self-built houses, community build, co-housing, pre-fabricated housing... is it realistic to think that small scale buildings will solve the shortage of affordable housing in the City?*

CS: A lot of local authorities are now focusing their attention on small scale sites because there really aren't many large sites in the city anymore - they tend to be in the very outskirts of the city; if you look at London and the way that's grown, because it has been very piecemeal, it has happened over time very organically, there are these small areas of land that are also real opportunities to build above buildings, over stations... It's a really exciting opportunity which a lot of local authorities are now looking at, and actually, when they start to look at all of the opportunities that they have for small scale development, it can often match what a large site would provide. The challenge tends to be that is a lot more expensive, it's a lot more difficult to get money for those sites because there are all sorts of regulations around insuring the quality of what you're providing, so that can make it really challenging to come up with a solution and getting a developer that will take the risk on a small site, for just a very small get back in quite challenging. So what some of those local authorities are doing is that they're packaging up small sites and working with teams of developers, or they might be developing them themselves, and are saying to them 'you can have these sites' and then, overall, they getting a good return but they're actually able to deliver those sites. There's massive potential in London for thinking really creatively about it. It's where the design sector comes into its own, and it's when innovative, interesting design that can solve these issues becomes vital to the whole issue, because you don't want London to be, you know, completely filled up in a way that doesn't make sense, that doesn't work for the people that live there.

LM: The other issue with small sites is that it's often in people's very close proximities, so the existing communities often find themselves in certain issues of land has been developed where they're attached to that land in a certain way,

and it's quite difficult to get buy in from everyone working around those sites. So often, local authorities find it just as difficult to develop on small sites as in a massive piece of land, just because of how many people have a say on what's happening there, so it's a difficult balance.

RC: *So you think that people tend not to accept different types of construction or new design ideas?*

LM: I think it just depends. Depends on the community, on local authority and it depends on the consultation process and on how involved they've been, I guess. It's a case by case basis really.

CS: We're doing a big study in modular housing, which we're launching at the end of this year, so I think with a lot of modular housing construction and different techniques, it doesn't necessarily mean that the product actually ends up looking different, but I think that one of the key things for London is the construction is quite quick and it doesn't impact for too long.

LM: And in small sites makes it so much easier because it can come in a lorry and be prompt in place without any construction site around it, so it means the sites can be developed really quickly.

CS: And the other thing about small sites in London is that our London Plan has set out that we want London to be a compact city and that it's much more sustainable if you're able to quickly access public transport. So if you're hubs that are of higher density rather than being in a suburban sprawl area where everyone has to drive, that's where there's a very positive feeling about it at a marrow level that you densify those areas where you already have good transport connections, good access to shops, hospitals, schools, and you can create a system around it.

LM: I actually brought you a piece of work that we did last year on London's Towns, which is just about what Catherine was just mentioning, about the densification around London's town centres, particularly in outer areas, where there's more opportunity for growth, and that might be useful for you to use.

RC: *In my research I came across an author that, talking about other times, focused that with lots of publicity about this problem, people eventually become indifferent to it. The truth is that everywhere we go in London we see people sleeping on the streets and most people that walk by don't even look at them – it is almost normal to them. But, in your organisation, you promote the involvement of people and work with volunteers in new developments. With this, do you think that people in general are interested in this subject – the housing crisis and lack of affordable housing for homelessness – and really want to help? What prevails among Londoners, the willing to help and proactivity or the indifference to it?*

CS: It's interesting, because I think if you look at a lot of US cities, and you look at the scale of homelessness is some of those cities, it's a completely different scale to London, not discounting that London has a homelessness issue. I don't think is anyway near the size of other major cities, so it's not something where you're actually on a day-to-day basis – walking past people and kind of dismissing it.

LM: And there's a lot of charities who deal with that problem. I'm not sure about policy level but there are a lot of innovative ideas and approaches to dealing with the problem.

CS: And there are lots of organisations that would provide temporary

accommodation for people over night. Of course that's a very different thing to having their own space, but there are a lot of organisations out there that do try to support...

*RC: When we talk about architects in specific. Are they interested in finding solutions to this problem? Are they willing to do 'pro-bono' projects for the homeless?*

LM: It's the biggest issue and everyone is aware of that, and it's definitely, for us, the programme that has the most activity and the most engagement from the industry, and everyone is willing to give out their time to figure out what the solutions are. As of here, we've got ideas and thinking and it's moving forward but there's no silver bullet for the problem. But it's definitely up for them to engage in ways to address the problem.

CS: And I think we're starting to get more kind of entrepreneurial architects that are delivering their own projects as well. There's an interesting project by Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners in Lewisham, Y:Cube; They came with a very interesting concept about how they can deliver housing for homeless people and because they worked together with the council, the council was able to offer them an area of land where they could develop this product. That, for them, is putting all of their design skills and engineering into a problem that they want to solve. I think that there's a lot of interest. There's also a group in Croydon who do a lot of work there and kind of group up architects who are looking to solve issues there, so you certainly start to see architects becoming a lot more entrepreneurial in developing their own schemes.

LM: An conducting research as well, really driving their own pieces of research and try to find ideas and so there is a real movement in the industry.

*RC: In your opinion, is an architect an important and crucial figure in the way to solve the housing crisis and the lack of housing for the ones that can't afford a home?*

CS: I think that they are one of the solutions. The major issue comes down to the land and the fact that the land is very expensive to buy and so you don't have a joined out force with local government. Because a lot of local authorities own large areas of land, they have enormous power to solve this issue using that land. They also don't have targets set by Government as to how much they should be making from that land, so there are challenges for them as well. But I think if you look at the combination of those two, then you have a start to solve the problem. Architects are certainly able to come up with creative design solutions but they're not able to solve the crisis on their own.

*RC: If the land belongs to the councils, are they willing to give some of that land to create social housing?*

CS: Many of them do. For the local authorities it's the major issue that they want to try and solve. They have to balance that very much with the funding that they need to be able to grant in order to provide all the other services for their local authorities, and one of the big issues for local authorities is that they have seen reduced amounts of funding from central government, so they're having to raise a lot more of their funds themselves. So for them to work with a developer, often means that they are able to raise funds of the back of that development, so they

call it Section 106 funding and CIL (Community Infrastructures Level) funding. Through private developing they are actually able to make money and that they can put back into the system. There's a challenge, they want to solve this issue, but they don't necessarily have the funding in order to do so.

*RC: Finally, what would you say it has been the NLA biggest challenge when we talk about the housing crisis and homelessness in London?*

LM: I guess our challenge reflects the challenges of the industry, there's no one solution, so we have to ensure that our programme reflects all the ideas and initiatives that are coming forward, and all the different housing products – there's not just one, there's a whole spectrum to meet the needs of everyone who wants to live in London. So our programme is a reflection of that, we want to bring people in to share what they are doing, the different products and technologies that are, but also demonstrate the problems and the gaps to be filled, it's kind of balancing the positive story with the negative story, I guess.

CS: And I think, as Lucie said before, probably the biggest issue is around that development of housing, affordable housing, for low to middle income earners in the city, and we do have this risk that we deliver housing for the very rich and for the very poor but we miss that group in the middle. That's, I think, the biggest issue to tackle. For us is about how you work with all those different people that need to be involved to tackle it. No one type of sector can solve it, so you need creative architects to come up with ideas, you need local authorities who have land availability, you need developers who have innovative techniques to deliver what we need, you need contractors who can come up with new methods of construction, you need the government... You need all of those people to be involve to solve it, and think about it in different ways. For us is about how you bring all those people all together in one place to really come up with a solution to these issues, when they all got slightly different things that might be pushing in other direction or another.

*RC: So you try to work the city as a whole, to create a compact city but at the same time, work in small sites and different places according to the community that's already there...*

CS: I think that's not necessarily about having one city, it's about thinking much more about the city as we look in our *London's Towns* – London is becoming a city of many centres so you have these amazing town centres that can be, in their own way, sort of compact places. So it's about how do you develop a city around those centres as opposed to just an outward development.

It's only so far that London can expand, so that why so much focus goes around how can you densify the existing town centres that we already have, many of which are quite low density. We have the Green Belt that surrounds the city and we can't develop into that and we can't go out any further so the city can't really sprawl out anymore. When it did move outward it move quite quickly and now it has reached that peak, and it's got to develop within its boundaries. That's why we have to think different about how we densify around station sites, town centres, etc. But London it's a big place, and that's why we have lots of centres!

*RC: That's it, you definitely helped me a lot!*



**Peter Barber Interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2018, interview over the phone made by Rita Carvalho**

Rita Carvalho: *When I was in London last month I started doing my research about the history of social housing in the City, and I realised that this is a problem that has accompanied London since before the nineteenth century. Why do you think that this problem hasn't been solved or at least eased over time?*

Peter Barber: We built lots of social housing after the Second World War and by 1977 half the population in the whole UK lived in social housing and then we had a succession of Housing Acts beginning in the late 70's with Thatcher's Housing Acts which resulted in the incompleteness of social housing. So now there's about 10 or 15 per cent of people who live in social housing. And that's because of a whole reason but not least because of the Right to Buy which Margaret Thatcher brought in, which has completely undermined the whole system. It was a situation that was resolved pretty admirably after the Second World War, after the late 1970's, but it's been reserved in policy since. It's been done by both parties; it's about winning votes instead of creating properties kind of democracy, which sort of favours the government.

RC: *I've done some research about your work, and I saw that you are really interested in talking about social issues like the lack of homeless shelters and lack of social housing. Why do you think that, as an architect in a big city, it is important to pay attention to these problems?*

PB: We got involved in homeless hostels and housing by sort of default really, but I've become sort of fascinated by it in the process. It seems to me it's a really pressing issue as evidenced by the number of people sitting on the pavement with nowhere to live. And if that's not a good focus for an architect than what is, you know? So that's why I'm interested in it.

RC: *You also talk about the idea of densifying the suburbs by creating a "belt" of housing to meet the number of needed homes in London. With my research I'm starting to conclude that small scale projects work better with the existing communities and environments. Even if we talk about dense urbanism, do you think that high-scaled projects make more sense than small-scaled ones? Won't a high scale project damage the character of the site where it is built?*

PB: Yeah, I know what you mean. Because you know it's difficult because I feel very much in two minds about it as well. But we do need to think in a macro way about these issues, we need to take big strategic decisions about how to resolve them. And ultimately this it has to be from government, but then one worries about the impersonal kind of nature of these decisions. I suppose one of the lessons we can learn from the post-war housing, social housing programme, was that clearly that was one which made possible by central government policy and big strategic thinking and opened the way in which a new social housing programme could feel more devolved and more bottom-up and more democratic in a local sense. So I think the idea for the 'ribbon-city' around London is in a way kind of preposterous, but when you actually go the edge London you realise it's not a clear distinction, there's not a clear edge to London. So what one might envision in studio is actually that the Green Belt is more like in little patches, so maybe it would be more patchy in the way that you're describing, and therefore, smaller-scale. And the reality of work in the outer-suburbs is that there are little small sites of 30, 40, 50 units and that's, I suppose, an equally interesting way of densifying the suburbs, by looking at the series of these sites.

RC: *What does affordable housing mean right now in London? Who can afford affordable housing? What's the difference to social housing?*

PB: Like you I find it very confusing and the various different names given to it. Usually there's some kind, not always consistent, discounted rent, very often which leaves the housing beyond the reach of people in average salary. I've done all these projects for shared ownership and that sort of thing and I think that is probably good that there are a variety of programmes available for people in different groups. But I don't think there can't really be any substitute for proper social housing, proper discounted, that people can afford, rent in central London. In the end I sort of feel that probably for the problems that need to be solved, there needs to be a programme run by central government with direct taxation, and that sort muddy, poorly defined, relationship between by private sector and social housing provision... it needs to be provided by government, in the end, and treated as an essential infrastructure. They're happy to fund railway lines and other programmes, and I think proper housing should be brought up in the same way.

RC: *Do you think that homelessness in London is a problem often ignored when people talk about the housing crisis?*

PB: I did a talk recently, they asked me to talk about our work in homeless provision and I said I'll be happy to be there it but I wish I wasn't there. Because in a way I wish there weren't any homeless hostels. It's not just an emergency accommodation, they provide for people in a lot of trouble, and they put everybody together, whether you're just somebody who hasn't been able to keep your rent up, or somebody with mental health problems or substance abuse, and very often those people are left there and they're kind of stuck living in hostels which often just aren't suitable. They find it for short-time, for emergency, but they spend a lifetime in it, it's their only room, perhaps, with or without your own bathroom and things like that. It's inhumane, London is a very bulky city, when shouldn't be kept institutionalised in that way. We should be thinking about providing different sorts of accommodation to suit the differences. There are people who struggle to live independently and they need the support of a kind of hostel hope situation, but with proper accommodation rather than hostel accommodation. And there're others who can be helped to get out of the hostel system and back into proper accommodation, and for them that's just normal social housing. And I think that for a small number of hostels, for a very very temporary accommodation, that we should be building social housing for those people and supporting housing for the remain there.

RC: *In your projects, I can see that you've done many work to provide homes for homeless people. How do these kinds of projects come to you? Is it the government, local authorities or associations that call for the need to build these kind of accommodations?*

PB: Lots of our work has been done in London borough Camden. Camden, the borough itself work in Camden with a number of charities, most notably St. Mungo's – they're one of the really big homeless housing providers in London. And we started working with St. Mungo's and it's all these things, you start working in and make a good job and so people come back to you for more. And that's been nice because we have been able over the years to develop ideas about a certain combination of how these people can be made less institutional, more humane. It started in Camden with a programme by central government, now no longer actually, but with the previous Labour administration, a project called 'Places for change', or 'Places of change', I can't remember which. It's a really interesting programme which said 'yes, we need to be putting roofs over people's heads,



we need to be working with them to develop skills for looking after themselves, proving them that they can overcome problems of health, mental health and dealing with any substance issues. And so it was a broad programme that tried to help people out of the cycle of hostel living and back into an independent living. That produces quite a lot of work, it was funding that came from central government for projects like that, and a lot of what we've been involved in has been funded by that. Not all boroughs in London take their responsibility seriously in that regard, but Camden is one of the ones that really does. But there are others that have virtually no provision for homeless people, which is strange.

RC: *We come back to the fact that it's almost ignored...*

PB: Yeah, in some places, in other places, let's say Camden, they have a really strong commitment and they'll be the first to admit that it's not enough. The problem is, for people like Camden that take it seriously, it gets help available, so it attracts people that have those needs and it becomes a bigger issue as a result.

RC: *In almost all of your projects I've seen, like Holmes Road Studios, Mount Pleasant or Endell Street, you create much more than just a dormitory. You always have a space, a small square or courtyard that promote social relations. In Holmes Road you even have a description of how people can appropriate the space. How important do you think it is to create not only a space to sleep/ a shelter, but somewhere where they can really foster new relations and build a new life?*

PB: You're right to highlight that, it really matters very much. It was a starter point for all of those projects and I suppose that was driven by, you know, when one visits kind of a lot of hostels, the circulation is around a labyrinth of corridors; and we all know that a corridor without daylight is kind of winding, confusing, it kind of does your head in a bit; and people very often live in these places and have big challenges in their life and that environment has a massive impact, I suppose in all of us, but perhaps if you got lots of other problems it's even more pronounced that that environment can impact on how you feel about yourself or other, people who are also staying there but also about the institution, maybe, the society that puts you there. And so, the other thing is that people who work in these places are living with quite a lot of stress and difficulty. It did seem to me that to start with a kind of circulation system which made it more like people would feel able to socialise and perhaps, give them the courage to get out of the isolation of their own rooms. And the other thing we understand from people who work in these places is that many of the people who live there aren't very interested in sort of keeping their appointments and things like that or talk about their housing or the more informal weather and how they feel; and making a courtyard space and that sort of thing makes it more possible to unplanned encounters between clients and staff. And so that an idea developed over various projects but, as you said, has come to a very developed form in the Holmes Road Project where its design work in Camden with a programme of people 'courty-culture', where people are encouraged to come out of their rooms and work in a garden. And that's an idea which came from us but was very well received but our clients, who in that case were the London Borough of Camden.

RC: *What has been the response of the homeless that have moved to these hostels? Are these hostels led by associations? Do you know what is the process of entering back to society of the people that live there (how can they start living there, do they get jobs, is like a transition home)? Do you keep on touch with how the hostels work?*

PB: Well I had a really nice visit to Mount Pleasant, the other night. I was taking some people around who wanted to write about it and we met more staff, to

be fair, then residents. But the staff were very sweet and very positive about it. I've you wanted to go and visit Mount Pleasant that would be another option for you because it's very much finished. It's very strange, because we have this architectural way of talking about things, doesn't we(?), that doesn't necessarily take down on how other people see things... but it was very good to be there amongst people who work in that hostel who were describing it exactly the terms I just described it to you, with the possibilities and the things that were made possible by this courtyard. That's how they talked about it, which surprised me, and I was pleased about it.

RC: *Who runs/manages these hostels?*

PB: Sometimes it's charities, sometimes it's the boroughs...

RC: *Do you keep in touch with the hostels?*

PB: Yeah it's really nice to go back, with the trees and the courtyard getting more mature.

RC: *And probably to see people living there and how they use and appropriate the space...*

PB: Yeah, I mean, there weren't many people in there in that particular time... there was one or two people passing through, the staff was saying 'hi' to them... but they have barbecues in there from time to time...

RC: *What are your main concerns when you start working in a project to provide homes for someone who doesn't have a home already? How can these projects bring something new?*

PB: I think lots of hostels are not really designed and they just became hostels. So, with very little thought, when we give in a hostels a project we have an opportunity to think of things so the most basic level is to giving a dignified small kind of people's space, which is their own, have their own bedroom with an ensuite. Many hostels still have dormitory accommodation and shared. So that's the accommodation itself, generally can only manage 10 or 12 square meters, because that's what the funding allows. Then we have to think about on how you get to that room, so you're coming from the reception area through very often, in our case, a courtyard, encouraging people to know each other and know the staff and things like that. And the other thing kind of important is how you arrive at the hostel and this is very often where the office is, where the staff are, and traditionally, in hostels, were arrived at through what they call an airlock which is a security system, and that was about security and staff protecting themselves, but presented kind of a very menacing form of arrival. And so, we wanted to have a much more welcome space, much more like an hotel reception area, where people can talk through their issues and feel a good relation with the institution. So, those things I suppose, a good room, a smart circulation system and a good point of arrival. And the other thing was addition pieces of programme so very often there's a medical room, classrooms, trading kitchen where they can talk about eating health and things like that.

**Vincent Walsh Interview, URBAN R+D/KehoeWalsh Architects, (sent by email on June 8th and received on June 13th)**

Rita Carvalho: *What do you think it's the main cause of the housing problem in London?*

Vincent Walsh: There are many many issues combining to create the "Housing Crisis", and many more solutions attempting to resolve the issues, but the unfortunate reality is that it all comes back to one fundamental force: Money.

On a very basic level, there is a shortage of private homes in London, with the properties that exist increasing in value at a greater rate than the earnings of those living and working in the capital, pricing most out of the market. The major private landowners want prices to keep rising and many of these are in positions of power, with the ability to influence regulatory bodies in a flawed system of governance.

When it comes to large-scale development of Publicly-owned land, generally controlled by individual Local Authorities such as Hackney Council (London Borough of Hackney), lack of departmental resources has allowed the largest property developers (entirely money-driven) to dominate the new-build sector, often delivering fewer properties for social needs than would have been forsaken to free up land for new developments. This feeds into the property price-hike scenario similar to that of the private sector. Again, it's the lack of resourcing and experience of Councils to adequately regulate development (Planning departments are increasingly over-worked and under-qualified) that has allowed this to happen.

It is the same lack of Council resources that restricts small-to-medium scale developers from access to development opportunities on public land. (This is the range of development opportunities we have mostly captured in our field analysis.)

RC: *In your opinion, how can planning and place-making help to fight the housing crisis?*

VW: Planning: Regulation of development is key to policing everything from the safety of developments to the quality of our built environment. As I mentioned above, the lack of resources and experience within planning departments has allowed sub-standard developments across London and in every part of the country for years, with a system that is historically extremely susceptible to corruption.

Quality Control: Often, when large amounts of housing is built in short periods of time, one of the main issues is a drop in quality. The planning process will be essential acting as quality control for the new developments. Knowing that the Local Authorities are under-resourced, place makers will be required to bolster knowledge and experience within Planning departments. There is a move towards installing Architects in positions outside of the traditional role of an architect to help improve those areas currently under-resourced and under-experienced: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2017/nov/09/architecture-housing-design-urban-planning-local-government>  
<http://publicpractice.org.uk/>

Place-making: Place-making is the design of the interaction between the cityscape and its inhabitants. It is up to the place-makers to create and fix any of the problems within the built environment, of which the housing crisis is but one.

In a similar vein to above, Architecture needs to re-assume control of certain aspects of the industry that it has lost over the past few decades. Our initiative would hope to be contributing to this movement by assuming a Strategic role for Architecture in the sourcing of worthwhile development opportunities in an effort to stimulate development where it's most needed and in a way that is most appropriate.

RC: *Lucie mentioned your work on small sites. What is exactly a small site?*

VW: The GLA (Greater London Authority) refers to a small site as anything below 2,000m<sup>2</sup>.

In the private sector, development opportunities that can fit less than 16-20 units on the site are generally regarded as small sites.

In our work, Small sites are 40-200m<sup>2</sup>, Medium sites are 200-800m<sup>2</sup>, Large sites are 800-2,000m<sup>2</sup>, and X-Large sites are +2,000m<sup>2</sup>.

So – our Small, Medium and Large development opportunities fall into the GLA definition of “Small Sites”, with the Private Sector definition being very situation-specific.

RC: *How are small sites identified? What makes them opportunity areas to housing and urban planning?*

VW: As far as we are aware, we are the only organisation that actively identifies and maps small sites. Our process is a manual field study, where we cycle up and down every street in a Borough finding development opportunities and logging them in our database. On slide 03 of our published field study we detail what is and isn't regarded as an opportunity. <https://www.urbanrandd.com/> every instance is different. Sometimes we need to make a judgement-call about whether a space is a worthwhile development opportunity and what it may be suitable for. Housing is the most in-demand development typology and the easiest to quantify in our data so most spaces get attributed to housing. We have, however, taken great care to highlight instances of underutilised and dilapidated amenities on public land that we would only ever suggest remain as amenities.

RC: *Do small sites allow to create denser urban areas?*

VW: Small sites do allow you to create denser urban areas, however, the primary concern would be the appropriateness of the infill development opportunities and the impact on the existing urban fabric. We speak a lot about the built Environment as the interaction between the cityscape and its inhabitants – we bring this same rhetoric into our search for worthwhile development opportunities, only identifying those that could, should, or will be developed in a reasonably appropriate manner.

RC: *Why are small sites so important in the planning of new housing schemes? Are these interventions public or private?*

VW: The knowledge that there are a significant quantity of opportunities within the existing urban fabric for additional developments is essential for planning policy and strategic development. Decisions are made by Local Authorities based on the information available at the time. If there is thought to be no free space for new developments, Local Authorities often decide to demolish existing buildings to make way for new developments that are advertised as more dense and providing additional homes of a better quality than the existing. This is often not the case.

RC: *When you work on small sites, what is your main concern – is it the integration of the community, the continuity of space with the surrounding areas...?*

VW: Again, we deal with this quite a lot in our published work <https://www.urbanrandd.com/>

We see ourselves as “pre-architecture Architects” - all of the same considerations are given to opportunity as we would eventual design. We are careful not to propose solutions, however, as that is the job of the eventual Architect. Much of the time the development opportunities we find, especially those that fall into

the small-site category, are compromised or complicated in some fashion, and would require a definitive strategy to unlock that would limit the scope of design solutions possible.

Context is of the utmost importance in our study. We work with the existing urban fabric, and as such, nearly all of our identified development opportunities would suit design solutions that fit neatly into the available space in a contextually appropriate way.

As we understand the built environment as the interaction between buildings and the city's inhabitants, we approach our search and judging criteria from eye-level and at a human scale. This way, the movement of people in and around the site can be considered from the outset.

*RC: Do small sites housing plans incorporate affordable housing/social housing?*

VW: Not always, but they can. In section 04.2 of our published study <https://www.urbanrandd.com/> we explore how Hackney Council would be able to develop 3 underutilised small sites together to provide 50% social/affordable housing alongside 50% market sale homes and turn a significant profit for reinvestment.

There is a regulatory requirement for private developments over 14 units to provide a percentage of social/affordable homes within the scheme. It is not so easy with small/medium-scale developments on privately-owned land as the capital investment in acquiring the land before cost of construction makes it difficult to factor in social/affordable housing and still turn the profit required to make the scheme worthwhile. On schemes of less than 14 units there is no requirement or financial allowance for social/affordable housing provision.



*"I can't understand why people are frightened of new ideas.*

*I'm frightened of the old ones."*

- John Cage