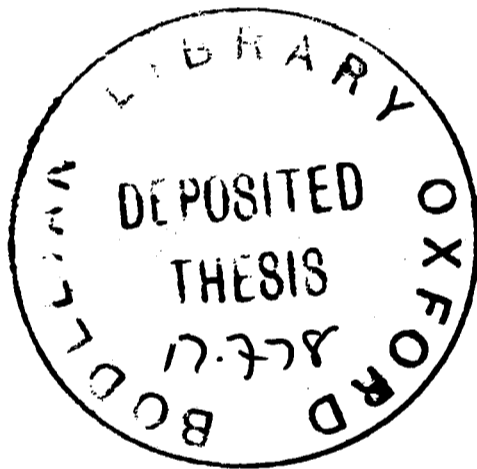# THE POLITICS OF HIGH RISE HOUSING IN BRITAIN: LOCAL COMMUNITIES TACKLE MASS HOUSING

by

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ABSTRACT

This research analyses an area of public housing construction policy in Britain, the building of high rise flats (defined as those in blocks of five or more storeys).

The national political process on the issue involved central government subsidy policy (which encouraged local authorities to build high until 1967), and the influence of the design professions, the construction industry and the national local government system on trends in high flat construction. The policy was largely confined to inner urban areas, where the operation of the 1947 planning system within an anachronistic local government structure forced local authorities to try to meet their housing needs in situ. High rise became characterized as a 'technological shortcut to social change' by production interests, and pursued despite its relative unpopularity and considerably greater costs. A weak structure of Ministry cost controls combined with the provision of strong subsidy incentives (both premissed upon inaccurate expectations of local authorities' response), resulted in considerable over-building of high rise and a major change in the balance of public housing construction policy. Contractual pressure on local authorities and central government by large national construction firms can be seen as the basic dynamic of the high rise housing boom.

The local level political process on high rise is examined in case studies of three widely differing areas - Newham, Birmingham and Bristol. The development of housing construction policies in these areas was essentially similar, and largely explicable in terms of non-local, structural influences. Explanations of policy change in terms of the system of actors in each locality proved inadequate, despite the importance of some distinctive local factors.

Theoretically the study offers little support to pluralist or elite approaches. 'New Pluralist' theory emerges as descriptively accurate but normatively optimistic, and the neo-Marxist critique is found to have relevance at points.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This is a study of a single political issue in contemporary Britain. It is first and foremost a piece of empirical research, seeking to analyse and understand the complex influences and processes which lay behind a particular series of policy outcomes. Policy studies of this kind are relatively rare in British political science, largely because of the extent of governmental secrecy in this country. That I was able to carry out this research at all is due primarily to the help and co-operation of those people in central and local government who provided information, granted me access to statistics and documentary evidence, or gave up some of their time to be interviewed. To all of them I am very grateful, particularly to a small number of current and former civil servants interviewed who, at their request, are not thanked by name in the relevant Chapters below.

The debts accumulated to people in academic life who have advised or helped me are also numerous. Peter Malpass, Chris Pickvance, architectural staff at Oxford Polytechnic (especially Roland Newman), Bill Connolly, and Betty Gittus provided invaluable guidance in strange territory. I was particularly lucky to be able to undertake this research at Nuffield College, and without the help of a number of colleagues in other disciplines, including Aubrey Silberston, Steve Nyman, Clyde Mitchell, Arthur Francis, Clive Payne, and others, this study would have been a good deal poorer and less accurate. In political science David Butler and Neville Johnson advised me on aspects of British politics and the Nuffield politics group provided a wide variety of intellectual stimuli. Jim Sharpe and Ken Newton especially helped me define my ideas on urban politics, and Jim Sharpe during and after his spell as my college supervisor commented extensively on several drafts of the thesis. Sir Norman Chester has been my university supervisor throughout and to him I owe my greatest debt for keeping the research on the rails by his tolerance and

criticism, for helping me gain access and for pushing me on where otherwise I might have faltered.

Lastly I would like to thank my wife Sheila, who has lived with this project for four years and been a constant source of encouragement and guidance at every stage.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

(Where an abbreviation is used only in particular circumstances the location is given)

BEP   Bristol Evening Post (Chapter 9, references only)
BG   Birmingham Gazette   (Chapter 8, references only)
BHCM   Bristol Housing Committee, Minutes (Chapter 9 references only)
BM   Birmingham Mail   (Chapter 8, references only)
BP   Birmingham Post   (Chapter 8, references only)
BRS/BRE   Building Research Station/Building Research Establishment
b.s.p.a.   bed-spaces per acre
CES   Centre for Environmental Studies (references)
CHAC   Central Housing Advisory Committee
C.I.P.F.   Chartered Institute of Public Finance.
CRAC   Construction Research Advisory Committee
DOE   Department of the Environment
DSIR   Department of Scientific and Industrial Research
DTI   Department of Trade and Industry (references)
ED   Evening Despatch   (Chapter 8, references only)
EDC   Economic Development Committee
EHM   East Ham Council, Minutes (Chapter 7, references only)
HBC   House Building Committee (Chapter 8)
HBCM   House Building Committee, Minutes (Chapter 8, references only)
HC   Housing Committee (Chapters 7, 8 and 9)
HC   Housing Committee meeting (Chapter 7 references only)
HCM   Housing Committee, Minutes (Chapter 8, references only)
HMC   Housing Management Committee (Chapter 8)
HMCM   Housing Management Committee, Minutes (Chapter 8, reference only)
HPR   Housing and Planning Review (references)
h.r.a.   habitable rooms per acre
IMTA   Institute of Municipal Treasurers and Accountants (references)
LBNM   London Borough of Newham, Minutes (Chapter 7, references only)
MHLG   Ministry of Housing and Local Government
Mintech   Ministry of Technology
MJ   Municipal Journal (references)
MPBW   Ministry of Public Buildings and Works
NBA   National Building Agency
NCC   National Consultative Council for the Building and Civil Engineering Industries
NEDC   National Economic Development Council
NFBTE   National Federation of Building Trades Employers
NR   Newham Recorder (Chapter 7, references only)
NRD   net residential density
p.p.a.   persons per acre
RIBA   Royal Institute of British Architects
RICS   Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors
TCPA   Town and Country Planning Association
TPHC   Town Planning and Housing Committee (Chapter 7)
TPI   Town Planning Institute
WHM   West Ham Council, Minutes (Chapter 7, references only)
WDP   Western Daily Press (Chapter 9, references only)

Addendum:

A.M.C   Association of Municipal Corporations
CCA   Cement and Concrete Association
C.P.O   compulsory purchase order
PWC   Public Works Committee   (Chapter 8)
QUAGO   quasi governmental body
QUANGO   quasi non-governmental body

INTRODUCTION

In the last twenty-five years the inner residential areas of British cities have been transformed by the public housing drive. Largely due to slum clearance and redevelopment levels of housing unfitness have fallen sharply and access to basic housing facilities has improved out of all recognition.[1]

But this process has not just been one of an equalization in housing standards. State intervention has also created some new forms of differentiation and inequality in housing. In particular it has in many areas destroyed 'a landscape of small houses' and the community life which went along with it,[2] and replaced it with 'mass housing' - large flatted estates of uniform housing quite distinct in form from the kinds of housing provided by market mechanisms.[3]

The scale of this kind of change is often underestimated. Contrary to the implicit assumptions of most of the sociological literature on slum clearance, probably a majority of the three million people displaced by redevelopment between 1955 and 1975 did not move out to houses in the suburbs but were rehoused on mass housing estates in inner and core city areas.[4] Over this period nearly 440,000 high rise flats were built, with around nine-tenths of this total in inner urban areas. The DOE observes that 'many if not most residents' in high rise flats moved there from slum accommodation.[5] The high flat population must account for a large proportion of the families rehoused by clearance, and of course thousands more have been rehoused in low rise developments on high density estates.[6]

For the households involved mass housing has provided a major improvement in their levels of housing amenity. But it has nonetheless represented a decline in the standard of provision made by public authorities. Council housing between the wars and in the 1940s concentrated on building suburban estates of cottage houses with gardens, some of which were located in pleasant settings and were built at generous internal and external space standards. Flat building started in the 1930s but was quite widely opposed particularly by the Labour

Party in Parliament and on some Councils.[7] Yet after 1950 accommodation which would previously have been rejected as offering unacceptable improvements in housing amenity came to be seen instead as inevitable and unexceptional. In the period before 1970 densities persistently increased; storey heights rose very fast, even for family accommodation; design, construction and ultimately safety standards were pared down (despite the raising of standards for internal dwelling facilities in the 1960s); community facilities and open space provision were sacrificed to demands for economy in state programmes; and considerable and growing evidence of tenant resistance to mass housing was ignored.

Overall families rehoused by urban authorities in the 1950s and '60s probably received worse forms of accommodation than those rehoused in some earlier periods, despite improvements in design standards, heating and domestic equipment. The sharp alteration in the type of housing provided by public authorities coincided with a more gradual decline in the amenity of private housing developments at the lower end of the suburban market. But as Hall points out, both these trends took place in a period of rising standards of living in most other areas of social life.[8]

The post-war predominance of mass housing in the conurbations' and major cities' public housing drive has occasioned much of the criticism of state intervention, physical planning and local authority activity of the past decade. At best many commentators have seen the redevelopment of inner urban areas as producing only limited and partial gains, at worst as a disastrous failure.[9] The popularity of public housing programmes has been increasingly called into question as disillusionment with the bureaucratized and austere forms of housing provided has set in. Since 1969 both major political parties have shown decreasing enthusiasm for new council building, and have turned to rehabilitation programmes to find a way out of the unpopular and costly solutions of mass housing policies.[10]

This research seeks to analyse the political process involved in the

changing character of public housing construction policy up to the 1970s; to understand why public authorities have produced distinctive forms of housing apparently at odds with majority preferences; and to explain the reasons for the widening gap between ideal and reality in post-war Council housing. These questions fall outside some conventional approaches to the study of politics. Although our focus is very firmly on changes in government and local authority policies, the decision and influence processes with which we are concerned are quite diffuse and 'unpolitical' in character. They produced no great clash of political leaders or parties, little overt interest or pressure group activity and at the time relatively little public debate or controversy. Yet the questions we have posed relate directly to Lasswell's famous formulation of the concerns of political science: 'Who gets what, when and how?' And our analysis pushes beyond this to ask 'What, if anything, determines who gets what, when and how?'

Clearly a single empirical study cannot adequately encompass all the changes in public housing construction policy in post-war Britain. Nor is there any existing political science literature on this or most related areas. Accordingly this research has focused on only a part of these changes, but one which has considerable strategic importance in the inner urban public housing drive over the years 1955 to 1970. This is the policy of building high rise housing, which may be defined as that provided in blocks of five or more storeys. We have already noted the importance of high rise in relation to the scale of rehousing in this period, and in terms of other indices the policy is an important one, involving the expenditure of £1,000 to £1,500 million and affecting the lives of perhaps one and a half million people.[11] High flat building was the most extreme and conspicuous form of mass housing provision in this period, and has since become one of the most widely proclaimed (if unstudied) 'failures' of public policy in this field.[12] The post hoc debate has helped to clarify the costs and benefits involved in high rise housing policy to a greater extent than for mass housing as a whole, and to produce much more information

about the pressures and options which may have been involved in it. But in our view the logic and resolution of these arguments - about densities, design philosophies, costs, tenants' reactions, professional roles, public authority decision making, etc. - are much the same for other forms of mass housing provision.

Because of the strategic qualities of the high rise housing issue, therefore, the implications of our findings should spread quite widely across the whole range of mass housing policies. And because of the issue's 'objective importance' in Dahl and Polsby's terms,[13] it may constitute a useful basis from which to assess some broader theoretical arguments about the operation of the British state in the field of social policies. (A full explanation of these points is given in Chapters Three and Five below.)

THE STRUCTURE OF THE ANALYSIS

The analysis of housing construction policies poses some problems for the political scientist because of the need for a dual focus on both national and local policymaking. Despite the extent of 'non-executive' central government in Britain,[14] relatively few studies have successfully spanned these different institutional levels because the methodologies appropriate to each and the kind of evidence they produce vary quite markedly. Accordingly most research has tended to focus on the distinctive aspect of decision-making at each level and to leave the interactions between them unanalysed or covered by only the briefest of sketches. We have chosen instead to attempt an integrated analysis in which full attention is given to the role of local authorities in national policy formation, and to the role of national pressures and central government policy in influencing local decision making. Our analysis is, however, divided into two Parts, reflecting the different methodological approaches used. Part 1 looks at the national political process on high rise, using some fairly extensive statistical analysis to characterise the overall trends in local authority decision making. Part II analyses this directly by means of case studies of particular areas.

Part I begins with a brief chapter establishing the general context of control and influence on public housing construction policies at the national level, an area which is almost uncharted in the existing housing literature but which is essential to our later analysis. The organizations and actors involved in national policy and some areas of their interaction are described in the first two sections, and the third provides a summary of the existing literature on the role of public housing 'clients' in decisions affecting them.

Chapter Two then presents a statistical picture of the development of high rise building and the influence of changes in central government subsidies on local authorities. An analysis of the distribution of high rise stocks shows that the policy was largely confined to inner urban areas.

Chapter Three is concerned with the dimensions of the high rise issue, its benefits and costs, the arguments used to advocate or criticize it, its distributive implications for the organizations and social groups with a stake in the issue, and its inter-connections with other issues and policies.

Within this framework, Chapter Four examines the influences actually brought to bear in shaping central government policy and national trends in high rise building. The activity of the design professions, the construction industry and a number of pressure groups is analysed. Media and Parliamentary consideration of the issue is reviewed. Trends and influences in the national local government system are discussed. And finally an attempt is made to penetrate at least some way into the decision process within central government.

To conclude Part I, Chapter Five compares some general conclusions about the national political process on the high rise issue with the accounts of policy making in advanced industrial societies suggested by four major theoretical approaches in contemporary political science.

Part II begins with a very brief chapter discussing some of the theoretical and methodological problems of urban political research, and the solutions adopted in our analysis.

Three detailed case studies are then presented in Chapters Seven (Newham),

Eight (Birmingham) and Nine (Bristol). In each of these a preliminary sketch is given of the urban and political backgrounds of the local authority. This is followed by a narrative account of the development of local policy on high rise over the post-war period.

Chapter Ten brings together and reviews the findings of the case studies in relation to some of the major theoretical approaches to urban politics, most of which are variants of those discussed in Chapter Five. The analysis focuses particularly on the comparative performance of actor orientated and structural accounts of local decision making.

REFERENCES : INTRODUCTION

1. See the progress charted in Department of the Environment, Housing Policy: a Consultative Document (London, HMSO, 1977), Cmnd. 6851, Ch. 3.

2. I take this phrase from S.M. Gaskell, 'A Landscape of Small Houses: the failure of workers' flats in Lancashire and Yorkshire in the nineteenth century', Ch. 4 in A. Sutcliffe (ed.), Multi Storey Living: the British Working Class Experience (London, Croom Helm, 1974).

3. The concept of mass housing employed here is that defined by N. Habrakan Supports: An Alternative to Mass Housing (London, Architectural Press, 1971). See also N. Dennis, 'Mass Housing and the Reformer's Myth', Planning Outlook, 6 [New Series] (1969). For a different usage see M. Pawley, Architecture versus Housing (New York, Praeger, 1971).

4. The strength of this assumption can best be gleaned from B.J. Parker, 'Sociological Implications of Slum Clearance' in D.V. Donnison and D. Eversley, (eds.) London: Urban Patterns, Problems and Policies (London, Heinemann, 1973).

5. R.Adams and J. Conway, The Social Effects of Living Off the Ground (London, Department of the Environment, 1975) D.O.E. Information Paper No. 9, p. 2.

6. The only extensive discussion of low rise flats as a component of urban authorities' housing stocks is by E. Gittus, Flats, Families and the Under Fives (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976), Ch. 8 and Appendices B and C.

7. See Pawley, Architecture versus Housing, Ch. 2 ; and A. Ravetz, 'From Working Class Tenement to Modern Flat: local authorities and multi-storey housing between the wars', in Sutcliffe (ed.), Multi Storey Living. Acceptance of flat building did increase in the inter-war period, particularly in the 1930s.

8. P. Hall, 'Policy Alternatives - Past and Future' in P. Hall, H. Gracey, R. Drewett and R. Thomas, The Containment of Urban England (London, Political and Economic Planning/Allen and Unwin, 1973), pp. 426-33. For improvements in internal dwelling amenity see V.A. Kahn, Housing Standards and Costs (Birmingham, Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, 1973), Occasional Paper No. 25, Chs. 1, 2.

9. See for the former view, L. Hellmann, 'Housing and Participation', Built Environment, 2 (1976), 328-32; and for the latter view C. Booker, 'Physical Planning: Another Illusion Shattered', National Westminster Bank Quarterly Review, February 1977.

10. See D.O.E., Housing Policy: a Consultative Document, for the present Labour government's minimalist conception of the role of public housing.

11. See below, sections 3.6 and 3.7 respectively.

12. There are two previous studies of high rise housing in Britain: E.W. Cooney, 'High Flats in Local Authority Housing in England and Wales since 1945', in Sutcliffe (ed.), Multi Storey Living; and R.McCutcheon, 'Technical Change and Social Need: The Case of High Flats', Research Policy, 4 (1975), 262-89. Both these are short articles.

13. See R.A. Dahl, 'A Critique of the Ruling Elite Model', American Political Science Review, 52 (1958), 466-9; and N. Polsby, Community Power and Political Theory (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1963), pp. 112-16, on the selection of key issues, and R.A. Dahl, Who Governs? (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1961), pp. 64-5. 'Objective importance' can on this view be measured in terms of the costs of a policy, or the number of people affected. But 'issues' are predefined as locii of political controversy, a usage which is not appropriate to high rise: see the discussion of pluralist analysis in Chapter 5 below.

14. On which see L.J. Sharpe, 'Whitehall, Structure and People', Ch. 9 in D. Kavanagh and R. Rose (eds.), New Trends in British Politics (London, Sage, 1977).

P A R T   O N E

THE POLITICS OF HIGH RISE HOUSING IN BRITAIN

CHAPTER ONE

Political Power and Control in Housing Construction Policy

There is an extensive literature covering most aspects of the politics

and administration of public housing, with one major exception: the

production of public housing outputs and the setting of housing construction

policy.   It is this gap which this brief chapter tries to cover, firstly by

surveying the organizations and groups constituting the 'public housing

apparatus', which determine national housing construction policy;   secondly

by charting the interaction of these groups in some key areas;   and thirdly

by looking briefly at the obverse side of this pattern of political control,

the non-involvement of 'clients' in the setting of housing construction policy.

1.1 : The Public Housing Apparatus[1]

Essentially the public housing apparatus consists of three sets of

organizations, central government, the design professions and the construction

industry.

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT.

The organization of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, the

central department concerned with housing policy for most of the post-war

period has been well described elsewhere.[2]   The Ministry's extensive influence

over public housing construction policy derived from housing legislation,

the setting of subsidy scales, the programing of local authority building via

a system of annual allocations, the exercise of cost controls over schemes

in the course of granting or denying loan sanction approval, and the specifica-

tion of design standards or desiderata.[3]   The degree of involvement of

Ministers decreased rapidly from the first to the latter means of influence;

similarly decision-making by administrative class civil servants gave way to

the influence of professional staffs.[4]   Cost controls provided a means by

which the Ministry architects were able to exert considerable influence on

local authority architects departments, particularly during the periods when controls were operated by regional staffs before 1954 and after 1962-4. This influence was concentrated on high rise contracts, since loan sanction approval for ordinary low/rise schemes could be dealt with by executive officers using routine cost yardstick procedures.[5] Design advice, crystallized in a number of influential circulars and manuals, was also almost entirely a professional function.[6] Under the normal pre-Fulton arrangements, the professional staffs were organized in separate hierarchies under a Chief Architect and Chief Planner, each of whom had direct access to the Minister if need be.[7]

The organization of the Housing Division was not good for much of the post-war period. Between 1954 and 1964, a crucial period for high rise policy, the MHLG Permanent Secretary, Dame Evelyn Sharp, 'ran the whole thing on a shoestring'.[8] Staffing levels were static throughout the decade and housing was run by a single division comprising an Under Secretary, five Assistant Secretaries and assorted Principals. They worked directly under the Minister a lot of the time, since Dame Sharp's main interest was in planning. In 1961 a Deputy Secretary was appointed with responsibility for housing amongst other things, but he apparently 'never did a damn thing'.[9] The Housing Division was very much understaffed. Between 1956 and 1963, a period of eight years, there were six major pieces of housing legislation.

Each of the five Assistant Secretaries had two kinds of workload, functional and territorial. The territorial workload consisted of looking after the regional loan sanction work allocated to him. The functional work-load consisted of responsibility for a particular aspect of policy. Thus one Assistant Secretary was needed to look after rents policy, one for subsidies, one for the public housing program, one for private housebuilding etc. Some work was completely devolved to separate sections of executive officers, mainly the approval of slum clearance orders, which were dealt with on an intensively routinized basis.[10] When legislation had to be drawn up an enormous temporary pressure built up on the Assistant Secretary concerned. Some of his territorial workload would be transferred to his colleagues and the remainder

thrust onto his principal while he worked on the legislation, often for a period of up to six months until it was safely through Parliament. The burden of consulting with interested bodies, deciding on a policy, clearing it through the departmental hierarchy, briefing Parliamentary Council and carrying it through Parliament fell completely on two men, the Under Secretary and the Assistant Secretary concerned. This was the situation on some of the most controversial legislation of this period, notably the 1957 Rent Act and the anti-Rachman legislation.[11] On top of this political intervention by Ministers was at times heavy handed, particularly on the 1957 Act which was initially drafted to include derequisitioning of property within six months against the strong opposition of the Housing Division and later altered to eighteen months after massive protests from local authorities. Under Macmillan interventions by 10 Downing Street were common. On the 1961 Act, one informant recalled that the Division was told in June that legislation would be needed by November.[12]

Attempts to alter this situation were made. In 1956 the Under-Secretary in charge asked for a second Housing Division, but it was not until 1964 (when this official became head of the Establishments Division) that this change was made.[13] Until 1963 there were no statisticians employed on housing figures, and no housing economists were employed until the late 1960s.[14] The defects of this system were exaggerated by the regular movement of administrators (but not professional staff) from job to job and to other Ministries.[15]

The weakness of administrative control of housing generally, and the bifurcation of administrative and professional responsibilities, meant that very considerable influence over housing construction policy rested with the professional staffs, especially architects.

For most of the post-war period, the department with responsibilities in relation to the construction industry was the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works.[16] During the 1950s the department played a background role, confined to influencing central government contracts and operating an extensive consultative machinery. - In the 1960s it adopted a markedly promotional role,

particularly over industrialized building.[17] The most important officials were probably the Chief Architect and Director of Contracts.[18]

THE DESIGN PROFESSIONS

Architects and planners are both organized as professions and display most of the characteristics on which trait theories of professionalism focus.[19] This is particularly the case with architecture, which has a long history as a gentlemanly profession and private practice, neither of which is true of planning.[20] Private architects have dominated the Council of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) throughout the post-war period despite the rapid growth of state mediation of professional services.[21] The problems of architectural practice in public offices have received surprisingly little attention, although Malpass' work has brought out the importance of public architects' dual professional/bureaucratic orientation for the kind of housing produced by local authorities.[22] Private architects have generally had higher status within the profession and higher salaries than public authority architects, and even in planning this configuration of rewards has been increasingly important, despite the much smaller scale of the private sector.[23]

Until the 1974 reorganization of local government, planning for much of the post-war period in many urban areas of the country was not organized in a separate department in local authorities.[24] Instead it was often carried out under the Chief Architect or Engineer, and the interpenetration of architecture and planning was thus considerable. The influence of planning departments or the planning function on public housing varied sharply, from the dominant position described by Malpass in Newcastle to the subordinate role discovered by Muchnich in Liverpool.[25] Overall architects had the major influence on detailed planning and layouts in most areas.

ARCHITECTS AND PUBLIC HOUSING

It is not commonly appreciated that the professional control of public

housing outputs has by no means been confined to public authority architects

for most of the post-war period. Housing authorities were quite slow to

recruit their own architectural staffs, or to organize them under a Chief

Architect, (Table 1.1).[26]   As Layton observed in 1961:

> Many authorities considered the use of architects
> for dwellings for the working class a quite
> unnecessary expense and have continued to do so
> until very recently. [27]

Table 1.1: Housing Authorities employing a Chief Architect.

Authority Type	1937 %	1957 %	1968 %
County Boroughs	16.9	56.6	73.5
Municipal Boroughs	0.3	4.4	13.1
Urban Districts	0.2	0.7	5.2
Rural Districts	0.2	0.4	7.9
Metropolitan Boroughs	-	17.9	N.A
London Boroughs	N.A	N.A	96.9
All Housing Authorities	4.0	8.6	17.4

Although large staffs were built up earlier in major urban areas, the

construction boom of the early 1960s strained their resources to full stretch.[28]

Over the period 1964-73 less than 60% of public housing was in fact

designed by local authority architects, despite the increase after 1969 when

demand pressure eased off, (Table 1.2).[29]   In 1966-7 barely half of all

public housing was designed by public authority architects, while private

architects designed 30% and architects employed by contractors the remaining

fifth.[30]

Table 1.2: Architects employed on Local Authority Housing, 1964-73.

Architect for Layout	SCHEMES (1966-73)		DWELLINGS (1964-73)	
	Number	%	Number	%
Architect for Layout				
Local Authority	10,393	60.6	756,265	64.7
Private	5,458	31.8	298,506	25.6
Contractor's	1,292	7.6	113,234	9.8
Architect for Building				
Local Authority	9,406	54.8	675,513	57.7
Private	5,458	31.8	286,492	24.5
Contractor's	2,285	13.3	208,943	17.8
TOTAL	17,141		1,170,939	

The major reason for the prominence of contractors' architects was the growth of industrialized housing systems in the early '60s. Although the RIBA was a firm supporter of industrialized building, the evidence suggests that the major consequence of these systems was to transfer work away from private architects to corporate architects, (Table 1.3).[31]

Table 1.3: Architects employed on Industrialized and Traditional Housing by Local Authorities, 1966-73.

% of Schemes	Local Authority	Private	Contractors
Layout			
Industrialized	65.2	11.7	23.1
Traditional	60.0	35.3	4.7
Building			
Industrialized	33.6	11.4	55.0
Traditional	58.4	35.2	6.4
% of Dwellings			
Layout			
Industrialized	68.7	15.6	15.7
Traditional	62.8	38.4	5.8
Building			
Industrialized	51.0	13.4	35.6
Traditional	60.4	30.7	8.9

At the height of the industrialized housing boom, private architects designed barely one in ten of industrialized housing schemes while contractors' architects designed nearly 70%. But the schemes given to private architects were nearly twice as large on average as those designed by corporate architects,[32] so that industrialized building seems to have favoured the larger architectural practices, (whose principals dominated the RIBA), at the expense of small private offices.

Since all sections of the profession were involved in public housing; and the unity of the profession under the leadership of private architects has been maintained; and the profession interpenetrated both national and local government and the construction industry, the scope for professional influence on housing construction policy was clearly extensive.

THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

The construction industry is very large. It accounts for 12% of GDP, half of gross domestic fixed capital formation, and in periods like the early 1960s some 7% of the country's workforce, (about 1.5 million workers).[33] There were 80,000 firms in the industry in 1968, a year which we take as our base year since it is most relevant to the high rise housing boom. But most of these firms were unimportant in terms of employment and output, (Table 1.4).[34] The 8% of firms employing more than 25 people accounted for four fifths of total output and employment, and the very small number of large firms accounted for nearly two fifths of all employment. Apart from a long war-time and post-war break the trend towards increasing concentration in the industry has proceeded steadily, although the level of concentration in relation to other industries is still low.[35]

Table 1.4:   Structure of the Construction Industry, 1935-68.

% of firms in each size category.	1935	1954	1968
SMALL (under 100 employees)	98.7	98.2	97.8
MEDIUM (100-500 employees)	1.1	1.6	1.9
LARGE (over 500 employees)	0.2	0.2	0.4
All firms	100.0	100.0	100.1

% of gross output by size of firm.			
Small	60.2	43.9	35.7
Medium	24.4	24.9	25.0
Large	15.4	31.2	39.3
All firms	100.0	100.0	100.0

% of employment by size of firm.			
Small	67.1	53.5	40.6
Medium	21.5	23.1	24.9
Large	11.4	23.4	34.5
All firms	100.0	100.0	100.0

Part of the explanation for this lies in the many different types of firm in the industry, particularly the distinction between main and sub contractors.[36] In public housing construction, most of the output is probably concentrated in the hands of building contractors - general builders concentrate on private housing and repair and maintenance, and while specialist firms are employed they are confined to particular tasks.   Sub-contracting has certainly increased in public housing over the post-war period.[37]   Looking at the distribution of work by these types of firm reveals a surprising concentration in the larger building and civil engineering firms (Table 1.5).[38]   The very largest of these firms accounted for 21% of employment and over 26% of gross output in this category in 1968, and for 6% of employment and 9.3% of gross output for the industry as a whole, (Table 1.6).[39]   All five companies were ranked in the top 200 companies in Britain, although only Wimpey was in the top 50.[40]

Table 1.5:   Structure of the Construction Industry; type of firm, 1968.

	Under 25 employees	Over 25 employees
Number of firms		
Specialist firms	36,415	1,991
General builders	31,960	2,268
Building & civil engineering firms	754	936
(Civil engineering only)	(608)	(347)
All firms	69,745	5,542
% of gross output		
Specialist firms	7.6	18.6
General builders	11.3	17.0
Building & civil engineering firms	0.7	37.9
(Civil engineering only)	(0.6)	(6.3)
All firms	20.2	79.8

Table 1.6:   Top Five construction companies; size indices, 1968.

Firm	£ million			
	Turnover	Capital Employed	Net Profits	Market Capitalization
George Wimpey & Co	200.0	39.70	8.17	84.0
John Laing & Sons	99.0	23.63	1.55	18.0
Richard Costain	86.0	30.02	3.53	5.3
Taylor Woodrow	71.0	31.30	4.31	20.7
Bovis Holdings	51.6	18.16	1.69	13.7
TOTAL	507.6	132.18	19.15	141.7

	WIMPEY	LAING	COSTAIN	TAYLOR WOODROW	BOVIS
Employees	34,000	17,000	9,343	10,225	9,158
Rank in terms of UK firms (turnover)	45	102	114	126	175

CONSTRUCTION ORGANIZATIONS

The central body which represents the interests of the construction industry is the National Federation of Building Trade Employers, which has a large and powerful central office, ten regional organisations (plus the powerful London federation), and 240 local branches.[41] In the early post war period the NFBTE local associations were primarily involved in price-fixing but since the

introduction of restrictive practices legislation their role has declined.[42]

The NFBTE is a main contractors organization, drawing on uniform support from the large firms and much less involvement from smaller firms and general builders, (21,000 of whom are organized in the rival Federation of Master Builders).[43] About 17,000 firms (25% of the industry total) are NFBTE members, but its power is such that it commands 87% of the employer seats on the industry's wage negotiating body.[44] Special contractors are organized separately but affiliated, as are the private housebuilders. The large national firms play a central role in the NFBTE and their personnel, including their top directors, have played a prominent role in its affairs for many years both at a national and a regional level.[45]

1.2: National Policy - the Apparatus in Action

GOVERNMENT CONSULTATIVE MACHINERY

The public housing apparatus is unified at a national level by an extensive network of advisory bodies which influence central government policy (Figure 1.1 and Table 1.7).[46]

Table 1.7: Composition of the Main Consultative Committees, Sample Dates.
(Number of members)

Organizations represented:	Committee:			
	CHAC	CHRAC	SCCH	NCC
Design professions	2	3	2	7
Contractors	2	6	9	12
Building Societies	2	-	5	1
Civil servants: D.O.E.	-	5	-	5
Civil servants: Others	-	2	-	-
Local authorities	5	2	5	4
Universities	3	2	-	-
QUANGOs	7	-	-	-
Construction Unions	1	1	-	4
Total Membership	22	21	21	33

Professional background of members:				
Planners	2	3	-	-
Architects	3	6	1	2
Engineers	-	5	-	6
Surveyors	1	2	2	2
Housing Managers	3	-	-	-

Figure 1.1: Consultative Bodies and Organizational Memberships in Housing Construction, late 1960s.

Non-governmental Groups

Government Departments, etc.
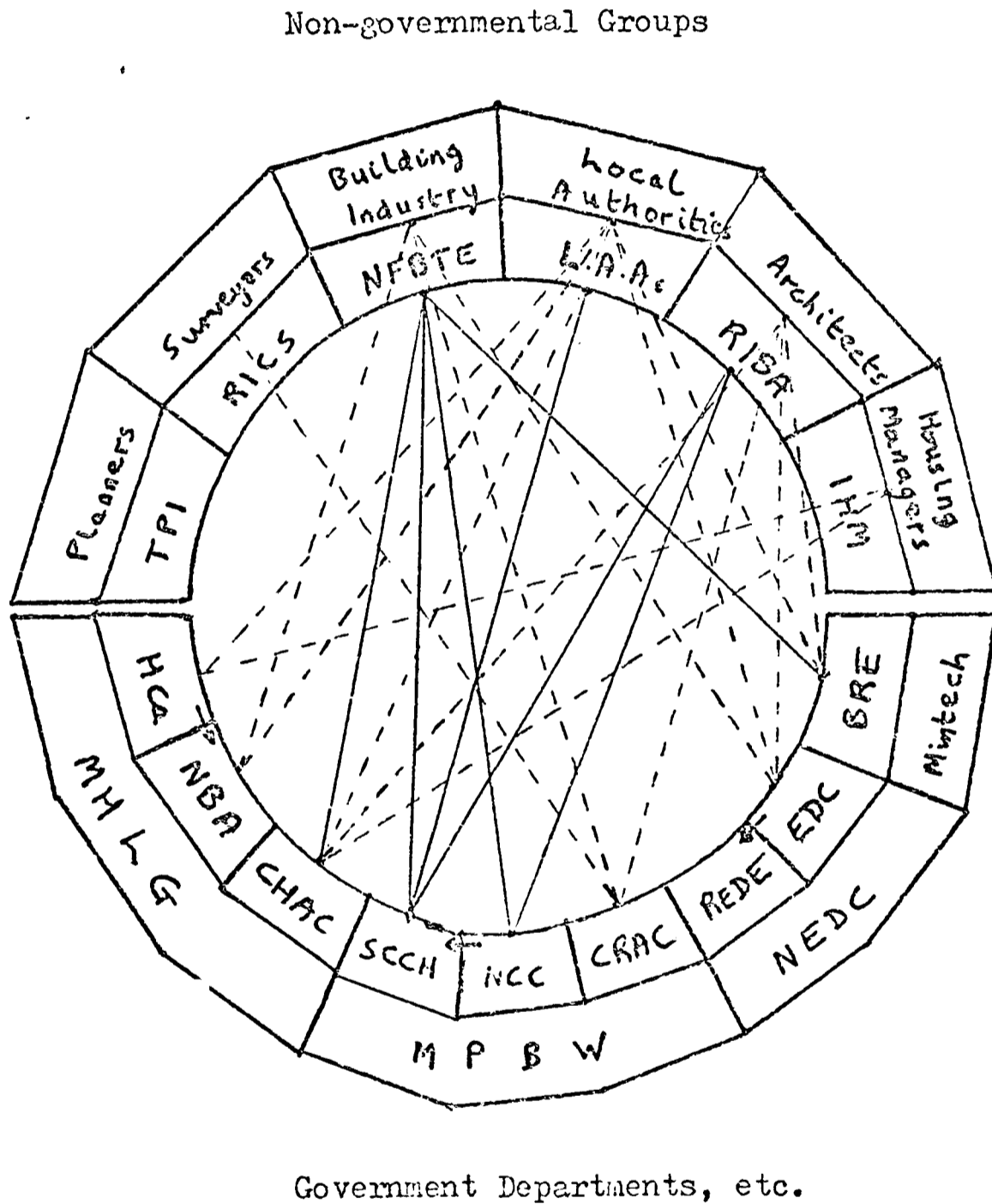
Formal organizational representation ⎯⎯⎯

Individual representation ⎯ ⎯ ⎯

(All memberships run from non-governmental groups to consultative bodies).

Over the post-war period there has been a marked change in the nature of the organizations concerned with housing construction issues. At the start of the post-war period, the main body involved was the Central Housing Advisory Committee (CHAC), which was dominated by people with local authority and housing trust backgrounds and was a statutory advisory committee of non-government people rather than representing specific interests.[47] CHAC's output of reports etc. declined steadily, until by the 1960s the Housing Management Sub-Committee was the only really influential part of the apparatus, (notwithstanding the nominal CHAC involvement in the extremely influential Parker-Morriss report).[48] Full committee meetings became rare and by 1973 over a quarter of the places on the committee were vacant. In 1975 it was abolished altogether.

In place of CHAC, the National Consultative Council for Building and Civil Engineering (NCC), the 'parliament' of the industry run by MPBW since 1950, became steadily more involved with housing.[49] A formal interest group body, the NCC set up a Standing Consultative Committee on Housing to advise on the implementation of the November 1965 White Paper pledge of 500,000 homes a year. The SCCH operated only until 1971 when the NCC was enlarged to include local authority and building society representatives and resumed direct control of housing. On all the NCC bodies, as one civil servant explained:

> if you're thinking about who represents building
> employers then certainly in the pre-1968 situation
> it was the NFBTE plus the predecessors of the
> National House Builders Federation. That situation
> has not really changed. [50]

On the NCC regional committees the NFBTE, RIBA and other professional bodies also dominated.[31]

A second increasingly important body in housing construction has been the Building Economic Development Committee, an active promotional body, mainly staffed by industrialists and related professionals, which since 1965 has campaigned vigorously for the implementation of the Banwell Report on

tendering procedures in public housing, and later for the Wood Report recommendations on 'design and build' firms.[52]

Finally a further important area of government-industry interaction has been in research. The Building Research Station (operated first by DSIR and later by Mintech) was the main body here, and its Board and various Advisory Committees were staffed mainly by local authorities, civil servants and personnel from large contractors, who also seem to have been among the primary beneficiaries of the research effort.[53] In 1963 MPBW set up the Construction Research Advisory Committee to advise its newly established Development Directorate and this had a more balanced government - industry representation - some of the six industry seats go to directors of the large firms.[54] In 1971 the Committee's ambit was enlarged by the addition of one social administration lecturer to form the Construction and Housing Research Advisory Committee (CHRAC in Table 1.7).[55]

The overall role of these bodies was described by one civil servant involved in these terms:

> It's important, especially in an industry which is so diverse, that you have a formal means of bringing together people on a regular basis. This means that they can see Ministers and senior officials without their having to have cause for complaint before they see them. [56]

In practice the consolidation of industry influence on housing construction issues and the progressive displacement of old style 'housing influentials' has been charted remarkably accurately in the evolution of government consultative bodies. In general, the representation of 'consumer' interests in housing typical of CHAC in its early days seems to have been squeezed out by bodies representing only producer interests.

INFORMAL CONTACTS.

Of course the formal machinery of consultation represents only the tip of the iceberg as far as contacts are concerned. Informal contacts between politicians, top Ministry officials and industrialists were common, as Crossman's diaries make clear.[57] Conservative Ministers Keith Joseph, (heir

to the Bovis fortunes), and Geoffrey Rippon, (director of Cubbitts) were closely involved in the industry, and construction interests were well represented in Parliament and elsewhere.[58] In politics firms like McAlpine and Taylor Woodrow have been major donors to Conservative party funds, and supplied a Party Treasurer and support for right wing bodies such as the National Association for Freedom.[59] In the civil service Dame Evelyn Sharp was a close friend of the London contractor Neil Wates,[60] and on retirement was given a Bovis directorship by her former Minister Keith Joseph. During the industrialized building campaign, MHLG drafted in a succession of high powered executives as advisers, including Kenneth Wood, Chairman of Concrete Ltd. In 1974 a Bovis executive was appointed on a similar basis to D.O.E. to mastermind a more vigorous public housing drive.[61]

Contact between architects and planners within and outside central government was maintained by the movement of professionals between the different organizations. Certainly MHLG Chief Architects, drafted in mainly from the L.C.C., had considerable influence within the RIBA Council, and architects and planners did move from government into private practice, (although rarely the other way round).[62]

Relations between the professions and the construction industry showed a marked change over the period as technological and industrial developments accentuated the contractors' role. By the mid '50s, as Bowley observes, contractors were no longer ready 'to go cap in hand' to the architect and were increasingly vocal in their demands to be involved in building design.[63] By 1963 surveys showed that participants in the construction process were already rating the main contractor's role as the most important one,[64] and during the industrialized building campaign this position was massively strengthened, often by the elimination of the independent professional from the design process altogether. At the industry-professional interface architects were, of course, constrained from becoming directors of property or construction companies by their professional code of conduct, but by

1964 the breaches of this requirement were so common that one commentator argued:

> It is inevitable that the RIBA will soon waive the restrictions on its members. The sooner it does so the better. The managerial revolution will have to come to the building industry before all the potential benefits are realized, but the deprofessionalization of architecture could help to bring it about. [65]

In the aftermath of the Pulson affair this kind of commonplace observation of the previous decade began to be seen in a different light, and the RIBA was criticized for not being professional enough in its attitude. McEwan observes:

> Self interest and group or class interest are the generators of the disease of professionalism; the obsession with money, status, privilege and secrecy. The function of protecting the public, upholding standards, advancing knowledge of the art and ensuring that architects serve genuine social needs are given verbal recognition but few resources. The first priority at RIBA today is to secure more work for the building industry under the leadership of architects. [66]

CONTRACT POLICY IN PUBLIC HOUSING

Contract policy is a key area of public housing construction policy on which to assess the influence of the various organizations involved.

Relations in construction are crystallized in the contract itself and it is interesting to note that the form used on 90-95% of non-package deal public housing work is the so-called 'RIBA contract', issued by the Joint Contracts Tribunal of RIBA, the NFBTE and the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors. It is not used in central government, however, and has been criticized by Turpin:

> it is remarkable that the RIBA form has been adopted for public sector work, for this form of contract is in some respects seriously deficient in the protection given to the interests of the client. [67]

And a leading manual on contract law concluded that 'no adviser of any private employer should allow the forms to be used without substantial amendment.'[68]

The main area of controversy in this area is however, the method of

tendering to be used.[69] Local authority standing orders and MHLG model

standing orders usually require open competition in which any firm can tender

and the contract goes to the firm with the lowest bid. The 1944 Simon

Committee recommended the adoption of selective tendering in the public sector,

in which only certain firms are asked by the client to submit tenders for a

competition and again the lowest tender wins.[70] The Ministry of Works followed

this policy after the war and it became universal on central government contracts,

but MHLG refused to alter its model standing orders throughout the 1950s,

despite an influential call for a revision of local authority procedures by the

Joint Contracts Tribunal in 1954. But by the late '50s housing authorities

were regularly suspending their standing orders and one 1961 survey showed only

10 out of 45 county boroughs still adhering to open competition on larger

contracts.[71]

In 1962 a second MPBW report recommended the revision of tendering

procedures,[72] and during the industrialized building campaign intense industrial

pressure was exerted for large contracts negotiated with a single firm or for

the adoption of a package contract, in which the contractor both designed and

built a standard dwelling at a negotiated price.

By 1964 this pressure had gone so far that the Banwell Committee report

insisted on the need to return to selective tendering on a streamlined basis -

with only two or three tenders invited, serial contracts and an emphasis on

achieving close working relationships with one or a few firms.[73] This re-

defined selective tendering was at last backed by MHLG as a procedure that

would 'not only provide value for money but also have a beneficial effect on

the industry as a whole',[74] and was very actively promoted to local authorities

by the Building E.D.C.

In fact much of the supposed failings of housing authority contracting

were misconceptions. The proportion of housing schemes let by open completion

was high (50% in 1964 for example), but the proportion of dwellings involved

was much less (32% in 1964), because average contract sizes here were low,

(only 28 dwellings in 1964). By 1968 the proportion of dwellings involved had fallen by more than half. And in 1966 55% of public housing was actually in negotiated or package deal contracts, (Table 1.8).[75] The shift to selective tendering after Banwell took place much more through the decline of these contracts than it did via a move away from open competition, partly because of the reduction in demand pressure from housing authorities and the redefinition of what constituted selective tendering.

Table 1.8: Local authority housing by type of tender, 1964-72.

Dwellings in contracts by

	Open Competition		Selective Competition		Negotiated		Package Deal	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1964	40,575	32.3	27,639	22.0	39,068	31.1	18,340	14.6
1966	30,474	20.9	34,556	23.7	58,469	40.1	22,308	15.3
1968	18,995	13.9	55,073	40.3	45,234	33.1	17,355	12.7
1970	11,879	13.6	51,272	58.7	15,373	17.6	8,821	10.1
1972	9,734	14.6	42,110	63.1	8,475	12.7	6,406	9.6

Rather more important than either of these, however, was the collapse of the industrialized and high rise housing markets after 1967. Negotiated and package deals were most frequently used on industrialized (particularly high rise) contracts, (Table 1.9).[76] The switch back to traditional building from the peak industrialized year of 1967 thus produced a fall in their importance. In 1966 over 84% of industrialized, compared with 34% of traditional, dwellings were let in non-competitive contracts.

The other main issue in this area has been the size of housing contracts. The frequent complaints of small scale contracts in the building industry do not bear close examination. By 1968 at the peak of the industrialized/high rise/comprehensive redevelopment focus of public housing over 40% of all dwellings let by housing authorities were in contracts of over 250 dwellings, (Figure 1.2),[77] although it is true that there had apparently been a rapid rise in their share throughout the 1960s. Industrialized schemes were much larger than traditional contracts, and the very largest schemes tended to be let by

Figure 1.2: Local Authority Dwellings Approved in Various Contract
Size Categories, 1960-73.

(England and Wales)
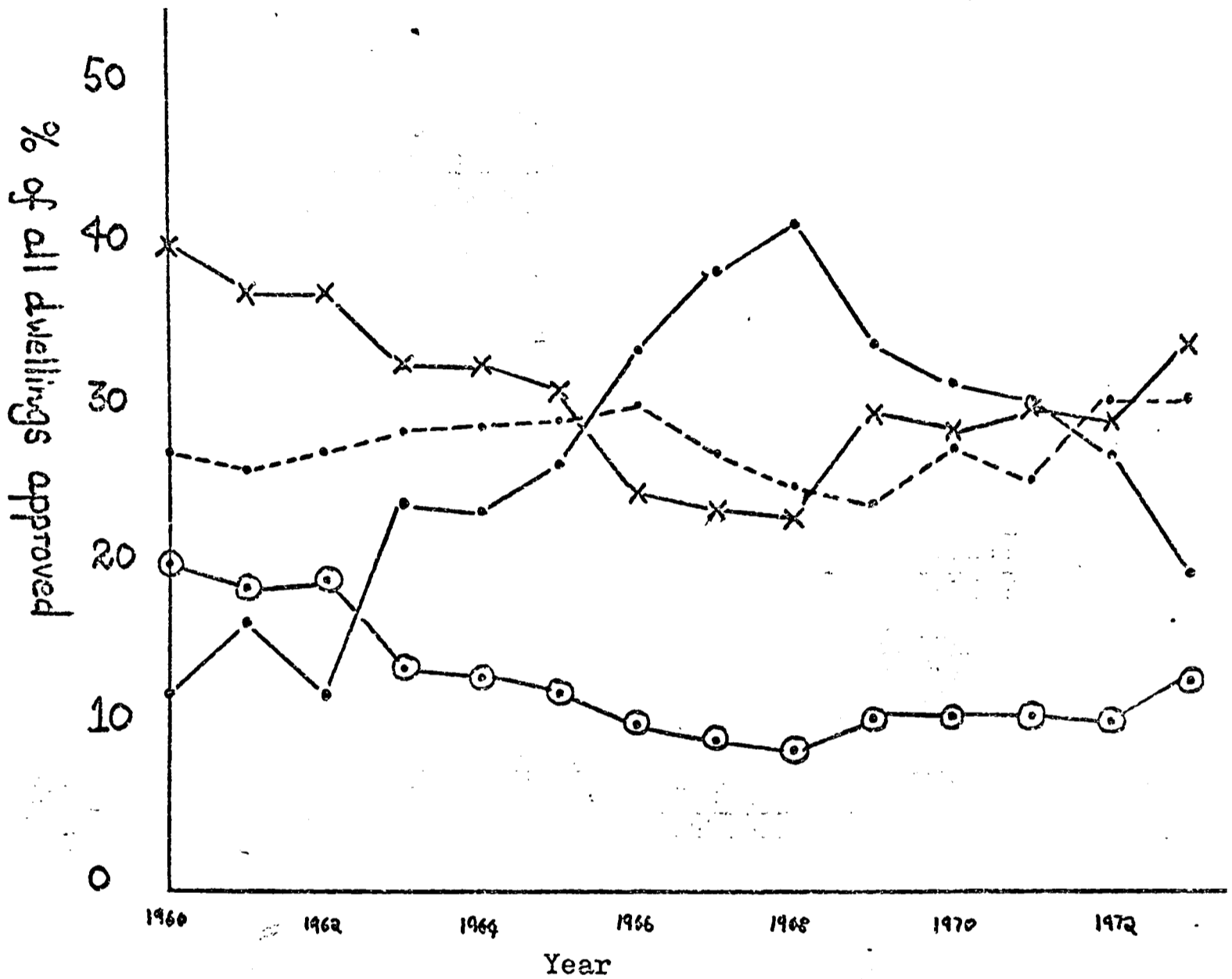
Number of dwellings per scheme:

over 250	——·——
101 - 250	----·----
26 - 100	——x——
under 26	——⊙——

Table 1.9: Industrialized and traditional public housing by type of
tender, 1966-73.

Dwellings in	contracts by				Number of
	Open Competition	Selective Competition	Negotiated	Package Deal	dwellings
	%	%	%	.%	
INDUSTRIALIZED					
1966	1.9	13.8	58.1	26.2	60,041
1967	4.5	17.3	56.4	21.8	66,573
1968	2.1	30.8	46.3	20.8	59,128
1969	9.3	24.0	43.2	23.5	30,472
1970	1.6	36.2	35.6	26.6	18,802
1971	9.3	57.2	17.8	15.7	15,713
1972	11.2	49.5	16.3	23.0	14,751
1973	7.2	33.2	35.8	23.8	20,529
TRADITIONAL					
1966	34.2	30.6	27.4	7.8	85,768
1967	30.6	36.0	25.1	8.3	81,243
1968	22.9	47.5	23.0	6.6	77,529
1969	18.9	58.8	14.1	8.2	67,839
1970	16.9	64.8	12.7	5.6	68,544
1971	20.3	64.1	8.8	6.8	61,456
1972	15.5	67.0	11.7	5.8	51,985
1973	21.3	61.2	12.9	4.6	53,201

selective competition and designed by private architects, (Table 1.10).[78] It
is safe to assume that up to 1968 these schemes were virtually all flats or
mixed development in urban areas,(Table 1.11).[79]

Table 1.10: Type of contract and technical advice; average number of
dwellings per scheme, local authority housing, 1968.

	Open Competition	Selective Competition	Negotiated	Package Deal
Industrialized	61	200	181	100
Traditional	28	50	50	51

	Architect for Layout			Architect for Buildin		
	Local Authority	Private	Contractors	Local Authority	Private	Contractors
Industrialized	176	183	74	223	178	93
Traditional	49	36	45	49	34	78

Table 1.11:   Type of area and type of scheme; average number of dwellings
            per scheme, local authority housing 1968.

	Houses only	Flats only	Mixed houses and flats	All schemes
Urban areas	46˙	74	153	89
Rural areas	14	15	44	19

By the peak years of the boom then, it is very difficult to see any respect
in which housing contracts were too small.   Indeed quite the reverse,
(Table 1.12).[80]   The concentration of work in public housing into larger
contracts had proceeded further than in any other construction market by 1969,
(the first year for which these figures are available, and one below the peak
year).   Some 54% of the total value of public housing work was in contracts
worth more than £500,000 - compared with figures of 51% for all other state
contracts, 34% for industrial contracts, 26% for commercial work and exactly
3.2% in the private housing market.   Over a fifth of all public housing by
value was in contracts over £2 million, a level exceeding anything in the
private sector.   The extreme contrast between public and private housing work
is dramatically indicative of the extent to which public housing was a favourable
market for large contractors.

Table 1.12:   Value range of new construction orders, 1969.

% of new work by value in range	Public sector Non housing	Housing	Private sector Housing	Industrial	Commercial
Under £100,000.	22.2	15.4	79.7	33.7	45.4
£100,001-£250,000.	10.2	12.0	11.9	14.3	11.7
£250,001-£500,000.	16.5	19.0	5.2	17.6	16.5
£500,001-£1 million.	10.5	20.3	1.6	9.6	12.8
£1 m-£2 million.	8.3	14.2	1.6	12.9	8.0
Over £2 million	32.3	19.1	-	11.9	5.6
Value of new work	£1,111m.	£523m.	£513m.	£489m.	£389m.

2.3: Client Influence on Public Housing Construction

The obverse of the influence exerted by the public housing apparatus can be considered as the exclusion of 'client' influence. Since much of this research is concerned with the relationship between national policy and particular local authorities' decision making, this brief section focuses directly on the overall level of involvement of people affected by the public housing process in the decisions about the kind of accommodation in which they would be rehoused.

SLUM CLEARANCE

Since 1955 over three million people in England and Wales have been rehoused under slum clearance procedures, and particularly in the major urban areas the clearance and redevelopment process has dominated public housing programs.[81]

The procedures and modes of operation of slum clearance have been well documented, partly because the coercive character of the process has proved a magnet for academic attention since the mid-'60s, when evidence of opposition to clearance first became prominent. The nature of local authority procedures creates a fundamental and massive imbalance of power resources and constraints on their use between Councils and clearance area residents, (Table 1.13).[82] Of course the operation of procedures varies from place to place, but this imbalance has never been found to be less than acute. Local authorities were never required to prove unfitness, to operate effectively standardized methods of classifying property or to prove that rehabilitation or other action was not feasible. Large numbers of people in clearance areas were only fitfully consulted (because they were not property owners), many residents are not eligible for rehousing, and virtually everyone lived in a state of ignorance and anxiety about their future. Where 'participation' exercises took place their relevance was often questionable:

Table 1.13:   Resources and Constraints in Rehousing Conflicts.

	Power Resources	Constraints

Power Resources

Constraints

Local Authorities

Monopoly of Information, Decision
and Timing

Minimization or withdrawal of
services

Blight creation: neglect of repairs

Withholding of payments related to
C.P.O.

Creation of neighbourhood conflicts

Control of jobs (of employees of
Council and businesses displaced by
clearance)

Unfavourable typing of residents

Unfavourable Housing Allocations

Withdrawal of housing rights

Eviction

Reference public opinion

Political control (of
party organizations and
councillors)

Clearance Area Residents

Access to councillors (individually)

Access to local media

Group forming strategies
(perhaps)

Access to reference
publics

Direct action

Uncertainty, lack of information

Poor conditions ($\therefore$ high
costs of delay)

Dispersion (in many cases)

Virtually complete housing
vulnerability

Job vulnerability (of L.A.
employees and employees of
businesses displaced by
clearance)

> Plans are unfurled and councillors explain what a
> magnificent scheme it is. But unfortunately for
> the councillors, the people have generally come not to
> learn what the area will be like when they have left
> it but how the scheme will affect them personally. [83]

Or as one Newham councillor interviewed for this study complained:

> All they're concerned with if you try and consult them
> is "When's the van coming to the door?" You don't
> get involved in the basics, the environment and the
> area and that. All that's important to them is their
> personal, once-in-a-lifetime move out of private
> tenancy into the mystic Council tenancy. [84]

In practice this is probably a rational position to adopt since, until the

1970s at least, residents in an area usually were not consulted on whether it

should be cleared or not, and would not be rehoused in the redevelopment that

would take place anyway. In the early post-war period, local authorities

often adopted dismissive attitudes towards clearance area residents' views.

For example, the Newcastle Chief Planner, later Chief Planner at the D.O.E.,

wrote in 1963:

> In a huge city it is a fairly common observation that the
> dwellers in a slum area are almost a separate race of people
> with different values, aspirations and ways of living...
> One result of slum clearance is that a considerable movement
> of people takes place over long distances, with devastating
> effect on the social groups built up over the years. But,
> one might argue, this is a good thing when we are dealing
> with people who have no initiative or civic pride. The task
> surely is to break up such groupings, even though the people
> seem to be satisfied with their miserable environment and
> seem to enjoy an extrovert social life in their own locality. [85]

Where this kind of attitude prevailed, the chance of a sympathetic hearing for

residents' views was obviously not great. But because clearance usually affects

relatively small and compact areas in which most people will have substantially

congruent interests, residents are in quite a good position to form groups to

try and influence the local authority via protest and demonstrations, which may

in turn secure local media coverage and influence 'reference publics'. But

these efforts will be continuously weakened by their uncertainty about their

futures and lack of information, by poor housing conditions and the consequently

high costs of delay which their action may cause, and by their virtually complete

housing vulnerability.

Of course, the blanket justification of clearance activity used by local authorities was that although involvement in the process could be disturbing, the gains in terms of improved housing amenity were large.[86] Other factors intrinsic to clearance, such as the break up of existing communities and the remoulding of huge urban areas in an image conjured up by the local authority in isolation, tended to be discounted. For example, Parker in a 1974 review of the social effects of slum clearance concluded:

> For many years now families have been migrating away from the decaying residential areas of our inner cities and seeking more congenial surroundings in the suburbs and beyond. Without doubt as far as the majority are concerned, this is a voluntary and desired change, which has been participated in by working class as well as middle class people. In a sense therefore we can say that local authorities are reacting to rather than precipitating social change. Many slum dwellers share the general aspiration for better housing and suburban living, and most of those forced to join the outward movement because of clearance settle very quickly into their new way of life, and the difficulties encountered by the minority are for the most part temporary. [87]

But many of the people affected by clearance were rehoused in exactly the same 'decaying residential areas' of the inner city, except that they were living in flats or tower blocks instead of houses, the diametrical opposite of the 'congenial surroundings' in search of which people migrated to the suburbs. Simultaneously with the rehousing of three million people via clearance, one and a half million were rehoused in high flats and many hundreds of thousands more in mass housing of some kind by the large urban authorities and with relatively little suburban or new towns migration. Little wonder then that the D.O.E. should cautiously admit: 'many if not most residents in high rise dwellings in Britain have been rehoused there from slums.'[88]

REHOUSING

The final and key stage in rehousing for people caught up in clearance is the receipt of a housing allocation.[89] By this stage in the process, the residents in a clearance area cannot hope to influence their overall rehousing chances, for their new accommodation will already be constructed and other options foreclosed. But the process of matching available housing to

individual needs might be expected to introduce a greater element of choice.

In fact it does not. Rehousing was largely determined by the new housing under construction and in many cities by the mid-1960s this was dominated by high rise. Frequently also it would be concentrated in a particular area so that locational choice would be limited. Finally most large urban authorities imposed stringent limits on the number of offers of accommodation made to clearance area residents. Although their homes might be falling down around them, the refusal of all but the most blatant 'cod offers' could seriously delay rehousing, lead only to worsening offers or produce offers which had to be accepted under threat of eviction. The Newham Director of Housing, for example, explained why his Council made only one offer of rehousing in these terms:

> when (people) are offered accommodation we endeavour to make
> the offer as reasonable as we can in accordance with requirements.
> We endeavour to spell out to people that if they think they're
> going to get a house they're going to be jolly unlucky, so they'd
> better say they're prepared to take something else... Having made
> the offer we don't have a formal method of three offers or something
> like that and then struck off the housing list. Because that's a
> lot of nonsense! I mean, three silly offers, it would be very
> unfair to strike someone off the housing list. Whereas, one very
> fair offer, thought about in the best way we could do, generally
> speaking people ought really to accept. Because we can't afford
> too much picking and choosing.. 90

(his emphases)

HOUSING WAITING LIST CLIENTS

If the influence of clearance area residents on housing construction policy was insubstantial during the 1950s and '60s, the situation of families on local authority housing waiting lists was clearly even more ineffective.[91] Unlike clearance area residents, waiting list applicants are dispersed in poor accommodation throughout the local authority area. They are thus effectively debarred from organizing collectively and must deal with councillors and the housing department on a completely individual basis. Their influence on the general housing construction policy pursued by the local authority is thus non-existent, since they have no idea which accommodation they will end up in and unlike clearance area residents, no stake in any particular area or

neighbourhood. The question of their needs or preferences for housing then becomes one of individual allocations. Here again their position is extremely weak. The clearance area resident being displaced by a coercive process from his own house or from a long standing home, can legitimately hold out for accommodation of a form most suitable to his needs, and in the process inconvenience the local authority to some extent by holding up the demolition of his house. The waiting list applicant has no similar basis for disagreement with local authority decisions. In getting on the waiting list, he has, in the eyes of some councillors and officials, 'failed to provide' for himself and his family. The long months or years which families spend in inadequate accommodation while accumulating the requisite number of housing points to be eligible for Council accommodation, and the additional time which may elapse before this eligibility results in a concrete offer of rehousing, count for little in comparison with the claims of clearance area residents. The refusal of an offer of accommodation by a housing list family merely puts in jeopardy their position on the waiting list, without any cost to the local authority, and the number of offers made to waiting list applicants is often much less than those allowed to clearance area residents. Not surprisingly then, the 'potential tenants' on housing waiting lists have remained completely passive and invisible politically.

Conclusion

We have shown that it is possible to talk meaningfully of a 'public housing apparatus' which at a national level exerts a considerable influence over the setting of housing construction policy. The two main production interests, the design professions and the construction industry, operate in close contact with each other and central government in shaping production policy on public housing. Partly as a corollary of this (although the full proof of this must rest with our subsequent analysis), public housing 'clients' have had little or no direct say in the decisions concerning their rehousing during the post-war period.

REFERENCES : CHAPTER 1

1. I take this term from N. Habraken's use of 'mass housing apparatus', in Supports: an Alternative to Mass Housing (London, Architectural Press, 1971).

2. E. Sharp, The Ministry of Housing and Local Government (London, Allen and Unwin, 1969). See also P.M. Johnson, 'The Ministry of Housing and Local Government', Public Administration, (1951), 237-44.

3. Sharp, Ministry of Housing and Local Government. E. Layton, Building by Local Authorities (London, Allen and Unwin, 1961). J.B. Cullingworth observes, however:

   'The Ministry's role in housing policy formation is remarkably weak... Though there are considerable reserves of power at the centre these are diffuse and are operated with care.'

   Housing and Local Government in England and Wales (London, Allen and Unwin, 1966), pp. 61 and 63.

4. 'Much of the administrative work has no professional content other than legal; while much of the professional work is under purely professional control.' Sharp, Ministry of Housing and Local Government, p. 218.

5. Ibid, p. 83. This point was strongly underlined in an interview with a former senior Ministry architect.

6. For example, Flats and Houses 1958 (London, HMSO, 1958) was written almost completely by the head of the architects branch design group.

7. Sharp, Ministry of Housing and Local Government, pp. 218-20.

8. Former senior administrator in interview, 1975.

9. Ibid.

10. Sharp, Ministry of Housing and Local Government, pp. 75-7 in this respect gives a misleading picture of the Ministry's consideration of orders.

11. Interview with former senior housing administrator, 1975.

12. Both these accounts are from the same source. One was additionally confirmed by a professional staff member interviewed in 1976.

13. Interview with former senior housing administrator, 1975.

14. See R.H. Crossman, The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister: Volume 1, Minister of Housing 1964-66 (London, Hamish Hamilton and Jonathan Cape, 1975), pp. 30-1.

15. A study of the British Imperial Calendar and Civil Service List, 1953-70 (London, HMSO, 1953-70), revealed turnover rates of between 10 and 45% at the level of Principal and above in most years.

16. See H. Emmerson, The Ministry of Works (London, Allen and Unwin, 1956). The title was changed to Ministry of Public Buildings and Works in Macmillan's 1962 Cabinet reshuffle.

17. See for example Cmnd. 2228, A National Building Agency (London, HMSO, 1953).

18. The Director of Contracts' role is described in C. Turpin, Government Contracts (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1972).

19. The term 'trait' theory is used by T.J. Johnson, Professions and Power (London, Macmillan, 1972) to refer to, inter alia; G. Millerson, 'Dilemmas of Professionalism', New Society, 4 June 1964, and The Qualifying Associations (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964); R. Lewis and A. Maude, Professional People (London, Phoenix House, 1952).

20. B. Kaye, The Development of the Architectural Profession in Britain (London, Allen and Unwin, 1960). See also J.A. Gotch, (ed.), The Growth and Work of the Royal Institute of British Architects, 1834-1934 (London, Royal Institute of British Architects, 1934). On planning see W. Ashworth, The Genesis of Modern British Town Planning (London, Routledge 1954); G. Cherry, The Evolution of British Town Planning (Leighton Buzzard, Leonard Hill, 1974).

21. P.A. Malpass, Professionalism in Architecture and the Design of Local Authority Homes (University of Newcastle upon Tyne, M.A. Thesis, 1973), Chs. 3 and 4. The idea of 'state mediation' of professional services is described by Johnson, Professions and Power, pp. 75-86.

22. P.A. Malpass, 'Professionalism and the Role of Architects in Local Authority Housing', Royal Institute of British Architects Journal, 82 (1975); and Malpass, Professionalism in Architecture, Chs. 5 and 6.

23. T.A. Broadbent, Planning, Profit and the Urban Economy (London, Methuen, 1977), pp. 223, 214-220 estimates private planners at around 14% of the total, and analyses the growth of consultancy in the 1960s.

24. Broadbent, Planning, Profit and the Urban Economy, p. 222.

25. Malpass, Professionalism in Architecture, Ch. 8. D. Muchnich, Urban Renewal in Liverpool (London, Bell, 1970).

26. This table is taken from Malpass, Professionalism in Architecture, p. 129. See also Ch. 6.

27. E. Layton, Building by Local Authorities (London, Allen and Unwin, 1961), p. 137.

28. See Layton, Building by Local Authorities, Ch. 4.

29. DOE, Housing Statistics, No. 21 (1971), Supplementary Table XIV, p. 81; DOE, Housing and Construction Statistics, No.10, (1974), Supplementary Table XXVII, p. 87. The table covers tender approvals of local authorities and new towns in England and Wales, except LCC and GLC tenders.

30. For the use of private architects see Layton, Building by Local Authorities, pp. 169-94. The problem of corporate architects does not seem to have been studied.

31. Sources are given in note 29 for Table 2. Schemes partly built in industrial and traditional methods were classified 'according to the main type of construction'.

32. Sources are given in note 29. Part (c) of the DOE tables gives average sizes of scheme.

33. Ministry of Labour, The Construction Industry (London, HMSO, 1965), Manpower Studies No.3.

34. Department of Trade and Industry, Report on the Census of Production 1968; 151, Construction (London, HMSO, 1972), Table 2; M. Bowley, The British Building Industry (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1966), p. 426.

35. M. Bowley, The British Building Industry, pp. 425-31; see also C.F. Carter, 'The Building Industry' in D. Burn, (ed.), The Structure of British Industry (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1958). The building materials industry is much more concentrated however; see B.R. Williams, 'The Building Materials Industry' in the same volume.

36. The 'roles and relationships in the building team' are well described in G. Higgin and N. Jessop, Communications in the Building Industry (London, Tavistock, 1965), pp. 37-55.

37. Very largely because local authorities progressively abandoned the attempts to determine sub-contractors which were still common in the early post-war period.

38. DTI, Report of the Census of Production 1968: 151, Construction, Tables 4.i.A, and 4.ii.A.

39. These rather crude estimates are obtained by summing the employment and output figures given in Table 2. and expressing them as a percentage of the employment and output figures for building and civil engineering contractors with over 25 employees given in DTI, Report of the Census of Production 1968: 151 Construction, Tables 4.i.A and the totals for the industry given in Table 2.

   Table 1.6 is drawn from The Times 500, 1968-9 (London, Times Newspapers Limited, 1969), Table 1.

40. Wimpey are one of the largest construction firms in Western Europe, however.

41. See Building Economic Development Committee, Employers and Unions in Building (London, National Economic Development Office, 1968), Appendix A, p.6.

42. K. Albert, Policy for the Building Industry (London, Fabian Society, 1955); Fabian Research Series, No. 170, p. 7.

43. The Federation of Master Builders are excluded from all government consultative committees, since the NFBTE has in effect enjoyed the position of favoured representative of the industry with both MPBW and DOE.

44. Building Economic Development Committee, Employers and Unions in Building, p. 6.

45. A. Sampson, The New Anatomy of Britain (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1971) gives some details on the top firm's principal figures. Sir Maurice Laing, Chairman of John Laing Construction Ltd., was President of the NFBTE in 1965-6.

46. Figure 1.1 shows the situation which existed in the late 1960s. Table 1.7 consists of data supplied to me by the secretaries of the committees for several years in the early 1970s. These were: CHAC, 1973 (the last time the Committee was reappointed); SCC, 1971 (after which date the Committee was abolished); CHRAC and HCC, 1975. Most of the information given in this section was supplied to me by the secretaries involved.

47. See Sharp, Ministry of Housing and Local Government, p. 90.

48. The Parker Morriss Report was written by a specially constituted sub-committee with a majority of architects drafted in for the job.

49. See H. Emmerson, The Ministry of Works (London, Allen and Unwin, 1956), p.

50. Interview with the Secretary to the NCC, 6th August 1975.

51. Not least because they have the best developed regional organizations.

52. See Building Economic Development Committee, The Building Industry and the Public Client (London, National Economic Development Office, 1968).

53. For an early account of the BRS see Layton, Building by Local Authorities, pp. 333-5.

54. Laing's Director of Research was a member in 1975, for example.

55. This was part of the changeover to DOE.

56. Interview with the Secretary of the NCC, 6 August 1975.

57. Crossman, Diaries, Volume I, pp. 80-1, 90-1, 363-4, 519, 528.

58. A. Roth, The Business Background of M.P.s (London, Parliamentary Profiles, 1959, 1963, 1967, 1968, 1972, 1975) shows that M.P.s with construction interests have numbered about 15-20 in most recent Parliaments. Companies represented have included Bovis, Costain, Taylor Woodrow.

59. The Guardian, 21 December 1976, p. 11.

60. Crossman, Diaries, Volume I, p. 162.

61. Crossman, Diaries, Volume I, pp. 131, 528; Sunday Times, 15 December, 1974.

62. MHLG Chief Architects recruited from the LCC/GLC included J.H. Forshaw (1944-56), A. Cleeve Barr (1959-64, subsequently Chief Architect and Managing Director of the National Building Agency, 1964-77), J.H. Whitfield Lewis, (1964-71).

63. Bowley, The British Building Industry, pp. 378-80, 420-4.

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66. M. McEwan, 'Thou shalt not sneak : Poulson and the RIBA", Royal Institute of British Architects Journal, 81 (1974), p.

67. Turpin, Government Contracts, p. 104.

68. I.N. Duncan Wallace, Building and Civil Engineering Standard Forms, p. xiii, quoted in Turpin, Government Contracts, p. 294.

69. See Layton, Building by Local Authorities, pp. 281-97.

70. Ministry of Works. Report on the Management and Placing of Contracts (London, HMSO, 1944).

71. County Borough of West Ham, Minutes, Vol. 76A, 1961, Minute 286.

72. Ministry of Works, Survey of Problems Before the Construction Industries (London, HMSO, 1962), [Emmerson Report].

73. Ministry of Public Buildings and Works, The Placing and Management of Contracts for Building and Civil Engineering Work, (London, HMSO, 1964); See also Industrialized Building (London, HMSO, 1966).

74. Building Economic Development Committee, The Building Industry and the Public Client, p. 2.

75. DOE, Housing Statistics, No. 21 (1971), Supplementary Table XIII, p. 80; DOE, Housing and Construction Statistics, No.10 (1974), Supplementary Table XXVI, p. 86. Figures exclude direct labour schemes, and refer to tender approvals by local authorities and new towns in England and Wales, except LCC/GLC approvals.

76. Sources as in note 75 above. Mixed schemes were classified according to the main type of construction.

77. DOE, Housing Statistics, No. 24 (1972), Table 24, p. 37; DOE, Housing and Construction Statistics, No. 10 (1974), Supplementary Table XXIV, p. 85. Tenders approved for local authorities and new towns in England and Wales, except that LCC and new town tenders were not included before 1963, (which may account for the sharp jump in the proportion of approvals in the largest contracts in that year). These sources also give figures for Scotland, not shown here, which display a much greater concentration of work in contracts over 100 dwellings (71% of the total in 1967), partly due to the inclusion of the Scottish Special Housing Association in the data.

78. DOE, Housing Statistics, No. 21 (1971), Supplementary Table XIII, p. 80. Tender approvals for local authorities and new towns in England and Wales, excluding the GLC tenders. In this particular year 13 mixed schemes (part industrialized and part traditional) were included in both the industrialized and the traditional categories.

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80. DOE, Housing and Construction Statistics, No. 5 (1973), Supplementary Table V, p. 65.

81. See J. English, R. Madigan and P. Norman, Slum Clearance (London, Croom Helm, 1974), p. 38, Table 1.

82. This table and the rest of this paragraph draw on the following studies: N. Dennis, People and Planning (London, Faber, 1970); N. Dennis, Public Participation and Planners' Plight (London, Faber, 1972); J.G. Davies, The Evangelistic Bureaucrat (London, Tavistock, 1972); S. Damer, 'Wine Alley: the Sociology of a Dreadful Enclosure', Sociological Review, 22 (1974), 221-48; English et al, Slum Clearance; R. Goodman, After the Planners (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1972); F. Godard, M. Castells, H. Delayne, C. Dessane and C. O'Callaghan, La Renovation Urbaine a Paris (Paris, Mouton, 1973); S. Jacobs, The Right to a Decent Home (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976); M. Lipsky, Protest in City Politics (Chicago, Rand McNally, 1970); Muchnich, Urban Renewal in Liverpool; Shelter, Shelter Report on Slum Clearance (London, Shelter, 1974); C. Ungerson, Moving Home (London, Bell, 1971); BBC 1 (TV film) The Corporation and the People (1974).

83. Ungerson, Moving Home, p. 57.

84. Interview, June 1974.

85. W. Burns, New Towns for Old (London, Leonard Hill, 1963), pp. 93-4.

86. Dennis, People and Planning, pp. 321-56.

87. Parker, 'Sociological Implications of Slum Clearance' in D.V. Donnison and D. Eversley London: Urban Patterns, Problems and Policies (London, Heinemann, 197), p. 269.

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89. R.D. Cramond, Allocation of Council Houses (Edinburgh, Oliver and Boyd, 1964); J.B. Cullingworth, Problems of an Urban Society, Volume 2 (London, Allen and Unwin, 1973), pp. 49-55.

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91. See P. Niner, Local Authority Housing Policy and Practice (Birmingham, Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, 1975) and J. Lambert, R. Blackaby and C. Paris, 'Neighbourhood Politics and Housing Opportunities' in Centre for Environmental Studies, Proceedings of the First Conference on Urban Change and Conflict (London, CES, 1975).

CHAPTER TWO

The High Rise Housing Boom

The aim of this chapter is to present as full a statistical summary of
the high rise housing boom as is possible within the limits of the available
evidence. In order for this account to be comprehensible it is first of all
necessary to sketch in the outlines of those policies which affected the mix
of building forms used in public housing programs, particularly to indicate the
timing of changes in subsidy structures to favour high flat building. The
close connection between the evolution of policy and the kinds of housing being
provided by local authorities is evident in section 2.2. A brief discussion
of the distribution of high rise between different regions and different types
of housing authority concludes the chapter.

2.1: The Basic Outlines of Policy.

PUBLIC HOUSING SINCE 1945

When public housing development restarted in Britain in 1946, the Labour
government decided to retain the subsidy system which had evolved from the
policy fluctuations of the inter-war period.[1] The essential elements in this
system were a flat rate central government subsidy paid over the sixty year life
of each council dwelling to offset the interest and repayment burden on local
authorities, plus various additional subsidies of which the contribution in both
the basic and expensive sites subsidy was fixed at around three quarters of the
deficiency between construction costs plus maintenance and an acceptable level
of rents, (determined by average incomes).[2] The remaining quarter of the
rent deficiency was made up by a statutory subsidy met from local authority
rates, although this requirement was abolished in 1956 when the Conservative
government was keen to raise council rents to 'realistic' levels.

In the immediate post-war years the need for new housing was desperate and

both main parties treated the level of housing completions as a major political issue. Initially all new housing was built by local authorities and private building was rigorously controlled.[3] In the 1940s virtually all council housing was built on large, suburban estates in cottage houses on the inter-war model.[4] Very little slum clearance was undertaken although a few blocks of flats were built on bomb sites. In 1951 the Conservatives were returned to power pledged to complete 300,000 houses a year by their Minister of Housing, Harold Macmillan. To boost the housing effort the government increased the level of Exchequer subsidy for council housing and encouraged the re-emergence of private sector house-building. The effect was to put considerable strain on construction industry resources and government finances, which was alleviated mainly by drastic reductions in the space standards and amenity of public housing, (the so-called 'People's House').[5] Following drastic relaxations of controls on private building in 1954 the government announced in late 1955 that the bulk of new housing needs could now be met by the private sector. The general housing subsidy which had been paid since 1945 was phased out by the end of 1956 and government help to local authorities reserved for slum clearance rehousing and overspill developments, a strategy which was justified in terms of concentrating government help on areas where it was most needed.[6] For a brief period the government even relaxed its programming controls on council building but these were soon reimposed.[7] These changes had a dramatic impact. Public housing completions fell by nearly a third between 1957 and 1959 and housing standards fell even further.[8] Public housing was certainly redirected into the redevelopment of inner urban areas but an acceptable level of slum clearance activity was not achieved. Many of the authorities with the most acute problems could not afford to go ahead with programs on the scale needed and were reluctant to be forced into raising rent levels by government policy. By the 1960s it was apparent that a new initiative was necessary.

One stimulus to change was the Parker Morris report, 'Homes for Today and Tomorrow' which reviewing the standard of housing provision concluded:

> The country already possesses a large stock of houses
> and flats that are becoming out of date and cannot
> afford to build more of them. 9

The report particularly criticized inadequate amenity standards in public

housing.

Rather surprisingly the report was endorsed by the government although no

additional help was provided to help local authorities to implement it.[10] The

1961 Housing Act established a new subsidy system which the government claimed

would help the poorer local authorities to build effectively.[11] The tasks of

public housing were still seen as slum clearance, the relief of overcrowding

and overspill housing, but the subsidy payable on all housing approved by the

Ministry was at two rates, related to the financial position of the authority.[12]

Those in financial need were paid three times the rate per dwelling payable to

those not in need. The test of need was based on the potential rent resources

of the local authority, however, and had the effect of forcing local authorities

to apply 'realistic' rents policies in order to carry on housing construction.[13]

Over the next three years public housing approvals increased by about 15%

and housing policies became key electoral issues. The Labour government

elected in 1964 was committed to a major expansion of the public housing

program and a new subsidy system.[14] The government guaranteed to pay as

subsidy any amount of loan charges due to the margin that interest rates exceeded

4%. Since the amount of subsidy obviously varies with the capital costs of

the housing the government introduced mandatory Parker Morriss standards and

housing cost yardsticks.[15] If the costs of a housing scheme exceeded the

yardsticks the local authority would have to finance the excess from its own

resources.

The Labour Bill, finally enacted only in 1967 because of the 1966 election

represented a substantial increase in subsidy levels and housing standards.

It was combined with encouragement to industrialized building and a licensing

system designed to give housing and education building priority of access to

construction industry resources.[16] The expansion of the public housing effort

was brief, however. Post-devaluation public expenditure cuts reduced the amount of public housing approvals by nearly half between 1967 and 1970.

HIGH FLATS IN POST-WAR POLICY

Central government policy on public housing has always been marked by a concern to attack the legacy of bad housing in the inner areas of Britain's cities left by the Industrial Revolution. In the early years of the 1920s it was assumed that this would largely be effected by building new housing for slum residents on virgin land at the urban periphery.[17] As a result relatively little was done by way of slum clearance and in 1930 the Greenwood Act introduced a special subsidy for local authorities building flats on expensive sites in an effort to secure a more direct attack on slum conditions. The higher the cost of the land used for building, the greater the subsidy paid per dwelling. A requirement that redevelopment be in flats of at least four storeys was inserted to make sure that sufficiently intensive use was made of the land, but since local authorities had a strong financial incentive to maximize the number of dwellings provided in any scheme the effect was to produce rather crammed flatted estates.[18]

In 1946 the basic framework of the expensive sites subsidy was left unchanged although subsidy scales were increased and a significant increment per flat added for flats in blocks of at least four storeys with lifts. In 1952 the subsidy scales were again increased.[19] The major policy reorientation of 1956 greatly increased the centrality of subsidies for inner city redevelopment, but did not prevent them from being markedly reduced. The old expensive site subsidy paid per dwelling was replaced by a much smaller one paid per acre and the primary encouragement to redevelop inner city areas shifted onto a new progressive storey height subsidy. Under this flats of four, five and six storeys qualified for very large increments to the basic house subsidy, wherever they were built. Above six storeys the subsidy rose by a fixed increment for each additional storey in the block.[20] A flat in a six storey block received

2.3 times the basic subsidy paid on a house, and this ratio rose to 3.0 at fifteen storeys and 3.4 at twenty storeys. This encouragement to high building was justified primarily by reference to the increasing costs of high rise construction associated with the need to include lifts and to shift from brick construction to more expensive building materials. Even with the new subsidy, flat developments of clearance areas were less well subsidized than under the 1952 scale, but flat developments on non-expensive sites were greatly encouraged.[21]

This subsidy structure was maintained largely unchanged until 1956, except that the 1961 Act slightly increased the amount paid on houses in needy authorities while leaving the flat increments unchanged. (In authorities judged not to be in financial need, however, the incentives to build high flats were strengthened by the reduction in the basic subsidy to a third of that in needy authorities).[22]

The Labour government's 1965 subsidy change lead to a major change in the high flat subsidy since the higher costs of high rise were now reflected in the variable basic subsidy. The increments to the progressive storey height subsidy above six storeys were abolished but a substantial flat rate addition at the 1956 rate was retained.[23] The new subsidy created a strong central government incentive to keep public housing costs down and led to a radical re-appraisal of the methods of control previously used. Since high rise was a particularly expensive building form the introduction of mandatory housing cost yardsticks in 1967 bore especially heavily on high flats. Over and above this the government had clearly decided to discourage high rise building. New, restrictive density ceilings for public housing schemes were imposed and the yardsticks were calculated on the assumption that the most economical mix of building forms would be used at each density level, a mix which implied minimal high rise use even at the density ceiling.[24] In fact the ceilings at 165 persons per acre in conurbations and 120 persons per acre (ppa) elsewhere were well below the level at which high building on its own would be feasible, (which

was around 200 ppa). Of course very small amounts of high building were still possible under the yardsticks but since the cost limits failed to rise in line with the escalation of building costs even this became more difficult, even in high density areas in London.[25] After a time high rise schemes began to be disqualified for subsidy and later to be disqualified for loan sanction approval at all as their costs fell outside even the 10% tolerance limit allowed over the yardstick.

These changes in central government subsidies and cost control methods had a direct impact on the housing construction policies of local authorities, as the next section shows in presenting a statistical summary of the evolution of the high rise housing boom.

2.2: The High Rise Housing Boom.

NATIONAL TRENDS IN HIGH FLAT BUILDING

In 1946 the vast majority of local authority dwellings were houses. Flat building had begun to increase by 1950, however, mostly in low rise blocks. By 1953 77% of public housing approvals were houses, 20% were low rise flats and 3% were high flats.[26] This situation changed markedly over the next few years, largely as a result of the freeing of private building from licensing controls in 1954. The numbers of houses in local authority approvals fell by 61% between 1953 and 1958 mainly because of the shift of construction industry resources into the private sector, which consisted almost entirely of speculatively built houses.[27] Public housing activity in suburban areas where private housing was concentrated also declined in favour of redevelopment in inner city areas.

This was reflected in the increasing importance of flat building and high rise by 1956, (Figure 2.1).[28] The proportion of houses in public housing approvals continued to fall until 1964, when it reached a post-war low of 15%. The proportion built as low rise flats rose to just under a third by 1958 where

Figure 2.1: Local Authority Dwellings Approved by Building Form,
1953-75.

(England and Wales)

Percentage
of total
tender
approvals

houses

low rise flats

high rise
flats

Year
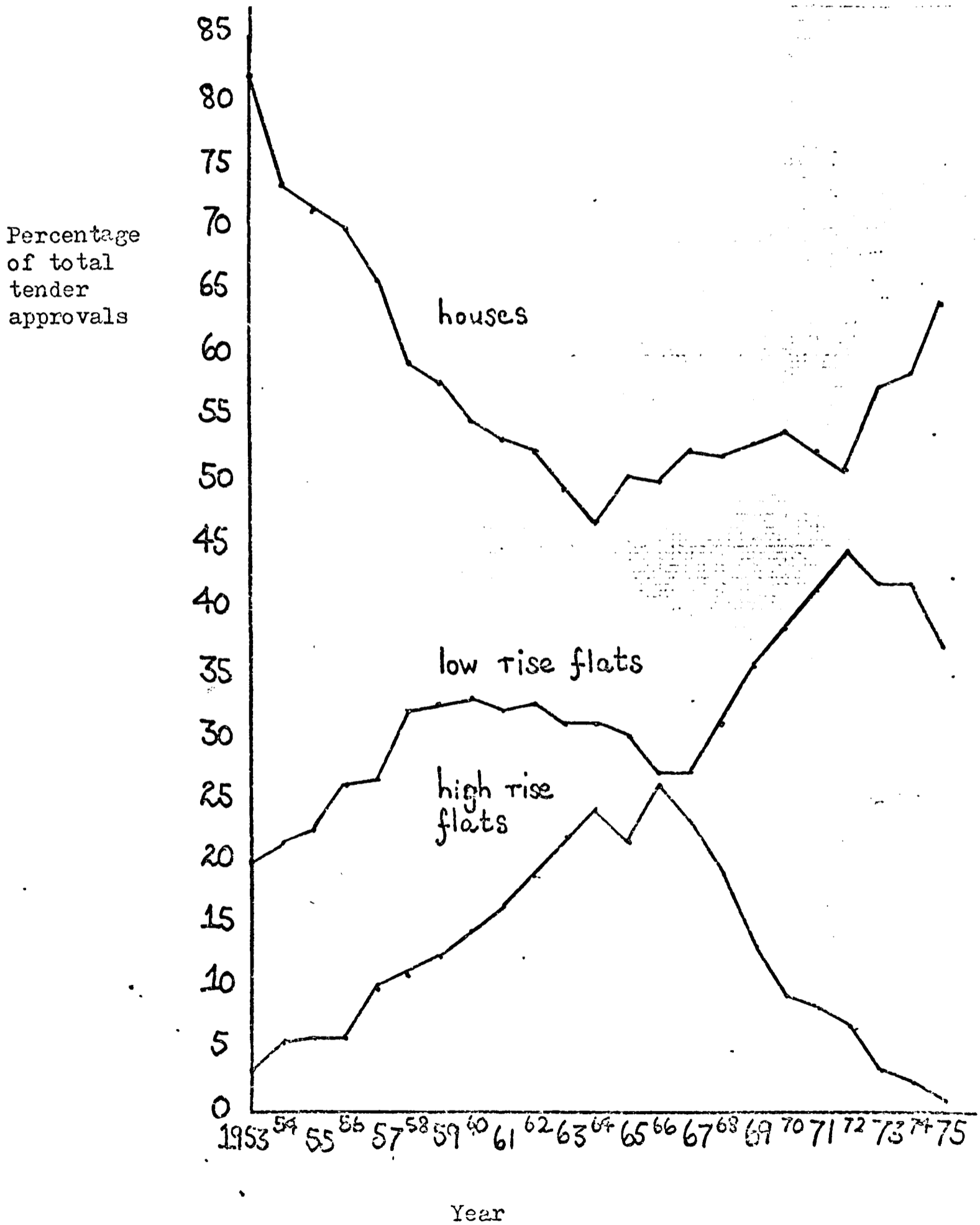
it remained static until 1966. High rise housing by contrast steadily increased in importance to 15% of public housing approvals in 1960 and 26% in 1966. The numbers of high rise dwellings approved rose from 6,000 in 1956 to 17,000 in 1961, 35,000 in 1964 and 44,000 in 1966, (Table 2.1).[29] The increasing importance of high flats was all the more remarkable since it coincided with a two thirds increase in public housing approvals, from 104,000 in 1961 to 172,000 five years later.

Table 2.1: Local Authority Approvals in Various Building Forms, 1953-75.

(Tender Approvals, England and Wales)

Year	Houses	Flats Low Rise	High Rise	Total
1953	149,904	38,749	6,730	195,382
1954	133,004	39,797	8,932	181,733
1955	97,365	31,606	8,044	137,015
1956	82,031	31,677	8,011	121,719
1957	72,964	31,992	10,009	114,965
1958	58,591	32,113	11,369	102,073
1959	66,099	37,583	15,109	118,791
1960	58,256	36,372	15,685	110,313
1961	53,213	33,428	17,107	103,748
1962	54,535	35,502	18,871	108,908
1963	58,835	39,109	27,500	125,444
1964	65,861	45,675	35,454	146,990
1965	78,520	49,067	34,953	162,540
1966	81,959	46,292	44,306	172,557
1967	85,211	46,025	39,309	170,545
1968	76,133	47,559	30,616	154,308
1969	56,731	40,253	15,217	112,201
1970	50,461	37,879	9,740	98,080
1971	46,460	38,419	8,004	92,883
1972	37,458	34,062	5,692	77,212
1973	48,141	36,531	2,970	87,642
1974	63,184	47,021	2,794	112,999
1975	70,173	42,336	1,484	113,993

Between 1966 and 1968 the public housing expansion faltered and in 1969 when public expenditure cuts began to take effect total housing approvals fell by over 27% in a single year. Thereafter overall approvals drifted down more gently until 1973 when they began to pick up again. But for high flats the bubble had burst irretrievably. Approvals of high rise fell by 31% between 1966 and 1968,

by more than half in the following year and by 38% in 1970. Fewer than 10,000 high flats were approved in 1970 and 2,750 in 1973.

In Scotland the data available on high rise is less complete.[30] The peak year of the '60s public housing expansion was again 1967, when total approvals neared 40,000 and high flats made up 29% of all public housing, (Table 2.2).[31] High rise approvals fell sharply in 1968 but then re-expanded again until 1970 before falling again.

Table 2.2: Local Authority Housing, Scotland, 1960-73.

	Proportion of Approvals %			Total Approvals
	Houses	Low Rise	High Flats	
1960	46.7	34.4	12.1	22,706
1961	52.5	31.4	7.3	19,248
1962	38.2	30.8	13.2	27,517
1963	41.1	30.0	22.2	29,958
1964	38.5	21.0	24.6	27,517
1965	35.2	21.0	28.7	33,260
1966	41.9	25.1	25.2	31,630
1967	46.6	24.8	28.6	39,438
1968	59.1	28.2	12.7	33,749
1969	57.2	25.6	17.2	33,756
1970	52.8	25.4	21.8	20,824
1971	64.6	23.3	14.8	23,122
1972	67.2	24.9	7.9	28,567
1973	81.0	12.9	6.1	11,677

Within the high rise category there was a marked trend towards increasingly tall blocks.. From 1955 to 1965 blocks of five to nine storeys, often termed 'medium rise', made up between 4.3% and 5.6% of all public housing, varying without any apparent pattern from year to year. Taller blocks on the other hand, were an increasing proportion of public housing during the period. Blocks of 10-14 storeys expanded from 0.7% of public housing in 1955 to 8.4% in 1963. Blocks of 15-19 storeys expanded from 0.1% of public housing in 1955 to 8.3% in 1964. The tallest blocks, of twenty storeys and over expanded from 0.3% of public housing in 1959 to 4.5% in 1967, (Figure 2.2).[32]

Figure 2.2: Local Authority Dwellings in High Rise Blocks as a
Proportion of Total Approvals, by Storey Height Categories,
1953-73.

Year
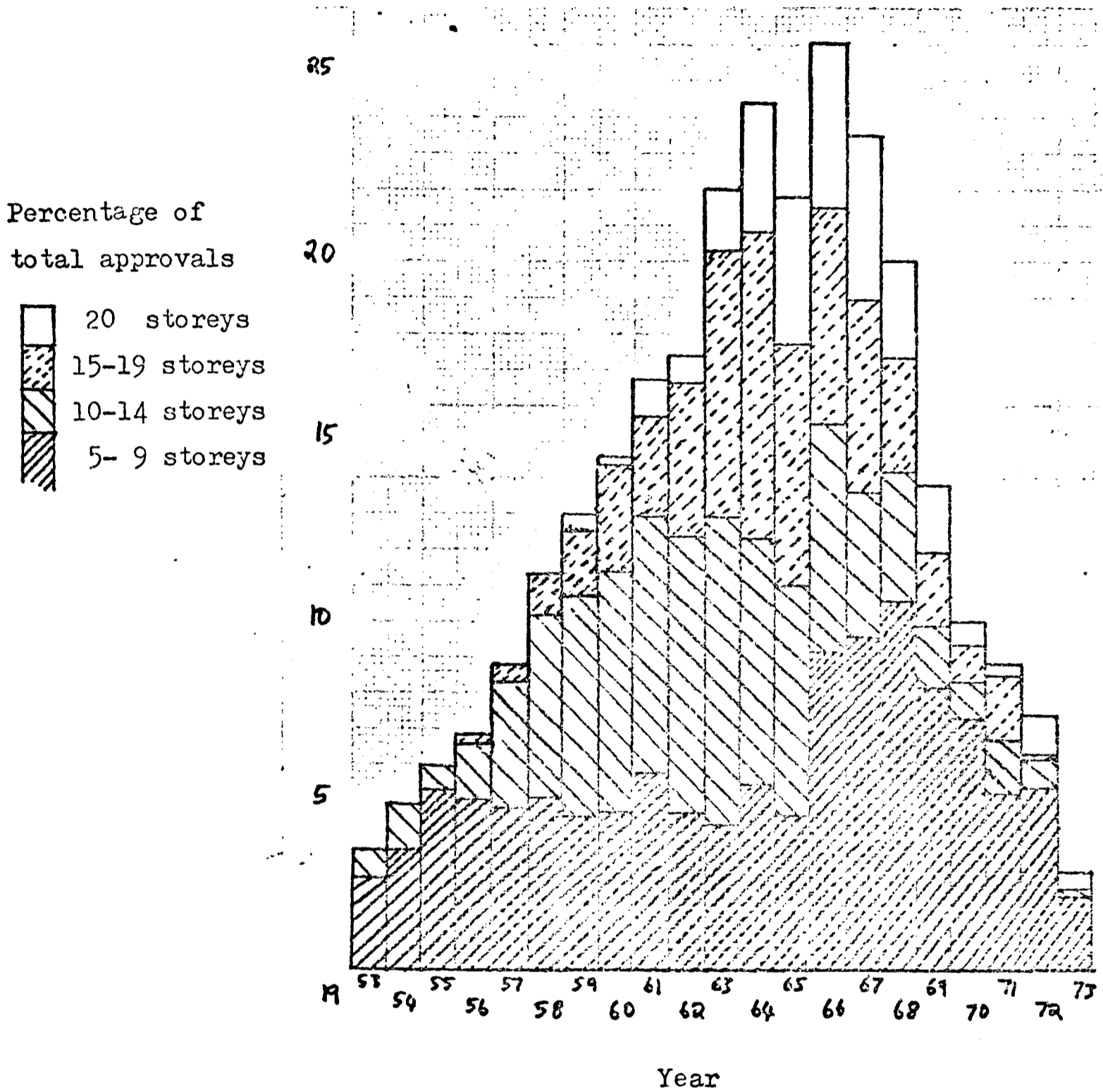
In 1966 when the progressive storey height element was eliminated from the flats subsidy, the trend towards increasing height ceased. Instead approvals of blocks under ten storeys more than doubled and grew until 1968 when they accounted for 10.5% of all public housing. In 1968 the taller blocks absorbed the whole of the decline in high rise building, and although medium rise building fell sharply thereafter its decline was still more gradual than that of the taller blocks.

This pattern, of a phased expansion of the taller blocks up to 1965, with a pronounced burst of 'medium rise' building from 1966 to 1970, seems to reflect very accurately changes in government subsidy policy. We shall see later that it also mirrored shifts in architectural fashion and construction technology.

THE REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF HIGH RISE

Analysis of the regional distribution of high flats is possible only for the period 1966-71, before which figures are not available and after which high rise approvals are so small that regional analysis becomes misleading. Although high flat building was declining in the period, over 187,000 high rise dwellings were approved, amounting to 18% of all approvals in these six years, and about 42% of all high rise built in Britain since 1953.

Over 90% of these approvals were in the six regions with conurbations recognized in the 1974 local government structure, Greater London, the North-West, Scotland, West Midlands, Yorkshire and Humberside, and the North, (Table 2.3).[33] Over a third were in Greater London alone, which accounted for over 46% of high flats approved in England and Wales. The proportion of English and Welsh high rise built in Greater London increased as high flat building declined, from 44% in 1966 to over 67% in 1971. Most regions except London, Yorkshire and the North West had virtually ceased high building by 1969. The propensity for local authorities to opt for high rise in London is best measured by the disparity between the region's share of national high rise and overall approvals. Only three other regions had a positive disparity.

Table 2.3: Regional Distribution of High Rise Building, 1966-71.

Region	Approvals 1966-71				Proportion of approvals in region (%)			Regional share of building (%)		
	Houses	Low Flats	High Flats	Total	Houses	Low Flats	High Flats	High Rise	Total	High Rise bias
Greater London	21,700	56,558	67,985	146,243	14.8	38.7	46.5	36.3	14.6	21.7
North West	53,505	42,723	25,317	121,545	44.0	35.2	20.8	13.5	12.1	1.4
Scotland	123,303	49,477	40,460	213,240	57.8	23.2	19.0	21.6	21.2	0.4
West Midlands	53,230	23,426	15,531	92,187	57.7	25.4	16.9	8.3	7.8	0.5
Yorkshire & Humberside	37,594	27,477	13,300	78,371	48.0	35.0	17.0	7.1	7.8	-0.7
North	46,593	13,480	7,715	67,788	68.7	19.9	11.4	4.1	6.8	-2.7
East Midlands	26,053	16,252	5,559	47,864	54.4	34.0	11.6	3.0	4.8	-1.8
Beds. Essex. Herts	25,977	13,184	3,983	43,144	60.2	30.6	9.2	2.1	4.3	-2.2
South-east Counties	19,146	13,931	2,389	35,466	54.0	39.3	6.7	1.3	3.5	-2.3
Southern Counties	33,427	14,826	2,290	50,543	66.1	29.4	4.5	1.2	4.0	-2.8
Wales	27,585	11,957	1,047	40,589	68.0	29.4	2.6	0.6	4.0	-3.4
South West	27,565	12,116	1,052	40,733	67.7	29.7	2.6	0.6	4.1	-3.5
East Anglia	19,626	6,874	727	27,227	72.1	25.2	2.7	0.4	2.7	-2.3

The mix of housing forms adopted also varies markedly across the regions with a fairly clear inverse relationship between the building of houses and high rise. The level of aggregation of these figures does not allow us to speculate about the lack of apparent relation between the use of low and high rise flats.

The wide disparity between regions in their use of high rise and the concentration of high flat approvals in the most heavily urbanized areas implies that high rise was a much more important element in public housing in urban areas than the national figures suggest. For example at the peak of the high rise boom in 1967 over 60% of approvals in Greater London were for high flats.

THE URBAN LOCATION OF HIGH RISE HOUSING STOCKS

The official view of the urban location of high rise housing has been summed up in a Central Office of Information pamphlet which claims:

> High blocks of flats are generally built in the central
> areas of large towns to replace old, overcrowded dwellings
> where land is scarce. They may also be used to provide
> focal points in new housing areas. [34]

That high rise building in the late 1960s was concentrated in the most highly urbanized regions of the country offers some prima facie evidence for this interpretation. But it is not possible to determine from government published figures the urban location of high rise flats. In the course of this research an approach was made to the Department of the Environment statistics section to obtain data which they might have collected but not published. Unfortunately it appears that until 1966 the old Ministry failed to keep adequate records of the location of high flat building at all, and that since this date only the regional location of such housing has been recorded. At no time in the post-war period then can there have been any statistics of the urban location of high flats being used in policy making.

This extraordinary gap in official statistics means that this section is compelled to use other less adequate and partial statistics in order to specify

more precisely the distribution of high rise housing across urban areas.

Our main source is a publication of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance, Housing Maintenance and Management·Statistics which includes figures for the size of individual local authorities housing stocks by storey height.[35] Since these statistics are compiled from voluntary replies made to the Institute their coverage is by no means complete, and the authorities which do send replies differ in systematic ways from those which do not.[36] But a total of 443 English and Welsh housing authorities sent replies in 1972, which we have chosen as a base year since it illustrates the importance of high flats in public housing stocks by the end of the high rise housing boom. About three fifths of all the high rise housing in England and Wales seems to have been included by this date, despite the omission of data for the G.L.C. and for some other large authorities including Birmingham and ten of the London Boroughs. A total of 22 London Boroughs, 58 County Boroughs, 105 Municipal Boroughs, 144 Urban Districts and 115 Rural Districts provided the necessary information, however, so that we would argue that these statistics can add appreciably to our knowledge providing their limitations are kept in mind.[37]

Over two thirds of the authorities replying to the C.I.P.F. in 1972 had no high rise dwellings in their public housing stock, (Table 2.4).

Table 2.4: High Rise Housing Stocks, held by Local Authorities 1972. Number of Authorities.

| Authority type | Percentage of Public Housing in High Rise | | | | | | | Total |
	0	0-5	5-10	10-15	15-20	20-50	Over 50	
London Boroughs	1	1	3	5	3	6	3	22
County Boroughs	12	13	17	7	9	-	-	58
Municipal Boroughs	60	30	7	6	1	1	-	105
Urban Districts	123	9	9	2	1	-	-	144
Rural Districts	·109	2	2	1	-	-	-	114
All Authorities	305	55	38	21	14	7	3	443

The importance of high rise clearly declines the smaller the authority.
Only in the London Boroughs and County Boroughs was high rise an important
element in local authority's housing stocks. If we distinguish between
county boroughs which were part of officially recognized conurbations and those
which were not, it becomes clear that the former were more likely to have
sizeable high rise housing stocks, (Table 2.5).[38]

Table 2.5: Conurbation and Freestanding County Boroughs.

	Percentage of public housing in high rise					
	0	0-5	5-10	10-15	15-20	Total
Conurbation C.B	3	3	9	4	7	26
Freestanding C.B	9	9	9	3	2	32.

Some of the freestanding county boroughs with sizeable amounts of high rise had
considerable housing problems, such as Blackburn and Hull. Others, such as
the two seaside resorts of Southend and Brighton, are more surprising.

There appears to be no very clear relation between the population size of
county boroughs and their propensity to hold sizeable high rise stocks,
(Table 2.6). The county boroughs without any high rise all have populations
under 200,000, however.

Table 2.6: High Rise in County Boroughs by Population Size, 1972.

Number of C.Bs	Percentage of public housing in High Rise					
Population	0	0-5	5-10	10-15	15-20	Total
Under 100,000	9	5	8	1	2	25
100,001-200,000	3	3	6	1	4	17
200,001-300,000	-	3	4	2	1	10
Over 300,000	-	1	-	3	2	6

The overall distribution of the high rise housing stock in the C.I.P.F.
data set emphasizes the concentration of high rise in large urban areas, and the
small numbers of high flats in the smaller authorities. (Table 2.7). Four
fifths of the high rise covered was in London and the conurbation county boroughs,
with a further 18% in the free standing county boroughs and non-county boroughs.

Table 2.7: Distribution of Aggregate High Rise Stocks, 1972.

	High Flats	% of total stocks	Average stock	Number of Authorities
London Boroughs	75,170	38.2	3,580	21
Conurbation C.Bs	82,279	41.8	3,577	23
Freestanding C.Bs	25,071	12.8	1,090	23
Municipal Boroughs	10,312	5.2	229	45
Urban Districts	3,038	1.5	145	21
Rural Districts	769	0.5	154	5
All Authorities	196,639	100.0	1,425	138

A quarter of the 13,350 high flats in the municipal boroughs and urban districts were in or directly adjacent to conurbation areas.[39]

The conurbation county borough total mainly consists of the high flats in a few large cities, including Liverpool (19,270), Leeds (11,930), Manchester (9530), Sheffield (8,360), Newcastle upon Tyne (6,170), Warley (4,650), Wolverhampton (3,770), and Bradford (3,080). In the free-standing county boroughs the largest numbers of high flats are in Bristol (5,450), and Hull (3,710). These ten authorities with over 3,000 high rise dwellings, together with two important authorities not in the data set, Birmingham (24,013) and Nottingham (4,300), between them account for over 100,000 high rise dwellings or about 25% of all the high rise in England and Wales.[40]

In London many boroughs have high rise stocks on the same scale as these cities, particularly inner London authorities such as Southwark (9,460), Westminster (8,610), Lambeth (8,130), Islington (8,300) and some intermediate areas like Newham (6,740), Enfield (4,650), Brent (3,240) and Barking (2,990). Other London boroughs with large high rise housing stocks but which are not included in the data set are Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth, Greenwich, Camden and Hammersmith. In addition, of course, the G.L.C. has a high rise housing stock running into many thousands.[41]

No strictly comparable figures for the proportion of change in the data set high flats stock between 1967 and 1972 are available since the data set is smaller than for 1972 alone. But it seems clear that virtually all the change in high rise stocks was concentrated in the conurbations and large towns elsewhere, (Table 2.8). Again much of the building by smaller authorities took place in or near conurbation areas.

Table 2.8: Distribution of Change in High Flats Stock, 1967-72.

	Change in high flats stock	% of total change	Average increase	Number of Authorities
London Boroughs	21,816	33.1	1,454	15
Conurbation C.Bs	28,140	42.7	1,563	18
Freestanding C.Bs	11,169	17.0	620	18
Municipal Boroughs	3,065	4.7	93	33
Urban Districts	1,239	1.9	89	14
Rural Districts	427	0.6	107	4
All Authorities	65,856	100.0	646	102

Of course, these figures do not give an accurate picture of the changes in high rise housing stocks over this period. In particular they probably under-estimate the concentration of high flat building in the largest housing authorities, and in London. Data published in the G.L.C.'s Annual Abstract of Statistics for example, show that in the four years 1970-73 a total of 37,562 high flats were completed in the metropolis, of which the G.L.C. built 8,227 of them and the London Boroughs 29,335.[42] Over three quarters of the G.L.C's completions were in the Group A Boroughs, (the G.L.C's officially defined housing stress area which includes most of Inner London plus Newham and Hackney). About two thirds of the London Boroughs' total was in the same area, where high flats formed over 60% of all approvals until 1973.

The data that we have examined here strongly suggests that a very large proportion of all high flat stocks is concentrated in the conurbation areas of

Britain.   In a data set strongly biased against London and conurbation areas

in general we found that 80% of all high rise stocks were in conurbation areas,

and 92% were in the conurbations or in freestanding county boroughs.   The

true figures are certainly greater than this.   We have noted also some data

suggestive of the extent to which high rise, in London at least, is concentrated

in the inner city.

INFLUENCES ON HIGH RISE BUILDING

A proper statistical description of influences on high rise building would

require a better data base and a larger analysis of possible variables than is

feasible here.   This section accordingly presents only some simple correlation

coefficients for local authorities' propensity to have one form of housing

rather than another in their housing stocks, correlated with some variables

which it was guessed might be influential.   There may therefore be other

variables involved and no inferences can be made from these correlations in the

data set to influences in authorities not in the data set.

The London C.I.P.F. data provides some strong correlations.[43]   The

proportion of the local authority housing stock in high flats correlates very

closely with net residential densities and the proportion of the housing stock

which is privately rented, (Table 2.9).[44]   The very high correlation between

the importance of high flats in the local authority housing stock and net

residential densities reflects the two-way relation between these variables;

i.e. high densities cause local authorities to build high flats which in turn

increases residential densities.   The importance of high flats correlates

negatively with the proportion of the local housing stock which is owner

occupied and the extent of the area which is open space.   Rather surprisingly

there appeared to be no relation with the importance of slum clearance but a

moderately strong relation with the continuing incidence of poor housing,

measured by the proportion of the local housing stock without a bath.   Interest-

ingly enough, the greater the proportion of the local authority's high rise

which was completed between 1967 and 1971 the less the importance of high flats in the authority housing stock.[45] This suggests that high flats were more important elements of the public housing stock in areas where the policy was a longstanding one.

Table 2.9: Pearson Correlation coefficients for Influences on High Flats Distribution, London and the County Boroughs, 1971.

(Correlations of less than 0.20 or -0.20 omitted)	London Boroughs % of Local Authority Housing in:			County Boroughs		
% of Local Housing stock:	High Flats	Low Flats	Houses	High Flats	Low Flats	Houses
Owner Occupied	-0.82	-0.22	0.88	-0.20	–	–
Council Rented	–	–	–	–	-0.30	0.22
Private Rental	0.84	–	-0.83	0.30	0.35	-0.42
% of Authority area:						
Residential	–	0.57	0.37	na	na	na
Industrial uses	–	–	-0.21			
Open Space	-0.61	-0.40	0.76	na	na	na
% of Local Housing:						
Without bath	0.52	0.37	-0.66	–	–	–
Cleared 1966-71	–	0.25	-0.22	0.35	–	–
Net Residential Density	0.95	–	-0.89	na	na	na
Gross Population Density	*	*	*	0.34	–	-0.25
Population Size	*	*	*	0.27	–	-0.22

* : Correlation inappropriate   na : Data not available

A very different pattern of influences appears to apply to the county boroughs. Unfortunately land use and net residential density figures are unobtainable for these authorities. But the data on gross population densities again suggest that local authorities build high rise and do not build houses in higher density areas. Significantly perhaps, the importance of high flats is related most closely to the importance of slum clearance between 1967-71,

followed by gross population densities, private rental houses and population size. A weak negative correlation with the local importance of owner occupation also exists.

The significance of the high rise figures needs to be set against the figures for the other elements of local authority housing stocks. There is a clear inverse relationship between the influences on the building of high flats and houses.

In summary, the county boroughs with sizeable proportions of their local authority housing in high flats have higher gross populations densities, did a lot of slum clearance in the late '60s, have fairly large populations, still have higher than average proportions of privately rented dwellings and fewer owner occupiers. In London these relationships are much stronger except that high flats' importance is related to the continuing incidence of poor housing and not slum clearance. High rise in London is concentrated in boroughs with high net residential densities, little open space and few owner occupiers.

The London data thus show a very pronounced tendency for high flats to be important in inner city and housing stress areas and to be absent in suburban areas. This picture is well supported by the county borough data. The more muted relationships in the provincial cities may be due to the greater level of aggregation in the data - the county boroughs are 'whole city' authorities rather than small parts of a very large metropolis. Or it may reflect a real difference indicating that county boroughs unlike the London authorities were able to pursue fairly similar housing policies in inner city and suburban areas. An equalization of housing policies within city areas would reduce the variation between cities.

Conclusion

The period of high rise building in Britain during the fifties and sixties bears the characteristic hallmarks of a 'boom', a swiftly escalating increase followed by a dramatic downturn. The existence of strong national trends

brings out the potential importance of an analysis of national policy making on the issue, and the prima facie evidence of direct influence from central government subsidy changes is impressive. In terms of geographical location, high rise housing seems to have been confined very largely to conurbation areas – mainly to 'core' or inner city authorities – and a few large free-standing cities and towns. The co-variation of high building with high urban population densities seems to be the main finding of our partial analysis of influences on local authorities' use of different building forms.

REFERENCES : CHAPTER TWO

1. J.B. Cullingworth, Housing and Local Government in England and Wales (London, Allen and Unwin, 1966), Ch. 1.

2. Housing (Miscellaneous and Financial Provision) Act, 1946.

3. See D.V. Donnison, Housing Policy Since the War (Weleyn, Hertfordshire; Codicote Press, 1960).

4. Greater London Council, Home Sweet Home: 85 Years of Housing by LCC and GLC Architects (London, Greater London Council, 1973).

5. Cullingworth, Housing and Local Government, pp. 34-36. For the political process involved see H. Macmillan, The Tide of Fortune 1945-55 (London, Macmillan, 1969). See also, National Community Development Project, Whatever Happened to Council Housing? (London, Community Development Project Information and Intelligence Unit, 1976), p. 18.

6. A.A. Nevitt, Housing, Taxation and Subsidies: a Study of Housing in the United Kingdom (London, Nelson, 1966), pp. 108-9.

7. E. Layton, Building by Local Authorities (London, Allen and Unwin, 1961), pp. 48-50.

8. Completions were 174,635 in Great Britain in 1957, and were down to 125,966 by 1959, Ministry of Housing and Local Government, Housing Statistics, No. 2. 1966, Table 1, p. 1. Cullingworth shows the fall of the average floor area of local authority houses in Housing and Local Government, p. 145.

9. MHLG: Central Housing Advisory Committee, Homes for Today and Tomorrow (London, HMSO, 1961), p. 6.

10. Ministry of Housing and Local Government, Circular 13/62 'Homes for Today and Tomorrow'.

11. MHLG, Housing in England and Wales (London, HMSO, 1961), Cmnd. 1290.

12. Effectively the 1961 Act reintroduced the general housing subsidy but with a heavy emphasis on MHLG approval of the purpose of housing. Cullingworth, Housing and Local Government, pp. 50-53.

13. This was certainly the intention of the Act according to a senior civil servant interviewed, 1975.

14. R.H. Crossman, The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister: Volume One, Minister of Housing, 1964-66 (London, Hamish Hamilton and Jonathan Cape, 1975), pp. 381, 383, 403.

15. Cullingworth, Housing and Local Government, pp. 53-7 describes the subsidy system. For the yardsticks see MHLG, Circular 36/67, Housing Standards, Costs and Subsidies'.

16. MHLG, The Housing Programme 1965 to 1970 (London, HMSO, 1965), Cmnd. 2838, pp.

17. M. Pawley, Architecture Versus Housing (New York, Praeger, 1971), pp. 23-5. See also Local Government Boards for England and Wales, and Scotland, Report of the Committee on the Provision of Dwellings for the Working Classes (London, HMSO, 1918), Cd. 9191. [Tudor Walters Report].

18. See A. Ravetz, 'From Working Class Tenement to Modern Flat', in A. Sutcliffe (ed), Multi-Storey Living (London, Croom Helm, 1974), pp. 122-50.

19. In the Housing Act 1972. See Nevitt, Housing, Taxation and Subsidies, pp. 107-8.

20. Nevitt, Housing, Taxation and Subsidies, pp. 108-9.

21. Before this they had qualified only for the base rate general housing subsidy.

22. See below, section 4.8.

23. The subsidy came into effect from the date of publication of the MHLG White Paper, The Housing Program 1965 to 1970 although it was finally enacted into law only in the 1967 Housing Subsidies Act.

24. MHLG, Circular 36/67.

25. See, for example, J. Bratt, 'Seifert versus Yardstick', Architects' Journal, 11 August 1971, 291-2. See also MHLG circulars 30/70 and 52/70 for revisions of the Housing Cost Yardsticks.

26. MHLG, Housing Statistics, No. 2, (1966), Table 7, p. 17. England and Wales only. Local authorities and new towns, plus housing by government departments, etc.

27. Ibid.

28. Computed from MHLG, Housing Statistics No. 2 (1966), Table 7, p. 17; Department of the Environment (DOE), Housing Statistics, No. 24 (1972), Table 12, p. 25; DOE, Housing and Construction Statistics No. 21, (1977), Table 22, p. 33. The data refer only to England and Wales; tender approvals by local authorities and new towns.

29. MHLG, Housing Statistics, No. 2 (1966), Table 7, p. 17; DOE, Housing Statistics, No. 24 (1972), Table 10, p. 24; DOE, Housing and Construction Statistics, No. 18, (1976), supplementary Table XXX(a), p. 90. England and Wales: local authorities and new towns, tender approvals.

30. Data was apparently not available for high flats building before 1960. Until 1966 all maisonettes were classified separately so that their storey height could not be determined.

31. MHLG, Housing Statistics, No. 2 (1966), Table 6, p. 16; DOE, Housing Statistics, No. 24 (1972), Tables 11 and 12, pp. 24-5; DOE, Housing and Construction Statistics, No. 18, (1976), supplementary Table XXX(c), p. 90. Maisonettes have been excluded from the storey height percentages, which therefore sum to less than 100%. See note 30 above. Tender approval by the Scottish Special Housing Association, local authorities and new towns.

32. MHLG; Housing Statistics, No. 2 (1966), Table 7, p. 17; DOE, Housing Statistics, No. 24 (1972), Table 12, p. 25; DOE, Housing and Construction Statistics, No. 21 (1977), Table 22, p. 33. England and Wales; tender approvals by local authorities and new towns. A similar figure could not be presented for Scotland where housing statistics do not distinguish storey heights above six storeys.

33. MHLG, Housing Statistics, No. 5, (1967), Table 12, p. 21 and Table 10, p. 20; Housing Statistics, No. 9 (1968), Table 12, p. 24 and Table 10, p. 23; Housing Statistics, No. 13 (1969), Table 12, p. 24 and Table 10, p. 12; Housing Statistics, No. 16 (1970), Table 13, p. 25, and Table 11, p. 24; DOE, Housing Statistics, No. 21 (1971), Table 13, p. 25 and Table 11, p. 24; Housing Statistics, No. 24 (1972), Table 13, p. 25 and Table 11, p. 24; Housing and Construction Statistics, No. 2 (1973), supplementary Table XVII, p. 75. Local authorities and new towns only.

34. Central Office of Information, Housing in Britain (London, HMSO, 1970), p. 4.

35. Institute of Municipal Treasurers and Accountants, Housing Maintenance and Management Statistics 1966-72, Part II Table ; column (4) gives the number of dwellings built under the Housing Acts; column (5) total is used in all subsequent tables requiring it, ie the total for purpose built council dwellings, rather than for complete council stocks. (London, Institute of Municipal Treasurers and Accountants, 1967-73). All data refers to the situation on 31st March of the year cited.

36. The number of responding authorities increased throughout the period and showed a big jump in 1972, a year we have taken as our base year. The bias of responses seems to have been towards central and southern England, smaller and wealthier authorities.

37. A detailed study of the 1971 data is included in E. Gittus, Flats, Families and the Under-Fires (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976), Ch. 8 and Appendices B and C.

38. County Boroughs were distinguished as in Conurbations if they were so classified by the 1971 Census, and as free-standing if they were not included in conurbations. See OPCS, Census 1971: Housing Part 1 (London, HMSO, 1974), pp. x-xi in Appendix A.

39. Authorities were defined as in conurbations if they were so classified by the 1971 Census, and as adjacent to conurbations if they shared one or more boundaries with a conurbation authority.

40. Birmingham's high rise total was computed from a document communicated to me by the City Housing Manager, 'Multi-storey Flats' (Birmingham, Birmingham City Housing Department, 1974, Mimeo). As far as possible, flats completed after 31st March 1972 were excluded from the total. The Nottingham total was computed from Housing Maintenance and Management Statistics, 1971-2, Part II, columns 22 and 32, for lift served dwellings. It seems likely that most of these will be high flats. (The number of lift served dwellings was calculated by dividing the total expenditure on lifts by the average expenditure per dwelling involved).

41. MHLG, Housing Statistics Table on 'Storey Heights' includes the L.C.C./ G.L.C. tenders; the Table on 'Floor Area and Cost of Construction by Type of Dwelling' excludes them and allows very crude computation of the G.L.C. high rise effort. What proportion of the G.L.C. high rise had been transferred to the Boroughs in 1972 is very difficult to say.

42. Greater London Council, Annual Abstract of Statistics 1970-1973 (London, Greater London Council, 1972-1975); 1970, Table 7.18, p. 220; 1971, Table 8.10, p. 231; 1972, Table ; 1973, Table 8.05, p. 232.

43. As with much ecological analyses, the strength of the correlations is only really useful for comparison within this data set. The small number of cases will tend to increase the figures.

44. The table uses the 1972 CIPF data and indices computed from the figures in Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, Census 1971: County Tables, Part I, Table 3, Part III, Table 25; MHLG/DOE, Local Housing Statistics, (1967-72), Nos. 2, 6, 9, 13, 21, Table 5 to 1969, Table 4 from 1970- . Data on net residential densities and land use in London were obtained from the G.L.C., Annual Abstract of Statistics, 1971, Table 4.02, pp. 72-3 and Table 1.01, p. 2, column (1). Net residential density is calculated by dividing the residential population by the residential area.

45. We do not report these figures in full, since it is unclear whether they could be considered independent variables or not for our analysis.

CHAPTER THREE

Dimensions of the High Rise Housing Issue

No discussion of ideologies, controversies and arguments can be abstracted from the consideration of the social functions they may serve or the interests they may advance. But it is possible to separate out the treatment of such factors from the detailed consideration of political processes and to examine them in a systemmatic way. The advantages of this procedure are that a much wider range of arguments can be covered in greater depth, and that a clear iuea of the overall character of the issues and policies in question can be brought to bear on the direct analysis of the political process. This chapter then tries to give a reasonably comprehensive picture of the issues involved and the ideas associated with high rise as an essential preliminary to the detailed analysis of policy formation and debate contained in the next chapter.

We shall discuss six main aspects of the high rise housing issue, four of them associated with advocacy of greater high flat building, and two with opposition to the policy. The 'pro' arguments reviewed relate to the place of high rise in modern architectural ideology; technological and industrial aspects of the high rise boom; the planning dimension; and the relation between high flat building and the organization of the public housing effort. The 'con' arguments surveyed concern the costs of the policy and the effect of living in high flat accommodation on residents. Finally, section 3.7 draws together these different threads in characterizing the promotion of high rise building as that of a 'technological shortcut to social change', which, like many shortcuts, proved to be illusory.

3.1: Architectural Ideology and High Rise

ORIGINS OF HIGH RISE

The cultural origins of high rise housing in architectural ideology owed nothing at all to the tenement building tradition evident in British and other countries' public housing in the nineteenth century.[1] Indeed high rise housing

was associated with the emergence of the 'modern movement' in architecture
which was directly opposed to this tradition.[2] Proposals for high rise
building came from many sources - the futurist city planning of Sant'Elia and
Chiattone, Gropius and Maxwell Fry, the Constructivists and architects in
Holland and Czechoslovakia. But Le Corbusier's contribution made by far the
greatest impact on the profession.[3] In a series of plans, exhibitions and
books in the 1920s Corbusier argued for the adoption of high rise as the funda-
mental building form of the modern city. His views made high rise a central
image in modernist architecture and exerted a direct influence on virtually all
contemporary architects.

Corbusier's basic conception of the structure of a city was nuclear and
architectonic to an extreme. At the centre of his ideal city would be giant 60
storey towers spaced far apart with wide open areas between and used for busi-
ness and professional offices, and perhaps housing. Next would be a ring of
twelve storey apartment houses built in long winding lines. Then there would
be a green belt beyond which small suburbs of individual houses would be built.
He called this 'the prototype of a classless city' but did not explain how
these different types of housing would be allocated or paid for.[4] As they
developed, Corbusier's formulations of his housing ideas became more techno-
cratic and he tried to depoliticize his views.[5]

He was hampered in this effort by an extraordinary degree of architectural
determinism and by his enthusiastic espousal of mass housing ideas. In Towards
a New Architecture he claimed:

> The problem of the house is the problem of the epoch. The equilibrium
> of society of today depends upon it.
> Architecture has for its first duty that of bringing about a revision
> of values.
> We must create the mass production spirit.
> The spirit of constructing mass production houses.[6]
> The spirit of living in mass production houses.

Corbusier barely mentioned the social and political pre-requisites or consequences
of the implementation of his ideas. Discussing the practicalities of mass
housing he distinguished as 'collaborators already consecrated to the task; big
industry and the specialized factories'. The 'collaborators which must be brought

in' included transport industries, banks and the architecture schools. The

coalition thus formed would be 'one between architects and men of taste' while

'the executive' would be 'business concerns and architects'.[7] As for the

people for whom mass housing would be built, Corbusier recognized that they

were likely to accept the changes he envisaged 'only when the world has been

radically upset':

> The dwelling changes only at the last moment, almost without the
> consent of the inhabitants, against the will of the passive forces
> of preservation.[8]

In later versions of his ideal city proposals the technological commitment was

softened by the description of his skyscraper town as a 'vertical garden city'

in which open space, greenery, fresh air and sunlight set off the machine-made

environment.[9]

But Le Corbusier never modified his notion of architecture as abstract

elite planning making reference primarily to the physical environment. In 1929

he wrote:

> Plans are not politics.
> Plans are the rational and lyrical monuments erected in the midst of
> contingencies ... the environment, regions, races, cultures, typo-
> graphies and climate ... the resources brought by modern technology.
> These are universal.[10]

To Corbusier and architects educated on his ideas the building of housing in

forms recognized to be unpopular but desirable in terms of elite aesthetics or

technological sophistication seemed uncontroversial, a legitimate exercise of

professional power.

> I have been very careful not to depart from the technical side of my
> problem. I am an architect; no one is going to make a politician
> of me. Everyone in his own domain, where he is an expert can apply
> his specialized knowledge and carry his solutions to their logical
> conclusion.[11]

POST-WAR DEVELOPMENTS

The sudden success of the modern movement in capturing the commanding

heights of the architectural profession after 1945 cannot be detailed here. It

is important to note, however, that the conditions of the inter-war period 'all

inhibited the development of the modern movement, and as a consequence, its ability to learn from experience. When the floodgates were eventually released, the leaders of the movement were hopelessly unprepared,professionally, politically and morally'.[12] Le Corbusier made one further contribution to the idea of mass housing by building a heavily subsidized French government reconstruction project, the Unité d'Habitation at Marseilles, a massive seventeen storey block housing 1,600 people.[13] In many ways the Unité broke away from the abstract megastructures of Corbusier's early ideas and formed one of the seminal works in the post-war 'International' style, which stressed slab blocks built in concrete rather than curtain walled towers.[14] The same kind of practical application occurred elsewhere, narrowing down the circle of influences on and influences from housing.

Most architects expressed a willingness to come to terms with the social context within which they worked. In the particularly restrictive situation of low cost public housing they found high rise a useful and respectable solution to problems whose definition they felt incapable of altering. Thus Yamasaki, a respected American architect who designed the now notorious Pruitt-Igoe scheme in St. Louis, wrote:

> As an architect if I had no economic or social limitations I'd solve all my problems with one storey buildings. Imagine how pleasant it would be to always work in spaces overlooking lovely gardens filled with flowers.
>
> Yet we know that within the framework of our present cities this is impossible to achieve... We must recognize social and economic limitations. A solution without such a recognition would be meaningless.[15]

Those architects who rejected fatalism in the face of post-war realities were predominantly attracted to the hard technology, 'logical' solutions of Buckminster-Fuller and Paolo Soleri.[16] These architects' frankly technocratic approach produced such repressive proposals as Buckminster-Fuller's Harlem redevelopment and Soleri's 'New City' megastructure.

ARCHITECTURE AND HIGH FLATS IN BRITAIN

After 1945 there was a marked change in the balance of public and private architecture in Britain, and a flood of young architects into the larger public offices produced the distinctive social responsibility element in architectural ideology, which focused primarily on housing and school building.[17] Innovation in architecture was no longer associated with theory and planning, as it had been in the 1930s: 'success for the young post-war graduate was actually building what his teachers had envisioned'.[18] As part of this movement, the debate amongst architects about high rise shifted away from whether to build high flats - this was taken for granted - and towards detailed design and technical issues. The debate changed also from a literary to an ostensive one, marked by the extended and repetitive discussion of a small number of individual schemes. In these circumstances British architects tended to justify the use of high rise in terms of a 'weak determinism', a non-decisive but important necessity to build multistorey accommodation in terms of social, economic or technological changes. These explanations were highly selective.[19]

The other strand of architectural ideology most often related to high rise was a vaguely defined appeal to 'social responsibility'. Paradoxically this did not denote deference to the 'untutored' preferences of public housing clients but was interpreted in elitist terms and combined with a strong determinist view of the influence of architectural design. Although the vulgar form of this view was not usually deployed, the basic message of this element in architectural ideology was that designs for buildings could have a direct and important influence on social relations.[20] Social responsibility thus came to mean incorporating in high flat designs features which it was supposed would produce desired forms of social behaviour. The leading instance of this was the adoption of Le Corbusier's 'streets in the air' idea at Sheffield to improve contact between neighbours (an effort in which they failed dismally).[21]

On a smaller scale and in a more diffuse way the architecture of public housing in Britain displays both the fatalistic and the strong minded responses

to a limiting reality. The fatalistic response was typified by the production of hundreds of schemes for high rise which made no pretension to any significant architectural qualities. This strand of design reached its zenith during the industrialized building campaign, when architects in many cities relinquished any real control over the building design and concentrated only on layouts and landscaping.[22]

The strong minded architects' response to public housing provision was spearheaded by the Smithson's 'new Brutalist' manifesto, which led directly to the growth of a recognized design approach whose trademark was the production of avowedly 'hard' designs using dramatic building forms and a great deal of exposed concrete.[23] Very high blocks unrelieved by detailing were also favoured and in a 1968 article headlined 'High Rise is Inevitable' Norman Wilson argued:

> It is important to avoid the rigidity of present day high rise and[24] move further beyond the 30 or 40 storeys into the hundred storeys.

The Smithson's ideas also lead directly to the long, deck access blocks of

Park Hill and Hyde Park in Sheffield, 'two of the largest and most uncompromising public sector housing developments ever built in Britain'.[24]

But towards the middle of the 1960s the architectural culture established before 1939 began to disintegrate from a variety of attacks. The first of these was that of the 'pop' architects and artists who stressed a deliberate embracing of the artefacts of business civilization and a new science fiction technological fixation, which centred on the use of plastics and steel in preference to concrete, and on the development of flexible and temporary building forms in preference to the monumentality and permanence of established architecture.[26] Later a variety of new inputs into architectural theory created temporary vogues. Studies of 'personalization' and 'architecture without architects' broadened the range of acceptable images to include the previously condemned inter-war suburbs and the self-build housing of Third World cities, leading in time to the so-called 'post-modern' architecture of the 1970s.[27] Notions of territoriality were used to criticize the unstructured public spaces

of local authority housing. Architects close to the vernacular tradition, such as Eric Lyons, began to be recognized, and an increasing use was made of traditional materials such as wood, brick and stone. Overall architectural culture moved from a relatively homogenous modernism towards a new eclecticism, a general background shift which probably did more to reduce the use of high rise than any developed debate in the profession, and certainly was vastly more influential than the participatory ideas.[28] There is some evidence that dissatisfaction with high rise was in part a cause of the general shift, as in the critique of functionalism put forward by Rapoport and Cowburn.[29] But it was only when the transition had begun that criticism of high rise developments came to be voiced. The movement of opinion away from high rise was thus a product of the aging and partial decay of the inter-war architectural culture, and in many ways a by-product of this process. High rise housing's failure became a stick to beat the old guard with almost by chance; the perception of this failure had no deep roots in and no very central effects on architectural ideology.[30]

3.2: Technology, Innovation and Industrial Concentration

The aim of this section is to explore the connection between high rise and 'an ethos of optimism about technology - a leitmotif linking high flats with technological advance'.[31] In particular, we shall try to show that there was no very direct input from new technology underlying the adoption of high flats; and that many arguments phrased in terms of technology were actually more relevant to industrial concentration issues.

THE TECHNOLOGY OF HIGH BUILDING

There is nothing particularly modern about tall building per se. The first skyscrapers were built in Chicago after the fire of 1871 where 'by the 1890s office blocks, hotels and warehouses were being built ... which would have been regarded as modern in England in 1930.[32] The transatlantic cultural lag produced by the conservatism of the British building industry made itself

felt in many areas.[33] But the basic technological skills for high building existed well before 1939, as the Highpoint blocks demonstrated.[34] Steel frame construction developed by the 1920s. Reinforced and pre-cast concrete were in production before 1914, and pre-stressed concrete by 1938.[35] Some of the non-traditional building techniques later used in high flat construction, notably Wimpey's 'no-fines' and Laing's Easiform were in production in the 1920s for houses.[36] Other precasting technique used by Concrete Ltd., Wates and Reema originated in the 1939-45 period. Even the heavy prefabrication systems such as Camus and Larsen-Nielson adopted during the 1960s industrialised building campaign, were being widely used on the Continent by 1949.[37] The equipment for high rise building was scarce initially - the first tower crane was imported only in 1951 for example.[38] But equipment advances generally followed after the adoption of new techniques rather than constraining them.

All this suggests that the technology for building high rise existed so long before the high flat boom actually got under way that advances in this technology can in no sense be seen as determining or even influencing in a major way the adoption of high rise.[39] What was needed was a market and until it existed in the early 1950s, the plant and expertise necessary for high building were in short supply.

A sophisticated variant of the argument from technology posits a major restrictive influence exerted by the building regulations as a reason for lack of experience with high rise. It is true that the 1939 Act on building in London enforced an 80 foot building limit for fire safety reasons.[40] But in the 1940s and early 1950s this and other regulations were widely breached, and by 1957 were completely changed. Over the period of the high rise boom, building regulations were relaxed:

> ... in the national interest on account of the housing shortage and in order to stay apace of the needs of modern industry. As one critic has written - "the spread of high building proves that public controls afford far less protection than would appear from the wording of many a bye-law".[41]

The report of the Griffith Tribunal provides a graphic illustration of how far

this non-regulation process had gone by the peak year of the industrialized building campaign.[42]

Finally it is worth considering whether the technology embodied in high rise acquired a particular significance in the post-war period. The only argument advanced here is that high rise cut completion times, an idea which originated in the period when non-traditional building firms claimed to be able to avoid building materials shortages.[43] The argument continued to be bandied around long after this situation had eased. In fact, completion times for public authority flats have always been greater than for houses (Table 3.1).[44]

Table 3.1 : Construction times in public housing 1957-70

Completion time in months

	1957	1962	1966	1970
Public authority houses	10.7	11.8	13.1	13.4
Public authority flats	16.1	18.0	18.7	20.8

A recent research paper concluded:

> Flats take approximately 1.33 times the length of time that houses take to complete. The probable reason for this is that a whole block of flats has to be completed before a single flat can be occupied, but on a low rise development as soon as the first dwelling is finished occupation is possible. Whatever the reason, the implication to the local authority of this extra time taken to completion is that of an extra burden on cost.[45]

INDUSTRIALIZED HIGH RISE

Did the industrialized building of high rise introduce a more direct connection between the building form and technical change? The non-traditional system used for flats probably did not. The improvements on traditional techniques made by these systems were relatively small, and owed more to the standardization of design components and the detailed development of plant and expertise than they did to the precasting of components or the mechanization of site processes, although progress in these areas was still quite notable.[46] The heavy prefabrication systems introduced during the industrialized building campaign were a different matter, however. Even though they had been in use for over a decade in other countries, the technical advance which they represented was an undeniably important and recent one, and there was an integral relation between industrialization and high rise.[47]

All the industrialized systems claimed to make major improvements in labour productivity in the structural construction process, an important step since house building productivity has remained at a chronically low level.[48] The industrialized systems could not easily be competitive with traditional construction on the typical, low cost British house, however. Stone estimates that structural labour costs (in 1964) accounted for only about 9 per cent of the total (Table 3.2).[49] Since industrialized building systems basically operate by substituting more expensive structural materials with a low labour erection content (such as large pre-cast panels) for less expensive materials with a high labour erection content (such as bricks), and by increasing the use of (expensive) plant, they faced a very difficult task.[50] Even if labour costs could be saved elsewhere very large savings in man-hours (50-60%) would be needed to achieve final cost savings of 3-4% via the mechanization of labour processes.

Table 3.2 : Estimated breakdown of traditional house costs

Non-house costs:	40%	of which:Land	25%
		Garage	5
		Road, site works	10
Direct house costs:	60%	of which:Materials	33
		Labour	18
		Foundations, equipment, fittings	15
		Total	100%
Material cost (33%) components:		Structural Materials	15%
		Non-structural Materials	18%
Labour cost (18%) components:		Structural labour above ground	9%
		Other labour	9%

These acute difficulties of cost competitiveness on low cost house schemes were drastically reduced on high cost high rise schemes, where the proportion of total costs accounted for by structural materials and associated labour was around 40 %(instead of 25%), and where the initial cost differential between traditional and industrialized structural materials was much less.[51]

The technical change involved in prefabrication, although impressive and directly associated with high rise, was nonetheless much less dramatic than its exponents commonly claimed. The advance in constructional technology never approached that suggested by such analogies as Le Corbusier's call for a mass production house, for reasons discussed by Stone:

> At first sight it often appears surprising that the use of industrialized factory methods does not result in substantial economies in building construction, but the scale of the differences between the normal manufactured article and a building can be overlooked. As compared with most manufactured goods buildings are large, heavy, bulky and cheap in relation to their size. Because of their size, weight and comparatively low price they are difficult and costly to transport even sectionally. Hence, and because of the need to tailor them to their sites and attach them to services, the advantages of building on site are considerable. Moreover building is an assembly industry and less easy to mechanize than manufacturing industries. Because of the size of a unit of building, the variety of purposes and client needs, and because of site limitations, a large variety of buildings is required. The construction industry can thus be more sensibly compared with shipbuilding than with manufacturing.[52]

Finally, labour productivity increases were also supposed to be useful for local authorities in reducing labour shortages or by cutting completion times. In practice, a relatively stable labour supply on traditional building could be obtained by employing larger regional firms which maintained relatively large and continuously employed labour forces.[53] The largest national contractors most involved in industrialized building tended to employ men erratically and to draw on the 'reserve army of labour' as needed to compensate for their generally higher overheads. On completion times, claims about speed became the common currency of the '60s industrial building campaign. For example Concrete Ltd., claimed in 1967:

> Much of Cumbernauld is being built with Bison Wall Frame. In constructing the first of eight 12 storey blocks of flats in only fifteen weeks Bison broke all Scottish building records. Bison was chosen for Cumbernauld because its smooth working, industrialized system ensured that this imaginative project would be completed on time... For Concrete Limited the greatest prize is the sight of contented families finding homes of their own - sooner rather than later.[54]

In the very short term speedier construction could offer some hope of easing acute housing problems, but within the time scale of planning, programming and redeveloping sites for public housing the difference which one construction

system rather than another could make was very small. In fact completion times for public authority houses and flats consistently increased throughout the industrialized building drive (Table 3.1).

THE MARKETS IN HIGH RISE AND INDUSTRIAL CONCENTRATION

Analysis of the claims made for high rise (and industrialized high rise in particular) in terms of technological or industrial progress, strongly suggests that many of the supposed benefits were premissed upon arguments for industrial concentration. If the construction of public housing could be regularized and improved in the hands of a smaller number of larger firms then a variety of technological/industrial benefits would follow. It was widely argued that public authorities had an incentive to build high in order to create these benfits; it was very seldom argued that these benefits were already available.[55]

To examine the implications of high rise for industrial concentration we shall first look at the industrialized high rise boom, and then at some more fragmentary evidence relating to the high rise market as a whole.

(i) Industrialized high rise. The 1960s industrialized boom which began in mid-1962 focused initially only on high rise, and although it was subsequently diversified high flats remained a very important element in the overall indus-trialized market (Table 3.3).[56]

Table 3.3 : High and Low Rise Industrialized Building, 1963-73

Year	Industrialized high rise			Industrialized low rise	
	Numbers	% of all high rise	% of all indus-trialized building	Numbers	% of all low rise
1963	11,072	40.3	n.a.	n.a.	n.a
1964	14,787	41.7	n.a.	n.a	n.a
1965	16.613	47.5	36.7	28,715	22.5
1966	24,342	52.4	37.5	40,553	31.6
1967	26,298	66.9	37.0	44,860	34.2
1968	19,192	62.7	32.8	39,393	31.8
1969	11,907	78.2	34.2	22,859	23.6
1970	1,983	20.4	10.2	17,399	19.7
1971	2,757	34.4	15.6	14,877	17.5
1972	1,940	26.2	13.1	12,922	18.1
1973	674	27.0	3.0	21,748	27.3

The stable importance of high flats was maintained by the much more extensive

and rapid industrialization of high rise building, amounting to two-thirds of all high flats by 1967, around twice the figure achieved for low rise. The importance of high rise to the overall industrialized market is indicated by the more general decline produced by the collapse of the industrialized high rise market after 1968-9. By 1970 fewer low rise flats were industrialized than in 1965.[57]

In practice high rise was more important than these figures suggest to industrialised builders, particularly those using concrete and heavy prefabrication systems who generally won low rise contracts because of their ability to handle mixed development estates.[58] Concrete Ltd's Bison system became the market leader in high rise in 1966, but from 1964 the firm's fastest growing market was on low rise. In practice systems with a high rise capacity accounted for over 70% of all industrialised housing until 1968, and their share of the market over the whole period 1965-73 was 69% (Table 3.4).[59] Systems with a high rise capacity were far more successful in securing orders until 1968 than exclusively low rise systems, which only seriously began to erode their predominance once the high rise market collapsed. For pre-cast concrete systems as a whole the effect of the high rise market disappearing was to produce a startling decline in their success. From being far and away the most successful of all system types in 1967 their share of the market dwindled to very little by 1970 (Figure 3.1).[60]

Because of the centrality of high rise in the industrialized building campaign, the concentration of output in the high flat market is especially significant. Seven national companies dominated the market:

(1) G. Wimpey - Britain's largest building contractor.

(2) Concrete Ltd., - one of the largest building materials firms.

(3) J. Laing - the second largest firm.

(4) Wates - sixth largest firm overall but specialising in housing construction.

(5) Taylor Woodrow - third largest firm overall.

(6) Camus (Great Britain) - subsidiary of the giant French firm which held the licence for the Camus system.

Table 3.4: Industrialized building systems, 1965-73.

Number of systems on the market

	Low Rise systems	Systems suitable for low and high rise.		High Rise systems	Total
		Predominantly low rise	Predominantly high rise		
1965	15	14	15	12	56
1966	56	14	18	·12	100
1967	65	15	16	11	107
1968	71	15	17	10	113
1969	72	14	15	9	110
1970	64	14	14	9	101
1971	63	12	13	7	95
1972	48	12	13	7	80
1973	30	7	11	6	54

Number of dwellings by system type

1965	9,632	24,430	9,019	2,247	45,328
1966	16,792	22,150	21,144	4,809	64,895
1967	20,173	24,430	22,754	3,933	71,158
1968	17,413	24,588	13,478	3,106	58,585
1969	12,554	7,946	12,079	2,187	34,766
1970	9,226	7,190	2,688	278	19,382
1971	7,482	7,172	1,988	992	17,634
1972	4,504	8,183	2,175	-	14,862
1973	9,455	12,376	153	438	22,422
Total	107,231	138,465	85,478	17,990	349,032

% of all industrialized building by system type

1965·	21.2	53.9	19.9	5.0	100.0
1966	25.9	34.1	32.6	7.4	100.0
1967	28.3	34.1	32.1	5.5	100.0
1968	29.7	42.0	23.0	5.3	100.0
1969	36.1	22.9	34.9	6.3	100.0
1970	47.6	37.1	13.9	1.4	100.0
1971	42.4	40.1	11.3	5.6	100.0
1972	30.3	55.1	14.6	-	100.0
1973	42.2	55.2	0.7	1.9	100.0

Figure 3.1 : Trends in Industrialized Housing Construction by Type of System

Tenders Approved for Local Authorities and New Towns
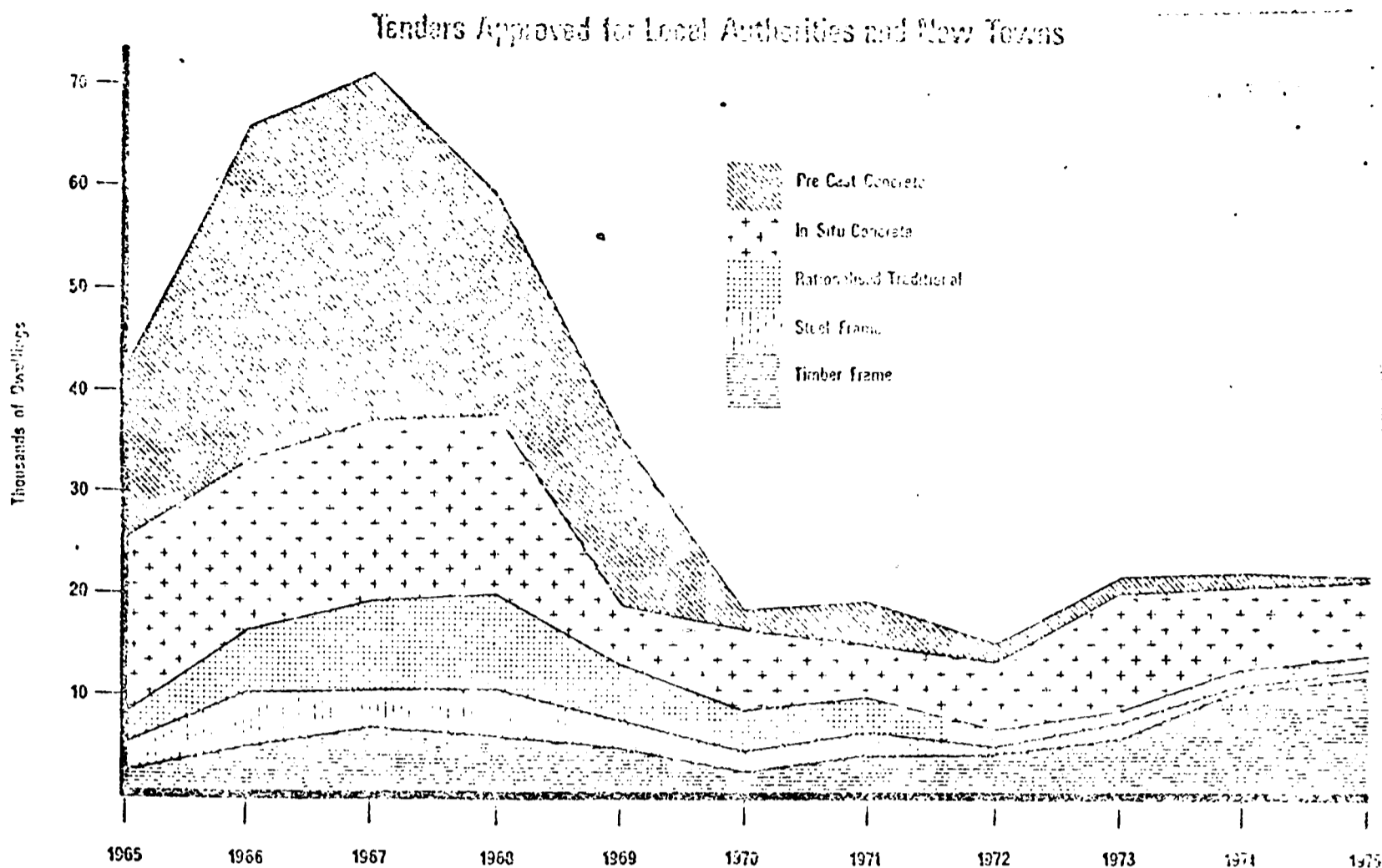
(7) Crudens Ltd. - one of Scotland's most successful building firms which penetrated the English market with the Skarne system.

Between 1963 and 1973 these firms accounted for three-quarters of all industrialized high flat approvals in England and Wales, Wimpey alone building nearly a quarter of the total (Table 3.5).[61] The total construction output of the firms is impressive - Wimpey built 31,200 flats, Concrete 23,000, Laing 12,050, Wates 15,500 - and overall in these eleven years they built over a quarter of all the high flat stock in England and Wales.[62]

The table shows the marked decline of Wimpey's share of the market under competition from the heavy prefabrication systems, a decline which also accounts for Laing's shaky performance until 1967 when their Jepersen system (redesigned jointly with MHLG) came on stream.[63] Between 1963 and 1969, average contract sizes in the market increased from 168 to over 350 flats, and all seven firms except Wimpey were consistently above this average.

In contrast, the top seven firms in the industrialized low rise market over

Table 3.5 : Contractual Background of Industrialized High Rise, 1963-73

Year	Numbers of High Rise	Percentage of tender approvals going to: Firm							Top 7 Firms	Firms (2) to (7)
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)		
1963	11,072	63.3	8.3	1.7	8.9	2.5	–	–	84.7	21.4
1964	14,787	43.4	16.1	6.7	10.3	4.6	1.2	–	82.3	38.9
1965	16.613	31.9	12.4	12.3	12.2	5.9	5.2	0.3	80.2	48.3
1966	24,342	14.1	23.3	4.8	20.3	6.3	10.6	4.6	83.9	69.8
1967	26,298	12.0	14.1	18.0	12.8	3.8	2.5	8.4	71.6	59.6
1968	19,192	20.1	20.1	5.1	4.4	–	6.2	3.4	59.0	38.9
1969	11,907	8.6	18.5	15.4	12.2	13.5	5.2	4.7	78.1	69.5
1970	1,983	17.5	23.3	12.5	14.8	15.7	–	–	83.8	66.3
1971	2,757	19.0	21.7	–	–	4.8	–	–	45.5	26.5
1972	1,940	2.6	53.1	–	–	–	–	–	55.7	53.1
1973	674	15.6	19.4	–	..	–	–	–	35.0	19.4
Total	131,565	23.7	17.5	9.2	11.8	5.0	4.6	3.5	75.3	51.6

the 1965-73 period (which consisted of Wimpey, Concrete, Laing and four low rise only firms), accounted for just under half of all approvals, the vast bulk (29%) being in Wimpey's 'no-fines' technique.[64] (The seven firms included in Table 3.5 accounted for less than two-fifths of all approvals.) The high rise market was thus much more concentrated than with any other form of industrial housing.

(ii) The High Rise Market as a Whole. Not all high rise was industrialized even in the mid-1960s so that overall levels of industrial concentration in high flat markets were lower than the previous analysis suggests. How much lower can be gleaned from an analysis of completions in Greater London between 1967 and 1972 (which would be contracts approved $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 years earlier). Our data cover nearly 85,000 dwellings in contracts with some high rise content (henceforward called 'high rise estate contracts'), of which 65,600 were high rise (around 15% of the British highflat stock).[65] Three-quarters of these were built by the London boroughs and the remainder by the G.L.C.

Some 30,000 dwellings (34% of identified approvals) were built by five national firms - Wates (9,330), Concrete (7,170), Laing (6,814), Wimpey (4,390) and Taylor Woodrow (2,600). Overall national firms built 46% of the total, some 17 regional firms built 25% , 39 local firms built 17% and direct labour organisations 13%[66]

There were marked differences between the London Boroughs and the G.LC. in their contractual relations (Table 3.6). The Boroughs relied heavily on national firms who built over half of their high rise estate dwellings (a proportion which rose consistently to 60% in 1972), in large contracts (the average size of which rose consistently from 178 dwellings in 1967 to 565 dwellings in 1972 completions). In contrast the G.L.C. relied more on regional and local firms since the authority had a greater technical and financial capacity and had little need to offer concessions to the largest firms. (The G.L.C. large firms total is, however, depressed by the cloud over their main industrialized system, Taylor Woodrow-Anglian's Larsen-Nielson system, which was the technique involved in the Roman Point disaster.)

These figures suggest that, whatever the peculiarities of the London market,[67] high rise markets overall were dominated by large national contractors

Table 3.6: Contractual Relations, London Local Authorities 1967-72

High Rise Estate Contracts, Completions

| | London Boroughs | | Greater London Council | |
	Dwellings	Contracts	Dwellings	Contracts
National Companies	29,344	100	5,584	21
Regional Companies	10,304	66	9,135	40
Local Companies	9,345	84	3,505	23
All firms	48,993	250	18,224	84
Direct Labour	8,415	51	1,330	19
Unclassified	5,836	33	1,679	14
Total	63,244	334	21,210	107
High rise dwellings	50,291		15,309	

	% of classified		% of classified	
National Companies	51.1	33.3	28.6	20.4
Regional Companies	17.9	22.0	46.7	38.8
Local Companies	16.3	28.0	17.9	22.3
Direct Labour	14.7	16.7	6.8	18.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

	Average Contract Size (Dwellings)	
National Companies	293	266
Regional Companies	156	228
Local Companies	111	152
Direct Labour	168	70

and displayed a markedly higher degree of industrial concentration than other public housing markets. In view of the high degree of concentration in public housing as a whole viz a viz other new construction (noted in Chapter 1) this finding suggests a quite remarkable process of concentration associated with the high rise boom. In our view it is this, rather than any major or modern technological change, which constituted the fundamental industrial innovation of high rise.

3.3: Planning Aspects

PLANNING AS URBAN CONTAINMENT

The origin and purposes of the 1947 planning system, and its orientation towards 'urban containment' have been exhaustively described elsewhere.[68] Here we need only note its success in reducing the average annual expansion of the urban land area from the 1934-39 level of 60,000 acres to a post-war figure of only about 36,000 acres.[69]

Within urban areas the basic post-war planning innovation was the decanting of overspill population into carefully planned new towns.[70] But despite its prominence in the planning literature, the new towns programme directly affected only a relatively small proportion of the urban population.[71] Far more important was the tradition of 'trend planning' on urban density zoning initiated by the County of London and Greater London Plans of 1943 and 1944.[72] The Forshaw-Abercrombie Plan, in particular, marked a regression in planning practice, largely because, in attempting to deal with the problems of an arbitrary urban area in situ, it closely reflected the views of the L.C.C's architect's department.[73] The two London plans defined concentric rings of density zones ranging from 200 persons per acre (ppa) in the centre of the L.C.C. area, through large intermediate areas at 136ppa and 100ppa, to a ring outside the County at 75ppa and a suburban zone at 50ppa. Abercrombie prepared very similar advisory plans in many other British cities and conurbations,[74] and these sort of proposals were adopted with remarkable uniformity in the Development Plans for urban areas up and down the country.[75] Most plans failed

to take into account the post-war fall in inner and core city populations and thus throughout the 1950s optimum population targets came to imply more of an emphasis on redevelopment and less on decentralization, a trend strengthened of course by the moratorium on new town designations.[76] In 1960 the L.C.C's first Development Plan Review extended the high density central area and introduced a new intermediate density of 175ppa.[77] The conception of nuclear cities as pyramids of density levels was thus strengthened at the same time as the focus of the planning system on residential densities as a central measure of housing amenity was maintained.

Whatever the initial configuration of social groups in relation to the 1947 planning legislation,[78] the operations of the system created and modified over the next few years clearly distributed benefits unequally and even perversely. 'Trend planning'[79] in the context of high density inner cities and low density suburbs reinforced an unequal status quo, accepting that those living at low levels of amenity would be rehoused in a sanitized environment at reduced but still comparatively high densities,[80] while those living at higher levels of amenity in suburban areas would continue to do. Policies such as the equalization of housing standards (particularly public housing standards) across metropolitan areas were explicitly debarred, even had there been a structure of housing authorities capable of achieving such a result. A strong conservative allocation of values was thus maintained.[81]

Essentially the defence of high density inner city redevelopment as a planning goal rested on two pillars, the notion of the nuclear city as a pyramid of market values, and the structure of existing social locations.[82] It is difficult to show an explicit connection between notions about market values and denzity zoning,[83] but a moment's thought will suggest that it underlay virtually every aspect of the planning system's operations.

> For example, in city-centre business and financial districts most planning authorities would not consider any other sort of development than offices. In other words, certain types of land use are seen as "logical", "sensible" and "financially sound". In city centres it is seen as "illogical" to zone land for uses which are not the most profitable and which do not bring in the highest income.[84]

The public housing programme might have developed away from a reliance on market values to indicate densities had the 1947 planning legislation remained intact. But the abolition of the betterment levy by the Conservative government in 1953 and the twenty-year property boom which followed it made the spiralling costs of land a fundamental influence towards higher densities.[85] Of course, the public housing programme could partially escape from this spiral by creating its own building land at site value prices through clearance (at least until 1969).[86] But this focus, while it could not insulate public housing from the inflation of land prices, powerfully strengthened the incentives towards densification and reduced amenity provision. The devalorization of some inner city land which was accomplished seems to have served principally to distort the profile of development costs as between clearance areas and land at market prices.[87]

The structure of social locations was used in defence of high density city planning in a rather diffuse way. The relationship between particular occupations and inner city residence was often put forward as a justification of high density redevelopment.[88] Crossman, for example, told the Commons:

> In the Central London area, Liverpool or Manchester there is a
> case for having housing there for working class people because
> their need is there. The great metropolis needs people who
> areelectricians, needs charladies who will do the cleaning work
> in the office ... and we have to build housing for them.[89]

In part this argument only brought out more clearly the commitment of the planning system to the reproduction of a sanitized status quo. But it was also linked to the espousal of general urbanist values and some evidence of locational preferences of inner city residents.[90] These arguments were principally at fault in leaving out of account the fragmented structure of the public housing programmes, the coercive nature of the clearance programme and the evidence which existed about trade-offs between locational and housing type preferences.[91]

PLANNING TECHNOLOGY AND HIGH DENSITIES

High density inner city redevelopment was not primarily defended in terms of its positive planning values, however. It was overwhelmingly justified in

terms of other planning goals which it was seen as maintaining. In particular
values associated with urban containment - the avoidance of urban sprawl, the
protection of farming land, the preservation of rural areas close to cities,
particularly green belts - were seen as intimately related to the density
zoning policies of inner and core city areas.[92] Since the planning system was
also directed to providing more open space, better schools, decongested indus-
trial zones and improved transport systems in these areas, all of which
required increasing space allocations,[93] the onus of land saving in inner
city redevelopment fell entirely on housing. And at the same time as this
pressure was brought to bear, architects independently began to argue that
high density residential development, as a result of advances in constructional
technology, was for the first time compatible with acceptable improvements in
housing amenity. As a result, inner city housing bore a large part of the
burden of urban containment. Although incremental density increases occurred
throughout the conurbations, the pressure on central urban areas produced
particularly drastic changes in housing.[94] This was in practice an
irrational distribution of pressures for urban containment because of the
diminishing returns in terms of land saved by densification at higher densities.
Since housing related uses are a fixed component of overall housing land needs,
an increase in densities from 24 to 40 ppa saves almost ten times as much hous-
ing land as the much larger increase from 160 to 220 ppa (Table 3.7).[95] If
housing land is to be saved anywhere it can be saved most easily by increasing
the density of low density developments.

The effects of pressure for increasing already high densities on inner city
housing developments was determined most basically by the assumption about the
relation of building forms to density built into planning technology at this
time. The Forshaw-Abercrombie plan defined the post-war orthodoxy in terms which
assumed that above 100 ppa most accommodation would be in high rise (Table 3.8)[96].
Because of difficulties in translating theoretically attainable densities into
buildings on the ground, it was anticipated that completely high rise development

Table 3.7 : Land needed for housing 1,000 people at various densities

(assuming a requirement of 8 acres for housing related uses)

Gross population density(ppa)	Net Residential density(ppa)	Housing Land (acres)	Overall Land needed (acres)	Land Saving (acres)
20	24	42	50	
				17
30	40	25	33	
				8
40	59	17	25	
				5
50	83	12	20	
				3.4
60	115	8.6	16.6	
				2.3
70	159	6.3	14.3	
				1.8
80	222	4.5	12.5	

Table 3.8 : The Relation of Building Form to Housing Densities in the County of London Plan, 1943

	Net residential density (ppa)			
Theoretical mix of building forms (%)	100	136	160	200
Houses	56	31	25	0
Low rise flats	25	8	0	0
High rise flats	19	61	75	100
	100	100	100	100
Actual mix (%)				
Low rise flats and houses	87	38	–	–
High rise flats	13	62	100	100
	100	100	100	100

would be necessary above 136ppa. The MHLG manual Flats and Houses 1958 revised these figures somewhat, suggesting that densities of 60ppa could be attained in two storey houses with garden developments, and that no high rise accommodation at all was necessary up to levels of around 90ppa.[97] The manual saw a need for steadily rising proportions of high rise, but this figure would only need to rise above 5% at levels over 140ppa.

In the 1960s these generally accepted figures came under challenge. Stone argued that theoretical densities of 130 ppa were attainable with two storey flats, and with four storey flats 176 ppa could be reached. Both theoretically and in practice he demonstrated the sharply diminishing returns in terms of density increases at higher storey heights, thereby calling into question the accepted account of the need for higher building at high density.[98] In 1962 Darbourne and Dark designed the first of many influential low and medium rise schemes breaking with previous paradigms; they achieved densities of 210 ppa on the ground, using no blocks higher than eight storeys and giving 60% of their dwellings their own garden or patio.[99]

The climax in this process of discrediting an inadequately based conventional wisdom was the first major theoretical work in this area, the built form studies of Martin and March.[100] March concluded:

> High buildings in nuclear centres make sense only in terms of real estate speculation. In terms of accommodating built space on urban land they are extravagant and irrational gestures.[101]

And he attacked 'present housing criteria which assume that as densities increase, houses decrease in favour of flats and low buildings give way to high'. In contrast he argued:

> With favourable land use planning, semi-detached houses can be built at 200 people to the acre. Three storey terraces under more normal circumstances can be built at up to 265 people to the acre. These are facts. All this density business is a dangerous convention.[102]

These arguments made quite clear the lack of any necessary connection between high building and high density development.

Several other formulations of this faulty planning technology can be considered more briefly.

(i) It was often argued that although increasing high densities produced sharply diminishing returns in terms of land savings, yet it could nonetheless make an important contribution by saving particularly valuable land on the urban periphery,[103] land valuable in terms of accessibility and in terms of price. Stone produced a table specifically to consider this objection, taking into

account both housing land and non-housing uses (such as commercial and

industrial uses). On a conservative estimate of non-housing land requirement,

this effectively demonstrated that variations in building form apart from in-

creases in low rise densities had little or no effect on the overall size of

the urban area (Table 3.9).[104]

Table 3.9 : Building Forms and Total Urban Land required for 10,000 people

(assuming 300 acres for all non-housing uses)

Housing Provision:	Housing Land (acres)	Total Urban Land (acres)	Land Saved
Detached 2 storey houses with gardens	300	600	
			200
Terraced houses and gardens	100	400	
			10
Two storey flats - no gardens	90	390	
			35
Five storey flats	65	365	
			15
Twenty storey flats	50	350	

On the argument about the prices of land saved, a 1974 study again by Stone

argued:

> The real costs of providing and maintaining dwellings rise more
> rapidly with increasing storey height than the requirement for
> land falls; hence the real costs of each acre of land saved
> rises with increases in the number of storeys. The cost per
> acre of land saved also increases as the size of the dwelling
> falls. The land saved by developing four bedspace dwellings in
> 4 storey flats instead of 2 storey blocks costs(the public
> authority) about £21,500 per acre (in 1964). The cost per acre
> of land saved is £46,700 if fifteen storey blocks are used. If
> two bedspace dwellings are used in this way to save land, the
> costs are about twice as much as for four bedspace dwellings. In
> the long run the land saved is farmland typically worth about
> £200 an acre in 1964. Clearly high building is an extravagant
> way of saving land.[105]

ii) Even if no connection was made between high rise/high density urban

development and urban land savings as a whole, it was universally believed that

the use of high buildings on a particular site allowed the creation of open

spaces within the city - areas of grass and green in sharp contrast to the

diminutive backyards of the terrace houses or crammed tenement blocks of the

nineteenth century.[106] In practice, the space about buildings per habitable

room falls more sharply with increasing densities than can be made up by

providing accommodation in taller blocks (Table 3.10).[107] Since about 200

square feet per habitable room are normally required for access, parking etc.,

the implication is that:

> ... even if high flatted blocks are used, play spaces, areas of planting
> and other amenities can only be provided at densities of 150
> habitable rooms per acre or less. Densities much greater, however
> high the blocks, are impossible without a serious sacrifice of
> amenities since the gain in space about buildings from building
> higher is soon exhausted.[108]

It may seem strange to argue that above 7 storeys virtually no extra space is

gained by building higher, until it is realized that the spaces present in

high rise schemes are obtained by massing space _per building_ - space per

dwelling or per person is static. In addition, of course, the spaces created

by massing have less and less specific use value -small grass verges, blank

areas of grass, tarmac parking lots, and spaces overshadowed by or very close

to high blocks have no positive value at all, and no space represents an

amenity unless it can be used for some purpose.[109]

(iii) Finally, it was often argued that high building allowed mixed development -

typically the provision of accommodation for large families in houses. Since

this depended on the creation of open space by building high, and space could

not be created by such means, this argument was as fallacious as those in terms

of open space provision. Space for houses could be created by increasing

densities, but as the MHLG consistently argued this meant using low rise flats

not high rise.[110] In practice, because of daylighting requirements, the poten-

tial ground space for houses created by high rise building is much less than

even Table 3.10 suggests.[111]

PUBLIC HOUSING DENSITIES

Public housing densities since 1964 (when records start) have shown a marked

fall in the proportion of dwellings in schemes over 100 ppa (Table 3.11).[112] Very

high density schemes (over 200 ppa), accounted for 10% of new council dwellings

in 1964 but this figure fell to just 1% by 1973. At the peak of the high rise

boom in 1967 nearly 150,000 people a year were being rehoused at densities over

100 ppa, a quarter of all those moving into public housing (Table 3.12).[113]

Table 3:10:   Space about buildings at various densities and storey heights

(Square feet per habitable room)

Density in Habitable Rooms per acre	Average number of storeys							Decrease in space
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
50	621	746	787	808	821	829	835	436
100	185	310	351	372	385	393	399	
150	40	165	206	227	240	248	254	145
200	-	93	134	155	168	176	182	72
Gain in space	125	41	21	13	8	6		

Table 3.11:   Distribution of Public Housing Approvals by Density, 1964-73

Proportion of dwellings approved (%)   England and Wales

Year	Density (ppa)					
	Under 60	60-100	100-140	140-200	Over 200	
1964	36.8	34.4	9.3	9.4	10.1	28.8
1965	34.3	40.5	9.0	8.7	7.5	25.2
1966	32.8	35.5	11.4	13.6	6.7	31.7
1967	34.4	38.7	7.6	11.9	7.4	26.9
1968	25.8	49.3	9.9	9.4	5.6	24.9
1969	37.0	39.7	9.5	10.8	3.0	23.3
1970	35.0	45.2	12.5	5.7	1.6	19.8
1971	38.1	44.9	9.1	5.2	2.7	17.0
1972	34.5	45.3	10.1	8.1	1.8	20.0
1973	39.1	50.5	6.3	3.1	1.0	10.4

One in every ten persons rehoused was in a scheme with a density above 180 ppa.

Large numbers of people in schemes with high proportions of family accommodation (as measured by the density of persons per dwelling), were also being rehoused at high net residential densities, although the proportion was slightly lower than in public housing overall.

Table 3.12: Distribution of persons in schemes by densities of persons per acre and per dwelling, 1967   (England and Wales)

Density of scheme(ppa)   Dwelling size(persons)

	Under 2.4	2,5-3-4	2.5-4.4	Over 4.4	All schemes
Under 70	21,037	33,264	153,328	113,389	321,020
70-100	3,098	12,599	58,149	52,142	125,988
100-140	1,481	14,049	23,045	4,040	42,626
140-180	423	22,101	14,979	9,715	47,185
180-200	545	4,595	13,145	340	18,678
200-240	208	8,463	3,569	6,348	18,678
Over 240	210	14,752	5,854	-	20,816
Total	27,002	109,823	272,048	186,063	594,936

3.4: The Fragmentation of the Public Housing Drive

THE STRUCTURE OF HOUSING AUTHORITIES

The urban containment orientation of the planning system was powerfully institutionalised in the opposing interests of the top tier pre-1974 local authorities, the counties and county boroughs. But the local government structure allocated the housing function to the bottom tier authorities, producing a much more complex nexus of conflicting interest, which meshed with the planning system primarily in forcing inner and core city authorities (usually county boroughs) back on their own land resources in meeting their housing needs.[114] Although the new towns and town development procedures provided a not unimportant means of decanting overspill population,[115] there were no other means of equalizing standards of public housing provision. Housing developments in other planning or housing authority areas were possible, but the difficulties and controversiality of such developments made them relatively infrequent, except where they were possible on directly adjacent or unbuilt up/non green belt land.[116] In the conurbations, middle class and suburban areas proved highly successful throughout the post-war period in preventing development by those authorities with more acute housing stress in their areas.[117] The core areas of conurbations

were surrounded by a variety of smaller authorities most of whom defended their autonomy and the character of their areas as vigorously as the counties resisted urban growth. The London government reorganization in 1963-5 merely reinstitutionalized this conflict on a borough level, a pattern followed by the 1972 local government reorganization.[118] As a result, apart from the over-spill procedures, housing authorities had to meet their redevelopment and rehousing targets _in situ._

Within the inner and core cities, the effect of these restrictions was intensified by the inflation of land values, and by the spread of high density public housing developments (which increased the potential value of sites to local authorities, and thus affected the cost of all housing land, but particularly land not acquired through clearance of unfit properties). As a result, redevelopment emerged as the major means of providing better housing in inner urban areas.[119]

SLUM CLEARANCE AND HIGH RISE[120]

The land scarcity in urban areas put enormous pressure on city authorities with large numbers of unfit dwellings to create building land via slum clearance. Since housing gains could be made in redevelopments built at high density, slum clearance could also allow the rehousing of some waiting list applicants. The danger of this situation was that the scale and pace of the clearance programme were no longer determined simply by the numbers of unfit houses. They were also influenced by the extent of housing need in the local authority area,as measured by the length of the Council's waiting list. If slum clearance had the effect of _increasing_ the incidence of housing need, it could become a self-generating cycle of public authority activity which ultimately had little relation to the problems of unfit housing. Clearance would result in increased housing need; which in the closed urban land system in city areas would justify further clearance to provide land for housing waiting list applicants; which would worsen the housing situation and produce further redevelopment.

Under what kinds of conditions could such a cycle be set in motion?

a)   The most basic pre-requisite was inadequate social accounting, specifically a lack of attention to the transition costs of the urban renewal process. No assumption was more deeply ingrained in the housing apparatus than that the gains from redevelopment swamped the costs involved in the transition period in terms of accommodation lost or blighted, the disruption of communities and the social upheaval accompanying renewal. On the whole these costs were considered so trivial that they were not measured.[121]   A recent study of Camden shows that the Borough claimed to make a housing gain of 478 dwellings in its current clearance programme, but that this benefit was more than offset by the loss of an estimated 64,000 'bedspace years' through accommodation being absent or unused during the clearance process. This study argues:

> A council can only claim a real housing gain when the clearance
> programme has offset the housing capacity which it has 'borrowed'
> from other sources during the period of blight and redevelopment.
> In the case of Camden's programmes between 1965 and 1973 it will
> be over 100 years before the 'lost' housing capacity is made up. .[122]

If a redevelopment programme works perfectly the decrease in the local housing stock will still be substantial during the transition from one set of dwellings to another. If the programme goes wrong, as programmes frequently did, then areas are blighted, sites are cleared and left empty, and the housing stock is depleted even further. Nor did local authority completions in many areas even keep pace with the rate of demolition. Between 1951 and 1966 Liverpool demolished 39,000 dwellings and built only 40,000 while Manchester demolished 48,000 dwellings and completed only 37,000, a net decrease in the local housing stock of nearly 25 per cent of the cleared total.[123]   Policies like these could hardly fail to create additional pressure on housing resources.

b)   It has been fairly commonly assumed that local authorities in Britain rehouse virtually all those who lost housing accommodation during redevelopment. The extent to which clearance 'dishoused' people has never been known. Because the people involved were 'fringe' groups, such as immigrants, furnished tenants, single people, or people unable to pay local authority rents, the problem has been ignored. The same study of Camden found that the Council in fact rehoused

only just over half the people displaced by their clearance programme between 1965 and 1973, and that clearance 'dishoused' 7,500 people, twice as many as were housed from the waiting list in the redevelopment schemes. Local authorities were able to push part of the problem created by their policies elsewhere, causing further pressure in the shrinking private rental sector.

c) Both these arguments are fairly conservative criticisms of the clearance programmes of city authorities. Since redevelopment caused blight it not only created additional demand pressure on local housing stocks, it could also tend to create unfit housing. And once a scheme was announced many people would leave a future clearance area, often halving the population by the time a C.P.O. was declared.[124] Local authorities always measured the housing gains of redevelopment from these artificially depressed population figures. Consequently the arguments in (a) and (b) represent minimum estimates of the adverse impact of clearance.

d) For the clearance process to make a major dent in the local housing stock there had to be a very loose fit between the measurement of unfit housing and the clearance process. Many writers have commented on the inadequacy of the criteria on which certain clearance decisions are based,[125] and the possibility of including completely fit housing in clearance areas to get sufficiently large or well shaped sites for rebuilding.[126] Such completely fit housing accounted for 9.6 per cent of all cleared houses in the 1960s,[127] but the number of houses demolished because of 'bad layout' or erroneously classified as unfit has never been measured. During the 1960s it was common to point out that the definition of housing unfitness in many authorities seemed to be determined primarily by the local authority's estimate of what it could reasonably develop in the foreseeable future rather than by objective housing conditions.[128] This was usually held to lead to deliberate under-estimating of the extent of housing unfitness. But the argument could be turned on its head and used to suggest that often the houses demolished by councils were not unfit, and that local authorities could often define habitable housing as unfit, particularly before

opposition to clearance became common. The Camden study found that very few of the dwellings in the borough's current programme are unfit, and in a G.L.C. Housing Condition Survey 59 per cent of all the houses demolished in London between 1967 and 1971 were rated as in 'good' or 'fair' condition on an objective scale, i.e. were at least capable of being rehabilitated. From that period alone London lost 54,000 fit dwellings.[129] Of course the proportion of cleared housing which is not unfit has been increasing since 1960. Before that a majority of houses demolished were probably genuine slums. But since 1960 over one million dwellings have been cleared and the logic of the closed urban system within which public housing operated must cast a doubt over much of this activity.

The unacknowledged cost of clearance in part explains why so many slum clearance authorities believed that high densities needed to be maintained in their developments. Operating with fairly short time horizons these authorities often saw their problems as originating with inadequate housing gains from development rather than from the clearance process itself. High rise-high density development seemed the only way of breaking out of a cycle of lengthening housing lists which redevelopment in the past had done little to reduce.[130] The worsening situation which clearance could create also came to justify densities such that high building was necessary to achieve them, often densities which should not have been aimed for in designing housing to provide acceptable accommodation for a sixty year period. High rise was also attractive because of erroneous impressions of shorter completion times with high blocks, or as a way of providing the maximum number of dwellings on one part of a clearance area which would allow the remainder of the area's population to be rehoused and thus speed clearance.

POPULATION DECLINE AND HIGH DENSITY DEVELOPMENT

An extraordinary aspect of much of the post-war public housing drive has been the prevalence of high density redevelopment policies in urban areas experiencing very rapid losses of population (Table 3.13).[131] However, when the

increased rate of household formation is taken into account, it becomes clear

that most major cities had a static or a rising population of households, at

least during the 1950s.

The loss of population raised other issues which could lead housing.

authorities to try and check the trend by redevelopment policies, such as high

rise, which claimed to avoid population dispersal.

> Frequently the saving in costs from population loss is far less
> than the corresponding loss from rates and rate deficiency grants. It
> is often worthwhile for a local authority to develop at very high
> densities and on very expensive land, rather than house people more[132]
> economically on land within the boundaries of another authority.

In practice the drift from the major cities was not checked by such policies;

those primarily affected were people unable to move into the private sector

market and thus 'trapped' in the housing waiting lists or slum properties of

the inner urban areas.

Table 3.13:   Changes in the Population of Some Major British Cities, 1951-71

City	Population increase (per cent)	
	1951-61	1961-71
Coventry	17.6	5.7
Hull	1.5	-6.1
Bradford	1.2	-0.6
Leeds	0.9	-2.9 .
Birmingham	-0.3	-9.0
Sheffield	-0.4	-3.8
Glasgow	-3.2	-16.0
Liverpool	-5.8	-19.9
Manchester	-6.0	-19.5
Oldham	-6.6	-8.5
Salford	-13.7	-16.7

3.5:   The Costs of High Rise Housing

Because of the limitation of official data it is not possible to measure the
the
cost of/high rise boom with any great accuracy. An informed guess would put

these costs at between £1,000 million and £1,500 millions, however (compared

with a total construction investment of £60,000 million for the period 1945-

70).[133]

CONSTRUCTION COSTS

That high rise housing in Britain is an expensive building form has always been known, although in the late 1950s wildly over-optimistic expectations of a decline in construction costs were held.[134] The first national data on costs showed that in 1960 all forms of high rise were more than twice as expensive per square foot as three bedroom houses (Figure 3.2).[135] This differential began to fall from about 1963 onwards, when high flat were between 1.65 and 1.80 as expensive as houses. Of course, since high flats provided on average only two thirds the floor space of a house, the cost differential per dwelling was less than these figures suggest, falling from a figure of 1.57 to 1.33 between 1962 and 1966. The dwelling costs tended to be used by those claiming a substantial fall in high flat costs, but clearly the cost per square foot is a more objective yardstick in incorporating some reference to the amenity level provided. From 1968 onwards the differential between high rise and house costs ceased to fall (unlike that of low rise flats), and if anything rose again, bringing out the importance of demand factors in affecting construction costs.

High rise costs were also expected to fall as a result of the industrialized building campaign. In fact both costs per dwelling and per square foot were less with industrialized high flats than in traditional blocks by 1964. After 1967 this cost advantage widened considerably but by 1970 had disappeared as the industrialized high rise market collapsed (Figure 3.3).[136] The gap between high rise and house costs did not narrow appreciably as a result of industrialized building, however.

The total construction costs of high rise can only be estimated by multiplying average cost by the base numbers included in the government statistics. This covers less than half the high rise in Britain (some 216,000 flats), the dwellings not covered being principally the 68,000 high flats built in England and Wales before 1960, around 89,000 built by the LCC/GLC since 1960, high flats in Scotland (69,000 built since 1960), plus other schemes on which cost data were not available. Expenditure on high flats within the cost figures

Figure 3.2: High Flat Construction Costs as a Proportion of House
Construction Costs (costs per square foot of dwelling space).
1960-73.

(England and Wales)

Year
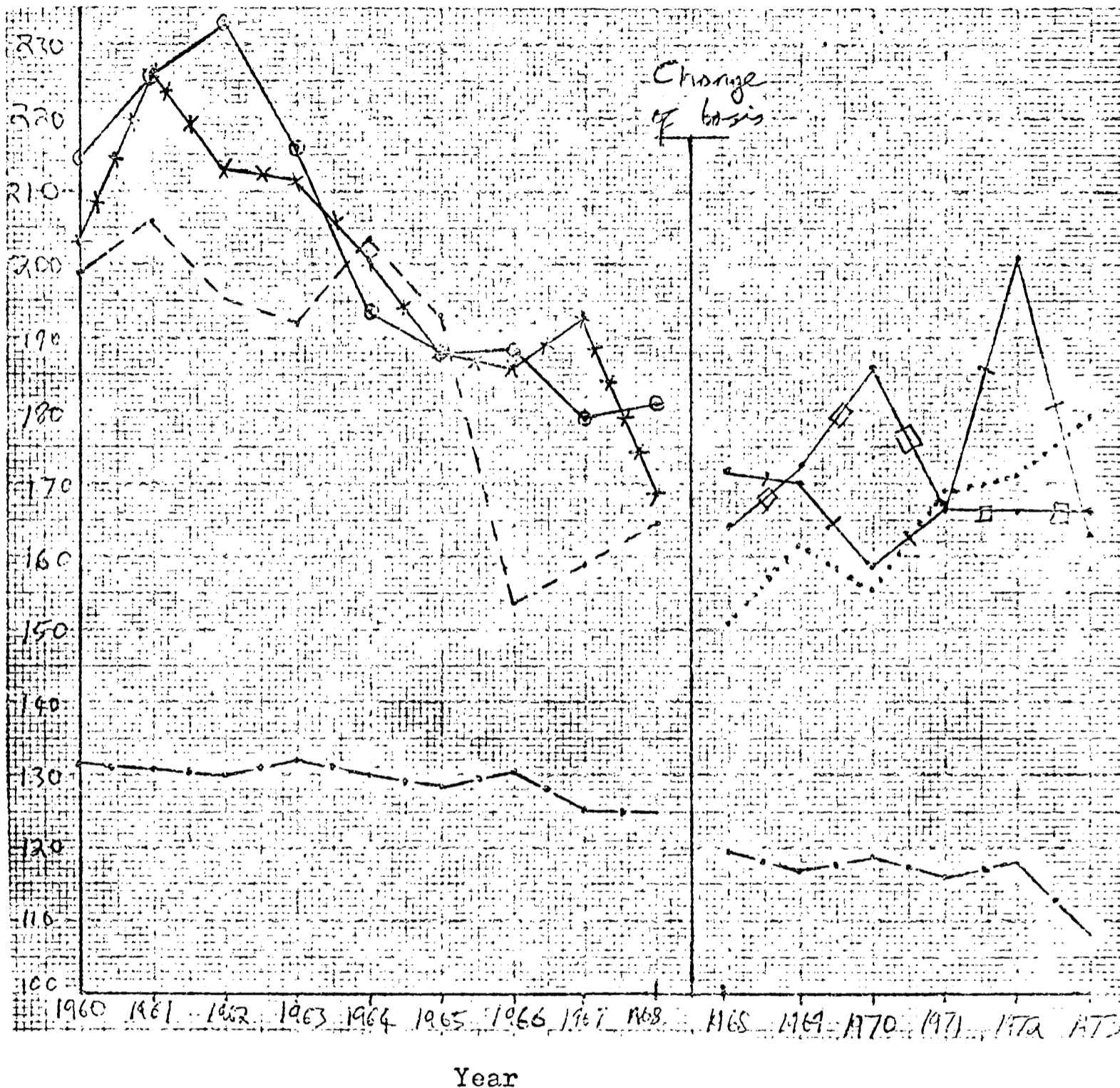
1960-68:

Base (100) = Two storey
                three bedroom
                house

Flats over 11 storeys   —⊖—

9 - 11 storey flats   —✕—

6 - 8 storey flats   — — —

        2 storey flats   — —

1968-73:

Base (100) = Two storey
                four bedspace
                house

Flats over 14 storeys   —⊢—

9 - 14 storey flats   —□—

5 - 8 storey flats   · · · · ·

        2 storey flats   — —

Figure 3.3: Industrialized and Traditional Building Costs
(construction costs per square foot of dwelling space), 1960-73.

Average
Cost in £s
per square
foot

Year
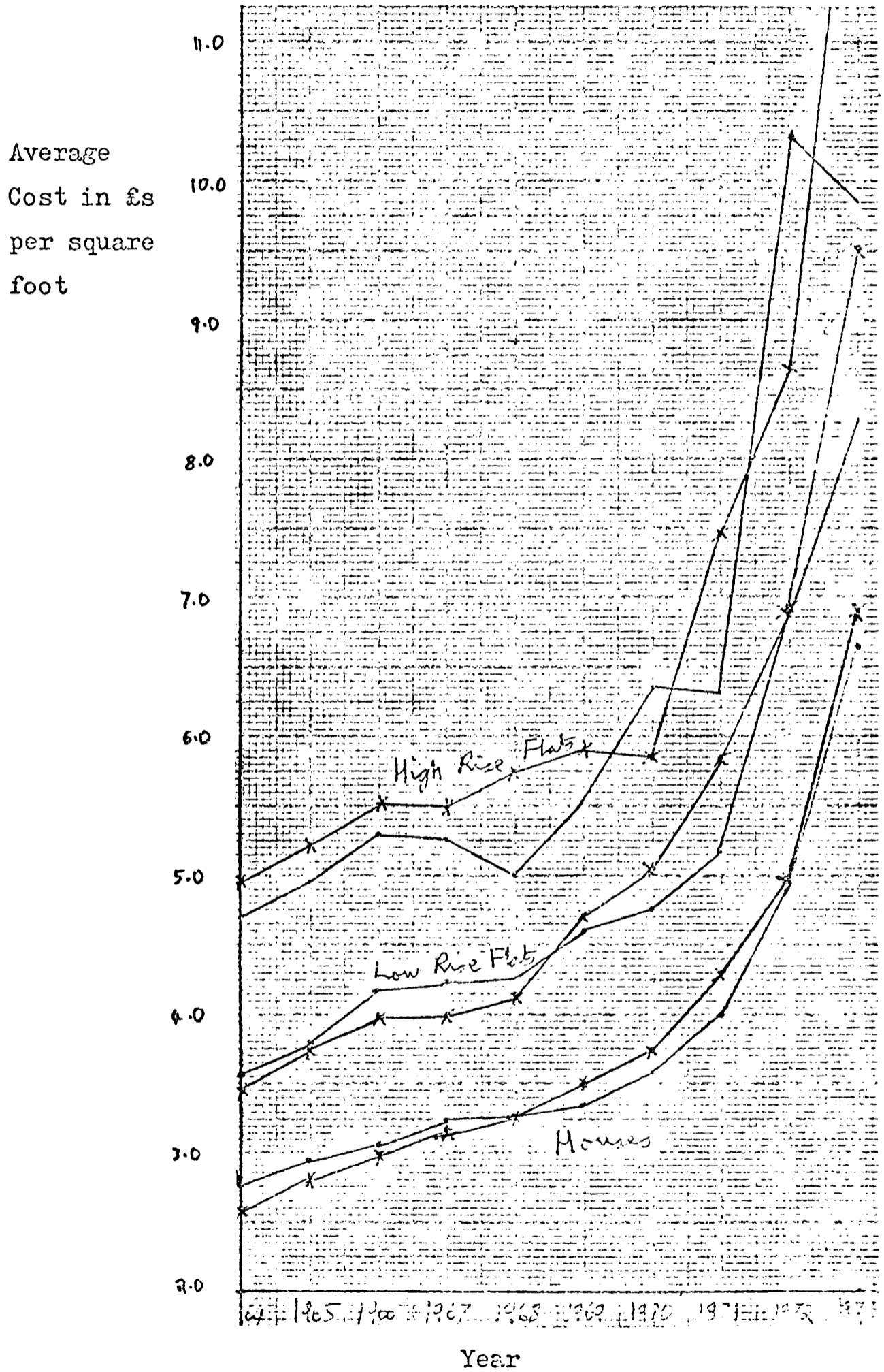
Industrialized building ———
Traditional building   —×—

increased by more than five times between 1960 and 1966, while the numbers

of flats included tripled (Table 3.14).[137] The difference between the cost

and base number increases is due very largely to the shift of more and more

high rise into the taller and more expensive blocks.

With the available data a very crude estimate can be made of the extra

costs incurred by local authorities as a result of building high rise rather

than low rise building forms. Dividing the aggregate cost of high rise in

each year by the average cost of two storey three bedroom houses in that year

gives a _ceteris paribus_ measure of the number of houses that could have been

built with the money spent on high rise. Between 1960 and 1973 this measure

suggests that 293,4000 houses could have been built for £753 million, a housing

gain of 78,000 dwellings.[138] In other words over 37 per cent more dwellings

could have been built at no extra cost, while the dwellings provided would have

been on average over 30 per cent larger than the high flats actually built.

Table 3.14: The Aggregate Costs of High Rise Construction, 1960-73

(England and Wales, excluding G.L.C. tenders)

Approval Date	Storey Heights: Annual Cost (£000s)					Number of High Flats
	5	6-8	9-11	12 & over	All High Rise	
1960	3,019	3,350	7,276	9,349	22,994	10,106
1961	2,736	3,118	7,038	9,328	22,220	8,402
1962	3,865	3,979	10,408	13,425	31,677	10,608
1963	3,373	2,247	11,920	38,956	56,496	18,404
1964	8,996	6,630	11,050	64,991	91,667	29,389
1965	9,111	7,037	12,364	71,865	100,377	29,432
1966	13,931	22,927	14,503	75,951	127,312	34,138
1967	25,376	21,843	8,998	70,482	126,699	33,772
1968	8,546	25,550	8,934	39,833	82,863	21,543
	5-8	9-14	15 & over			
1968	(34,100	17,726	31,038	)		
1969	18,578	4,550	10,991		34,119	8,356
1970	12,059	5,411	4,250		21,720	5,160
1971	9,207	2,374	5,032		16,613	3,543
1972	6,254	1,765	1,425		9,444	1,549
1973	7,005	268	1,486		8,759	1,126

This crude comparison must immediately be qualified, however. Regional

variations in construction costs are/ not controlled for in the D.O.E. figures, yet

they have a very marked impact on different dwelling costs. High rise in

London costs 10 per cent more than the national average, but is cheaper in

relation to houses, since council houses in London cost 30 per cent more than

the national average.[139]

The D.O E. statistics overestimate the cost differential involved

in high rise since London accounts for a large proportion of the high flats

but only a small proportion of the houses included. What is being compared

is thus (higher than average) high rise costs in London with (lower than

average) house costs in the provinces.[140]

DEVELOPMENT COSTS

Another method of assessing the costs involved in high rise housing would

be to examine the conclusions of housing economics studies. This has the

additional advantage that it is possible to look not just at construction costs,

but also at those for land, site development, garaging and maintenance.

Land costs per dwelling fall with increasing density in relation to a

particular site, and although high rise was an unnecessary way of achieving

higher densities this argument was often advanced in its defence. However,

since land costs are responsive to density zoning, the overall land cost savings

involved in high density development are less than might be supposed. Taking

land costs per dwelling at ten dwellings an acre as 100 per cent costs fall to

82 per cent at twenty dwellings an acre, 76 per cent at thirty dwellings and

73 per cent at forty dwellings an acre.[141] This shallow curve is not enough

to offset the drop in land values as one moves away from the city centre. So

the land cost per dwelling at high densities in an inner urban zone may be only

slightly less or even more than the cost in a lower density development in an

outer zone.[142]

Site development costs do fall markedly with high flats, to about half

those of two storey dwellings, although again the decline dimishes with storey

height and has virtually levelled off at ten storeys.[143] These costs account

for less than 10 per cent of development costs in two storey dwellings, however,

so very large savings are necessary to have any impact on overall cost.

Garaging costs increase markedly in high rise developments. Those in schemes with at least one high rise block were 40 per cent above those in completely low rise schemes in 1964, and as 100 per cent car parking provision became mandatory the differential rose until in 1967 a high rise garage cost more than twice as much as those on low rise schemes.[144] At this date the cost per car in a high flat scheme was £445, over 10 per cent of the average cost of a high flat and 17 per cent of the cost of a house.

Finally maintenance costs in high rise were 53 per cent more than in low rise schemes in 1964.[145] Since then this differential has widened consistently to as much as 100 per cent, as labour costs have risen, and the problems and defects of the high flat stock have become evident.[146]

The best overall impression of these costs (excluding land costs, however) is provided by Stone (Table 3.15).[147] This suggests that total dwelling costs with high flats are about half as much again as those of two storey housing.

The only available figures including land costs (but excluding maintenance costs) indicate a much lower cost differential between 2 storey and 15 storey development in 1964, amounting to only 13 per cent in the innermost London zone for which data is available, and 26 per cent in inner Birmingham

Table 3.15: High Rise Housing Costs as a proportion of House Costs, 1964

2 Storey House costs = 100

Storey Height:	4	10	15
Dwelling Cost	117	155	164
Garage	150	150	150
Site Development	72	57	53
Total Initial Cost	114	143	150
Maintenance (Capitalized Cost)	113	153	153
Total Development Cost	114	145	150

Table 3.16).[148] In practice these figures seem to underestimate the cost differential involved in high rise since it seems doubtful that two storey

Table 3.16:   Total Cost of Development per Dwelling   (£)

	Mile from centre	2 Storey	10 storey	15 storey
London	10-20	5,650	6,170	6,400
	20-30	4,840	5,500	5,710
Birmingham	0-10	4,150	5,070	5,230
	10-20	3,740	4,760	4,930
	20-30	3,400	4,460	4,630
Density (dws per acre)		16	39	

dwellings would be built in inner urban areas at only 16 dwellings per acre, less than two-fifths of the density for high flats. A more valid comparison would be the cost differential between high flats in an inner zone with low density low rise in an outer zone. On this basis, a high flat within ten miles of Birmingham city centre cost 40 per cent more than a two storey dwelling ten to twenty miles out, while the same differential for the two London zones shown was 32 per cent. Away from the very high metropolitan land prices in London, the differentials between building forms widened considerably.[149]

It is impossible to do more than guess at the opportunity costs of high rise housing, the proportion of total cost which could have been saved by building houses. In London and Scotland (where high rise costs are low and house costs relatively high), the differential would have been substantially less than in the rest of the country. But even in the most favourable circumstances, the extra costs of high rise must have been an extremely significant proportion of total costs, and the loss of alternative dwellings in the public housing programme substantial.

THE COST OF GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES

Government subsidies for high flats have assumed throughout the post-war period that since high rise housing was necessary in some urban areas the Exchequer had a duty to offset the extra costs which a local authority would incur in meeting housing need by high building.

The 1956-65 high flat subsidy paid 1.4 times the basic house subsidy at four storeys, 1.7 times the basic subsidy at five storeys, 2.6 at ten storeys, 3.0 times the basic subsidy at fifteen storeys and reached a ratio of 3.4 at twenty storeys.[150] In view of our conclusions about the cost differential between low and high rise schemes this may seem to have oversubsidized high flats until it is appreciated that the government subsidized not the building costs themselves, but the rent deficiency which would otherwise have to be paid by local authorities. A hypothetical example is sufficient to demonstrate that with the same rent and rate fund subsidy, an initial difference in capital costs of a high rise flat over a house of 60 per cent of the house costs could make necessary the payment of a subsidy over four times the house subsidy in order to make up the greater rent deficiency with the high flat (Table 3.17).[151]

Table 3.17: Government Subsidy Calculation: a hypothetical example

(£s)

	(1) Capital Cost	(2) Loan Charges	(3) Plus Repairs	(4) Total Cost
House	2,000	100	20	120
High Flat	3,200	160	35	195

	(5) Less Rent	(6) Net Cost	(7) Less Rate Subsidy	(8) Gives: Exchequer Subsidy
House	65	55	31	24
High Flat	65	130	31	99

The Exchequer subsidy was designed not to equalize the costs of high and low rise housing for local authorities but to leave an incentive for local authorities to opt for low rise building. The 1957 Act in Scotland which introduced the high flat subsidy specifically stated that the Exchequer would meet two thirds of the extra costs of high rise, and this was also the aim of the subsidy scale in England and Wales.[152] But since the local authority could make land savings with high rise this meant that the extra costs of high building were considerably less than a third before 1965. After the 1967 Act the extra annual cost to the local authority of high building was 10-16 per cent of the cost of houses in London and

30-55 per cent in Birmingham (depending on the dwelling size and the rate of interest).[153]

The aggregate costs of the high rise subsidies can be assessed only for high flats approved under the 1956 and 1961 Acts in England and Wales, 216,000 in all. (Since statistics are only available for storey height ranges such as 5-9 storeys, minimum and maximum costs have been calculated assuming that all the flats in each range were at the minimum or maximum height.) By 1966 the subsidy bill for high rise buil since 1956 was between £10.6 million and £12.5 million, or between 14.4 per cent and 16.9 per cent of all post-war subsidies in that year. Between 1962 and 1966 the cost of high rise subsidies increased by 260 per cent and as a proportion of post-war subsidies nearly doubled (Table 3.18).[154]

Table 3.18 : The Cost of High Rise Subsidies, 1957-66

(England and Wales)

Year	Cost of Exchequer Subsidy and percentage of all post-war subsidies			
	Minimum Assumptions		Maximum Assumptions	
	Cost(£000s)	Per cent	Cost(£000s)	Per cent
1957	345	0.82	462	1.10
1958	815	1.75	1,059	2.27
1959	1,375	2.279	1.752	3.56
1960	2,162	4.31	2,696	5.37
1961	2,992	5.67	3,686	6.98
1962	3,900	7.07	4,766	8.63
1963	4,936	8.42	5,980	10.20
1964	6,520	10.25	7.796	12.25
1965	8,587	12.50	10,157	14.78
1966	10,648	14.41	12,492	16.90

Since the abolition of the progressive storey height element the flat rate subsidy addition of £26 for all flats over six storeys has added a further £4.02 million to this annual bill for the 155,500 flats approved in England and Wales from 1966 to 1973. Of course a large part of the cost of high flat subsidies since 1966 is included in the basic subsidy element and thus cannot be analysed.

The subsidies for high flats will be paid out for sixty years after the date of approval. Over this period the Exchequer will pay between £640 million and £750 million for the total subsidy on high flats approved under the 1956 and 1961 Acts. The high flat supplement paid since 1966 will cost a further £241 million over sixty years. A complete estimate of the cost of high rise subsidies would need to take into account also subsidies on high flats approved before 1956, subsidies on Scottish high rise and the proportion of the overall subsidy of high rise built since 1966 which is met by the basic percentage grant subsidy. Rough and ready calculations suggest that it could well total £1,300 million spread over eighty years from 1953.[155]

3.6: Living in High Rise

The literature on how living in high flats affects people is now quite large and we shall attempt only a brief review of it.[156] A preliminary caveat must be entered concerning the variations in methodology between the less satisfactory 'user reaction' studies sponsored by the D.O.E. (in itself the 'user' terminology suggests the perspective from which the studies were conducted),and those studies carried out by non-official sociologists.[157]

HOUSING PREFERENCES

Virtually all the available sociological evidence suggests that the vast majority of the population would prefer to live in a house rather than a flat.[158] Although resistance to flatted development on abstract or principled grounds has diminished in post-war Britain,[159] and more and more people have experienced flat life,[160] this overwhelming housing preference has remained little changed. In contrast to countries like France, the single family house remains the dominant housing image in Britain.[161] Some 92 per cent of new private housing is provided in this form, and only around 1 per cent in high flats.[162] For many people, living in a flat provides a transition phase when they first move into the private housing market, particularly in high cost areas such as London.[163]

Amongst local authority tenants this preference is equally strong. In 1967

the GLC found that 75 per cent of their applicants preferred a house and garden, although at this period only 9 per cent of the authority's housing output was in this form, while 65 per cent was in high flats.[164] Very substantial majorities of residents in high flats would prefer to live in houses, according to all the studies asking about housing preferences.[165] Wanting a house is the major reason for residents to be potential movers, except amongst elderly households.[166]

LEVELS OF SATISFACTION WITH HOUSING

Asked how satisfied they are with their housing, most people will give strongly affirmative answers.[167] As a result the levels of dissatisfaction with their accommodation amongst high flat residents are not high, although they are appreciably greater than those found in other building forms. In Glasgow, where tenement living has a long history, only 8 per cent of people in high flats were generally dissatisfied.[168] Elsewhere, however, surveys have found that around one in every five people in tall blocks are dissatisfied, while amongst family households the proportion rises to around half.[169] In Newcastle 35per cent of mothers in high flats thought their accommodation worse than before rehousing, even though many of them came from slum dwellings.[170] Even surveys that have found quite low levels of general dissatisfaction have turned up some major grumbles intrinsically related to high rise provision. In London and Sheffield 62 per cent of respondents wanted a garden, 56 per cent found the lifts inadequate, 47 per cent 'would move' or were nervous, over 30 per cent were not proud of the estate or found it unattractive.[171] Taking account of the degree of self-selection that may take place in the locating of people in high rise blocks, i.e. the possibility that those households most opposed to living there may have refused a tenancy, these levels of dissatisfaction are acknowledged by the D.O.E. to be 'not negligible'.[172]

The D.O.E. surveys asked residents separate questions about their satisfaction with their dwelling and their estate (a remarkably difficult distinction to make with any accuracy if one is living in a high flat, since the block of flats itself is neither part of the dwelling nor part of the estate). Their results

show that residents are much more satisfied with their flats than with their estates.[173] Jephcott's Glasgow study showed that the high rise blocks themselves are very much the focus of dislike, while even low amenity estates are little criticized.[174] More recent D.O.E. research has shown that the wider neighbour-hood setting is an important component of resident satisfaction and that neighbourhoods dominated by industrial buildings, residential decay, railways or busy roads are particularly disliked.[175]

Residents in high flat estates are highly critical of their appearance. They dislike concrete surfaces, greyness, dark colours, car parks (especially multi-storey car parks) and an institutional or monumental appearance, which leads to frequent comparisons of high rise schemes with prisons, barracks or even concentration camps. Small scale building, traditional materials, space about buildings, grass and trees, colour and brightness are greatly valued.[176]

Density levels have an important effect on residents' feelings. Above 60-80 bed spaces per acre (bspa), satisfaction with accommodation declines sharply and largely irrespective of the building form or other variables. General levels of satisfaction do not decline much above 100 bspa, and at high density low rise flats are not preferred more than high rise.[177]

Preferences about storey height show a marked bipolar peak, however, with the lower and the very top floors being preferred because of convenience and quietness respectively. A GLC survey concluded: 'the taller the block the larger the number of dissatisfied tenants there are likely to be'.[178] Some studies have detected increased anxiety amongst residents too high up to be able to reach their flats if lifts break down.[179] Very few residents in low rise flats would prefer to live in high rise, mainly elderly people who would like to avoid climbing stairs.[180]

LIFE CYCLE EFFECTS

The only point about high rise on which there is now a sociological consensus is the markedly unfavourable effects of this form of accommodation for families with children.[181] Life in a high flat may have a particularly

damaging effect on young children whose play is restricted and whose development may be inhibited. And the effect on children's mothers is equally serious.[182]

Elderly people are in general much less critical of high rise, and relatively few of them wish to take on the job of running a house.[183] But there is no clear evidence that they are well catered for in high flats, although they are amongst the largest group of residents.[184] When given a free choice about storey height, they almost never choose to live above the second floor.[185] It has been suggested that about 75 per cent of old people would prefer to live in a bungalow.[186]

Adult households and young single people are probably those residents best off in high rise, as they are in flats generally.[187] There is some evidence that those with high incomes, cars and jobs are better satisfied than those without by high flat life.[188]

SOCIAL EFFECTS OF HIGH RISE

The discussion of the social effects of high rise is hampered by the disparity between many of the results discussed and the possible effects of a particular type of accommodation. Nevertheless there are some significant results in this area.

People who live in flats have a greater vulnerability to certain kinds of illnesses because they undertake less physical activity and go out of doors less. Respiratory infections are the main problem and groups affected include children, young mothers and women over 50.[189] The effects of high flats are probably even more marked in this respect. Hird in addition found that old people often felt dizzy in high blocks,[190] and the D.O.E. found that 'vertigo was experienced by one in five of those living on the sixth floor or above'.[191]

Mental health may be affected by living in flats or high flats. Cappon suggests on theoretical grounds that high flats are undesirable[192] and a greater incidence of psycho-neurotic disorders and emotional stress has been found amongst flat dwellers than those in houses.[193] The available evidence is not by any means conclusive, however, and the matter is controversial.

One potent source of anxiety for flat dwellers may be safety. Mothers are particularly worried about children falling from windows or being injured by lifts.[194] Residents may also worry about fire safety, since there have now been at least two deaths in flat fires at heights above the level which the local fire brigade could reach with their equipment.[195] A number of studies have shown that people in flats are also abnormally worried about crime.[196]

Vandalism and associated minor crimes appear to be more frequent in high flats than other types of accommodation. American studies have shown a close association of crime and high rise, part of which may be an independent building form effect.[197] In Britain 28 per cent of high flat residents saw vandalism as a major problem in the mid-1960s and the indications are that this situation has worsened.[198] A D.O.E. survey carried out ten years later found the following distribution of council dwellings admitted by their occupiers to be unpopular (Table 3.19).[199] 30 percent of these are high rise, and nearly a

Table 3.19 : Distribution of Unpopular Local Authority Accommodation in England and Wales

Type	Number	Percentage
Houses	16,000	26
Walk up flats	11,500	19
Walk up maisonettes	10,600	17
High rise slab blocks	14,700	24
High rise point blocks	4,000	6
Other	5,200	8
Total	62,000	100

quarter of the total are slab blocks of the kind favoured by MHLG throughout the high rise boom. Considering the small proportion of national local authority stocks in high rise (around 7 per cent of the total), and considering the newness of the high rise stock, this picture suggests rapid decay. Proposals by Birkenhead and Liverpool to demolish five slab blocks where accommodation has become unlettable have been rejected by the D.O.E. in the last year (1976-7).[200] And at other estates huge repair bills have been incurred; at the system built

Aylesbury estate in Southwark, for example, repairs costing £2.3 million were necessary four years after it was completed at a cost of £12 million, principally as a result of vandalism.[201] One by-product of high levels of vandalism has been that the enormously expensive multi-storey car parks on high rise estates are very rarely used for fear of car thefts or 'mugging'; so much so that several local authorities are trying to convert their boarded up car parks into flats rather than pull them down.[202]

Loneliness and social isolation are perhaps the most frequently cited adverse aspects of high flat life. Between 20 per cent and 40 per cent of respondents in different households confess to feeling lonely or cut off in high flats, particularly in point blocks.[203] A study of a deck access block specifically designed to foster neighbourliness (Hyde Park in Sheffield), found the density of contacts between residents was greater than in point blocks, but still very much less than in old established housing areas and new estates of council houses.[204] Again family and elderly households are most liable to feel lonely.

The overall lifestyles of residents are adversely affected in a number of ways. Space and storage standards are generally low in high flats. Little use is or can be made of the open space provided. Lifts function as major barriers to activity outside the dwelling, particularly as lift failures become increasingly common through maintenance strikes and age.[205] And individuals' control of their environment is much less in flats and particularly in high flats. Taylor argues:

> Not only do flatted estates impose a bureaucratic anonymity which violates the individuality of family life, but they have gone on to deny fundamentally the changes and chances of a rapidly improving standard of living, which is at last making it financially possible for most people to breathe the freedom of doing their own thing.[206]

Overall then, high rise flats can at best be characterized as a clearly second best form of house accommodation. In the long term the effects of life in high rise may be proved to be seriously detrimental to the interests of elderly or adult households as well as to those of families with children.

3.7 : High Rise Housing as a Technological Shortcut to Social Change

The purpose of this review of six aspects of the high rise issue has been to bring out the problematic quality of the policy. There were strong pressures for the adoption of high rise - such as the centrality of high rise in the ideology of modern architecture, the apparent link between high rise and technological advance and the undoubted link between high rise and industrial concentration in construction, the faulty planning technology widely accepted in post-war Britain, and the fragmentation of the public housing effort.

But there were also strong factors against the policy, particularly the extra costs of high rise, the unpopularity of high flats and the reduced amenity provided. If we take each of the pressures for the policy and test them against the apparent irrationality of building large numbers of high flats, then it is difficult not to conclude that the sum of these influences is still incommensurate with the scale of adoption of high rise; there is still an unexplained 'rationality deficit' involved in the policy. Even if we are prepared to ascribe particular social efficacy to groups advocating high rise - such as the national construction firms who assiduously fostered the image of high rise as technologically sophisticated, or the social groups most insistent on policies of urban containment - the disparity between causes and effect remains.

TECHNOLOGICAL SHORTCUTS TO SOCIAL CHANGE

In order to develop a more convincing fit between the justifications of high rise and the policy followed, it is essential to have some <u>overall</u> characterization of the positive reasons for adopting high rise, a characteriza- tion which can introduce the possibility of the whole being greater than the sum of its component parts. This possibility is contained in Etzioni and Remp's notion of 'technological shortcuts to social change'.[207] These can be defined as 'solutions' to a <u>social</u> problem which permit economies to be made in resource allocation for managing the problem, or permit the problem to be tackled more directly.

The view of social problems necessary for decision-makers to see oppor-
tunities for such shortcuts was extremely prevalent in the 1950s and '60s. It
has been graphically summed up by Weinberg:

> In view of the simplicity of technological engineering, and the
> complexity of social engineering, to what extent can social problems
> be circumvented by reducing them to technological problems? Can we
> identify Quick Technological Fixes for profound and almost infinitely
> complicated social problems, "fixes" that are within the grasp of
> modern technology, and which would either eliminate the original
> social problem without requiring a change in the individual's social
> attitudes, or would so alter the problem as to make its resolution
> more feasible.[208]

The paradigm cases of such quick technological fixes have included the intro-

duction of birth control devices, particularly the contraceptive pill, the use

of drugs to combat heroin and alcohol addiction, and the adoption of instruc-

tional television to avoid constraints set by teacher shortages. But as

Etzioni and Remp make clear (and as our discussion of planning technology

assumed), the term 'technology' cannot be simply confined to science-based

knowledge or techniques. It refers much more generally to 'bodies of skills,

knowledge and procedures for making, using and doing useful things', to all

techniques which are 'means for accomplishing recognized purposes'.[209] But

since the variety of human purposes is very great social scientists have

normally imposed some limitations on this common-sense definition. Merrell's

authoritative definition therefore suggests that 'the concept of technology

centres on processes that are primarily biological or physical rather than on

psychological or social processes'.[210] Among Etzioni and Remp's case studies

are thus included procedures for screening out drunken drivers to improve

traffic safety, and methods of gun control to reduce accidents and violent crime.

neither of which is linked to science-based technology.

THE 'SOCIAL PROBLEM' TACKLED BY HIGH RISE

What was the nature of the 'social problem' for which high rise housing

could be seen as a quick technological fix? To recap briefly, because of the

ecological development of British cities, the housing problems to which the

post-war public housing effort was directed were overwhelmingly concentrated in

the inner and core city areas of the major conurbations, and in some isolated towns in heavy industrial regions. The distribution of people between areas of good housing and the 'slums' was marked by a profound class cleavage, a cleavage which combined with the gross disparities in housing amenity involved, posed a major threat to the overall cohesion of the social formation and the legitimacy of the state. In order to remove this threat the public housing programme committed large but insufficient resources to an attempt to provide decent housing for the mass of people living in poor conditions. The primary constraint on public housing's success was the variation in its effectiveness in different areas of the country. While most rural housing authorities successfully met their public housing needs in the inter-war or immediate post-war periods, the organization of the housing drive in major urban areas and the political constraints on its effectiveness there generated acute contradictions within public housing. The social base with most at stake in public housing, the inner city working class, organized politically almost soley through the Labour party, did not succeed in establishing the necessary planning framework and local government structure to pursue the enormous housing drive that was needed. By the 1950s, the social base with least to gain from public housing, primarily the surburban middle class and rural upper class, organized in the Conservative party, had succeeded in orientating the planning system towards urban containment, halting all expansion of the new towns programme and resisting any extension of political control or land availability by inner and core city authorities. The cities were, in effect, forced to meet their housing needs in situ, to use up their remaining building land (in competition with private housing), to develop piecemeal on small sites, to begin rebuilding areas without moving out large numbers of people and without any linear expansion of the urban area. Greater equality in housing conditions was to be achieved with inadequate funding, without any substantial diversion of land from rural to urban use and without any significant equalization of densities across metropolitan areas. Even within inner and core cities themselves, equalization of housing densities was not pursued.

HIGH RISE AS TECHNOLOGICAL SHORTCUT

It was this situation of acute crisis which allowed high rise and mass housing solutions to be successfully introduced and promoted as technological shortcuts. They appeared to provide the means of cutting the gordian knot of conflicting social and institutional pressures confining the public housing programme in a vicious circle of solutions and problem intensification. By building high rise/high density schemes, it was claimed, a direct attack could be mounted on inner city housing conditions without altering the planning system, the local government structure or the existing balance of social pressures. Inner and core city authorities could tackle their own problems in situ, without loss of population via overspill, without boundary or building land extensions, without co-operation across local authority boundaries. With the minimum necessary change of the institutional status quo, i.e. with no change, and within the existing configuration of class power and party politics, high rise apparently provided the state with a direct means of intervening to alleviate the worst housing conditions. All that was needed was the provision of substantial extra state finance to meet the costs of high rise, and money which was not available for the simple expansion of public housing programmes was granted without controversy to meet this need. At a later stage when the public housing drive began to run up against constraints from competing private sector demands on construction industry resources, industrialized high rise combined the technological shortcut of high rise with the appeal of mass production to create an even stronger means of by-passing a restrictive organizational frame.

A large part of the appeal of high rise was based on its claim to newness, to be the product of technical advances in construction, building research and industrial organization. Although these aspects were constantly emphasized by the construction industry, especially over industrialized high rise, the legitimation of these claims provided by architectural ideology was an especially important influence in procuring acceptance. In addition the technological basis of high rise housing was consistently over-estimated as a consequence of its real

impact on architectural designing and planning technology.

There was another diffuse but nonetheless important reason for the acceptance of high rise housing by the public housing apparatus. This was the prevalence of an extremely optimistic ethos about technology in post-war British society, an ethos particularly well developed in the political elite.[211] Both decision makers and 'public opinion' were predisposed to accept policies such as high rise embued with the appropriate technological aura.

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14. Jencks, Architecture 2000; Modern Movements in Architecture, p. 28.

15. M. Yamasaki, quoted in R. Goodman, After the Planners (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1972), p. 132.

16. See J. Meller (ed.), The Buckminster Fuller Reader (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1972), and the picture of Buckminster Fuller's Harlem proposals on p. 179 of Goodman's After the Planners; P. Soleri, Arcology: the City in the Image of Man (Cambridge, Mass.: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1969).

17. See A. Lipman, 'Architectural Education and the Social Commitment of Contemporary British Architecture', Sociological Review, (1970), 5-27.

18. A. Jackson, The Politics of Architecture: A History of Modern Architecture in Britain (London, Architectural Press, 1970), p. 122.

19. See A. Lipman, 'The Architectural Belief System and Social Behaviour', British Journal of Sociology, 20 (1969), 190-204.

20. Lipman, 'Architectural Education';   see also M. Broady, Planning for People (London, Bedford Press, 1968).

21. See D. Bryant and D. Knowles, 'Social Contact on the Hyde Park Estate, Sheffield', Town Planning Review, 45 (1974), 207-14.

22. See Chapter 1. McEwan, Crisis in Architecture;   J.S. Curl, European Cities and Society (London, Leonard Hill, 1970), p. 167.

23. P.and A. Smithson, writing in Architectural Design, April 1957, quoted in Jencks, Modern Movements in Architecture, pp. 256-7.

24. N. Wilson, 'High Rise is Inevitable', Architect and Building News, 1 (1968), p. 37.

25. Pawley, Architecture versus Housing, p. 94.

26. See Jencks, Modern Movements in Architecture, pp. 270-98.

27. See Habrakan, Supports; A. Rapoport, 'The Personal Element in Housing', Royal Institute of British Architects Journal, July 1968;   J. Turner, Freedom to Build (London, Calder and Boyars, 1977);   P. Oliver (ed.), Shelter and Society (London, The Cresset Press, 1969).

28. K. Campbell, 'Decline and Fall of Tower Blocks', The Builder, 18 July 1969, p. 114.

29. Rapoport, 'The Personal Element in Housing';   W. Cowburn, 'Popular Housing', Arena, October 1966.

30. Many architects' change of heart came very late in the day. Colonel Richard Seifert, the London property architect, renounced it only late in 1974, for example: 'From towers to homes: Seifert comes full circle', Sunday Times, 3 November, 1974;   and 'Life in a Seifert high rise', The Observer, 20 October, 1974.

31. McCutcheon, 'Technical Change and Social Need', p. 286.

32. Bowley, The British Building Industry, p. 11.

33. Ibid., Chs. 2 and 3.

34. Jackson, Politics of Architecture, pp. 96-7.

35. Bowley, British Building Industry, pp. 15-27, 58-61.

36. Ibid., 187.

37. R.M.E. Diamant, Industrialized Building (London, Illife Books and Architect and Building News, 1964).

38. Jackson, Politics of Architecture, p. 187.

39. And see G.A. Atkinson, High Buildings in Britain: some historical aspects (Watford, Building Research Establishment, 1975).

40. Atkinson, High Buildings in Britain, p. 3.

41. McCutcheon, 'Technical Change and Social Need', p. 274.

42. MHLG, Report of the Inquiry into the Collapse of Flats at Roman Point, Canning Town (London, HMSO, 1968).

43. Bowley, British Building Industry, Ch. 8.

44. MHLG, Housing Statistics, No. 12 (1969), Table 5, p. 17; DOE, Housing Statistics, Table 5, p. 17. These figures give the estimated time lag from start to completion (on a first started, first completed basis) for local authorities and new towns in England and Wales. Slight definitional changes took place in 1962 and 1967 in the compilation of the data.

45. R.F. Stevens, 'High Rise Costs', Paper given to the 'Tall Buildings and People' Conference, September 1974, organized by the International Association of Bridge and Structural Engineers and the Institute of Structural Engineers, and reported in the Building Research Establishment's BRE News, 31 (1975), pp. 9-10.

46. Bowley, British Building Industry, pp. 255-60.

47. Diamant, Industrialized Building; R.B. White, Prefabrication: a History of its Development in Great Britain (London, HMSO, 1965).

48. M. Ball, 'British Housing Policy and the House Building Industry', Paper given to the Second Conference on Urban Change and Conflict, 5th January 1977, York University.

49. This expresses in table form the argument of P.A. Stone, in Urban Development in Britain: Standards, Costs and Resources, 1964-2004 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 228. Stone's figures (and hence this table) are only estimates.

50. Stone, Urban Development in Britain, pp. 222-28.

51. Ibid., p. 226.

52. Ibid., p. 225.

53. Albert, Policy for the Building Industry, pp. 5-6. National firms do not work continuously in given areas, unlike regional firms. Hence, unless labour is mobile, security of employment is less.

54. Advertisement for Bison high flats by Concrete Ltd., in the Housing and Planning Review, July 1967, p. 32.

55. See Royal Institute of British Architects, High Flats: Report of a Symposium (London, RIBA, 1955), Paper No. 13, 'The Contractors' Viewpoint', by C.D. Mitchell.

56. This table is computed from a D.O.E. file on Industrialized Building. All industrialized high flat contracts were noted and low rise numbers obtained by subtracting the annual figures obtained from the totals given in MHLG, Housing Statistics, No. 2, Table 12, p. 22; Housing Statistics No. 5, Table 17, pp. 25-6; Housing Statistics, No. 9, Table 17, pp. 29-30; Housing Statistics, No. 17, Table 18, pp. 29-31; DOE, Housing Statistics, No. 21 (1971), Table 18, pp. 29-31; Housing and Construction Statistics, No. 5 (1973), Supplementary Table XXI, pp. 77-8; Housing and Construction Statistics, No. 9 (1974), Supplementary Table XXI, p. 81. These overall figures are not available for 1963-4, and the data included in our table for these years must be regarded as highly dubious in view of the state of MHLG statistics at the time. Figures for the total high rise building were obtained from the sources given in note 20 in Chapter Two above. The table refers to tender approvals by local authorities and new towns (including the LCC/GLC) in England and Wales only.

57. See section 4.2 below where this argument is further developed.

58. That is, estates of both high and low rise dwellings.

59. Sources for this table are given in note 56 above. The number of systems on the market was obtained by counting the systems for which individual figures were given by MHLG/DOE. Not all systems on the market won orders in any given year. By 1973 many had not won an order for several years. The number of dwellings refers to net tender approvals in the year. Systems were classified as low or high rise if they were used exclusively for one building form in the period 1965-73, and as predominantly low or high rise according to whether more than 50 per cent of their approvals in the period were in a particular building form.

60. This figure is taken from National Building Agency, Trends in Housing and Constructions, No. 1 (1976).

61. Sources in note 56.

62. If traditional high rise could be included the proportion would rise only slightly. The figures for Concrete Ltd. need to be interpreted with caution since the firm typically marketed its products as main sub-contractor, the general contractors involved being a variety of smaller building firms.

63. See DOE, New Housing in a Cleared Area: a Study of St. Mary's, Oldham (London, HMSO, 1971), Design Bulletin, 22. Other systems are described in Diamant, Industrialised Building.

64. The low rise only firms were, in order of importance; Bryant (who were also general contractors for Concrete Ltd. in the West Midlands, however), Howlem, Lowton Cubitt (a subsidiary of Holland, Hannem and Cubitt), and Frameform (designed by James Riley and Partners).

65. The table is drawn from DOE files to which I was given access. Before 1967 contractual information was very rarely recorded. Our data refer to whole contracts the last dwelling of which was completed in these years; published DOE figures refer to individual dwelling completions and will not therefore tally. Completion numbers after 1972 were too small for inclusion.

66. Firms were classed as national building firms if they were given independent listing in The Times 1000, 1971-2 (London, Times Newspaper, 1971), or were subsidiaries of construction firms so listed, or were major subsidiaries of other firms listed. Local firms were identified as having a single office/ works and as carrying out over two-thirds of their work in the borough or neighbouring boroughs in which this was located. Regional firms, virtually all of which were London based, are thus to some extent a residual category. Firms acting as general contractors for industrialized systems were not classified; their totals were assigned to the system in question - the main problem here being Camus (Great Britain) Ltd., which was classified as a national firm although not meeting the requirement given above since it is a small (private) subsidiary of the French firm, formed only to hold the U.K. license for the system. Other sources of information used were Stock Exchange Official Year Book, 1968 (London, Stock Exchange, 1968), Stock Exchange Official Year Book, 1973-4 (London, Stock Exchange, 1973).

67. The London market might be seen as especially competitive or concentrated; alternatively it could be argued it was less competitive because local authorities had a harder time attracting contractual interest because of other construction demand, principally that for office and hotel building at this time.

68. P. Hall, H. Gracey, R. Drewett and R. Thomas, The Containment of Urban England (London, Political and Economic Planning/Allen and Unwin, 1973), two volumes. See also J.B. Cullingworth, Town and Country Planning in England and Wales (London, Allen and Unwin, 196); J.B. Cullingworth, Problems of an Urban Society, Volume 1 (London, Allen and Unwin, 1973), Chs. 3 and 5.

69. L.J. Sharpe,'Innovation and Change in British Land Use Planning', in J. Hayward and M.Watson, (eds.) Planning, Politics and Public Policy: the British, French and Italian Experience (London, C.U.P, 1975), p.319.

70. F. Schaffer, The New Town Story (London, MacGibbon and Kee, 1970).

71. P. Hall and R. Thomas, 'The Planned Communities', Ch. 10 in Hall et al., Containment of Urban England, Volume 2.

72. J.H. Forshaw and P. Abercrombie, County of London Plan (London, Macmillan, 1943); P. Abercrombie, Greater London Plan (London, Ministry of Town and Country Planning, 1944).

73. See L. Mumford and F.J. Osborne, The Letters of Lewis Mumford and Frederic J. Osborne (Bath, Adams and Dart, 1971), pp. 39-40.

74. For example, see P. Abercrombie and H. Jackson, West Midlands Plan (Birmingham, for the Ministry of Town and Country Planning, 1945), Mimeo; P. Abercrombie and R.H. Matthew, The Clyde Valley Regional Plan 1946 (Edinburgh, HMSO, 1949). In the former ring zones at 75-120 ppa and at 50 ppa were proposed for Birmingham; in the latter zones of 120 ppa, 90 ppa and 60 ppa were outlined for Glasgow. The Liverpool Development Plan included three density zones, 140 ppa, 100 ppa and 40-56 ppa; Municipal Journal, 2 October, 1953, p. 2133.

75. See J. Tyrwhitt quoted in D.L. Foley, Controlling London's Growth (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1963), p. 198.

76. This was not unrelated to the difficulties of development in external authorities and to the counties' general resistance to overspill.

77. London County Council, Development Plan Review 1960 (London, LCC, 1960).

78. On which see C. Hewitt, 'Policy Making in Post War Britain: a Nation Level Test of Elitist and Pluralist Hypotheses', British Journal of Political Science, 4 (1974), 187-216.

79. This term is used by C.G. Pickvance, 'Physical Planning and Market Forces in Urban Development', National Westminster Bank Quarterly Review, August 1977, p. 42, to refer to a planning system which reproduces market trends.

80. Abercrombie and other planners saw their goal, of somewhat flattening out the density pyramid in cities, as a radical one, as it certainly was in its day. Once post-war suburbanization began, however, the goal came more and more to reflect the status quo, not to change it.

81. Not least because the planning system's emphasis on preserving particular environments judged successful displaced the burden of adjustment into lower amenity areas.

82. On the notion of a pyramid of market values, see D. Harvey, Social Justice and the City (London, Edward Arnold, 1973), Ch. 5.

83. In a way this is because planning was seen as effecting modifications of market trends; thus high density inner city redevelopment was expressed not as a positive choice, but in terms of 'thinning out the central area', of reducing 'congestion', etc. See D.L. Foley, Controlling London's Growth, pp. 102-105; P. Self, Cities in Flood (London, Faber, 1957), Ch. 2.

84. Pickvance, 'Physical Planning and Market Forces in Urban Development', pp. 41-2. The only systematic discussion on density zoning, market prices and type of housing provided is given by R. Thomas, 'Housing Trends and Urban Growth', Ch. 8 of Volume 2 of Hall et al., Containment of Urban England, especially pp. 275-8. This relates only to private and suburban council housing, however.

85. See O. Marriot, The Property Boom (London, Hutchinson, 1967); T.A. Broadbent, Planning and Profit in the Urban Economy (London, Methuen, 1977), pp. 103-9, 120-6.

86. Description of compensation payments are given by English et al., Slum Clearance, pp. 59-63. The effect of slum clearance acquisition on housing costs remains largely unstudied.

87. This is, of necessity, a tentative conclusion based on the largely unscientific data and arguments around the topic, such as those of the Town and Country Planning Association. See also Stone, Urban Development in Britain, pp. 130-1, and P.A. Stone, Housing, Town Development and Land Costs (London, Estates Gazette Ltd., 1963).

88. See R.A. Jensen, High Density Living (London, Whitefriars Press, 1966).

89. R.H. Crossman, Speech on the Second Reading of the House subsidies Bill, 15 December 1965: Hansard, 5th Series, 1965, vol. 742, 1393.

90. The espousal of 'urbanist' values was stimulated by R. Glass's paper on 'Urban Sociology in Great Britain', in R.E. Pahl (ed.), Readings in Urban Sociology (Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1968), which first appeared in 1955.

91. See below, section 4.4 for the distortion of Young and Wilmott's research in this way.

92. Self, Cities in Flood, devotes a great deal of time to combating these many diverse and partly bogus goals of 'urbanists'.

93. These additional demands are well documented in Forshaw and Abercrombie, County of London Plan, and in development plans for towns and cities up and down the country. The later increase in transport system demands with the commitment to urban road building is graphically illustrated in Reports of the Steering Group and Working Group appointed by the Minister of Transport, Traffic in Towns (London, HMSO, 1963); the Buchanan Report.

94. P. Hall, 'Policy Alternatives - Past and Future' in Hall et al., Containment of Urban England, Volume 2, pp. 426-33.

95. MHLG, Residential Areas: Higher Densities (London, HMSO, 1962), Planning Bulletin No. 2. Table 4. is taken from p. 5. Housing related land uses comprise some open space, primary schools, local roads and shops: it excludes industry, central business and commerce, railways, sewage works, etc.

96. Forshaw and Abercrombie, County of London Plan, pp. 171, 174.

97. MHLG, Flats and Houses 1958 (London, HMSO, 1958).

98. Stone, Urban Development in Britain, pp. 102-110; P.A. Stone, 'Building Economics'in S. Zuckerman et al., Land Ownership and Resources (Cambridge, Department of Estate Management, University of Cambridge: 1959).

99. For descriptions of their scheme, Lillington Gardens, Westminster, see Daily Telegraph Magazine, 25 May 1973; and T. Aldous, 'Down to Earth', source unknown, communicated to me by Roland Newman of Oxford Polytechnic.

100. L. Martin and L. March (eds.), Urban Space and Structures (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1972).

101. L. March, 'Let's Build in Lines', New Society, 20 July 1967, p. 14.

102. March, 'Let's Build in Lines', p. 14. For a full and detailed examination see L. March, Chs. 1 and 3, and Martin, March et al., Ch. 2 in Martin and March, Urban Space and Structures.

103. See the forward by H. Macmillan to MHLG, The Densities of Residential Areas; and the Municipal Journal editorial, 'The Choice: Develop Upward', 15 February 1952, pp. 333-41.

104. Stone, 'Building Economics', pp. 94-97. Table 3.9 is taken from the figure on p. 45.

105. Stone, Urban Development in Britain, pp. 156-7.

106. See for example, Jensen, High Density Living; Whitfield Lewis, 'Development in High Flats', Paper given to the Housing Centre Trust, November 1956; Royal Institute of British Architects, High Flats: Report of a Symposium (London, RIBA, 1956); J.L. Wolmersley, 'Multi Storey Housing: When and How', Housing and Planning Review March-April, 1953.

107. P.A. Stone, The Structure, Size and Costs of Urban Settlements (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 27.

108. Stone, Structure, Size and Costs of Urban Settlements, p. 26.

109. See A. Rapoport, 'Housing and High Densities in France', Town Planning Review, 39 (1969), p.   ; J. Musil, Urban Sociology and Planning (London, Centre for Environmental Studies, 1969), p. 16 quoting a German study by H.P. Bahrdt.

110. MHLG, Flats and Houses 1958.

111. Stone, Urban Development in Britain, p. 104, shows that the proportion of public authority houses built at densities over 80 ppa was approximately four times that of private houses. This seems to have been achieved more by the massing of open spaces with flatted developments, however.

112. Sources are MHLG, Housing Statistics,No. 19 (1970), Table 23, p. 36; DOE, Housing and Construction Statistics, No. 10 (1974), Supplementary Table XXVIII, p. 88. The figures are tender approvals for local authorities and new towns in England and Wales, except the LCC/GLC, and the density measure used is that of persons (designed bedspaces) per acre. The exclusion of the GLC means these figures underestimate the trend for densities to fall from the mid-1960s.

113. Source: MHLG, Housing Statistics, No. 13 (1969), Supplementary Table XIII, p. 83. The figures refer to tenders approved for local authorities and new towns in England and Wales, except the GLC.

114. See J.H. Warren, The English Local Government System (London, Allen and Unwin, 1946) and Donnison, The Government of Housing on the structure of housing authorities.

115. See P. Hall and R. Thomas, 'The Planned Communities', Ch. 10 in Volume II of Hall et al., Containment of Urban England.

116. This problem was obviously most acute in London, despite the presence of the LCC. Overspill arrangements were better developed in the metropolis, however. In contrast the West Midlands experienced acute difficulties. See P. Hall, 'The West Midlands', Ch. 10, Volume I of Hall et al., Containment of Urban England; and A. Sutcliffe and R. Smith, Birmingham, 1939-1970 (London, Oxford University Press, 1974), Chs. IV, VIII and XIII.

117. The process of suburban authorities excluding inner city redevelopment is studied explicitly for the first time in Britain by K. Young's forthcoming book on Metropolitan Housing Politics, in relation to Bromley and the GLC. See also, P. Saunders, Who Runs Croydon? Power and Politics in a London Borough (Ph.D. Thesis, University of London, 1974).

118. See P. Dunleavy, The Politics of Collective Consumption (London, Macmillan, forthcoming), Ch. 4.

119. This seems likely because of the scale of clearance but is difficult to prove. The argument was best put by J.B. Cullingworth, 'Are Multi-Storey Flats the Real Answer to our Housing Needs?', Municipal Engineering, 25 June 1965, pp. 329-31.

120. This section draws principally on C. Booker and B. Gray, 'The Worst of the Big Spenders', Observer, 30 November 1975, and 'The Great Bulldozer Blunder', Observer, 7 December 1975;

121. Dennis, People and Planning, Chs. 7, 14-17.

122. Booker and Gray, 'The Great Bulldozer Blunder', reporting an unpublished study by the Architectural Association.

123. Sutcliffe and Smith, Birmingham, 1939-1970, p. 235.

124. See Dennis, Public Participation and Planners' Blight; Davies, The Evangelistic Bureaucrat; Jacobs, The Right to a Decent House; English et al., Slum Clearance.

125. Dennis, People and Planning, Ch. 7; Shelter Report on Slum Clearance, pp. 3-4.

126. Cullingworth, Housing and Local Government, pp. 177-205.

127. See MHLG, Housing Statistics, No. 19 (1970), Table 36, p. 47. This figure refers only to houses demolished in clearance areas in England and Wales which were not unfit as a proportion of all such houses, between 1960 and 30 September 1970.

128. R. Samuels, J. Kincard, and E. Slater, 'But Nothing Happens', New Left Review, January 1962; J.B. Cullingworth, Housing Needs and Planning Policy (London, Routledge, 1960).

129. Booker and Gray, 'The Great Bulldozer Blunder'.

2,500

130. The scale of the problem can be indicated by one example. In Lambeth in 1973 some / homes were added to public housing stocks, of which less than 400 were used for housing waiting list applicants, despite a list of some 14300 families.

131. Source Office of Population, Surveys and Censuses, Census 1971, County Tables: Part 1, Table 2; General Register Office, Edinburgh: Census 1971: Scotland, County Report: Glasgow City, Table 2, p. 2.

132. Stone, Urban Development in Britain, p. 239.

133. See below for the estimate of high rise costs; note 135 and Table 4.

134. See, for example, the Municipal Journal editorial, 'Multi-Storey Flats' of 14 December, 1956, and the article on p. 1993 of the same issue.

135. Sources are MHLG, Housing Statistics, No. 12 (1969), Table 18, p. 31; DOE Housing Statistics, No. 20 (1971), Table 19, p. 32; DOE, Housing Statistics, No. 21 (1971), Table 19, p. 32; DOE, Housing and Construction Statistics, No. 10 (1974), Supplementary Table XXIII, p. 92. Figures refer to tenders approved for local authorities in England and Wales, except the GLC. New towns are not included.

136. Sources are MHLG, Housing Statistics, No. 12 (1969), Table 20, p. 33; DOE, Housing Statistics, No. 21 (1971), Table 21, p. 34; DOE, Housing and Construction Statistics, No. 10 (1974), Table 26, p. 36. Figures refer to tenders approved for England and Wales by local authorities and new towns up to 1968, and for local authorities alone from 1969 onward, with the GLC being excluded throughout.

137. Sources as note 135.

138. Costs for two storey 4 bedspace houses were used as the denominator after 1968. Sources are as for note 135.

139. Regional cost variations in different building forms are discussed by Stone, Urban Development in Britain, pp. 160-1, 149-50.

140. I would like to thank Mr. A.E. Holmans of the DOE Housing Economics section for information on this; quite why the DOE cannot publish costs for different building forms in different regions, remains a mystery to me.

141. Stone, Urban Development in Britain, p. 153. Our figures are for London: Those for Birmingham show a slightly greater fall.

142. Stone, Urban Development in Britain, p. 159.

143. Stone, Urban Development in Britain, p. 157.

144. Sources, MHLG, Housing Statistics, No. 11 (1968), Supplementary Table VI, p. 73; since 1967 this differential has not been reduced but widened even further, DOE, Housing and Construction Statistics, No. 10 (1974), Supplementary Table XXV, p. 93. These figures refer to the average costs of garages included in housing tenders approved for local authorities and new towns in England and Wales, except the GLC.

145. Stone, Urban Development in Britain, p. 157.

146. Economist, 13 December, 1975, p. 32; Stevens, 'High Rise Costs' in BRE News, 31 (1975), p. 10, shows maintenance costs in high flats twice those in houses.

147. Stone, Urban Development in Britain, p. 157, Table 9.10.

148. Stone, Urban Development in Britain, p. 159, Table 9.13.

149. See also F.J. Osborne, 'How Subsidies Distort Housing Development', Lloyds Bank Review, No. 36 (1955), 25-38, and P. Hall, London 2000 (London, Faber, 1963), Ch. 4.

150. See Table 4.6 below.

151. I am grateful to Mr. A.E. Homans of the DOE Housing Economics section for suggesting this example, the figures in which are purely illustrative.

152. See Community Development Project, Whatever Happened to Council Housing? A senior MHLG housing administrator interviewed for this research claimed that the progressive storey height subsidy was always carefully calculated in relation to the actual costs of building forms in such a way that local authorities had no positive inducement to build high.

153. Stone, Urban Development in Britain, p. 161.

154. Sources for subsidy figures base is MHLG, Housing Statistics, No. 13 (1969), Supplementary Table XIV, p. 84. The high rise figures based on tender approvals were simply compared with subsidy payments in the nearest financial year; this will tend to overstate their importance but no other procedure seemed feasible. Other sources are the same as those for note 32 in Chapter 2 and for Table 46 below. Approvals of high flats from 1957 to the end of 1965 are included.

155. This is a minimum figure which includes the GLC flats.

156. For a fuller discussion see B. Adams and J. Conway, The Social Effects of Living Off the Ground (London, DOE, 1975), DOE Information Paper No. 9.

157. See P. Dunleavy, 'The Social Consequences of High Rise', paper given to the Architecture IV Seminar, Oxford Polytechnic, November 1976, Introduction (unpublished).

158. Centre for Urban Studies, 'Tall Flats in Pimlico' in London: Aspects of Change (London, MacGibbon and Kee, 1964), p. 279; Self, Cities in Flood. p. 44; Bournville Village Trust, When We Build Again (London, Allen and Unwin, 1941); Gallup Poll reported in The Times, 8 September 1968, p. 18.

159. See A. Sutcliffe, 'Introduction', pp. 1-18 in Multi-Storey Living.

160. MHLG, Living in a Slum (London, HMSO, 1970), p. 31.

161. D. Sinton, 'Attitudes: a Source of the Housing Problem', Connections, 1969 (a publication of Harvard Graduate School of Design). This is a study of housing images in advertising.

162. Source DOE, Housing and Construction Statistics, No. 10 (1974), Table 18, p. 30.

163. A. Murie, P. Niner and Watson, Housing Policy and the Housing System (London, Allen and Unwin, 1976).

164. GLC, Height Preference Survey (London, Greater London Council, 1968), Mimeo.

165. E. Gittus, Flats, Families and the Under-Fives (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976), pp. 110-11; MHLG, Families Living at High Density (London, HMSO, 1970), Design Bulletin 21, p. 4; W. Stewart, Children in Flats (London, National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, 1970), p. .

166. DOE, The Estate Outside the Dwelling (London, HMSO, 1972), Design Bulletin 25, p. 30.

167. P. Jephcott, Homes in High Flats (Edinburgh, Oliver and Boyd, 1971), Glasgow University Social and Economics Studies Occasional Paper No. 13, p. 127; M. Abrams, 'Owners and Tenants', New Society, 21 August 1975, pp. 417-19.

168. Jephcott, Homes in High Flats, p. 48.

169. Adams and Conway, Social Effects of Living Off the Ground, pp. 1-2; MHLG, Families Living at High Density, p. 14; Gittus, Flats, Families and the Under Fives, p. 56; Stewart, Children in Flats, p. 23; DOE, The Estate Outside the Dwelling, p. 23.

170. Gittus, Flats, Families and the Under Fives, p. 56.

171. DOE, The Estate Outside the Dwelling, p. 25.

172. Adams and Conway, Social Effects of Living Off the Ground, p. 1.

173. MHLG, Families Living at High Density, pp. 20, 22; DOE, The Estate Outside the Dwelling, pp. 23-4; R. Smith and M. Burbidge, Density and Residents' Satisfaction (London, Department of the Environment, Unpublished, 1973), p. 17; I. Reynolds, D. Davies, R. Ince, Quality Monitoring: a Pilot Survey of the Quality and Performance of Local Authority Housing in England and Wales (London, DOE, Unpublished, 1972), Volume I, pp. 20-4.

174. Jephcott, Homes in High Flats, pp. 50-4.

175. Reynolds, et al., Quality Monitoring, Volume I, p. 22; M. Burbidge, Medium Rise High Density Housing (London, DOE, Unpublished, 1972), p. 23.

176. DOE, The Estate Outside the Dwelling, pp. 31-38.

177. Smith and Burbidge, Density and Residents Satisfaction, passim; see also M. Burbidge, High Density Housing: a Social Perspective (London, DOE, Unpublished, 1969).

178. GLC, Height Preference Survey, Tables 15 and 18.

179. Jephcott, Homes in High Flats, pp.54-6.

180. Burbidge, Medium Rise High Density Housing, pp. 29, 72-89, 109.

181. Adams and Conway, Social Effects of Living Off the Ground; Gittus, Flats, Families and the Under Fives; Stewart, Children in Flats; J. Maizels, Two to Five in High Flats (London, Housing Centre Trust, 1961); A. Stevenson, E. Martin and J. O'Neill, High Living (Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1967); Jephcott, Homes in High Flats; DOE, Children at Play (London, HMSO, 1973), Design Bulletin, 27; the only dissenting voices are M. Willis, 'Living in High Blocks of Flats', Royal Institute of British Architects Journal, 61 (1954), 242-3; and D.A. Francis, 'The Wandsworth Study', (B.A. Thesis, Polytechnic of the South Bank, 1973). A bibliography of French studies of the 'grands ensembles' suggest a similar focus of sociological research on problems of children; B. Lamy, Les nouvelles ensembles d'habitation et leur environnement (Paris, Centre de Sociologie Urbaine, 1971).

182. Gittus, Flats, Families and the Under Fives, passim.

183. DOE, The Estate Outside the Dwelling, p. 30.

184. Indeed, after 1970 a large majority of flats over 10 storeys were for old people: information communicated by M. Day, Department of Geography, Kings College, London.

185. GLC, Height Preference Survey.

186. V. Hole and P.G. Allen, 'Dwellings for Old People', Architects Journal, 9 May 1962; see also Jephcott, Homes in High Flats, Ch. 8 and Burbidge, Medium Rise High Density Housing, arguing that high flats suit the elderly.

187. DOE, Housing Single People (London, HMSO, 1971), Design Bulletin 23; Burbidge,High Density Housing, pp. 14-16.

188. C. Bauer, 'Supertenements: Does the Low Income Tenant Want Them?', Town and Country Planning, October 1952, 458-66; O. Newman, Defensible Space (London, Architectural Press, 1972), p. 24.

189. D.J. Fanning, 'Families in Flats', British Medical Journal, 4 (1967), 382-6.

190. J. Beatson Hird, 'Vertical Living: Health Aspects', Royal Society of Health Journal, 87 (1967), 171-2.

191. Adams and Conway, Social Effects of Living Off the Ground, p. 8.

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CHAPTER FOUR

The National Level Political Process on the Issue

4.1 : The National Issue System

Before considering the concrete activities of the various groups and
organizations involved in influencing central government policy on high rise
and exerting a general influence on the kind of building undertaken by housing
authorities, it is useful to present a much broader preview of this analysis which
relates to the dimensions of the issue discussed in the previous chapter.

To do this in a brief but effective way, this section focuses on a diagram
of the 'national issue system'. The diagram is drawn using some techniques of
systems analysis outlined by Cortes, Przeworski and Sprague and it attempts
to map influence flows involved in producing high rise outputs.[1] It is not ·
possible to quantify these flows, but this representation does provide an
appropriate mode of representing the inter-relationship of the basic variables
which functioned as inputs with the processing of these inputs by specific
elements of the political system, (Figure 4.1).

The main inputs into the debate on high rise distinguished in Chapter 3
were mediated to state bodies principally via the organizations linked to the
social interest concerned. Thus developments in construction industry technology
were mediated to the central state and local authorities primarily by the con-
struction industry, although they also had an important influence on architectural
ideology. Similarly architectural ideology directly entered the debate over high
rise only to the extent that it influenced the position adopted by the profession,
although for our purposes its influences via the associated development of planning
technology was probably more important. Two of the inputs discussed in Chapter
3 had a direct influence on the Ministry of Housing, the planning system and the
organization of housing authorities, since in both these cases the Ministry was the
most important organizational actor concerned with such problems. The structure
of local government functions in respect of housing also exerted an important
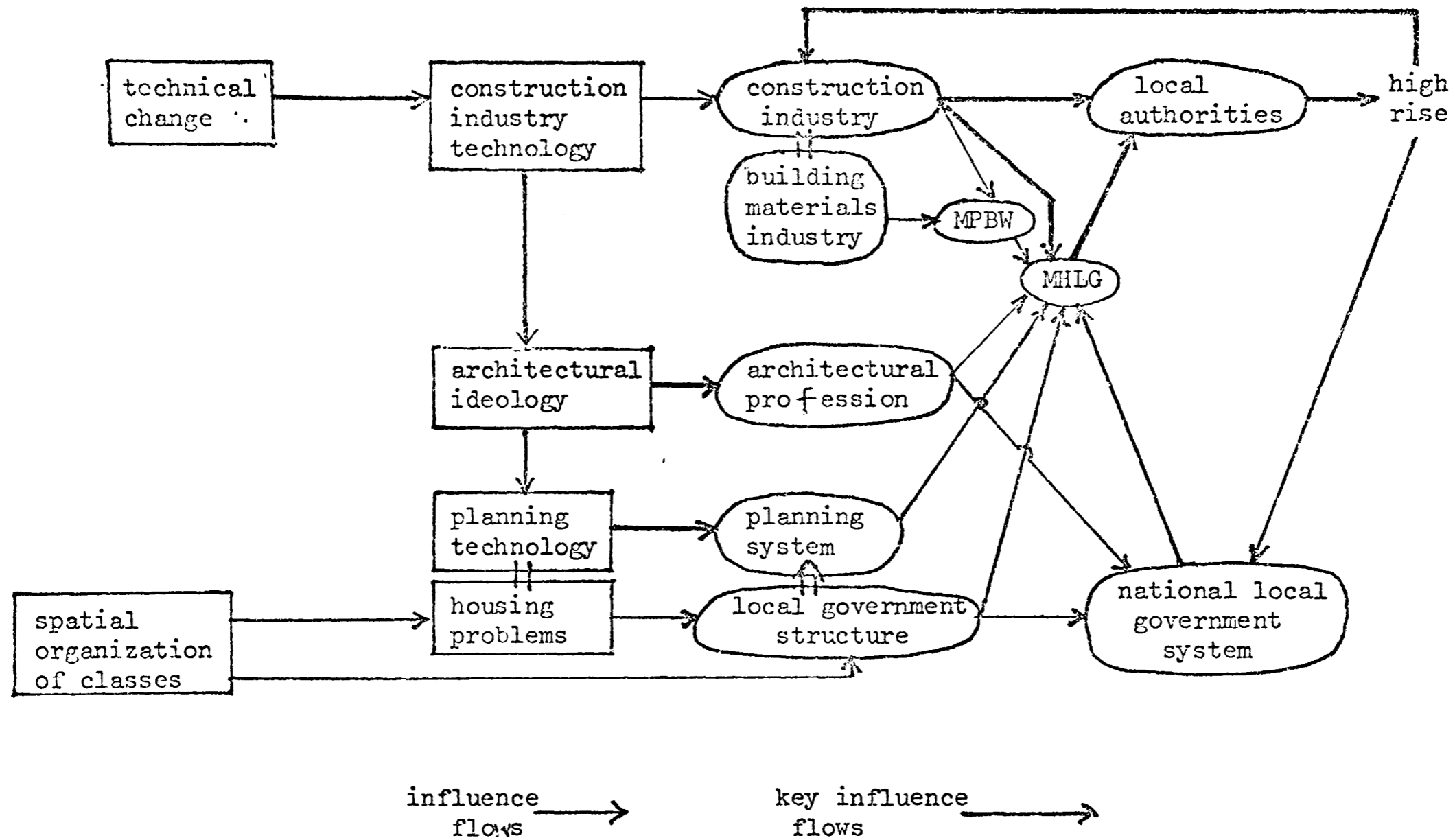
Figure 4.1: The National Issue System on High rise Housing

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influence on the 'national local government system', by which is meant

the set of organizations and actors which together define the national

role and state of opinion in local government as a whole. The most

important influences on the development of high rise policy were the

pressures from the construction industry directed at both MHLG and at local

authorities, the influences from the planning system on MHLG policy, and the

influence of MHLG on local authorities. Other influences shown were

distinctly subsidiary to these four.

Once high rise building got under way the initial influences were

supplemented by powerful feedback processes which maintained the increase

in the rate of high flat building and contributed to the steady rise in

the proportion of all public housing being built in high rise up to 1967.

At a national level these feedback processes flowed from the output of

high rise by local authorities to the construction industry, producing an

increased committment to high building by firms which in turn resulted in

increased pressure for high flat contracts on local authorities and central

government. Secondly, high rise outputs fed into the national local govern-

ment system creating a cumulative endorsement of high flats as a suitable

form of public housing provision, which in turn influenced local authorities

directly to adopt or extend programs of high rise building.

Overall it is interesting to note how relatively few of the influences

involved in national level policy formation and debate affected local authori-

ties directly. Apart from industrial pressures and feedback via the national

local government system all other influences were mediated to local authorities

via the Ministry of Housing and Local Government. The complexity of

the processes influencing the Ministry and indeed operating within the

Ministry itself made its influences on local authorities a rather odd, even

schizophrenic one. This filtering has most significance in explaining how

it was that the architectural profession had less influence on the development

of local authorities' policies than the construction industry. The non-

involvement of the professional associations in direct contact with local

authorities meant that their influence was bound up in the evolution of central government policy, although the profession did have some impact on the national local government system, especially in the early days of the debate over high flats.

Cortes et al argue that all operations carried out in a system can be reduced to one of five types, identity, proportional transformation, delay or advancement, accumulation and difference/differentiation.[2] Applying this schema to the various locii of operations we have distinguished, suggests that the construction industry and the Ministry proportionally transformed their inputs throughout, in the direction of increasing them up until 1967. The architectural profession was initially important in anticipating technical changes, but early on in the period moved towards an identity operation. The planning system accumulated inputs over the period until the mid 1950s when they exerted a strong influence on the change in Ministry policy towards high flats; thereafter both the planning system and local government organization caused a cumulation of problems which increased the Ministry pressure for high rise. Similarly the construction industry and the national local government system accumulated feedback favourable to further high rise building from existing outputs.

So far we have considered the issue system solely from the viewpoint of the build up of influences favourable to an expansion of high rise housing provision. But how did the system come to change and to be put into reverse in the late 1960s? Was this produced by new inputs and did it lead to changes in the pattern of influence flows? We would argue that this process of change can basically be understood as one in which the existing issue system decayed. The overall configuration of influences in favour of high rise building did not suddenly alter. Rather, some originally important influences, such as that from architectural ideology and construction industry technology became attenuated, the scale and intensity of housing problems were reduced over the years, and the planning technology on which high rise building was premissed was eroded. By the mid 1960s the high rise boom was

sustained only by construction industry pressure and the feedback effects
generated by existing outputs. Construction industry pressure could not
prevent a switch of Ministry policy between the end of 1965 and early 1967
which sought to correct the distortion built into central government policy
by the combination of a new subsidy scheme and inherited methods of
Ministry cost control. This policy change had already begun to reduce
high building when the Ronan Point disaster began to switch feedback
processes operating via the national local government system into reverse.
At the same time, public expenditure cuts in housing brought about a reduction
in demand and a consequent change in the context of relations between the
construction industry and local authorities, a change which strengthened
councils' ability to resist industrial pressure.

4.2: The Influence of the Construction Industry

The study of construction industry influence on national level housing
construction policy is hampered by a number of factors. Firstly, this
influence rarely surfaces in the public realm, since the issue lies outside
the scope of conventionally 'political' issues. Secondly, industrial
influence had tended to be exerted informally and behind-the-scenes, since
this is a more effective way of gaining leverage on the decision making process
than public statements or campaigns. Thirdly, the most direct influence was
exerted at the local level or in the national local government system. Indus-
trial influence on central government partly reflected Ministry perceptions
of the developing trends in local authority contractual relations which
resulted from this influence.

We have already noted in section 1.2 the increasing dominance of central
government consultative machinery in housing by industrial interests during
the post-war period; and in section 3.2 we have described the pattern of
industrial concentration on high rise contracts, and the dominance of the
industrialized high rise market by seven major national contractors. In this
section we shall focus on three specific forms of industrial influence in
favour of high rise: firstly, a variety of industrial initiatives directly

advocating greater high rise building and attempting to influence central government in this direction; secondly, the advertising campaign in favour of greater high rise building which the industry directed at local authorities from the mid 1950s onwards; and lastly, the orchestration of the 1960s industrialized building campaign, and the industrial influence on the central state and local authorities alike.

PRO-HIGH RISE INITIATIVES

Industrial initiatives specifically directed to influence central state policy in favour of high rise housing were not a very important element in the development of industrial pressure for high rise. Since the building form was defined as the prerogative of the client and his architect, the industry could not directly put forward proposals for particular approaches to housing problems, although the industrialized building campaign certainly suppressed this constraint in pushing for the adoption of heavy prefabrication methods. Two industrial initiatives were important in helping to define a generalized ideological context favourable to high rise. These were the High Paddington scheme, and the 1963 Fulham Study.

The High Paddington scheme was initially drawn up by the architect Sergei Kadleigh in 1952 with the collaboration of several other design professionals and several contractual firms.[3] The scheme proposed the erection of a mixed-purpose mega-structure on the site of Paddington railway station, with a huge multi-storey district building of 50 storeys built over a new ground level. The upper floors of this building were supposed to house 8,000 people. Unveiled to an enthusiastic reception from the industrial, engineering and local government press - but widely criticized by planners and architects - this rather fantastic scheme became the focus of a long and detailed technical research project, carried out by a committee of seven building contractors under the chairmanship of the Conservative Paddington M.P., R.A. Allen.[4] Its three volume study was completed in 1955 and submitted to the L.C.C. in a bid to break the density ceilings laid down in the County

of London Plan.[5] Since the inception of the project, however, the development of high rise building had moved on and the study was rejected by the Housing and Planning Committees as bold but impracticable.

The second industrial initiative originated with central government. In 1963 Keith Joseph decided to seek industrialists' views on the ways to tackle Britain's urban problems, with a view to encouraging private enterprise to take on a larger share of the urban renewal effort. The MHLG invited Taylor Woodrow Ltd., the second largest construction group in Britain at the time, to undertake a study of Fulham and produce proposals for the urban renewal policy to be pursued in the study area, which covered some 480 acres with a population of 40,000 people. Taylor Woodrow's team responded by calling for 'large scale rebuilding rather than piecemeal development of worn out housing areas'.[6] This necessity was argued not in terms of acute housing need - 'there are very few real slums in the area' - but in terms of the need for modern, purpose built accommodation rather than houses converted into flats or flatlets. The study argued that this redevelopment could be carried out completely by private enterprise, but that to make this feasible the permitted density level would have to be increased from 136 ppa to around 250 ppa. System building would be used in constructing the new housing, most of which would be in long medium rise blocks to attain the very high densities needed. The Metropolitan Borough of Fulham welcomed the stress on comprehensive redevelopment but criticized the density proposals: 'For our part we consider that the primary purpose of planning control is to resist blind economic pressures and recognize social needs'.[7] In practice the study's role was severely limited by its stress on private enterprise, but it did exert a considerable influence on the design professions as an argument for practicable high density design, playing a significant part in leading to the medium rise boom of 1966-8.

There were other instances of projects for high rise building being initiated by the construction industry, but these were even closer to the level of fantasy than either High Paddington or the Fulham Study. For example,

in 1954 the monopoly glass manufacturer, Pilkington Brothers, set up a front organization known as the Glass Age Development Committee composed of architects, engineers and others.[8] The Committee drew up a plan to roof over the streets in an 83 acre area of Soho with glass, to construct a new ground level at roof top height and on this to build six, giant 25 storey tower blocks, thus 'allowing the existing residential population to be doubled or trebled'. Such schemes seem quite improbable from contemporary experience, but they exerted much more influence at the time, as the Buchanan Report for example bore witness in 1960.[9]

INDUSTRIAL ADVERTISING AND HIGH RISE

Advertising was one of the most important general ways in which the construction industry influenced local authorities and the national local government system, and in a more diffuse way maintained a public opinion context favourable to industrial interests. The technological sophistication of high rise, its association with modernity and progress were all systematically nurtured and advanced by advertising.

The prominence of high rise as a motif in construction industry advertising from the mid-1950s until the later '60s is difficult to overstate. Over and over, pictures of high blocks were used to establish the credentials of a firm to undertake the largest public housing projects. So potent was the image of modernity associated with high rise that a whole range of other advertisers competed with each other to associate their products with the building form. This was particularly true of the various nationalized fuel industries, with coal and gas struggling to ensure that their fuels were not excluded from this increasing share of the public housing market, and the electricity boards trying to further exploit their advantages, by, for example, pushing ahead the adoption of full central heating in high flats. But high rise was also used by a whole range of advertisers as a marketing tool, for products ranging from water heaters to refuse disposal systems to pivot hung windows to building sealant, a truly massive list. The overall

effect of this was to fill the local government press and the professional journals with a continuous stream of pictures of high blocks in which their unquestioned pro-value was never in doubt - the advertiser did not need to argue the virtues of his product in terms of the virtues of high rise; simply to be associated with high rise was a recommendation in itself. Typical Wimpey advertisements during this period, for example, consisted of large pictures of 25 storey blocks in Glasgow with the heading 'Wimpey answer the Housing Problem!'[10]

To give an overall account of the character and development of industrial advertising is difficult because of the predominantly visual character of the pro-high rise message. We have therefore chosen to try and encapsulate such an account in the analysis of the advertising output of a single large construction firm. Wates' advertisements were particularly useful for our purposes because of the use of rather more copy material in them than was the case with some other firms' output.

Wates began using high rise as the dominant illustrative motif of their advertisements directed at the local authority market during the mid '50s, and within a few years were beginning to identify themselves as 'Wates - the specialists' in high rise building. From 1956 the company began to include an increasing amount of copy directly advocating the greater use of high flats by local authorities. In October 1957, below pictures of the L.C.C. blocks at Roehampton (built by Wates), the copy declared:

> House large numbers of people in a limited urban area
> - and give them plenty of space and modern amenities.
> House them in tall buildings and stem the urban sprawl. [11]

A year later copy accompanying pictures of the L.C.C.'s Brandon Estate stressed the company's technological capabilities:

> 12, 16, 18 STOREYS -
> High buildings go up fast the Wates way. [12]

A dominant theme of the company's output was their evident anxiety to get in on the planning of high rise schemes at a stage when negotiated contracts would be possible, although this was naturally put in other terms.

A 1960 advertisement declared:

> Wates' achievements in multi-storey buildings for local
> authorities are a matter of record. Wates wide experience
> in this type of construction is available to you, but in
> order to take full advantage of their special "know-how" and
> facilities you should contact them the moment you begin to
> think about such a project. For among the very many things
> Wates know about high building is that success is founded upon con-
> sultation and co-operation between all concerned right from the
> earliest stages. 13.

In 1962 Wates began running a series of advertisements illustrated for

the first time not with pictures of high blocks, but of harassed planners

and housing managers, and accompanied by copy re-emphasizing the theme that

high flats saved land. The first asked:

> HOUSING PROBLEMS GIVING YOU GREEN-BELT BLUES?
> Don't pack your overspill population off outside your
> conurbation; put them up at home by putting homes in a
> high block. Wates will show you designs up to 20
> storeys high, which can be modified as necessary to meet your
> own special needs. Working in close collaboration with your
> experts, Wates will do the whole job for you; from preliminary
> survey to final coat of paint. For this they quote a firm price,
> inclusive of fees and charges from which final rents can be
> calculated before you begin. So, don't send people packing because
> your supply of land is low; send for Wates and build high. 14.

Later advertisements stressed the same theme. For example:

> BIG HOUSING HEADACHES ... LITTLE BUILDING ACRES?[15]

And: HOUSING LIST LONG... BUILDING LAND SHORT? [16]

The package deal emphasis of these advertisements was also pursued in

copy apparently aimed at smaller authorities with little experience of high

rise:

> If a high flat scheme sounds like a pretty tall order
> to you, the solution is to call in Wates, the specialists.
> ... Wates lay your housing problems low by helping you build
> high, and that's the best way to get down to it. 17

The launching of the industrialized building campaign left the

company temporarily out in the cold, however. Between the autumn of

1962 and mid 1963, the Wates advertisements dried up while the firm focused its

energies on producing a new image in line with the campaign's emphasis on

prefabrication. Their solution was basically an extension of the non-traditional

methods of on-site pre-casting of components which they introduced into

house building in the 1940s. Clearly unable to compete in the prefabrication

stakes with factory produced systems, (despite the adoption of the terms

'site factory' to describe the on-site casting), the company's techniques

for high blocks had to emphasize other aspects of its use. The technique

was relaunched as 'Wates System' with a series of advertisements which

were now dominated by pictures of high rise blocks under construction, usually

showing concrete panels being lifted into position by a tower crane and two

or three operatives. And in 1965 Wates claimed that their system was the

only one 'which does not deny the basic proposition that the only man who can

put the spark of beauty into a building is the architect who is free to design

it the way he wants it'. This was also combined with a more explicit

knocking of rival systems:

> You can go to any industrialized builder in Britain
> and get a ready made building system. Instant designs.
> Dwellings off the hook. Pre-casting pre-conceived at a
> factory miles from the site. You'll end up with a
> decent modern building that doesn't disgrace anybody, but you
> will wonder how much of it you can honestly call yours. 18

This clear courting of architects and attempt to play upon their

professional values was paralleled by copy aimed at councillors, and

apparently at Labour councillors. A series starting in 1964 on 'The Wates

System and the artisan' was calculated to appeal to the councillor with

a trade union background. In July, copy accompanying the ubiquitous picture

of a tower block under construction declared:

> WATES SYSTEM - <u>One way to get a building up faster is
> to get good men and treat them right.</u>
>
> Today a small group of men build more in a week than
> twice their number three years ago. How is this possible?
> It's the Wates system in action.
> Building used to be largely an unskilled trade.
> Bedevilled by insecurity. But under the Wates System,
> site operatives are full staff members. Each man is
> an expert, highly skilled and, of course, highly paid.
> ... We're building aster than ever before. A lot of
> Britain's present success in rapid rehousing is due to the
> Wates' system. 19.

The stress on labour relations did not last long, but other sources of identification could be suggested. After the publication of Crossman's 1965 White Paper, the company's advertisements began to emphasize 'Wates believe passionately that system building is the key to this country's plans to build half a million homes a year by 1970'.[20] The importance of speed of construction also began to be re-emphasized. One picture of a very small site in Battersea, for example, was headlined: 'Just how quickly could you build 192 flats here?'[21]

From 1966 onwards the advertisements began to introduce images of poor housing accommodation into their message that industrialized high rise was an answer to housing problems. For example, the copy accompanying a picture of the interior of a damp basement flat ran:

> Should you build trad or system?
> Ask the woman who lives here.
>
> (Photo)
>
> She'll give you the answer.
> Build how you like, but build quickly.[22]

A similarly illustrated advertisement in December 1966 argued:

> WHAT'S IT WORTH TO GET HER OUT OF THIS?
> A lot of discussion about system building turns on
> aesthetics and economic viability. Does it look good?
> Is it really cheaper?
> There is a third criterion.
> Can it get people out of rotten slums quicker?
> Unreservedly, yes. Wates recently built an 11 storey
> block of 44 flats in ten weeks. Tenants were moving
> in six months earlier than had been expected.
> Wates believe passionately that system building is the
> key to this country's plans to build half a million
> homes a year by 1970. 23

This analysis has demonstrated the directness of the advocacy of high rise in construction industry advertising, the wide variety of approaches and arguments used to sell high blocks, and the close links between high rise and the industrialized building campaign made by the company. Wates' advertisements were, as we have already noted, rather exceptional in the amount of copy they contained. But they were not exceptional in the stress they placed on high rise.[24]

THE INDUSTRIALIZED BUILDING CAMPAIGN

This section presents an integrated account of the 1960s industrialized building campaign which did so much to consolidate industrial influence, particularly on high rise housing. We shall look both at construction industry pressure and governmental response, thus somewhat anticipating the account in section 4.8.

The 1960s campaign's origins can be traced back to the non-traditional housebuilding drive launched in the 1940s and reinvigorated briefly during the Conservatives' 1951-4 housing drive. The campaign attracted the large national firms, Wimpey, Wates, and Laing:

> non-traditional houses seemed more likely to offer a nation wide market than did traditional ones, for local authorities are naturally inclined to employ local contractors for straightforward traditional housing schemes. 25

With the ending of physical controls in 1954, central government support came to an end, and demand for non-traditional houses slumped.[26] Helped by the support of cities such as Birmingham, Leeds and Coventry, however, the major non-traditional firms successfully diversified into flat building and procured acceptance of their standard designs by local authorities.[27] In Birmingham, for example, 'most blocks of dwellings were designed entirely by contractors' in the later 1950s.[28]

These developments kept the idea of non-traditional building alive but the stimulus for the 1960s' campaign came from two different sources. The first was the success of industrialized school building in cutting costs and achieving high design standards, mainly via local authority consortia building systems.[29] The second was the availability of heavy prefabrication methods in France and Scandinavia which could be quickly imported given a change in central government attitudes to favour industrialization again.[30]

In late 1961 the first local authority housing consortium was established by Leeds, Sheffield and Hull aimed at 'developing new systems of construction exploiting modern methods of manufacture and assembly',[31]

and MHLG's new Housing Development Group began work on a low rise housing
system. The Ministerial shuffle and change of MPBW nomenclature gave
further clear indications of a shift in central government attitudes.[32]

In mid-1962, however, the industrialized building campaign began in
earnest as the large corporations moved in to pre-empt these slow government-
local authority initiaties. By the autumn the Municipal Journal observed
'an almost overnight transformation' in opinion in the industry and amongst
architects as a result of several key decisions by the national firms:

> The real breakthrough came in May with the formation
> of a new company - Taylor Woodrow-Anglian Ltd - to produce
> dwellings in the factory. Since then Concrete Ltd have
> issued details of their Bison wall frame system for
> prefabricated flats and John Laing have announced their
> acquisition of the sole rights of the Sectra system of
> rapid multi-storey flats construction. 33

This activity started an impressive bandwagon which smaller contractors
struggled to climb aboard. A construction materials pressure group,
the Cement and Concrete Association, organized the requisite national publicity
with a conference on 'Housing from the Factory' in October 1962.
Sir Keith Joseph told the conference that he welcomed the new methods but
his department were keen to push ahead the use of industrialized methods on
houses and low rise buildings as well as high flats. The MHLG Chief
architect, A.W. Cleeve Barr, sketched out lines of the incipient debate
between 'hard' and 'soft' line definitions of industrialized methods:

> The question is whether the industry is to be dominated
> by a number of large firms each with its own system,
> producing a limited range of flats or houses around which
> its standardized production is based, or whether there cannot
> be some wider interchange of components based on a common
> approach to standardization and dimensional co-ordination. 34

The hard line position came to be characterized by an emphasis on using
proprietary systems on a massive scale, and only those systems which used
very large pre-fabricated components and could be erected 'dry'. The 'soft
line' on industrialized buildings was taken by the NFBTE, whose president
argued strongly against concentrating on prefabrication of this sort
at the expense of other methods, and in favour of developing as far as

possible all methods of speeding up and rationalizing production. At

the same time the NFBTE lent its weight to the campaign and tried to

dispell the hostility of some smaller and medium size firms. Their

Director told a conference in 1963:

> Small builders feared they would be 'pushed out' by the
> new building methods, but in his view this was not so.
> 'We're looking for a surplus' (for industrialized building)
> 'over and above traditional building' he said.   35

There was, however, remarkably little diversification of the corporate

campaign in relation to high rise before 1964, although at this time this

was the principal industrialized market. While the hard line definition

seemed to have triumphed in 1963, a great deal of favourable publicity

was focused on a few firms. In May a Municipal Journal survey of housing

systems included only five suitable for high flats - Bison, Camus, Larsen

Nielson, Sectra and Reema.[36]

Government pressure behind industrialization, combined with somewhat

more effective attempts to divert attention from the corporate (largely

high rise) campaign on to low rise systems, continued throughout 1964.

In September the Municipal Journal remarked:

> The process which began with the first breakthrough
> only two years ago has snowballed into a veritable
> avalanche.   37

This diversification of the campaign was stressed by Sir Keith Joseph

in his speech to the 1963 Conservative Party Campaign in which he

claimed that the industrialization program would boost housing output

to 400,000 homes a year. (The speech won him a standing ovation and made

his political reputation).[38] Diversification was supposed to be fostered

by the National Building Agency, set up in December 1963 under the MPBW

as a quasi-governmental body to influence and supervise the industrializa-

tion campaign,[39] but which never looked at high rise systems even after it

was transferred to MHLG in 1966.

MHLG itself became involved in a vast number of consultations with

firms (700 meetings by July 1964) and local authorities, of which 70 (out

of 510 contacted) had joined consortia by mid 1964. Sir Keith explained:
'the Ministry helps and encourages local authorities to play their parts in
the development and use of promising systems'.[40] In practice it seems
likely that the large, national firms probably got more help than smaller
companies, if only because their size and target markets made it more
worthwhile for civil servants to facilitate their activities. For
example, a senior administrator interviewed for this study when asked
to give an instance of how MHLG helped the development of the industrialized
building campaign, replied that he personally had had contacts with Laing,
Wates and Mowlem:

> I remember Laings came to the department saying that they
> had a system costed out and ready to import, but they
> needed a market - some guarantee. The department advised
> them what local authorities to approach and spread the
> word to the regional architects, who would often visit the
> local authority and help negotiations along. 41

By late 1964 there were something like 240 systems in development,
the vast majority being systems for houses, and although not all of
these had reached production calls for some rationalization of systems
were already being voiced, by local authorities and already established
firms. The industry reserved most of its criticism for the consortia
movement.[42] Only one consortia, the first Yorkshire Development Group,
actually developed a high flat system, the others stuck to houses.[43] MHLG
made the major public authority contribution by co-operating with Laing
on modifications to the Jespersen system, which won the firm contracts for
8,200 flats between 1965 and 1970.[44]

By far the most important consequence of the industrialization
campaign for the large firms, apart from earning contracts and publicity
for the more advanced proprietary systems, was to increase the size of
local authority contracts. Cleeve Barr put the government's message at
its clearest in 1963. Local authorities would have to adapt their
procedures to factory models:

> The factories must have large, controlled and continuing
> orders to make production economical. This should be well

within the capacity of the larger authorities..
and the smaller authorities will have to try (to
generate bigger contracts) if they are not to miss
the advantages of these methods. 45

As the original hard line definition of industrialization began to

be watered down, these sorts of arguments came to be applied to systems

which had little to do with factory production.

The election of a Labour government in October 1964 committed to an

expansion of house building to 500,000 homes a year gave a further boost

to the emphasis on industrialization. Following the publication of The

Housing Programme, 1965-1970,[46] MHLG sent local authorities its toughest

ever instructions to use industrialized methods, without which it was

claimed the public sector target in the White Paper could not be achieved.

The circular said that the Ministry had decided 'to launch a concentrated

drive to increase and improve the use of industrialized methods of house-.

building in the public sector'.[47]

The most important change in the Labour government's drive was a

clear committment to a very broad definition of industrialization. This

included: 'all measures needed to enable the industry to work more like

a factory industry.' (even including)   ...'schemes using fully rationalised

traditional methods'.[48] The main beneficiary of this enlarged definition

was Wimpey, whose output of high flats had fallen from 7,000 in 1963 to

3,150 by 1967 because of competition from the heavy prefabrication systems, but

whose low rise output now expanded by an extra 4,000 dwellings a year by

1967, keeping output levels buoyant.[49]

The circular called unequivocally for local authorities to adopt

industrialized building if they wanted to maintain or expand MHLG approved

programmes and urged them to 'avoid having a succession of small schemes

each using a different system. Wherever possible each contract should be

for 100 dwellings or more'.

Over the past few years many of the best firms in the
industry have put a great effort and much capital into
the development of new techniques, but this effort will
be wasted unless these can be given the conditions to

operate really effectively... Clients must play their
parts to ensure:-

a) that firms have continuous programs;

b) that industrialized building is concentrated on larger
and more straightforward sites where it can be used to
greatest effect;

c) that the number of plan types in a scheme is kept down and
satisfactory plan types are kept in use to enable the
industry - and the client - to get the advantages of
longer runs.   50

The pressure for large, simple contracts was justified by the claim that 'the

use of carefully prepared standard designs will release scarce professional

time to concentrate on raising the quality of layouts'.

The circular described the drive as 'a short term effort aimed at

giving the industrialized building program the best possible conditions to

get on its feet.   This means that in this first phase all the conditions

for successful use of the methods will need to be met to the full'.   In

the long run, 'it should be possible to use the new methods more flexibly than

in the initial stages'.   What this prospect meant in practice was; firstly,

as local authorities dished out more contracts they could expect system

sponsors to be ready to tailor their systems more closely to their specific

needs; and secondly, that the Ministry and NBA were still beavering away at

dimensional co-ordination, although the circular admitted that 'this is not

the kind of development in which quick solutions can be expected'.[51]

The impact of this new push more than doubled local authority orders

for industrialized dwellings between 1964 and 1967, destined to be the peak

year of the boom.

(iii) <u>Contractual influence during the Campaign</u>   Overall the period from

1961 to 1967 was marked by a staggering increase in the extent of industrial

influence on central government, on the design professions and on local

authorities.   The basis of this change in relations was the enormous

expansion of construction activity in the early 60s.   In 1964, Sir

Herbert Manzoni (who had been Birmingham's Chief Engineer and Planner from

1935 until 1963) wrote:

> It is doubtful whether at any time during the present
> century there has been such great activity in the construction
> industry as there is now, and all the indications are that
> this is likely to increase. 52

In the context of relatively limited resources, of labour and particularly of

capital, of soaring cost levels and restrictive public housing cost limits,

this meant that construction companies were increasingly in a position

to demand concessions from government and local authorities in return for

their continued involvement in the public housing drive. To what extent these

concessions affected profits is difficult to assess. But on a whole range

of proxy variables for profits - such as the use of unnecessarily expensive

building forms, size of contracts, forms of tendering and reduction of

risk and uncertainty - it is clear that public housing authorities were

falling over themselves to attract industrial interest. Industrialized

building took this process to its logical limit as the design professions,

local authorities and central government increasingly approved the sacrifice

of previously maintained design and amenity standards to the over-riding impera-

tives of production.

Important as this contractual change was, however, the speed and scale

of the industrialized building boom and the integrally related expansion of

high rise housing construction were also in part attributable to a change

in the methods of exerting industrial influence within the state apparatus,

and particularly in the national local government system. Whereas in the

past contractors had stood rather apart from housing authorities, the new

contracting and tendering procedures associated with industrialized building

placed a premium on the development of close or closed relations between

local authorities and particular firms. The sine qua non of success for

firms was access, and the means of obtaining access diversified. In 1963,

the NFBTE Director commented on the industrialized building campaign:

> We are now in the days of the 'hard sell' in which
> hundreds of hopefuls parade their wares, using methods
> ranging from the press conference to the knock on the
> door, wooing local authorities, hospital boards,
> nationalized industries and government departments. 53

In fact the development of techniques for marketing to local authorities, telescoped into the peak years of the campaign, was more startling than this modest picture suggested. In 1966, an article in <u>Official Architecture and Planning</u> warned:

> Contractors employ armies of men to find housing programmes
> large enough to warrant a reasonable product of their
> reinforced concrete monoliths. These men are high
> pressures sales staff.   54

Construction companies, particularly the large firms, began to offer ever more lavish enticements to persuade decision-makers in local authorities to consider their systems, ranging from sophisticated publicity presentations through a variety of business entertainment functions to expenses paid trips to other authorities or other countries to inspect systems. An increasing number of public relations firms and consultancies were employed to gain local authority contracts, a trend pioneered by T. Dan Smith's multiple P.R. outlets. The final element in this development was the growth of corruption which the Poulson and other scandals have demonstrated was clearly linked with the industrialized building campaign.[55] MacEwan observes of this period:

> There was no human need for the tower blocks or more
> of the industrialized building system of recent years.
> But a commercial demand was organized by political
> manoeuvring and high pressure salesmanship, helped
> along by corruption, regardless of human needs and
> consequences.   56

(iv) The Collapse of the Campaign. The artificiality of the apparent success of the industrialized systems' penetration of public housing and the centrality of high rise in the industrialized campaign's momentum are both amply demonstrated by the collapse of the campaign from mid-1967 onwards, (which is described statistically in section 3.3). Three events combined to bring about a dramatic downturn in the industrialized market. The first was the introduction of mandatory housing cost yardsticks discriminating against high rise building in April 1967. Closely following this, the partial collapse of a 21 storey block of system built flats in Newham in May 1968, with the loss of five lives produced the first thoroughgoing

examination of the industrialization drive by the Tribunal of Inquiry appointed to investigate the disaster. Their report was markedly critical of the procedures and regulations in force at the time of the collapse, and of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, the Ministry's Building Regulations Advisory Committee, the National Building Agency and in a general way both the architectural and structural engineering professions for their failure to appreciate the new dangers and requirements involved in high rise system building. The Ministry it concluded relied on the building Codes of Practice to ensure a buildings' safety, without appreciating that system building was a completely new mode of construction, not covered by the regulations in force which were formulated at a time when heavy prefabrications systems were not used in Britain. In effect the Ministry embarked on the industrialization campaign without the necessary expertise to be aware of possible risks.[57] The report also presented an obliquely disturbing insight into the modes of operation of contractors and local authorities, and its recommendations involved checks on the structural stability of all high blocks, and the strengthening of system built high rise at very considerable expense. At the time of publication high rise systems, (i.e. systems with a high rise capability) still accounted for 70% of all industrialized approvals, although only half of the dwellings built in these systems were actually high flats. The Tribunal report produced a   rapid   fall in demand for these systems which in combination with the cut back on high rise imposed by the new yardsticks made an enormous dent in the overall market.[58]

Thirdly, the industrialized market was additionally affected by the government's public expenditure cuts in 1968. The reduction in public housing programmes was severe enough to produce a marked alteration in the context of relations between contractors and housing authorities, which in turn had its most serious impact on the industrialized housing market. By 1970 even the proportion of houses built by industrialised methods had fallen below 20%, and the proportion of low rise flats to less than a sixth.[59]

These levels, which continued until 1972, were below those achieved in 1964, only two years after the start of the campaign. This switch away from industrialized methods even on non-high rise projects apparently reflected an effort by local authorities and the design professions to recapture control over their building output from contractors, and is suggestive of the degree of reluctance with which some authorities adopted industrialized methods in the first place.[60]

4.3: High Rise Housing and the National Local Government System

Local authorities do not make decisions about housing construction policy, or indeed most aspects of policy, in isolation. Like all social institutions local authorities have a number of distinct roles. In particular over and above their local roles, Councils are located and locate themselves in what may be termed the 'national local government system'.[61] This may be taken to describe the complex web of inter- and supra-authority relations which can exert a strong influence on the policies pursued by particular corporations. No real study of this system has yet been made in Britain so that our remarks here are necessarily exploratory and tentative. At a political level the national local government system finds powerful organizational expression in the local authority associations, and their relations with central departments, ministers, M.Ps, interest groups, the national party organizations and the publicservice trade unions. This constellation of actors and organizations determines the parameters within which local authorities operate, parameters which range from the organization of local government itself and the distribution of functions between the central state and local government to the constantly defined and redefined methods of central control, the context of central-local relations, levels of central state funding of local services and the distribution of funding between urban areas and policy programs. At an ideological level the system provides an important source of values and ideas for actors in particular localities. This role has very strong institutional support in the form of the local government press (both the general and professional outlets), the functional

service associations and their publications and activities, the apparatus

of local government professionalism, and the regular conferences,seminars and

meetings which play such a large part in the nationalization of local

policy change - all these define the boundaries of policy consideration

and debate in local authorities as a whole.

We shall tackle three related topics under this heading: firstly, the

influence of key local authorities and local government organizations on national

trends in the introduction of high rise and industrialized high rise;

secondly, the pattern of innovation in relation to high rise amongst local

authorities; and thirdly, the relations between local authorities and con-

struction firms which underlay the pattern of high rise adoption (insofar

as these relations can be discerned from aggregate level data).

INTER-AUTHORITY INFLUENCES AND THE INTRODUCTION OF HIGH RISE

The national local government system is a many tiered one, with

inter-locking and crosscutting bases for influence flows. Firstly there

are the differences between authority types. In the pre-1974 structure there

were four levels of housing authority - county boroughs, municipal boroughs,

urban districts and rural districts. Independent of this structure much

the largest housing authority was the London County Council, (later

reorganized in the even larger Greater London Council). The 'higher level'

housing authorities clearly set patterns which were followed by lower level

authorities, because of greater resources, better staffing and more

vigorous political processes in these authorities. Secondly, within

authority types larger authorities tended to set the patterns followed by

smaller authorities. Thirdly there were strong regional effects within the

local government system, such that influential authorities served as models

for adjacent small authorities confronting similar types of housing problem.[63]

These various types of influence flow were clearly discernible on high

rise housing. The size of the L.C.C. housing program, combined with the

concentration of a large part of the high rise building effort in the London

region, meant that the authority became the most important trend-setter on high rise within the national local government system.[64] This also owed a good deal to the pre-eminence of the L.C.C. architects' department amongst public authority architects. It was only after the transfer of control of the Council's housing construction from the Valuer to the architects' department in 1949 that L.C.C. influence began to grow with the discernible improvement in design standards which followed.[65] L.C.C. schemes began using high flats as a basic building form in the late '40s, in Scandinavian style blocks. But their most famous scheme was the Alton estates at Roehampton, which played such a large part in the growth of the mixed develpment orthodoxy of the period. Planned in the early 1950s for the tree-clad sites of large Victorian villas adjacent to Richmond Park, these estates mixed high blocks with houses and low flats in a real approximation to a garden city setting, and at densities of around 70 ppa. The mixing of housing forms contrasted with the uniform flatted estates the L.C.C. had built in the 1930s. Later written into official policy by the Ministry, mixed development was supposed to soften the visual impact of the high blocks and by accommodating dwellings of different sizes and types help to produce a socially balanced community. The L.C.C. architects also built several scaled down facsimiles of Corbusier's Unité block, and the view of these flats across the park at Roehampton became one of the most familiar and potent image of post-war British architecture.[66]

The adoption of high rise was at this stage advocated for positive amenity reasons. In 1955 the L.C.C. Chief Architect Whitfield Lewis declared:

> As far as the L.C.C. are concerned, the use of high blocks
> of flats is part of the policy of mixed development
> first put forward in the Forshaw-Abercrombie Plan for the
> County of London in 1943. 67

And he later

> ...emphasized that really high blocks had not arisen as a
> result of any general increase in zone densities laid down
> in the L.C.C. Development Plan. Densities had always been
> operated flexibly ... 68

By this stage, however, storey heights were being pushed up on all the

L.C.C. sites and as piecemeal rather than comprehensive redevelopment became

more common, the mixed development content of schemes was reduced, densities

were pushed up and the little ground space freed by using high blocks was

being covered with houses or low rise flats. As provincial authorities began

building high rise they tended to take L.C.C. practice as a model or a touch-

stone for judging their own activity. By the late 1950s, L.C.C. plans

for blocks around twenty storeys were widely copied.[69]

Provincial authorities were also influential in disseminating knowledge

of high rise and coping with some of the early design and application pro-

blems. In 1951 Glasgow began to switch a large proportion of its housing

program into high rise, and the city went on to make large slab blocks

the distinctive trade-mark of its contemporary public housing, in much

the same way as point blocks became identified with the L.C.C. architects'

department.[70] A succession of eminent private architects designed massive

redevelopment schemes consisting almost entirely of giant high rise blocks,

the climax of this development being the 33 storey Red Road scheme of the

mid '60s. Liverpool's lead on high rise was also widely publicized. In

1955 the City sent a delegation from its Housing Committee to tour

public housing developments in the United States which on its return

published a report advocating the use of high rise housing on similar lines

in Britain. Its verdict on these projects was astonishingly favourable:

> One surprising feeling which emerged was that high density
> in itself is not a bad thing provided the architectural solution
> adopted is intelligent and well and carefully conceived ...
> For example, Dyckman Houses (a project consisting entirely of
> 17 storey brownstone tenements) had an open, free feeling in the
> scheme, although its density of development was 290 ppa.[71]

The report concluded by arguing that densities in the central area of

Liverpool could be very greatly increased from those envisaged in the

Development Plan, and that this 'could be achieved without in any way pro-

ducing a depressing effects on tenants'. The City Architect, Bradbury,

became a committed exponent of very high density high rise development using

slab blocks, and with little or no mixed development content. In 1962

Liverpool sent another delegation to France to inspect industrialized

building systems, and following the report placed a £9 million contract

for 2,500 dwellings in the Camus system, to be built almost entirely in

24 storeys slab blocks. [72].

A very similar initiative by a leading housing authority on high rise
was the report of a Sheffield deputation which toured high rise schemes
1455

in Denmark, Germany, Holland, France and Switzerland, and concluded:

> The members of the delegation have returned from
> their tour satisfied that housing development in the
> form of well designed multi-storey flats can provide
> living standards which are in every way adequate as an
> alternative to two storey housing,.. the multi-storey flat can
> provide exceptional amenities in the form of more open space,
> community buildings, services and equipment.

The deputation was greatly influenced in this view by the City Architect,

Lewis Wolmersley, and they ended by approving his policy of comprehensive

redevelopment.

> It is strongly urged that the temptation to carry out
> small piecemeal rebuilding as and when groups of outworn
> houses become condemned be resisted and that so far as
> the redevelopment of slum areas is concerned attention be
> concentrated on two or three large, comprehensive schemes. [73]

The first such scheme approved by the Council on the basis of this

report was the £5 million Park Hill development, which together with its

successor Hyde Park estate, defined a type of linear high rise which was

particularly influential during the mid '60s medium rise boom.[74]

Two other major housing authorities, Birmingham and Leeds, played

an important role as models for non-traditional and later industrialized

high rise building.[75]

THE ADOPTION PROCESS ON HIGH RISE

The patterns of innovation, filtering and adoption of high rise in the

national local government system cannot be studied systematically for the

1950s owing to the lack of available data for this period. But it is possible

to study the process involved in the adoption of industrialized high rise

during the 1960s from data collated from Department of Environment

files. Although the patterns of adoption involved clearly differed in certain

key respects, they are sufficiently similar to shed some light on the pro-

bable course of the earlier innovation. And the definition of industrialized

building used by the D.O.E. is sufficiently generous to include over 70%

of all high rise building in the 1960s. Full details of this analysis are

given in Appendix I and we shall only touch briefly on the main findings in

this section.

The cumulative distribution of authorities experienced in the use of

industrialized high rise shows a trend consistent with an S-shape curve,

rising steeply overall until 1966 and flattening out by 1968.[76]

The county boroughs were earlier adopters of industrialized high rise than

other authorities but the numbers of new adopters in this category began to

decline in 1964, while the number of new adopters in the London boroughs

reached a peak in 1965, and in the urban districts in 1966-7. There were

clear cut differences between authority types in the cumulative percentage

of local authorities with some experience of using industrialized high

rise.[77] Final adoption levels reached 88% in the London boroughs, 66%

in the county boroughs, 12% among municipal boroughs, 5% among urban

districts and 1.5% among rural districts. The number of authorities awarding

contracts for industrialized high rise reached a peak in 1966 and from 1967

to 1970 declined very sharply.[78] County boroughs accounted for 58%

of users in 1963, but this dropped to around two fifths from 1965 on,

with a large fall in the numbers using high flats in 1969. The London

boroughs in contrast accounted for less than 10% of users in 1963, but this

figure rose steadily to 36% in 1966, somewhat declined over the next two

years, and peaked in 1969 at over half of all users, when London authorities

continued to approve high rise schemes at a time when provincial authorities

were turning to other building forms. London authorities followed

this lead a year later.

In terms of dwellings approved, the county boroughs dominated the

industrialized high rise market until 1966 when the rate of construction

in London increased remarkably, (Table 4.1).[79] The smaller authorities'

involvement in the market peaked in 1964, when they accounted for nearly

a fifth of approvals but thereafter dropped to nearly half this figure.

Table 4.1 : Dwellings approved by Housing Authorities in industrialised
high rise

| Year | G.L.C. | % of tender approvals in: | | | | | Total Dwellings |
		London Boroughs	County Boroughs	Municipal Boroughs	Urban Districts	Other	
1963	5.0	3.3	73.9	15.2	2.0	0.5	11,576
1964	1.6	9.9	68.9	13.8	4.1	1.7	15,217
1965	6.8	18.1	64.1	3.4	4.5	3.2	16,519
1966	10.1	43.1	34.9	4.3	6.8	0.8	23,227
1967	3.8	41.4	42.5	3.1	8.6	0.6	26,319
1968	4.7	18.8	64.9	4.9	3.4	3.3	19,034
1969	9.5	55.4	32.7	1.0	1.3	--	11,020
1970	36.5	19.7	18.2	2.6	4.3	--	3,195
1971	4.1	33.9	33.3	--	28.8	--	1,765
1972	37.2	53.1	9.7	--	--	--	1,940
1973	--	79.9	8.9	--	--	--	548

The later start by the London boroughs in using industrialized high rise

is reflected in the steady rise of their contract sizes until 1968, when

contracts were affected by the reaction to Ronan Point.[80] Overall, contract

sizes rose steadily from 161 dwellings in 1963 to 334 dwellings in 1969,

the increase being particularly sharp in 1966 and 1967, by which time average

contract sizes were nearly 300 dwellings in the larger authorities as a whole,

which   accounted for nearly 90% of the industrialized high rise market.

These variations in the adoption and use of industrialized high rise

suggest that the change agent involved in the innovation process may have

been different, and certainly worked differently in the different areas and

levels of the national local government system.[81] We have argued that

contractual pressure played a key role in the rapid dissemination of high rise

and particularly industrialized high flats. By looking at the relations be-

tween local authorities and the construction industry it may be possible to

determine the extent to which the differences between authority types in

their adoption and use of high rise can be explained in terms of contractual

influences.

INDUSTRIAL INFLUENCE ON LOCAL AUTHORITY INNOVATION

The pattern of relations between local authorities and contractors over industrialized high rise offers one of the best clues to the probable change agent involved for two reasons. Firstly, the differences between the firms in terms of their products reflected different degrees of involvement in the industrialized building campaign, primarily the distinction between the non-traditional systems such as Wimpey's 'no-fines' or the rationalized traditional systems marketed by many smaller firms, and the heavy prefabrication systems of Laing, Wates, Camus, Taylor Woodrow-Anglian and Crudens, with the Bison system marked by Concrete roughly in the middle of the spectrum. Secondly, these differences in product were allied to differing market, strategies by the firms and different reasons for adopting industrialized high rise among the local authorities using them. The 'soft line' systems were generally marketed in fairly small scale package deal contracts to authorities whose high rise effort formed a small or peripheral element in their housing programs. The 'hard line' systems in contrast were marketed in large contracts to housing authorities for whom high rise was a basic building form, and for whom system building was a necessity because of Ministry pressure, labour shortages or the difficulties of attracting contractors into their area.

A preliminary index of the likely change agent involved in the adoption of industrialized high rise is the extent of local authorities' dealings with construction firms on these contracts. Where a local authority gave contracts to only one firm, it is very likely that the initiative to introduce high rise came from the firm rather than the authority. Authorities dealing with two firms are an ambiguous category since in a large number of cases this reflects only the supercession of an older rationalized traditional method of building by a technique introduced in the industrialized building campaign. Local authorities dealing with a larger number of contractors can be assumed to have responded to internal pressures to innovate on a broad front, from their architects, other design professionals or from councillors. Over two thirds of

all local authorities using industrialized high rise fall into the first

two categories, (Table 4.2).[82] The proportion is predictably much higher

in the smaller authorities and is least in the London boroughs. Most of

Table 4.2 : Contractual Relations of Housing Authorities by Authority
Type on Industrialized High Rise, 1963-73

Number of authorities dealing with:	London Boroughs	County Boroughs	Municipal Boroughs	Urban Districts	Other	All
One firm	10	27	34	29	9	109
Two firms	8	13	4	3	-	28
Three firms	8	6	-	-	-	14
Four firms	2	5	-	-	-	7
Five or more firms	1	3	-	-	-	4
total	29	54	38	32	9	162

the remaining authorities fall in the intermediate category. Only eleven

authorities dealt with four or more firms (excluding the G.L.C., which is not

shown in the Table): these were Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds,

Sunderland, Newcastle, Leicester, and Nottingham amongst the county boroughs, and

Waltham Forest, Enfield and Barking in London.

Looking at the type of firm which the different authority types tended to

deal with shows some interesting variations in contractual patterns, (Table

4.3).[83] Large majorities of the smaller authorities dealt with a single

large contractor, (i.e. one of the seven firms which we demonstrated

accounted for three quarters of all industrialized high rise approvals in

section 3.2; these firms are Wimpey, Laing, Wates, Concrete, Taylor Woodrow-

Anglian, Camus and Crudens). Virtually all those smaller authorities not

dealing with a single large firm dealt with a single medium or small firm.

Less than half the county boroughs and less than three tenths of the London

boroughs gave industrialized high rise contracts to just one large firm.

Nearly half the London boroughs and just over a third of the county boroughs

gave contracts to at least two of the larger firms. The detailed breakdown of

local authority relations with contractors shows that all but two of the

fifty three authorities dealing with more than one firm gave at least one

Table 4.3 : Contractual Relations on Industrialized High Rise by
Authority Type and Number and Type of Firm. (1963-73).

Proportion of authorities (%) dealing with:	London Boroughs	County Boroughs	Municipal Boroughs	Urban Districts	Other	All
One large firm	28	45	68	71	(71)	54
Several large firms	21	17	5	3	-	11
Several large and small firms	23	17	-	-	-	10
One large and one or more small firms	14	17	5	6	-	10
Several small firms	7	-	-	-	-	1
One small firm	7	4	23	21	(29)	14
Total	100%	100%	101%	101%	(100%)	100%

contract to a large firm, and all of the twenty five authorities dealing with
three or more firms did so.

Looking in detail at the contractual relations of the seven market
leaders reveals some marked differences between them.[84] Much of the largest
contractor, Wimpey, dealt primarily with small county boroughs, municipal
boroughs and urban districts building only 'no fines' high rise, although
these authorities did not necessarily account for the bulk of 'no fines'
building. The second largest firm Concrete, also dealt with a large number
of such authorities, although they formed only just over half of the firm's clients
compared with Wimpey's two thirds. Concrete's widespread involvement reflected
the handling of the Bison system by a number of general contractors, some of
them medium size building firms with local contacts. The other five firms
dealt primarily with local authorities employing several systems. Only Laing
and Wates had a wide market, the other three systems being used in six or fewer
local authorities. Wates dealt primarily with London authorities, while Laing's
contracts were more geographically dispersed.

These differences in relations with local authorites reflected very
different marketing strategies during the industrialized building campaign.
Wimpey built up a good deal of business with the county boroughs before the

campaign began. When it did, the firm came under pressure from the newer

heavy prefabrication systems which swept the board in the larger housing

authorities, so that to maintain their high rise output Wimpey had to build

up their contacts with the smaller authorities offering small package deal

arrangements and probably accounting for a high proportion of adoptions in

these cases. Concrete had a regionally patchy success with the large housing

authorities during the campaign, but also developed their marketing to

smaller local authorities. The other five firms were centrally involved

in the pressure for the adoption of heavy prefabrication systems and

directed their energies to winning large contracts from the major housing

authorities.

Overall, contractual influence from Wimpey and Concrete together with
                                                                    over
a variety of smaller firms can be seen as the primary reason why/half

of all local authorities adopting industrialized high rise did so. A small

minority of the largest housing authorities adopted industrialized

high rise as a result of internal decision making, although this is not to

say that industrial influence was unimportant in the adoption decision

or in the subsequent development of their policy. The change agent in the

remaining 25% of all authorities adopting industrialized high rise cannot

be specified more precisely with the data available.

4.4: The Professions.

In considering the professional input into the debate on high rise

housing this section looks at the contributions of three groups, the design

professions, housing managers and sociologists.

THE DESIGN PROFESSIONS

Virtually every major British architect who designed housing schemes in

the post-war period has been associated with high rise housing development in

one form or another. Amongst public authority architects the L.C.C. occupied

pride of place, not only in Britain but also internationally.[85] Most

of the L.C.C. department's leading lights were closely associated with high

rise. J.H. Forshaw who was the authority's Chief Architect until 1945

when he became Chief Architect at the Ministry of Health, drew up the

Forshaw-Abercrombie Plan which laid the planning foundations for mixed

development. Whitfield-Lewis, who followed a similar career path, oversaw

the L.C.C.'s housing during the early years of the high rise boom.[86]

Cleeve-Barr moved from the L.C.C. housing division to be MHLG Chief

Architect and then to the National Building Agency where he was a leading

force behind theindustrialized building campaign. R. Matthews, L.C.C.

chief architect until 1951 and then Professor of Architecture at Edinburgh,

oversaw the start of the L.C.C.'s high rise building and later designed

some of Glasgow's largest high rise estates.[87] K. Campbell was the

housing architect in charge of the G.L.C.'s high rise program in the

1960s, which was marked by steadily falling design and amenity standards

as industrialization proceeded.[88] Other major public departments also came

to be associated with high flat building. The Liverpool city architect,

R. Bradbury, controlled a department which produced large slab blocks of

very poor design throughout the 1950s and continued and intensified

the policy during the industrialized building campaign. The Sheffield city

architect, L. Wolmersley, was an enthusiastic publicist for the virtues

of tall buildings in the 1950s responsible for the Park Hill and Hyde Park

estates, and later for Hulme Five in Manchester.[89] The Birmingham city

architect, A. Sheppard Fidler, was an enthusiastic exponent of suburban

high rise building in the '50s.[90] And perhaps the most fervent propagandist

for high rise, high density development was the architect to Paddington

Borough, R.A. Jensen, who produced numerous articles about European

high rise in the '50s and an influential book, High Density Living in 1966,

which single-mindedly plugged the idea of tower block schemes at over

300 ppa.[91]

Private architects also contributed strongly to the high rise housing

boom. F. Gibberd pioneered the 'planning' use of high rise by building

a 14 storey block at Harlow New Town.[92] Powell and Moya made their reputa-

tions with the pathbreaking Churchill Gardens scheme in Pimlico.[93] The

Smithson's Golden Lane entry, universally reproduced in architectural texts, established their reputation and outlined a pattern later used in Park Hill.[94] Sir Basil Spence, designer of Coventry Cathedral and a member of the RIBA Council, went on to design the enormous Gorbals redevelopment scheme in Glasgow.[95] The prestigious firm of Chamberlain, Powell and Bon produced the Barbican scheme including 41 storey tower blocks as the main residential accommodation in 1956.[96] D. Lasdun produced an influential design for two 'cluster blocks' in Bethnall Green in 1959.[97] Even E. Lyons, long associated with the tradition of vernacular house-building inaugurated by Span, went on to design the Worlds End estate in Chelsea, the last of a long series of schemes which tried to break through the 200 ppa limit in London.[98] In fact, just about the only private architect of any standing in the profession who did not include high rise in his housing schemes was J. Stirling, whose 1962 Preston development presaged the style which the profession as a whole only adopted towards the end of the decade.[99] Even the 'Pop' architects when they designed more 'realistic' projects tended to adopt high rise for housing, as in C. Price's 'Potteries Thinkbelt' proposals.[100]

Partly because of the uniform acceptance of high rise housing amongst the leading architects, the more formal endorsement of the building form by professional organizations and groupings was not essential to the development of the high rise boom. In fact architects rarely committed themselves to specific design solutions as a profession, a tendency bemoaned by the editor of the Architectural Review in 1953:

> Good design by individual architects does not alter the fact
> that their failure as a body to give a lead and impose on it
> the ideas their knowledge and technical resources tell them are the
> best ideas, is the failure of modern architecture itself... 101

This restraint in the profession which ruled out the production of a concerted line on design issues did not prevent architects from acting so homogenously as to seem concerted in their designs. But it did detract from the acceptance of high flats by local authorities and others involved in public housing. Indeed J.M. Richards argued in the early 1950s:

> By letting it be imagined that high flats were their
> sole objective, the town minded modern architects
> failed to win a clear cut victory over the garden
> suburb sentimentalists. 102

In 1955 this situation was changed by the RIBA's most decisive intervention

to indicate official professional support for high rise housing, the holding

of a 'Symposium on High Flats' in the Institute's Portland Place headquarters.

Opening with a speech by Dame Evelyn Sharp, the Symposium was an unprecedented

example of professional support for a particular building form and it exercised

a decisive influence on virtually all the major housing authorities' architects'

departments. All the most famous exponents of high rise building, including

Whitfield Lewis, Bradbury, Sheppard Fidler, Cleeve Barr, Gibberd and Jensen,

gave addresses, and an executive of Wates Ltd gave 'the contractor's viewpoint'.[103]

The central direction of all these contributions was towards the legitimation of

high rise solutions to the rehousing problems of the major cities rather than

the presentation of technical information or the exposition of novel design solu-

tions. The only critical note in the proceedings was sounded by L.J. Martin,

then the L.C.C. chief architect who, while making the normal genuflections to

Le Corbusier and Gropius, noted that enormous problems of design 'on the

borderline between statistics and architecture' had been insufficiently

studied.[104] Two years later, the RIBA followed up the success of their first

effort by convening a second symposium on a key problem for exponents of high

rise, 'Family life in High Density Housing'.[105] Although much less influential

than its predecessor, the symposium's overall message was again largely un-

critical and optimistic. For the remainder of the high rise housing boom the

RIBA kept out of design issues, partly because of its internal turmoil [106] Nor

over rank and file demands for reform of the Institute's management.

did the Institute make a similar commitment on the industrialized building issue

until 1967 when a conference on 'Industrialized Housing and the Architect'

was held at Portland Place, but by this stage the peak of the campaign had

already been passed.[107]

The position adopted by other organizations in the profession was much

less clear cut on high flat building. In the early 1950s, the Architectural

Association was dominated by the influence of Mies van der Rohe,[108] and was
relatively uninvolved in housing design using high rise.[109] This situation
changed markedly after the completion of Corbusier's Unité which was adopted
by the Smithsons as exemplar of their 'new Brutalist' philosophy. But the
AA and its schools never lined up unequivocally in favour of high rise
mass housing. Similarly, the Architects Journal, although its contents
reflected the dominance of high rise motifs in public housing designs,
did not adopt a clear cut advocacy position. The same cannot be said of
the major 'high brow' journal, the Architectural Review which under the
influence of its proprietor, de Cronin Hastings, and its editor J.M. Richards,
evolved a design philosophy within which high rise, high density designing tended
to be evaluated more positively than it deserved. The essence of this
philosophy (it was actually called 'Townscape Philosophy') was a single minded
pursuit of 'urbanist' visual effects, which involved high density massing
of building forms to produce dramatic architectural photographs, a desire
summed up in the 1960s by the journals number one pro-image, the Italian
hill town. In 1955, the AR devoted a whole issue to the 'Outrage' of
new town 'prairie planning' and the evils of 'Subtopia', a campaign which
rumbled on into the 1960s.[110] This attitude changed only at the very
end of the high rise boom. N. Taylor recalled:

> In 1967, as an assistant editor of the Architectural Review,
> I was asked by my editor to put together a special issue of
> the magazine which would illustrate 'the best of current
> housing design', together with a text explaining 'what we think
> should be done'. He made quite clear that what was wanted
> by him and the other editors was a typical AR tract on the great
> god Urbanity and her cosmetic soul sister Townscape. My idea
> of importing into the argument some sociological evidence of what
> ordinary people actually wanted was scornfully dismissed by the
> proprietor de Cronin Hastings with the words 'But we know what
> should be done'.

In fact Taylor and his contributors found that they 'suddenly came to the
conclusion that almost all the most renowned high density housing schemes were
dangerous rubbish', a view which eventually dominated the November issue,
which was published with unusual disclaimers by the editors.[111]

The overall AR position only really moved away from its early post-war line in the 1970s.

The other design professions can be treated more briefly, mainly· because they normally followed the lead given by architects on the choice of building form. The close integration of the planning profession with architecture throughout the 1950s and '60s meant that the planners never really began to assess high rise independently of the climate of architectural opinion although some signs of change were evident by the late '60s as the technical economic and sociological bases of planning slowly improved.[112] Many of the key figures in the profession were, of course, architects or engineers. The Royal Town Planning Institute throughout the post-war period was dominated by an exaggerated concern to stop urban sprawl. The major theme of the Institute's 1966 Conference for example was reported as 'Urban Contraction must be the Priority', a stance that could not fail to have basic implications for housing construction policy.[113]

Structural engineers were also firm advocates of high rise, for the simple reason that their services were normally not required in housing schemes whereas they played an essential role in the design of high blocks.[114] Their endorsement meant that engineers in local government service generally were favourably disposed to high building, particularly where the chief engineer retained control of planning.[115] This support increased noticeably during the industrialized building campaign which further expanded the scope for the exercise of engineering skills in housing design. And of course, engineers in direct labour organisations quickly acquired a fairly direct, interest in high rise building if they were to maintain the credibility of their departments in the face of competition from technologically more sophisticated private contractors.[116] Engineers also were the most enthusiastic subscribers to the idea of sweeping urban redevelopment, both large scale comprehensive redevelopment as practised by the main housing authorities, and the far more radical proposals envisaged in such plans as the Buchanan Report and the Fulham study.[117]

THE SOCIAL PROFESSIONS

The attitudes of the professionsinvolved in the social aspects of

housing were in general slightly more ambiguous than those of the design

professions. Public health inspectors as a body persistently pressed for

rapid action on slum clearance, for the comprehensive treatment of areas of

bad housing and for quick solutions to rehousing problems. But, in the

early post-war period at least, they were also opposed to very high density

schemes which had in the past been associated with ill health, and to tenement

blocks in particular. In 1954, for example, the Glasgow Medical Officer

of Health used his annual report to criticize the City Council's redevelop-

ment proposals for the Gorbals, a move which precipitated an acrimonious

dispute with the Council over the publication and circulation of the report.

The densities proposed he said:

> ... are far in excess of what has been customary and
> it is difficult to believe that they will not have
> adverse effects on the health of the community.   118

And in 1955 he again singled out high rise as 'causing a deterioration in the

internal design of houses'.[119] By the end of the decade, however, these

attitudes were voiced less and less frequently. The undercurrents of dis-

quiet about high rise amongst some social workers and doctors again only

began to be notified very late in the 1960s.[120]

The profession most directly involved in the protection of council

clients' interests in housing construction policy was of course, the housing

managers. The Institute of Housing Managers was the main professional organiza-

tion but had an uphill struggle during the early post-war period against a

minimalist view of their functions among housing managers which centred on rent

collection and the tradition of coercive tenant management inaugurated in

the nineteenth century by Octavia Hill. Within this perspective the problem

of tenant resistance to rehousing in high flats was a golden opportunity for

housing managers to display their professional skills, an attitude summed

up in a 1958 Municipal Journal editorial:

> It may be necessary to accommodate many people in
> multi-storey flats who would much prefer a house.
> For this reason and because the transition from a
> house to a flat does involve a very big change with
> a need for more 'give and take', housing officers
> may have to be particularly diplomatic in dealing with
> new flat dwellers. 121

The editorial went on to appeal for tenants' 'co-operation with the Council

and with each other on such matters as not walking on specified lawns and

respecting certain parts of the grounds allocated to play areas for children

of certain ages'. In other words, the housing management problems involved

in high rise were seen as problems of managing tenants, a perspective

which persisted throughout the 1950s and the early years of the next decade.

Some housing managers in authorities committed to high flat building admitted

that four fifths of their tenants wanted to live in houses, but this did

not seem to lead them into trying to influence the building forms being

provided by the architects, partly because no authority except the L.C.C.

seems to have operated any procedures for systematically monitoring tenant

reaction to their accommodation. 122

The professionalization of housing management in the early '60s altered

this situation in two rather different directions, depending on the role

played by the housing department in each authority. The basic distinction

was between authorities where the housing department was involved in the control

of slum clearance and housing construction policy, where the architects

department often played a technical role, and authorities where the department

was relatively uninvolved in the production aspects of housing. In the first

type of authority, professionalism was often taken to imply a broadening of the

scope of the housing departments' interests and the adoption of more business-

like methods and values taking fuller account of the imperatives of production. [123]

The end result of this process was demonstrated by J.W. Boddy, the Lierpool

Director of Housing in a speech to the 1964 Housing Centre Trust Conference

in which he declared that the industrialization of housing provision would

have to go ahead whether some people liked it or not:

> There can be no difficulties in industrialized housing
> which cannot be overcome - the only thing which can
> slide up is prejudice, but this must be set aside.

He went on to claim that 'repetition is going to be the means of solving

the housing problem' so that it was wrong to shy away from the monotony

involved in industrialized production:

> The days of the small, hand to mouth builders are
> limited so far as new dwellings are concerned.

He also reported as, ... pleased that Liverpool was compelled to build
upwards, as it would be appalling to see housing extending
over the country with two storey buildings. 'The rehousing
of people in cities should be tackled on a national basis. I
am advocating a national system of prefabricated buildings', he
said. 124

Where housing departments were not involved in the housing construction

process, however, the development of professionalism slowly lead to a partial

reassessment of the departments' role in advancing the interests of their

consumers, the tenants. This in turn lead to a more activist involvement

in the basic design decision such as the choice of building form and the

scrutiny of designs to try to spot defects that would later occasion management

problems. This strand of development was on the whole well supported by

the Housing Centre Trust and its journal, Housing Review[125]. The reappraisal

of attitudes towards discontented tenants involved in this view of housing

management was an important element in leading local authorities to review

their committment to high rise from 1967 onwards. About this time, for

example, the G.L.C. found that their new housing was almost exactly a mirror

image of tenant preferences.[126] Clearly the new consumer orientated concep-

tion of housing management could not accommodate this level of inconsistency.[127]

THE SOCIOLOGICAL INPUT

The final contribution to the debate amongst professionals involved in

the housing construction process was provided by sociologists. In the

post-war era the prestige of the discipline was noticeably high and

sociologists themselves were eager to involve themselves in the policy process.

The newly prominent social responsibility themes in architectural ideology

meant that the design professions were unusually responsive to their

arguments and findings. In practice, the message which sociologists provided

was noticeably split between those researchers who were concerned to emphasize

the importance of providing accommodation in line with public housing

clients' needs and preferences and the view of others who seemed

prepared to defend architects' position and procedures for purely aesthetic

reasons,[128] often without adequate research backing. The picture was

further complicated by the 'official' sociologists working for MHLG or

local authorities whose work tended not to question the basic parameters

of established policy.

The divisions between sociologists and the complex ways in which their

findings could affect policy are well illustrated in the treatment of the

seminal study carried out by Michael Young and Peter Wilmott, Family and

Kinship in East London.[129] In 1954 the Municipal Journal reported preliminary

findings which showed that most people wanted to stay in the East End

and that the urban rehousing process effectively destroyed the strong

matri-local community which existed in Bethnal Green. An editorial

concluded:

> Before inviting these problems by breaking up existing
> communities should not urban development be intensified?
> Building could and should go higher... City after city
> is declaring that its building land is exhausted or
> nearing exhaustion. It does not necessarily follow that
> future developments must be elsewhere. 130

Young and Wilmott by no means accepted this interpretation of their

findings, however, and their position was made clear in a powerfully argued

letter to the Times in May 1957:

> In our submission the choice is not between high flats and high
> density on the one hand and houses, low density and dispersal on
> the other.
> In the course of three years social research in East London we
> have interviewed hundreds of local people; the overwhelming majority
> of them want a house rather than a flat, inside rather than outside
> the East End. Should the aim not be to provide as many new and
> reconditioned houses as possible while avoiding dispersal? If
> this be so then the authorities should build high only for those
> who cannot be accommodated on the ground. Houses would come
> first, flats second. Such an approach would demand a good deal of
> fresh thinking, and we would merely refer briefly to some examples of
> what might be done. For a start architects might put on one side

the suburban standards they usually adopt when they turn from flats
to urban housing, and instead apply their ingenuity to
designing decent terraced houses with small gardens at high densities.
Skillful layout would reduce the waste of space on roads.

.. The major error surely is to imagine that the metropolis can
or should be made in the image of Welwyn, Harlow or Stevenage. That
is not what most Londoners want - not if the price is to continue
the mass migration and force the majority of those who remain to
live in flats. 131

This perceptive contribution presaged virtually every major design innova-

tion in public housing made during the '60s and '70s, but it remained uninfluen-

tial at the time partly because of the willingness of other sociologists

to contribute to the conventional wisdom on high rise. A reply by John

Westergaard argued that Young and Wilmott were,

... unduly pessimistic about the popular response to imaginative
'vertical'building.
The antipathy towards flats, although strong, is not immutable.
Where new flats of even moderately good design have been provided,
mixed with houses and maisonetters at high overall density, and .
where tenants have thus been enabled to live in areas where
they were 'born and bred' close to their work and the accustomed
variety of urban facilities - there the old dislike of buildings
may be already weakening. This was evident at Lansbury in the
East End where I collaborated in a social survey a few years ago.

... The success of the new tall blocks suggests that the traditional
attitude is not permanent. Moreover exclusive or predominant
provision of houses with gardens - even if possible at high
densities - may not in the long run by a rational policy. To take one
example, elderly households - who will make up a substantial
proportion of an area that has achieved a 'normal' population structure -
may well be more suitably housed in tall blocks of flats with lifts,
thus leaving more space for other housing. Such considerations
only emphasize the potentialities of imaginatively designed 'mixed'
development at densities higher than those adopted in current plans. 132

This fragmentation of sociological opinion was quite general,[133] and meant

that it was not until research explicitly directed towards the social

dimensions of high flat living got under way in the 1960s that the profession

slowly came round to a better founded and generally more critical appraisal

of the implications of the high rise boom.[134]

4.5 : Media Coverage of the High Rise Housing Issue

The most difficult problem involved in an objective description of

policy making concerns the influence which can be ascribed to 'public

opinion', however this may be conceived. A conviction that movements of

popular opinion can exert a diffuse but nonetheless powerful influence

on decision making has characteristically informed most pluralist writings.

Yet because of the intangibility of the processes involved, the evidence adduced

for this view is almost invariably slender and tangential.[135]

We have chosen to assess the openness or restrictiveness of the public

debate on high rise by means of a content analysis of various newspapers

and magazines, reported in full in Appendix II. Coverage in the general

media (The Times, and local newspapers) is taken as defining the timing and

extent of information available to the general public, and that in local

government magazines (the Municipal Journal and the Housing and Planning Review)

as defining the timing and content of decision-makers' consideration. Figure

4.2 shows that the timing of coverage in these outlets was almost completely

out of phase.[136] In particular while the elite debate reached a peak in

1954, and thereafter the high rise issue was progressively routinized, coverage

in the general media was negligible until the 1968 Ronan Point disaster.

In other words, it is difficult to see any role for an informed public opinion

on high rise before the decisive national policy changes in 1965-7. Even

at the local newspaper level coverage of the issue was very slight before

1968, although there is certainly evidence that it had begun to increase in

the mid '60s.

An analysis of the favourableness of coverage suggests that the bulk

of it was 'neutral' news reportage, combined with considerable direct

advocacy of high rise in the local government press until 1968.[137] The

proportion of critical coverage of high building was very low. Many aspects

of the issue were not discussed in the coverage that was given. For example,

over the 1950-70 period less than 3% of high rise coverage in the

Municipal Journal was devoted to discussion of the overall suitability of

Figure 4.2: Coverage of the High Rise Housing Issue in The Times and the Municipal Journal. 1950-70.
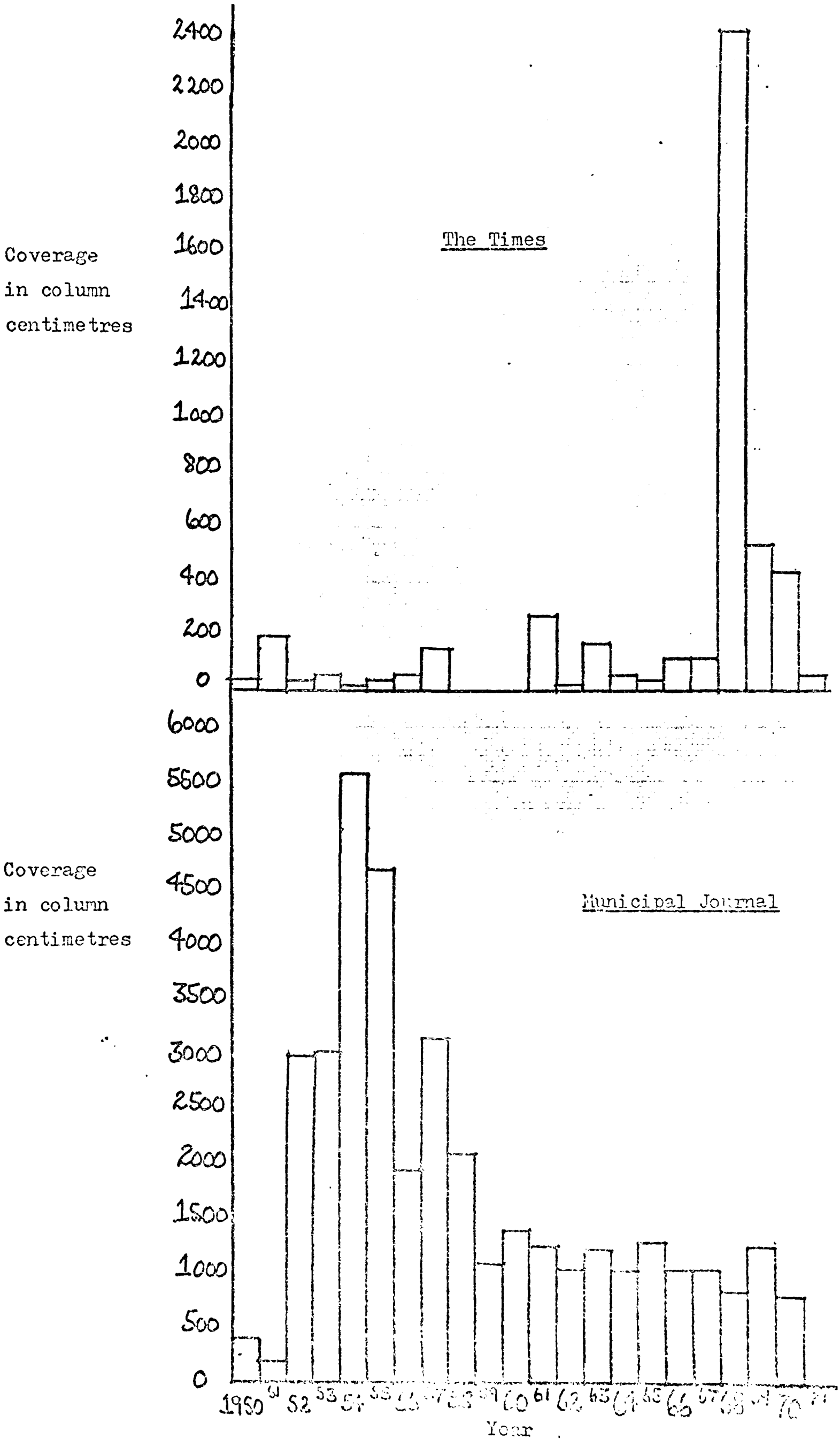
high rise as a building form, or to its social implications, and around 1% of coverage was concerned with its differential costs. Instead, once the brief elite debate about high flats had been resolved in about 1954, coverage focused on specific designs, building techniques or contractual performance.[138]

We also attempted to classify the proximate sources of coverage, that is to say the events which secured media attention, or the background of persons writing articles or supplying information used in them. Most newspaper coverage seems to have been stimulated by central or local government officials' announcements, by meetings or conferences (usually of professional bodies) or to have been initiated by the paper itself.[139] In contrast, the local government press seems to have relied very largely on local authorities' own reportage of their activities in housing, on similar 'public relations' releases by construction firms, and on articles by design professionals.[140] Interest and pressure groups opposed to high rise or putting forward the 'consumer' interests of public housing clients secured little coverage, however.

Finally, although it is impossible to prove this via quantitative methods, it is worth noting that the coverage we have surveyed was not marked by very developed argument or analysis. It was, on the contrary, overwhelmingly factual and this 'facticity' conduced to the acceptance of high rise as a normal, indeed routine and unexceptional element in housing construction policy. Much of the coverage in the local government press consisted solely of 'puffs' and 'plugs' for particular local authority schemes, architects or construction firms. Local newspaper coverage also took on this aspect in the 1950s and '60s, with a lot of reportage of tower block opening ceremonies and 'ultra-modern skyscraper flats',[141] but little or no independent discussion of the issues involved. In short the debate on high rise before 1968 as well as being selective, restricted to the decision makers' media, largely inspired by production interests and quite markedly one sided, was a low level one. The standard of discussion remained poor, much of it consisting of unanalysed maxims or assumptions of the 'if you cannot build

out, build up' variety. Of course, the level of argument was considerably
better in the purely professional journals, and a good deal of critical
coverage was published in Town and Country Planning throughout the post
war period. But it is difficult not to conclude from our analysis that the
nature of the high rise debate as much as the lack of coverage in the
general media, excluded public opinion from any effective influence on policy.

4.6 : Pressure Group Activity

The permissive subsidy structure which allowed local authorities to
build high flats without incurring extra costs largely accounts for the low
level of national debate about high rise and for the scarcity of pro-high
rise initiatives from the construction industry and the design professions.
For all these groups advocating high flat building, the centre of attention
was largely displaced to the local level and they were largely uninvolved
in pressure group activity in its overt forms. In contrast for groups
opposed to the level of high rise building attempts to influence central
government to change the subsidy structure formed a central element in their
activity.[142] The consideration of pressure group activity thus involves looking
at the only organizations or sets of actors publicly critical of high rise
during the peak years of the boom, the Town and Country Planning Association,
and what may be loosely termed 'the child lobby'.

THE TCPA

The Town and Country Planning Association was the most consistent source
of opposition to high density inner city redevelopment and high flat building
throughout the post-war period. Founded in 1919 as a promotional body committed
to the establishment of a new towns programme, the TCPA was dominated from the
late 1930s to the mid 50s by Frederick Osborn, who was chairman of the Association
Executive and editor of its influential journal, Town and Country Planning.
Osborn managed to influence the 1940 Barlowe Commission Report in favour of
the dispersal of industrial activity from the major metropolitan areas.[143]
During the war, he was active in trying to move the context of planning dis-
cussion towards decentralist options. He was shocked, however, by the

Forshaw-Abercrombie Plan published in 1943. Abercrombie had been a prominent

exponent of decentralization in the past and continued to deploy these

arguments but in Osborn's view he had bowed to the pressure of the L.C.C.

architects department and produced 'a Plan that doesn't do the main thing neces-

sary - permit people to have decent family homes'.[144] By 1945, Osborn

was already pessimistic about the future of inner city housing. The TCPA

lobbied M.Ps in a vain attempt to alter the subsidy scales introduced in 1946.[145]

After Macmillan's announcement of an end to further designation of new

towns and the introduction of even higher expensive site subsidies in 1952

Osborn noted:

> The Minister for Housing has been stampeded by the
> agricultural lobby into a campaign for high rise building, and the
> British people must become 'flat minded' - which amounts to a
> reversal of the dispersal and new towns policy the (Tory)
> party accepted a few years ago.   146

The TCPA Executive made representations to this effect to MHLG throughout

the '50s. Osborn himself was a vigilant campaigner against particular

schemes for high density redevelopment, writing letters to the national

and provincial press stressing the extra costs of high rise building and

the undue weight accorded it by the Ministry subsidy scales.[147] This tactic

was partially successful since some exponents of mixed development began

to argue that the expensive sites subsidy with the flats addition dissuaded

local authorities from pursuing proper mixed development, and gave incentives

for 'site cramming'.[148] Partly because of this the Ministry decided

to recast the subsidies in 1955 and simultaneously introduced the Town

Development Act which the TCPA greatly welcomed. At the same time the new

subsidy for high flats was disquieting, although the TCPA like MHLG seemed to

underestimate its long run implications. The 1956 TCPA Conference was marked

by a fierce debate on housing densities between Osborn and Sergei Kadleigh,

the architect responsible for the High Paddington proposals.[149]

During the late '50s, Osborn's involvement in the TCPA declined with

ill health and his place was taken by a group of younger men. Prominent

among them was the L.S.E. academic, Peter Self, author of an influential

book <u>Cities in Flood</u> published in 1957, which displayed a critical

but somewhat equivocal attitude to high rise housing. As the volume

of high flat building increased in the '60s the TCPA's low key opposition

between 1957 and 1962 was reawakened. In 1963, Self denounced 'high

density housing backers who live spaciously', and criticized the 'false

thinking' used to justify high flats.[150]

In February 1964, the TCPA produced possibly its most influential

document on housing subsidies. Its implicit position was very critical

of the 1961 Housing Act and its proposals called for the revision of

housing subsidies to give real help to needy local authorities. In particular

the Association argued the Minister should have power to vary the subsidy accor-

ding to the rate of interest. On high rise the report made a number of

recommendations:

> High population densities are an unfortunate necessity in
> many areas but high rise buildings are not and the Association
> prefers to see families occupying houses with gardens wherever
> possible. Where blocks of flats are essential they should be
> no higher than three or four storeys, at which height building
> costs are little more than for ordinary houses. The Association
> recommends a single fixed dwelling subsidy of a size appropriate
> for a two or three storey house. 151

These detailed proposals probably exerted some influence on the Labour

government later in the year, which was pledged to introduce a similar

scheme for subsidy variation with interest rates. Crossman said that

the new administration had few specific ideas on how this pledge might be

fulfilled by the time they took office.[152] Several TCPA proposals were

present in the Labour White Paper of November 1965. The expensive site

subsidy was recast in line with their suggestions and the high rise

subsidy additions above 6 storeys were abolished.[153] The introduction of

the 4% subsidy which reflected the cost variations with high rise more

than compensated for the loss of this additional subsidy, however, and

throughout 1966 and early 1967 high rise was more heavily subsidized and subject

to fewer cost controls than ever. In an effort to alter this situation

the TCPA Executive sent Crossman a letter in June 1966 arguing once again

for a policy of discouraging flat building and greater use of houses in conurbation on public housing developments:

> A given outlay of Exchequer subsidy will finance the construction of many more houses than flats. To house 10,000 people in a new or expanding town costs £1.7 million less than accommodating them in tall flats in overcrowded cities. 154

The introduction of limits on densities in public housing and the imposition of strict housing cost yardsticks discriminating against high rise in April 1967 represented a very belated victory for the arguments which Osborn and the TCPA has been consistently putting forward over the post-war period.

THE CHILD LOBBY

The other main set of organizations critical of high rise were those involved in children's welfare. It was always known that life in flats was generally less suitable for children than living in a house but during the 1950s the basis of this impression was not well established. The various children's organizations successfully influenced the recommendations of the 1952 CHAC report Living in Flats, which concentrated on detailed proposals for playgrounds and children's facilities in blocks.[155] This line of advance was also the organizations' main contribution to the RIBA symposium on 'Families Living at High Density' held in 1957, when most contributions were generally optimistic about the effects of life in flats on children and mothers.[156] Until the early 1960s, not very much concern was voiced about high flats in particular, and the problem was conceived almost entirely in terms of facilities, and detailed design issues. Although the levels of playground provision in public housing developments were low the publicity given to the issue remained poor.

In 1961 an L.S.E. sociologist, Joan Maizels, carried out the first study of children in high rise housing with money from the Joseph Rowntree Memorial Trust.[157] The research uncovered a very disturbing picture of the effects of high flat life on pre-school children who were found to play

outside very rarely, to have less than normal contact with other children or

people and to cause extra problems for their mothers because of the difficult

and cramping conditions of their accommodation. The report produced an

attempt by Labour M.Ps to persuade the Minister for Housing to enforce

compulsory playground provision in high flat schemes. Although this initiative

failed the research was used by those who argued against the level of high

rise building as such and initiated a number of other studies of the

social implications of high rise. The Rowntree Trust financed a large

scale project in Glasgow in 1966-9 carried out by Pearl Jephcott which again

stressed the problems for families with children, as did perhaps the best

study of high rise for Newcastle Council for Social Service by Betty Gittus

in 1967.[158] Finally the NSPCC entered the same field publishing a highly

critical study based on a national survey of families in high rise in 1970.[159]

It was largely as a result of these interest group backed studies that MHLG

came to adopt a firmly anti-high rise position for family housing long before

their own research was complete.[160]

The pressure from the children's organizations continued long

after the reversal of policy on high rise in 1967, primarily directed to

securing first increased provision of facilities, and latterly the moving

of families with children out of high rise together. This policy was

adopted by a number of local authorities such as Newcastle upon Tyne as

early as 1968 and imitated by a growing number of authorities in the early

seventies.[161] In May 1974, the Conservative M.P. for Acton, Sir George

Young, published the results of a small survey of families living in high flats

in his constituency and secured an official promise from the Minister for

Housing and Construction of immediate D.O.E. action on the continuing problem

of children in tower blocks.[162] The official line now became to speed

up the process of moving families with children out of high rise completely,

as a first stage of which the D.O.E. launched (at this incredibly late stage):

> ... a study to see how many families with young children
> are housed off the ground and to consider the feasibility
> of expecting all local authorities to house them in ground
> floor dwellings. 163

Early in 1975, some eight years after Ministry policy finally moved to discourage high /buildings, the senior D.O.E. sociologists in charge of the study confessed:

> ... local authorities will be obliged to continue
> housing families in unsuitable high rise accommodation
> for years to come. 164

The most serious recent development which has put in jeopardy the goal

of moving all young children out of high flats is the selling off of council   .

houses begun under the Heath administration and likely to resume under any

new Conservative administration. This policy would dramatically reduce

the numbers of houses in local authority housing stocks in conurbation areas

while leaving the flats stock largely untouched; particularly in London,

the policy is likely to mean that the dwellings into which tower block families

might be able to move will instead be taken out of the local authority stock

for good.

4.7 : Parliamentary Consideration

Parliamentary consideration of high rise housing is important for

our analysis in several respects. Firstly it was the only direct inter-

vention on the issue by national politicians. None of the party organizations

apparently took up a policy position on high rise or indeed on mass housing

issues generally. Support for slum clearance and redevelopment and for a

speedy end to the country's housing problems was professed by both Labour

and Conservative ministers. Divisions in attitudes to mass housing reflected

primarily the personal positions of Ministers and M.Ps or the interest group

links which influenced them. Contacts with local authorities in their

constituencies and with local authority associations were particularly

important in shaping M.Ps attitudes. Secondly, Parliamentary consideration

was potentially important as a generator of public debate on high rise

housing via press and media coverage of Parliamentary proceedings and via

links with a broader interest group debate, such as it was.

Altogether the House of Commons focused attention on high rise housing

five times in the post-war period, coinciding naturally enough with the

introduction of legislation on housing subsidies in 1946, 1956, 1961, 1965 and 1967.[165] The basic features of these debates are summarized in Table 4.4.[166]

Table 4.4 : Parliamentary Consideration of the High Rise Housing Issue

1946	Hours of debate	References in speeches	M.Ps speaking	Amendments moved	M.Ps voting
Second Reading	0.5	4	4	-	-
Committee	-	4	4	-	-
Third Reading	-	-	-	-	-
1956					
Second Reading	-	4	3	-	-
Committee	-	3	3	-	-
Third Reading	-	-	-	-	-
1961					
Second Reading	-	-	-	-	-
Committee	4.5	(debate)	12	7	28
Recommittal	2.8	(debate)	15	2	377
Third Reading	-	ł	1	-	-
1965					
Second Reading	-	7	8	-	-
1967					
Second Reading	-	1	-	-	-
Committee	0.5	8	6	-	-
Third Reading	-	-	-	-	-

Expressed in terms of these quantitative indices this consideration is strikingly unimpressive, with just over five hours of extended debate in Committee and full Commons consideration for less than three hours. References to high rise and M.Ps devoting a major part of their contribution to the issue in debate are almost equally scarce, while theissue provoked a vote on only two occasions, once in Committee and again at the Recommittal stage in 1961.

The 1946 Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill set up the basic post-war subsidy structure which lasted until the 1967 Act, in the process introducing the revised expensive site subsidies with an increment for flat building over four storeys with lifts. When the provisions for this

were published by the Ministry of Health in February they immediately

aroused controversy. The TCPA Secretary, Osborne, wrote to the <u>Times</u>

protesting that the subsidies 'put a heavy bonus on flat building' and

were extravagantly large, as well as conflicting with the government's.

planning policies by encouraging town cramming rather than the dispersal

of slum residents to new towns.[167] Osborne circulated a memorandum to

M.Ps on these lines before the Second Reading and briefed Gilbert McAllister,

a Labour M.P. and former secretary to the TCPA, to oppose the expensive site

subsidies. McAllister began by reminding his fellow Labour M.Ps that the

desperation of people for new housing should not now be allowed to force

the government into the worst expedients of Tory housing ministers during

the Depression.

> I should like to remind the Minister (Aneuran Bevan), that
> it has always been the policy of the Labour Party to provide for
> increasing living space for our people, and that the policy
> of the Labour Party as decided at the Conference held in
> December 1944 is completely at variance with the principle
> embodied in Clause 4 of this Bill..   168

McAllister also condemned the complete failure to accord weight to what he

saw as most peoples' resistance to rehousing in flats:

> Perhaps the Minister is of the opinion that the wishes
> of the people of this country should not be consulted..
> but his view does not square with my view of Socialism or with what
> I have always regarded as the outlook and policy of our great
> Labour Party. 169

Despite the power of McAllister's speech he failed to evoke any response

from the Labour benches. Barbara Castle, for example, argued that he had

overstated his point: 'I have read the Bill very carefully and I do not see

that it will lead to more flats going up where flats grew before or to

flats going up in new places'.[170]

Although the 1946 provisions were substantially increased in 1952, the sub-

sidy structure was not altered and the role of the expensive site subsidy

was not mentioned in the Commons debate. So that it was not until the

introduction of the 1956 Housing Subsidies Bill, which produced what Bevan

called 'the first major debate on housing since 1945', that the issue was

raised again. Duncan Sandys in introducing the progressive storey height subsidy argued previous flat subsidies had been fixed at a time when there was little experience of flat building so that flats had been over-subsidized in relation to houses, (largely because London costs had been used in calculating subsidies). In addition the subsidy he argued 'has unintentionally influenced local authorities to concentrate on building blocks of 3, 4 and 5 storeys, which are most monotonous'.[171] In the Standing Committee on the Bill, Ben Parkin, Labour member for Paddington, North, pressed the Minister not just to give subsidies for high rise but to use his authority and loan sanction control powers to actively encourage high flat construction. Parkin was an advocate of high rise largely because Paddington Council pursued very high density schemes under the influence of their Housing Officer, R.A. Jensen.[172] Sandys expressed only vague sympathy for Parkin's views but would go no further. There was no real indication of opposition to the high flat provisions, since the TCPA had secured substantial subsidies for Town Development dwellings in the same Bill. But at least one rural member, Viscount Hinchinbrooke, called for the diversion of these subsidies from 'spoliating the countryside' to the creation of 'first class flats of 12, 15 and 20 storeys' on the pattern of Continental developments.[173]

THE 1961 DEBATES

Once the 1956 subsidies came into force, local authorities' use of high flats increased substantially to 15% of all public housing approvals by 1960. In discussions on the 1961 Housing Bill the Association of Municipal Corporations pressed for a more generous subsidy for high flats, unsuccessfully, since the Ministry retained the existing scale. Several Labour M.Ps from conurbation constituencies were briefed by their local authorities to try and influence the Ministry attitude in debate.[174] In the Standing Committee the right wing Labour housing expert, James McColl, moved an amendment seconded by the Labour front bench spokesman, Michael Stewart, which would increase the level of high flats subsidy at any height

by £2. Julius Silverman and Frank Allaun, two Labour members on the
left wing of the party, moved a rival amendment proposing to increase the high
flat subsidies by between 40 and 50%. McColl described his motion as a
'moderate, compromising and revisionist approach' aiming only to take account
of inflation in construction costs since 1956.[175] Four Tory M.Ps intervened
to support the amendment, arguing that if any concessions were to be made
this was the area to do it. Many speakers from all sides implied that the
Ministry was lukewarm in its attitude to high flats, while McColl pointed
to 'the general divergence of views between "planners" and "housers"' in the
Ministry.[176] The left wing M.Ps' speeches centred particularly on the housing
problems and contractual difficulties of the major cities, particularly
Birmingham, London and Manchester.

The Minister, Henry Brooke, argued against any change on several
bases. Firstly, he declared that the government simply could not afford
to accept either of the amendments. Secondly, he countered the accounts
of local authorities' problems by arguing that Ministry figures showed that the
cost differential between houses and high flats had if anything lessened
since 1956.

At the division, only one Tory member voted for the 'moderate'
Labour amendment, which was comfortably defeated. All the Labour members
then supported the Silverman-Allaun amendment, which also failed.

The debate did not end there, however, since the Opposition decided
to reintroduce the Silverman-Allaun amendment at the Recommittal stage as
additional discretionary powers for the Minister where he was 'satisfied
that the cost of building flats is exceptionally high by comparison with
the average costs of similar building in England and Wales and that by reason
of the shortage of available land or the number of people requiring accommoda-
tion in the neighbourhood ... it is desirable that (dwellings) should be
provided in a block of (high) flats'.[177] Stewart in moving the amendment
criticized the Ministry figures as inadequate and claimed that if the
amendment was accepted it would allow subsidy to be directed at the Minister's

discretion to the conurbations while at the same time avoiding any risk of paying out over-large subsidies on high flats in other locations. This position won some initial support from Conservative members but was briskly attacked by Sir Keith Joseph on the grounds that national high rise costs were already stable, and at some heights costs were falling, so that the subsidy levels fixed in 1956 were still appropriate. He refused to accept the cost figures for individual schemes quoted by Labour Members because of the very large variation in costs between different block designs. The availability of the proposed discretionary subsidy would serve only to put the Ministry under greater pressure from inefficient local authorities and to 'encourage relatively poor or slack design'.[178] The amendment was rejected on a straight party vote by 200 votes to 153, with two Liberals and two Conservative backbenchers voting with the Opposition.

The Opposition also introduced a second amendment at this stage, moved by Mrs Irene White, who had secured the money from the Rowntree Memorial Trust for Joan Maizel's pioneering work, Two to Five in High Flats. This was published by the Housing Centre on May 11, two days after the Committee discussions and six weeks before the Recommittal debate.[179] Its conclusions were disturbing and Mrs White's amendment was designed to alleviate the problems of children in flats. It proposed that:

> In the case of flats for which (a high flat) subsidy
> is payable ... the Minister shall by regulation require
> the authority to provide adequate play space for children,
> including those of pre-school age, unless he is satisfied
> that adequate play facilities are available in a park or
> other public ground adjacent to the flats. 180

It might be thought that this amendment was relatively uncontroversial, but the Conservatives decided to oppose it.[181]

Brooke argued that the Ministry could not compel local authorities to provide particular facilities in the direct manner demanded by the motion, nor could the Ministry begin to intervene on one among many design points. In addition the proposal was inappropriate in a piece of financial legislation. But the Ministry was of course aware of the problems and did attempt to ensure that adequate facilities were available before granting loan

sanction.[182] Finally he promised that the matter would be looked at again

following the report of the Parker Morris Committee, which would no doubt

contain recommendations on the matter: (in fact Homes for Today and Tomorrow

was completely silent on this and other problems of high rise, and nothing

was ever done by the Ministry on children in flats). Despite strong support

from several Labour members from both wings of the party, together with

two speeches of very muted criticism from Tory backbenchers, the amendment

was again voted down on party lines by 216 to 161.

THE REDUCTION OF HIGH RISE SUBSIDIES

In the light of the pressure on the Conservatives from the official

Opposition in 1961, it is surprising that Labour attitudes could change

as quickly as they did in government away from high rise. Both

amongst front bench spokesmen and ordinary members the pro-high rise values

disappeared almost without trace, with only the residual identification of

members like Frank Allaun of high rise with the solution of inner city

housing problems reminiscent of Labour's 1961 view. Of course, the 1965

Housing Subsidies Bill represented only a partial switch of emphasis from

high rise.

Introducing the Second Reading debate, Bob Mellish, (Parliamentary

Secretary at MHLG) explained:

> It is no longer true, as it was as recently as 1961, that
> building very high is very much more expensive than building
> to six or eight storeys. As (the Minister) has said, publicly,
> he will not encourage higher building purely for its own sake.
> It is essential in the great cities and conurbations, but
> each of the applications made for higher building will be
> watched by (the Minister). 183

Interestingly enough, this position was now attacked by the Conservative

front bench spokesman, Boyd-Carpenter, who called it 'a mistake', disputed

the claims made by Mellish for cost reductions from industrialized building

and argued that it was foolish that 'the higher building, which is certainly

one of the methods of solving the problems of Inner London, should be

discriminated against in this way'.[184] Crossman then pointed out that the

changed basic subsidy plus the high flat and increased expensive

site increments could mean that at certain interest rates the government

was paying as much as 80 or 90% of the extra costs of high rise in

subsidies, (whereas previous flat increments had assumed that the subsidy

would meet two thirds of these extra costs). [185]

Later in the debate, Frank Allaun also criticized the high flat

increment reductions, saying that several local authorities had contacted

him because they were concerned that if interest rates fell and the basic

subsidy was reduced then they would get less help with high rise than

under the 1961 Act. Mellish gave an assurance that there was not intended

to be a disincentive to high rise and that the Ministry recognized that 'in

the conurbations we must build high in order to achieve the housing targets' of

the White Paper.[186] But the dominant tone of references to high rise was

for the first time markedly critical. Roy Hattersley attacked the prestige

building of high rise; Eric Heffer declared that high flats 'themselves

created more problems than they solve'; and Arthur Blenkinsop called for

an examination of 'whether we can get relatively high densities in ways

which are more satisfactory for families and social needs'.[187] In his summing

up Crossman pointed out that the Bill shifted a good deal of emphasis from

the high flat subsidy to the increased expensive site subsidy in dealing

with the problems of inner city developments. And he criticized high building

outside these areas:

> There is no reason to put a 16 storey building plump
> in the middle of the suburbs of a small provincial town
> just because the architect felt it would be better with a high
> rise building. It is getting a bit too American for my taste. 188

The Bill failed to reach the Committee stage because of the dissolution

of Parliament for the March 1966 general election. The proposals were

reintroduced virtually unchanged early in 1967, (although with a great deal

of additional material on non-financial topics). The high flat provisions

attracted very little attention in comparison with previous debates. In

Committee there was about half an hour's discussion of the high flat

clauses.[189]

4.8 : The Formulation of Central Government Policy

With the consideration of decision making inside the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, this part of the research reaches a difficult core problem. To understand the specific reasons why the structure of central government subsidies was changed to favour the building of high rise housing by local authorities, maintained for the peak decade of the high rise housing boom and eventually changed to remove the incentive to build high would require access to central government records and files if an authoritative account were to be constructed. Since this access was not available, this account is less than authoritative. It is based on a comprehensive review of Ministry publications, circulars and informal statements over the post-war period, supplemented at key points by material drawn from interviews with five senior civil servants immediately involved in the setting of high rise housing policy. These include the head of the Ministry's housing design section throughout the 1950s, who became Deputy Chief Architect in 1964, plus several administrators who wished to avoid all attribution. Informants were of course relying on memory in their replies and presented them with particular slants, but in practice their replies proved remarkably helpful and accurate.

It may be useful to recap on the allocation of responsibilities for policy within the Ministry discussed in general terms in section 1.1, with specific reference to high rise policy, (Table 4.5).[190] The most important aspect of this pattern of involvement is the separation of actors involved in one decision from those involved in closely related areas of policy, particularly the sub-division of responsibility and information between administrative and professional staff. Together with the chronic under-staffing of the Housing Division until 1963, this pattern of involvement contributed to some of the Ministry's mistakes in handling the growth of high rise housing.

Table 4.5 : Involvement in Decisions on High Rise Policy (MHLG)

TASK	INVOLVED IN MHLG	INVOLVED OUTSIDE
Setting of housing targets/problems	Ministers, Administrators Senior professional staff	Local authority associations, Housing interest groups.
Policy advice on subsidies	Housing Under-Secretary one or two Assistant Secretaries	Local authority associations, local authorities
Determination of subsidy levels	Accountant General's section, quantity surveyors, Treasury	Local authority associations
Design advice, monitoring of design trends, determination of cost yardsticks and standards	Architects and quantity surveyors, CHAC	Contacts with RIBA and local authority by architects
Loan sanction supervision of contracts	Ordinary contracts: admin. staff at Executive level High rise contracts: architects (in regional offices from 1962-4)	Local authority architects departments

THE 1956 POLICY CHANGE

A central problem involved in the analysis of Ministry policy is the wide

gap between the overall housing construction policy suggested by their

design advice, and the actual housing outputs produced within a subsidy

structure very favourable to high rise. This essentially schizophrenic

stance requires some prior explanation. Its origins can be located in the

pre-suppositions built into the expensive sites subsidy at its inception

in the 1930s. A basic assumption made at the time was that local authorities

wanted to build houses in suburban areas at near garden city standards, that

they would be reluctant to develop central urban areas, and that they would

be especially reluctant to redevelop using flats. The subsidy therefore was

open-ended; i.e. no restriction was placed on the overall numbers of flats

being built and no provision was made for monitoring the densities being

produced by flat developments. This policy carried over into the post-war

period, and until 1956 when the general housing subsidy was withdrawn could

still have been plausibly defended as an accurate appreciation of local

authority attitudes. However, this orientation seems to have continued

after the housing program had been switched overwhelmingly into slum

clearance and redevelopment, with the new high flats subsidy the most prominent

feature of Ministry encouragement to undertake central area redevelopment.

The effect of this orientation on the operation of Ministry control

procedures (principally on loan sanction policy) was to build in a fatal

flaw from the outset. One informant confessed:

> We tended to accept the fact that the planners were the
> determinators of density levels because they were working
> in the wider concept of land use. So that when we or
> one of our housing architects were advising on or
> vetting a scheme of housing, we didn't tend to question
> the density. We asked what the density was and that was
> part of our brief.
>
> Interviewer:
>
> When you say 'the planners', which set of planners
> do you mean?
>
> Informant:
>
> Oh, the planners in central government didn't come into
> approving detailed local schemes at all. When I say
> the planners I mean the local authority's planner under
> his zoning plan would say "I want 80 persons per acre on
> that site" or "I want 150 persons per acre here".
> So that the Ministry planners didn't come into that. 191

The Ministry architects in exercising loan sanction control over high flat

schemes thus accepted the density levels involved as given. Costs were

thus controlled within parameters set by the local authority itself.

The architects branch knew from the 1930s on that flats are more expensive

than houses, and from the late 1940s on that high rise flats are particularly

costly. The assumption that local authorities were reluctant to build flats and

later that they were reluctant to build high flats, was the main reason why no

attempt was made to control densities in relation to which contract costs

were assessed. This was initially underpinned by the requirement that local

authorities make a rate fund contribution to the annual cost of housing

equivalent to half the government subsidy being paid on the accommodation, which

implied that Councils would have to bear at least a third of the costs of high

rise directly as well as the effect on rent levels involved.[192]

But in 19.6 this requirement was allowed to lapse at the same time as the expensive site subsidy previously paid on high flats was replaced by the progressive storey height subsidy and a drastically reduced expensive sites subsidy, (Table 4.6).[193] Before 1956, four storey flats on land costing £15,000 an acre received roughly three times the basic subsidy paid for houses on land costing less than £5,000, most of this being an expensive site subsidy payable only on flats, plus an addition of £10.50 per dwelling for flats in four or more storeys. The subsidy was not varied with storey height

Table 4.6 : Subsidies on High Rise Dwellings, 1946-65

Subsidy per dwelling (£s)

	1946 to 1952	1952 to 1956	1956 to 1961	1961 to 1965	1965
House Subsidy	16.5	26.7	22.1	24.0	64.0
Flat subsidy:					
4 storeys	(No high flat subsidy but		32.0	32.0	89.0
5 storeys	additional £10.5 per dwelling on		38.0	38.0	95.0
6 storeys	the expensive site subsidy for		50.0	50.0	107.0
	flats over four storeys)				
10 storeys			57.8	57.0	107.0
15 storeys			65.8	65.8	107.0
20 storeys			74.5	74.5	107.0

Expensive site subsidy per dwelling

Land cost per acre:		
£5,000	30.0	54.5
£10.000	33.8	59.0
£15,000	39.8	66.8
£20,000	47.3	76.5
£50,000	62.3	96.0

Expensive site subsidy per acre

Land cost per acre:			
£5,000	60.0	60.0	34.0
£10,000	230.0	230.0	204.0
£15,000	400.0	400.0	374.0
£20,000	570.0	570.0	544.0
£50,000	1,556.0	1,556.0	1,530.0

Note: The subsidy per dwelling figures for 1965 are taken from the 1965 White Paper sample figures and assume an interest rate of 6½%.

only with the price of the land. And, of course, the more dwellings could be accommodated on a given piece of land the greater the expensive site subsidy total received, hence the complaints of Osborn and others that the subsidy was an incentive to site cramming.[194]

The 1956 change in the subsidies introduced a new subsidy paid per dwelling for flats which rose steeply up to six storeys and by an increment of £1.75 with each further storey. Flats in six storey blocks received more than twice the subsidy paid on houses, and fifteen storey flats nearly three times as much, irrespective of the cost of the land on which they were built. At the same time, the old expensive site subsidy paid per dwelling was abolished. In its place there was a subsidy paid per acre of land. The implication of this change was to make the progressive storey height subsidy the dominant means of central government support for central urban development. To see this consider the effect of the expensive site subsidy change on a local authority developing land at densities of thirty dwellings per acre. On land costing £10,000 an acre the new subsidy paid only 3.3% of the old subsidy; in fact the new subsidy paid the same amount at this density as the old only when land costs passed beyond the £200,000 per acre mark, an impossibly high figure at the time. Of course, the progressive storey height subsidy by no means made up for the loss in the expensive site subsidy. The important thing is the relative contribution of the two subsidy elements. Thirty dwellings in four storey flats built on an acre of land costing £5,000 would have received a total annual subsidy of £2,751 under the 1952 scale, of which £801 was the basic subsidy, £315 for lift served flats and £1,635 the expensive site subsidy. Under the 1956 scale the scheme would receive only £1,020, of which only £60 was expensive site subsidy, £663 was basic subsidy, and £297 from the progressive storey height subsidy. If the development was in six storey flats the loss of subsidy under the new scale would fall from £1,731 to £1,191 and at fifteen storeys the new scale paid out £717 less than the old.

There appear to have been four reasons for the Ministry's reorganisation of subsidies in this manner. Firstly, the whole range of subsidies on public

housing were being cut back as the government moved to stimulate private house building and to cut back on general Council housing.[195] The 1952 expensive site subsidy was also cut because it was very costly, but to have further reduced subsidies for inner city redevelopment at the same time as the general housing subsidy was withdrawn would have been politically unacceptable. The government may have hoped that the transfer of this subsidy to high flats would accomplish a further reduction, however, since only a few thousand high flats a year were being built in the early '50s, a very much smaller number than were eligible for the expensive sites subsidy. If the Ministry were convinced of the innate conservatism of local authorities over high building, and thus failed to predict the scale of the high rise housing boom which followed the introduction of the progressive storey height subsidy, then the shift must have looked like a good opportunity to drastically reduce support for redevelopment without appearing to have done so.

Secondly, some change was made necessary by the demands from several local authorities, particularly Birmingham, to be allowed to start building flats in their suburban areas in order to make the most intensive use of their remaining building land.[196] Under the 1952 arrangements extra subsidy for flat developments was often not payable since suburban land prices fell below the qualifying levels for the expensive site subsidy. The switch to a building form subsidy eliminated this difficulty and encouraged higher density building on low cost land, a solution particularly attractive to Conservative ministers intent on freezing the new towns program and encouraging urban authorities to meet more of their housing needs within their own boundaries.

Thirdly the 1952 provisions had come under criticism for encouraging 'site cramming' with low rise flats, rather than the mixed development option briefly recommended in the Ministry's 1952 guide Living in Flats and laid out in detail as official policy in Flats and Houses 1958.[197] Since it was thought that the use of high flats could free ground space for houses, the progressive storey height subsidy was seen as enhancing the possibilities of

mixed development. Again this incentive only worked on the assumption
that local authority conservatism would keep the proportion of high rise
dwellings down, rather than high building becoming simply a means of
achieving even greater 'densification' of public housing developments.

Finally the expensive site subsidy had to be changed because it was
proving increasingly difficult to administer. Applications for the subsidy
to be paid could be made only when land transactions and estate development
had been completed and so typically lagged a long way behind local authorities'
accumulation of costs. Each application had to be assessed by the quantity
surveyors in relation to the price of the land, and a sizeable backlog
of claims continuously built up. This bottleneck imposed a constraint
on local authorities' slum clearance activities since this was the only
government provision for inner city redevelopment. The reduction of the
expensive site subsidy to a minor role and the transferral of the burden
to the progressive storey height subsidy, which could be assessed by the
architects branch at the loan sanction stage in the normal way, speeded up
the process.[198]

POLICY DURING THE HIGH RISE BOOM

The general context of Ministerial and senior civil service attitudes
during the period of the high rise boom supports the view that the Ministry
thought of themselves as more progressive than the predominantly conservative
local authorities. In 1953, the Labour M.P., R.A. Allen raised the
example of the High Paddington scheme in a Commons debate on the loss of
agricultural land and was told by Marples, the Parliamentary Secretary at the
Ministry that he wished it every success. He added, 'I only hope the
nation as a whole would become a little more "flat-minded".' The remark
led the Municipal Journal to editorialize enthusiastically: 'This is the
first official support for the principle of the scheme'.[199] Perhaps
the clearest exponent of the progressive Ministry-conservative local authorities
dichotomy was Dame Evelyn Sharp, who addressed the 1955 RIBA Symposium on High
Flats. She began by quoting a poem which contained 'an exciting passage about

the beauty of high towers' and continued:

> I am assuming that certainly from the point of view of
> this conference, high dwellings are acceptable and the
> pattern of urban housing which high dwellings imply.
> I know this is not necessarily accepted by the whole of
> the public. We are, I suppose, the most conservative people ·
> in the world, and some of us are uneasy and upset by the sight
> of anything new and unaccustomed. 200

Henry Brooke, who sat on the CHAC sub-committee which drew up Living in Flats

and became Ministerin 1957 was also committed to this view:

> Long before I became Minister, I urged people to get
> rid of this foolish prejudice against living in flats.
> Of course, houses suit some of the people better and
> flats suit others, but my view is that a number of
> towns and cities allowed that prejudice to remain far
> too long after the war, when in London it had become
> accepted that it was a good thing to build flats. 201

And of course, ministerial encouragement for high rise housing fitted

in closely with the planning orientation of successive Conservative ministers

who opposed the extention of county borough boundaries into rural counties

or any expansion of the new towns programme. 202

There were, however, several sources of tension within Ministry policy

from the outset which grew more pronounced as the high flats boom got under

way. The first of these was a division between some of the architects

branch who favoured economy in building and stricter cost control over local

authority schemes,and the administrators and Chief Architect who preferred to

let the policy continue unchanged. A leading member ofthe first group was

the head of the housing design section in the '50s, Alec Bellamy, who was

largely responsible for the production of the MHLG housing manuals. 203 In

1956 he went on a year long study trip to research U.S. high rise public

housing projects. On his return he rewrote the draft of an earlier unpublished

manual on flat developments which was issued by the Ministry as Flats and

Housing 1958. This showed for the first time that high densities of around

110 ppa could be obtained without using high rise at all, and that up to this

level maximum economy could be achieved by using as large a proportion of houses

as feasible for the density. Above this level maximum economy could be

obtained by mixing high and low rise flats, with as large a proportion of low

flats as was feasible for the density. The booklet also showed how high blocks could be designed as cheaply as possible by using large slab blocks rather than point blocks, more intensive use of elevators etc. The overall message of the booklet was emphatically the need to cut costs:

> High buildings cost more than low ones and the lessons
> of the chapters (on layouts) is that money can be
> saved in tens of thousands of pounds by planning for only
> the minimum of high buildings, or often none at all.
> The key to economy by intelligent layout is to get the
> required economy with the minimum use of high building. 204

One informant when asked about the criteria used by the architects' branch in assessing schemes for loan sanctions replied:

> What the design group drew up was what the architects'
> branch enforced on local authorities. 205

Unlike previous manuals, however, Flats and Houses, 1958 was purely advisory and does not seem to have been enforced, although it certainly had influence. Sears and Meacher have shown that the Ministry in at least one case in the early 1960s insisted on the use of slab designs rather than point blocks.[206] But the wider question of the use of building forms in relation to density was not tackled. Local authorities' use of high rise continued to increase dramatically partly because densities themselves were being increased, but partly also because the Ministry failed to put any effective pressure behind their own advice. In 1961 the Ministry resisted strong pressures from the local authorities associations, delegations from the large housing authorities and Parliamentary criticism aimed at securing an increase in the high flats subsidy. Indeed the increase in the base rate of the house subsidy from £22 to £24 for housing authorities defined as being 'needy' slightly reduced the incentive to build high built into the subsidy structure.[207] However, at the same time the house subsidy for non-needy authorities was reduced to only £8 while the progressive storey height increments for these authorities were left unchanged. As a result while the non-needy authorities received only a third of the house subsidy paid to needy authorities, this proportion increased to over two fifths at four storeys, 58% at five storeys, 64% at six storeys and 76% at twenty storeys. Putting the point another

way, these authorities were paid four times their basic house subsidy

on six storey flats and seven times at twenty storeys. This perverse pro-

vision thus gave a peculiarly strong incentive to local authorities to

build high in areas where high rise was least needed, i.e. the better off

non-conurbation authorities.[208]

In the early '60s, the Ministry occasionally made pleas to

local authorities to think again about their use of high flats. In March

1962, Cleeve Barr told the RIBA:

> If fewer tall blocks of flats were built in high density
> housing schemes the saving would more than pay for
> the higher space and heating standards recommended by the
> CHAC report, Homes for Today and Tomorrow.. Tall blocks
> of flats would continue to be necessary in developments over
> 100 ppa but the tendency within such areas would be likely
> to be in the direction of fewer and taller blocks. Reasonable
> schemes could be produced at densities of the order of
> 80-100ppa without using blocks above four storeys in height.
> ... The higher cost of building over four storeys was still
> not sufficiently realized by architects... The saving in cost by
> using a reasonable proportion of tall blocks (say 20-30%
> of accommodation) as compared with a high proportion (say 70%
> of accommodation) would be about 30% of the total cost of the
> scheme. More attention by architects to the fundamental
> economics of housing layout could therefore save substantial
> sums of money. 209

In 1963, the Ministry tried again by issuing a set of advisory Housing Cost

Yardsticks taken from the figures published in 1958, and providing a compre-

hensive set of guidelines for schemes of various densities.[210] By this

time, however, the high rise issue was inextricably linked with the industrialized

building campaign. The slow response to the Ministry's efforts to broaden

the campaign to cover other building forms meant that the 1963 yardsticks were

never effectively applied, and served principally to increase the pressure

on local authorities to raise densities in order to justify the high rise

content of their developments.[211]

According to one informant the Ministry's failure to enforce the 1958

and 1963 design recommendations by cutting down the over-use of high rise,

reflected in part the broader difficulties and weaknesses of its position viz-a-

viz the local authorities.

> The (1963) yardsticks booklet was pressed on local authorities
> in a circular to the effect that schemes more expensive than this

would not necessarily be approved. That's circular
40/63. But of course persuasion on thepart of the
regional architects was going on all the time from 1958 through
1963 until the subsidy over 4% of costs was introduced by
Dick Crossman.

Interviewer:

Why then did high rise building increase so much in this period?

Informant:

Um. Let's put it this way. This advisory yardstick was
pressed by the department generally from this date, but...
the subsidy per dwelling apart from the expensive site
subsidy remained a unit cost per dwelling. Now in that
situation our administrators would say, "Well, you give
all the advice you can. And, er, we'll press them hard to
be economical". A great deal of scope existed at that period
for the local authorities who were actually doing the building
and working on the drawings to say, "Oh, we know all about this".
Look at Preston. They had a very powerful chief engineer
at one time who built high rise everywhere. He didn't look
at this (the yardstick booklet). And he'd arrive on the
doorstep one day with a tender and say "I want approval
for this scheme, What the hell's it all being held up for?"
Government's rather open to being exploited in this situation.
They are guiding and persuading. But if local authorities, who
after all are spending their own money, don't see fit to
take any notice; and if when the tender's in, it's too bloody
late to do anything about it; and if that particular government
in office wants numbers - then the administrators' line is often
"Well, we'll approve this one. But don't let it happen
again!"   212

A second source of tension which eventually had important implications

for the high rise housing boom was external to the Ministry. A very large

proportion of high building throughout the period was concentrated in

London, and much of this was built by the L.C.C./G.L.C. We have already noted

the L.C.C.'s key role as innovator within the national local government

system in breaking down barriers to the acceptance of high flats and mixed

development. One of the reasons why L.C.C. design standards were so influen-

tial, particular schemes such as the Roehampton estates, may be that the

L.C.C./G.L.C. sought approval for all its borrowings in an annual Bill in

Parliament and thus departmental loan sanction procedures were never applied

to its schemes. As a result, the Ministry were paying out subsidies under

the Housing Acts for schemes over which they had no cost control. In parti-

cular, they had no control over the mix of building forms adopted. One

informant recalled:

> Whilst we were all delighted to see Robert Matthew,
> Chief Architect of the L.C.C.,producing schemes of
> mixed development the government had no control over
> any of those schemes. They forked out the standard
> rate of subsidy for whatever the L.C.C. chose to build
> because it didn't have to come to the government for
> loan sanction. Now they set the stage in my view for
> building point blocks and good mixed development in
> the form of Roehampton and many other schemes subsequently.
> And when it became the Provinces' turn to build to
> similar kinds of densities - high rise was the fashion.
> It was just an image. They didn't do any of the arithmetic.
> They just said, 'Well, they're doing high rise. We'd like
> some high rise'. 213

The third source of tension in policy during the high rise boom was

produced by the split between the planning and housing divisions within the

Ministry. The former were inherited from the Ministry of Town and Country

Planning and retained a decentralist position not uninfluenced by the TCPA

which was not very much in tune with Ministerial opinion in the early

1950s, or with architectural fasions on inner city development. In 1953 a

a scheme drawn up by Paddington Borough for a 15 storey flatted estate with

densities of 300 ppa was rejected by the L.C.C. Planning Committee, and the

Ministry planners supported this judgement on appeal, a decision which

firmly enforced a limit of around 200 ppa on high rise schemes in London.

Except in such appeal cases, however, the planners had no involvement with the

setting of public housing densities and in the late '50s, under their Chief

Planner, J.R. James, they seemed anxious to widen their influences. The

planning division's main concerns were to stop the prevalent low densities

in housing construction outside the large cities, and to reduce the pressure

to push up densities in inner city redevelopments. In September 1961 James

told the Housing Centre Conference that very high density solutions to housing

problems were unacceptable and did not save rural land.[214] A year later the

planners' most important intervention in public housing policy in the post-war

period until then, the Planning Bulletin Residential Areas: Higher Densities,

stressed that large gains in economical land use would follow an increase

in housing densities at the lower end of the spectrum, but that increasing

already high densities had only a very small effect.[215] In May 1962, the senior

planning officer in the Urban Planning Group told the Royal Society of Health Conference that people preferred living in houses and that the days of high rise building 'may be numbered'.[216]

These three sources of tension in high rise policy were all fully developed by 1962-3. Yet because of the Ministry's commitment to the industrialized building campaign no change in policy was feasible. The result was an acute contradiction in policy before 1967. The Ministry was promoting industrialization primarily in a bid to increase building industry productivity and thus lower costs. Yet at the same time this effort entailed concentrating on a building form more than twice as expensive as conventional houses. This contradiction was not perceived at a Ministerial level, however. Sir Keith Joseph, for example, confessed of this period:

> I suppose that I was genuinely convinced I had a new answer. It was prefabrication and, Heaven help me, high blocks. [217]

Finally, it is worth looking at one relatively unimportant element in Ministry policy during the period of the high rise boom which sheds an interesting light on departmental priorities at this time. This was the Ministry's research into tenants' reactions to living in high rise. Sociological research only began in 1959 following the setting up of the Housing Development Group.[218] The first survey into high rise, in Leeds, Liverpool and London began in 1963 in connection with the HDG's involvement in the redevelopment of St Mary's, Oldham.[219] Its explicit focus was 'families living at high density' and the survey was supposed to help HDG decide which problems to tackle in its Oldham scheme. The survey's findings were not very critical of high rise per se, but contained much information suggesting that high flats were better avoided. In the event St. Mary's was designed as a medium rise scheme. Data from the study were first published in 1966 but only fully issued in 1970, three years after most high rise building had ceased.[220] MHLG did not follow up this study until 1967 when a second survey on 'the estate outside the dwelling' was undertaken

to determine residents' reactions to aspects of housing layout.

In 1969 the two research officers most involved in the study published

an article in the Architects Journal arguing that their results showed that

tenant resistance to 'living off the ground' was much less than press comment

and other sociological studies suggested, a view not particularly well

substantiated when the full report was published in 1972, five years

after high rise building had virtually come to an end.[221] HDG sociologists

also did work in the late '60s on the relations between density, building

forms and tenant satisfaction/was dominated by a concern to service architect-

                                                    which

ural and design decision-making, focusing on specific manageable issues at the

expense of broader questions.[222] For example, tenants' satisfaction was given

prominence, tenants' preferences in the absence of the constraining needs

to adapt to their immediate housing situation were not. Overall, the

sociological research which MHLG undertook had little impact on government

policy before the 1967 policy change, and strikingly little effect on local

authorities because of the extraordinarily poor publicity for Ministry

studies and the time lags between completion of the research and publication

of the results.

THE POLICY CHANGES, 1965-7

The decisive change in departmental and Ministerial attitudes to

high rise housing was produced by the proposals for a new basic public

housing subsidy introduced by the Labour government of 1964-6. The Party

came to power pledged to introduce a new kind of subsidy for public housing

which would protect local authorities from the fluctuations in interest

rates which constantly threatened the viability of their programs under the

1961 Act. This was to take the form of a government commitment to absorb

the additional interest burden when interest rates rose above a standard

figure, eventually fixed at 4%. The size of the subsidy was thus determined

by the level of interest rates. But it was also crucially influenced by

the cost of the capital project itself.   At any given interest rate level,

a costly project attracted more subsidy than a cheaper one. The subsidy was

equivalent in effect to a percentage grant so that the increased cost of high
rise building was for the first time reflected in the basic housing subsidy itself
a change which obviously brought into question the continued need for
the progressive storey height subsidy.[223]

In the event the Ministry did not adopt the TCPA suggestion that the
storey height subsidy should be abolished altogether, but the progressive
increments paid for additional stories above the sixth were scrapped, with
the previous increments for the fourth, fifth and sixth stories left
unchanged. These new provisions came into effect for all schemes given loan
sanction after November 1965 when the White Paper was published and had
some astonishing implications for the structure of incentives given to local
authorities. Taking the sample figures in the White Paper as a basis for
comparison it can be seen that subsidies for houses increased by a factor
of 2.7, for four storey flats by 2.8, and for higher storey flats by a factor
falling gradually to 1.4 at twenty storeys. These figures are calculated on the
basis that high flats would cost no more than houses; in fact they would
receive a larger basic subsidy plus the high flat addition, implying that
flats up to around six storeys in height would receive almost as large an
increase in subsidy as houses, and that the incentive to build high
built into the 1956 structure would only begin to be reduced significantly
at the upper storey height levels (Table 4.6). Overall high flat subsidies
were effectively doubled, and their higher costs more fully offset than at
any time in the past, particularly below about ten storeys.

As a result of the subsidy change local authorities were now in a much
easier position on high flat costs. There were still no effective cost
controls on high rise, indeed the 1963 yardsticks were now so out of date that
they could hardly have been enforced. Councils could pass on to the govern-
ment under the new basic subsidy a fixed proportion of the extra costs so that
incentives to economy were reduced. In 1966-68 the short, sharp medium
rise boom (i.e. in the 5-9 story range) pushed the volume of high rise housing
to a post-war peak.[224]

This disastrous mix up in Ministry policy was partly the result of the failure to pass through the 1965 Housing Subsidies Bill before the 1966 election and the need to reintroduce it in the next session. But it seems to have dawned on the Ministry only slowly that by introducing the new subsidy without cost restrictions the stage had been set for a boom in the most expensive form of high rise building. Some attempt was made to bring local authorities to heel using existing methods. A number of regional offices began withholding loan sanction for schemes where the mix of building forms clearly did not conform to the economic mix for the density.[225] The G.L.C's schemes began to be subjected to loan sanction scrutiny for the first time. But in the absence of any density controls these interventions were ineffective.

This situation had to change. Asked why there was such a long lag before density limitations linked to cost controls were introduced a senior architect replied:

> Again it's part of the history of swallowing the
> (Flats and Houses, 1958) booklet. Without it government
> would look at proposals from local authorities to build
> high and say 'If it's right, it's going to cost so much more
> than if it is a lower building,and therefore we'll increase the
> subsidy' - no further questioning. After this we press on with
> scrutiny of schemes under it, to try and reduce the waste
> and overbuilding of high blocks and we come out with the
> (1963 yardsticks), with strong words about unless you're
> as economical as this shows we won't approve it. But still in a situa-
> tion where the authority is left with the initiative and govern-
> ment is paying out subsidy on the basis of a check that for
> what it is it's not expensive. You have a £4,000 flat. If it's
> an expensively designed block we're going to turn it down. But if
> it's a reasonable design and reasonably economical, for what
> it is, then we'll accept it. But of course the day the 4% subsidy
> was.in the offing, we on the professional side could walk down
> the corridor and say to the administrators, 'This (the housing
> cost yardstick) is what you want; this is what you must have'.
> So that for the first time, and only because of the 4%
> subsidy, cost control related to density became the order of the
> day. It should have been the order of the day at a much
> earlier date in my view. 226

In April 1967, directly following the Royal Assent to the Housing Subsidies Bill, the Ministry issued circular 35/67 to local authorities. This laid down the first ever Ministry guideline on the maximum densities permitted in public housing developments, irrespective of the density limits

defined in local Development Plans. This ceiling was fixed at 165 ppa
in conurbations and 120 ppa elsewhere. A mandatory system of housing cost
yardsticks linked to density was introduced, to which all schemes had to
conform if they were to receive subsidy. A tolerance level of 10% over
the yardstick was allowed, although this excess did not qualify for subsidy,
schemes above the tolerance level would not get loan sanction at all. The
yardstick was calculated on the assumption that the most economical mix of
building forms would be used at each density and a further strong warning
against the over-use of high flats was coupled with a reminder that most
tenants preferred living in houses in the circular. One administrator
remarked of the yardsticks:

> We knew that we'd only provided cost at each point in
> the table to cover the minimum necessary amount of high
> building in themix.

Interviewer:

> Was this in effect discriminating against high rise?

Informant:

> Well yes, but why not? [227]

In practice, the yardsticks made high rise building extremely difficult,
as a comparison between the 1967 costs of different dwelling types and the
costs allowed in the yardsticks shows, (Table 4.7).[228] Two storey four
bedspace houses at £2,214 were within the limit at the low density of 60 ppa
with a margin of 15%. Three storey flats at an average £2,718 were within
the limit for four or five person dwellings at 80 ppa and for three person
dwellings at slightly over 100ppa. Flats over twelve storeys cost
£3,718 on average and were within the cost limits only for five person
dwellings built over the new density ceiling of 165 ppa. The average cost of
all flats over five storeys was £3,752 although they were on average 20% smaller
in terms of floor area than houses, and thus probably accommodated fewer
people.[229] A review of the new limits by two leading architects in the
Municipal Journal concluded:

> The future of high rise development would seem, with or without
> the 10% excess loan sanction, to be limited unless the maximum
> density of 165 ppa is used. [230]

Table 4.7 : Cost Limits in the Housing Cost Yardsticks, 1967.

(Total cost allowed per dwelling £)

Net density (ppa)	NUMBER OF PERSONS PER DWELLING:				
	One	Two	Three	Four	Five
60	2,038	2,172	2,349	2,592	2,865
80	2,246	2,322	2,550	2,792	3,040
100	2,437	2,430	2,667	2,936	3,210
120	2,566	2,638	2,787	3,036	3,315
160	2,584	2,902	3,132	3,396	3,670
200	2,584	2,967	3,336	3,640	3,960

The Ministry's Chief Quantity Surveyor defended the yardsticks in general as 'not stultifying', despite architects' criticisms. But on the realities of the yardsticks for high rise buildings he commented only: 'Some authorities are realizing that fewer tall buildings mean lower costs in use and easier maintenance'.[231] A great many high rise schemes still went through in some regions, however, where the regional architects seem to have allowed Councils to calculate different densities for estates as a whole and forparticular contracts, while in London the availability of yardstick supplements for regionally high building costs (based on house costs) combined with the relatively low London prices for high blocks to ease the yardstick constraints for some years.[232] But as tender prices continued to rise while the yardstick levels lagged behind the yardstick limits bore more and more heavily on high rise schemes. By 1970 only a few hundred high flats were being given tender approval, virtually all of them in London.

A final factor in moving the Ministry into a firmly anti-high rise stance, even in its public pronouncements, was the Ronan Point collapse in May 1968. The Griffiths Tribunal report was critical of MHLG (for encouraging system building while not assessing the technical safety of the heavy prefabrication systems), of the National Building Agency, the Building Research Station and the Ministry's Building Regulations Advisory Committee.[233] An

extensive shake-up of the relevant Ministry divisions was carried out in the

wake of these findings. In addition two areas of intense controversy

developed out of the Report. The first concerned new safety standards. On

November 6th, the Ministry technical panel circulated to building firms

and local authorities their suggestions for new requirements on structural

stability, which included the incorporation of steel loops between walls and

floor panels in system built flats, to prevent the progressive collapse

which the Report had shown could occur as the result of gas explosions, high

winds or fire. Two weeks later a group from the NFBTE System Building Committee

began a week of talks with Ministry officials on this draft which resulted

in the publication of a radically revised set of Ministry standards.[234] In

this the original steel loop solution, which was very expensive for system

building manufacturers, became 'Method A', and a new solution known as

'Method B' was put forward as an alternative. The description of this was

noticeably short and vague, requiring only 'providing a form of construction

of such stiffness and continuity as to ensure the stability of the building

against forces liable to damage load supporting members'. Furthermore, the

original recommended standard of resistance to pressures of 5 lbs per square

inch was amended so that:

> Where residual risks are lessened by control of the
> incidence of an explosion in magnitude or frequency, a
> corresponding reduction can be made in the pressure. 235

Where gas was removed from system built flats much lower standards were

enforced, although the risks due to high winds and fires pointed out by

the Griffiths Tribunal report were clearly not reduced in such blocks.

The second area of controversy concerned how much of the costs of

strengthening the system built flats would be met by a grant from the Ministry

and how much would have to be borne by the local authorities with system

built blocks. Initially the Ministry announced a 40% grant which prompted

an angry campaign by local authorities and some backbench M.P.s to try and

increase this figure. In June 1969, Desmond Plummer, the leader of the

G.L.C. declared:

> We do not accept that the offer represents fairly
> the extent of the Ministry's responsibilities. The
> Government pressurized us into erecting these types
> of system built flats to save time and money.   236

This campaign rumbled on till the new year when the Minister agreed to raise

the offer to a 50% grant.[237] Overall, this operation cost MHLG and the local

authorities some £30,000,000, but this refers only to the direct cost of

strengthening contracts. Loss of rents, payments for replacing gas appliances

and heating systems, etc., undoubtedly took the overall bill to a much higher

figure.[238]

By 1970 Ministry policy had come round to a firmly anti-high rise

position. Cost yardsticks were being enforced and had effectively eliminated

high density and high rise public housing developments. Along with the

control of public housing densities, the planning assumptions which had

produced and underlain the high rise boom were being questioned and partially

revised. Ministry pressure on density levels in the G.L.C. Development Plan

was the most important instance of this change. The Department of the

Environment wrote into the Plan the restriction of new housing to a density

range of 70 to 100 habitable rooms per acre (about 80-100 ppa), with

housing for families 'normally in the lower part of the range'. And the

D.O.E. revision continued:

> High densities will only be acceptable either where
> the number of family dwellings in any given scheme is small and
> can be provided primarily in low rise building, or where
> dwelling houses as distinct from flats or maisonettes are
> provided. 239

While this position is maintained the likelihood of further high rise building in

British cities seems slight.

CONCLUSIONS

This analysis of influences on national policy-making on high
rise has confirmed the interpretation of it as a 'technological shortcut
to social change'. For we have argued that changes in central government
policy or the national local government system cannot be seen as the results
of specific professional, industrial or local authority initiatives aimed
at influencing national policy, important though these were. Rather these
interests affected policy in much more diffuse ways, by creating and sus-
taining a climate of opinion in the public housing apparatus favourable
to high rise, and by constraining Ministry policy change within narrow
limits. The progressive storey height subsidy was transformed from a
modest, cost cutting exercise into a major policy shift, by industrial and
professional pressure, the industrialized building campaign and the
magnification of these influences by the national local government system.

MHLG's weak structural position within the public housing process
stemmed firstly from its non-executive position, its dependence on local
authorities to produce outputs. Secondly, it reflected the dependence of both
central and local government on industrial involvement to secure production.
Even without the internal divisions over policy o_n housing construction issues,
these factors would have severely limited the department's ability to
restrain the over-building of high rise.

The industry's pressure on central and local government in a period
of high demand on construction resources can be seen as the basic dynamic
of the high rise boom. This pressure was exerted by formal and informal
contacts, by extensive marketing and advertising, by the contractors'
industrialized building drive, and by the ability of large firms to
withhold their involvement and capital unless given incentives to undertake
public housing work. Such incentives included changes in tendering methods,
larger contracts, continuity of work, extended control of building design,
the adoption of proprietory systems, or changes in the building form used.

High rise housing incorporated all these concessions, defining a technologically sophisticated market in which the largest firms were insulated from small firm competition and were able to undertake work in peculiarly favourable conditions.

The operations of the national local government system facilitated and magnified industrial pressure, leading to rapid adoption by smaller authorities of large authorities' innovations in housing construction policy. The selectivity and low level of debate in this system quickly constituted a dominant conventional wisdom on high rise housing, responding uncritically to industrial and professional initiatives. At the same time, the powerful local authority incentive to make public housing policies effective within a basically unfavourable organizational context vested considerable social and political significance in high flat building. Local authority pressure behind high rise (well illustrated in the 1961 Commons debate), ascribed it a central place in the conurbations' housing drive. At the same time the sensitivity of local authority building to Ministry subsidy changes prevented MHLG effectively controlling the over-building of high rise until the adoption of a percentage grant subsidy in 1965 threatened to transform MHLG's lack of control of densities into a blank cheque for local authorities.

Contrary to the prevailing conventional wisdom on the high rise period, the design professions could not be seen as important national influences on the level of high flat building. Their legitimizing influence within the national local government system was particularly important in leading to the acceptance of high rise and later industrialized building. And their tendency to focus on a limited decision context, and indeed to rationalize these limits lead to a debate on high rise which was extremely restrictive in definition. But professional bodies as such were not bound up in advocacy of high flat building and in many ways were unintegrated into the evolution of national policy.

The interest group process, Parliamentary considerations and public opinion were all noticeably uninfluential in setting central government policy, and seem to have had little effect on the overall level of high building before 1963. The interest group process was fragmentary, confined to the few altruistic

elite bodies opposing high rise provision or protecting childrens'

interests. The views of public housing clients were apparently never

channelled into the national political process, while the elite debate.

on high rise largely ignored critical contributions. Public opinion

could hardly be seen as involved in the issue until after Ronan Point,

since the level of information about high rise available in the general

media was negligible prior to this point. Finally the level of Parliamentary

scrutiny of high rise policy was negligible and largely responsive to the

nexus of industrial —local authority interests already discussed.

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with senior housing administrator; see also Municipal Journal, 16
September 1956, p.2512.

31. Cullingworth, Housing and Local Government, p.117.

32. The MPBW change was Macmillan's personal initiative; see also,
Donnison, Government of Housing, p.177.

33. Municipal Journal, 12 October 1962, p.3104.

34. Quoted in Municipal Journal, 25 January 1963, p.225.

35. Quoted in the Municipal Journal, 22 November, p.3593.

36. Municipal Journal, 17 May 1963.

37. Municipal Journal, 18 September 1964, pp.2992-3022.

38. The Times, 10 October 1963, p.18.

39. Ministry of Public Buildings and Works, A National Building Agency (London
HMSO, 1963).

40. The Times, 30 March 1963.

41. Senior housing administrator in interview.

42. The Builder, Consortia of Local Authorities: Advantages and Disadvantages
(London, The Builder, 1964). By 1967 these criticisms were also being
voiced by Ministers as well; see Municipal Journal, 14 July 1967,p.1871.

43. Analysis of DOE files reported in Ch.4; note 56.

44. See DOE, Housing in a Cleared Area. Source of data as in note 43 above.

45. Municipal Journal 25 January 1963, p.225.

46. MHLG, The Housing Programme, 1965-1970 (London,HMSO,1965), Cmnd.2838.

47. Circular 76/65, Industrialized Housebuilding.

48. Circular 76/65.

49. DOE Industrialized Building file, see Ch.4, note 56.

50. Circular 76/65

51. Circular 76/65

52. 'Britain's Construction Industry Thrives', Municipal Journal, 13 November 1964, p.3703.

53. Quoted in the Municipal Journal, 18 September 1964, p.2992.

54. Quoted in McCutcheon, 'Technical Change and Social Need', p.282.

55. See M. Pinto-Duschinsky, 'Corruption in Britain', Political Studies, XXV (1977), 274-84.

56. McEwan, Crisis in Architecture, p.19.

57. MHLG, Report of an Inquiry into the Collapse of Flats at Ronan Point, Canning Town (London, HMSO, 1968), p.53.

58. See section 3.2. above.

59. Source DOE, Housing and Construction Statistics, No.10 (1974), Table 26, p.36. Tenders approved for local authorities in England and Wales, except the G.L.C. and some other dwellings not classified on cost data.

60. Professional control of building design reverted markedly to local authority architects, and package and negotiated deals decreased very fast, DOE, Housing and Construction Statistics, No.10, (1974), Supplementary Tables XXVI and XXVII, pp.86-7.

61. See P. Dunleavy, 'The Politics of Collective Consumption: Urban Political Analysis in a Nationalized Society', Paper given to the Annual Conference of the Political Studies Association, University of Liverpool, 4 April 1977.

62. The only published work on this system seems to be H.A. Scarrow 'Policy Pressures by British Local Government', Comparative Politics, 4 (1971), 113-34.

63. These are my conclusions; no work seems to have been done on these inter-authority flows.

64. McCutcheon, 'Technical Change and Social Need'; Cooney, 'High Flats in Local Authority Housing'.

65. Greater London Council, Home Sweet Home.

66. See A. Jackson, The Politics of Architecture, p.138; H.J. Whitfield Lewis 'The Principles of Mixed Development' in RIBA, High Flats: A Symposium; and Municipal Journal, November 16 1956, pp.2739-41; and 'Site Densities and Multi-storey Flats', Housing and Planning Review. March-April 1953, pp.8-9.

67. Municipal Journal, 18 February 1956, pp.465-8.

68. Municipal Journal, November 16, 1956, pp.2739-41.

69. See the designs examined in the Municipal Journal, 20 April 1956, p.885.

70. S. Bunton, 'The Choice: Develop Upward', Municipal Journal, 15 February, pp. 333-41; Municipal Journal 23 April, 1954; pp.899-902; and 15 March 1957, pp.588-9; 13 December 1963, pp.3875.

71. Multi-Storey Housing in the USA: Report of a City of Liverpool Housing Deputation (Liverpool City of Liverpool, 1955). See also the Municipal Journal, 25 September 1959, p.260 and 10 July 1964, p.2219.

72. Municipal Journal, 12 October 1962, p.3104.

73. Sheffield City Council Deputation, Multi-Storey Housing in Europe (Sheffield, Sheffield City Council, 1955).

74. M. Pawley, 'Parkhill', New Society, 29 April 1971; The Times, 15 Setember 1961, p.19.

75. See Ch.8 below and Municipal Journal, February 13, 1953, pp.329-35; 1 May 1953, pp.889-90; November 19, 1954, p.2867; 24 June 1956, pp.1659-61; 6 September 1957, p.1873; 6 May 1964, p.1473; for Birmingham. For Leeds, see Municipal Journal, 22 January 1960, pp.257-64, and 2 June 1967, p.1471.

76. The S curve is discussed by W. Rodgers, Diffusion of Innovations (New York, Free Press, 1962), on which much of this section is based. See also L. Nasbeth and G.F. Ray, The Diffusion of New Industrial Processes (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1974), Ch.1; G. Zaltman (ed.) Processes and Phenomena of Social Change (New York, Wiley, 1973).

77. See Table I.1 in Appendix I.

78. See Table I.2 in Appendix I.

79. Source: DOE file on industrialized building; tender approvals for local authorities and new towns in England and Wales.

80. See Table I.3 in Appendix I.

81. For the concept of 'change agent' see Rodgers, Diffusion of Innovations.

82. Source: DOE files on industrialized building: tender approvals for local authorities and new towns in England and Wales, except the G.L.C.

83. Source: DOE files on industrialized building: tender approvals for local authorities and new towns in England and Wales excluding the G.L.C. 'Small' firms are all firms other than the seven market leaders in industrialized high rise.

84. See Table I.4 in Appendix I.

85. Jencks, Modern Movements in Architects, p.244; Jackson, Politics of Architecture, pp.185-6; G.L.C., Home Sweet Home.

86. See Municipal Journal, 16 November 1956, pp.2739-41.

87. Jackson, Politics of Architecture, p.178; G.L.C., Home Sweet Home; Housing and Planning Review, December 1962, p.12.

88. See the 'mea culpa' implicit in K. Campbell, 'Decline and Fall of Tower Blocks', in The Builder, 18 July 1969, p.114.

89. See Sheffield City Council, Multi-Storey Housing in Europe; on Park Hill see Jencks, Modern Movements in Architecture, pp.257-8; on Hulme Five see Morriss, 'Challenging Rubbish'; this last was designed by the firm of Lewis and Wolmersley, see also the article by Wolmersley in Housing and Planning Review, December 1955 pp.8-12.

90. See Municipal Journal, 6 September 1957, pp.329-35; 19 November 1954; p.2867,; 6 May 1964, p.1473; 'Post-war Housing in Birmingham', Town Planning Review XXVI (1955), 25-46; Housing and Planning Review, December 1953, pp.21-2.

91. Jensen, High Density Living; see also the articles by Jensen in Municipal Journal, 4 February 1955, pp.316-9; 31 October 1952, p.2282.

92. See Housing and Planning Review, February 1960, p.18.

93. See Municipal Journal, 3 October 1952, pp.1845-7; Centre for Urban Studies, 'Tall Flats in Pimlico' in London : Aspects of Change.

94. Jencks, Modern Movements in Architecture, p.257.

95. See R. Smith, 'Multi Dwelling Building in Scotland 1750-1970', in Sutcliffe (ed.), Multi-Storey Living, p.229.

96. Municipal Journal, 8 June 1956, p.1317.

97. Housing and Planning Review, February 1958, p.8; Jackson, Politics of Architecture, pp.145, 191.

98. See S.L. Elkin, Politics and Land Use Planning (London, Cambridge University Press, 1974), Ch.3; and Municipal Journal, 9 June 1967, p.1549.

99. Municipal Journal, 14 July 1961, p.2302.

100. Jencks, Modern Movements in Architecture, p.285.

101. J.M. Richards, 'Failure of the new towns', Architectural Review, CLIV (1952), p.32.

102. Ibid.

103. See RIBA: High Flats: Report of a Symposium.

104. Martin designed high flats at the L.C.C., (see Municipal Journal, 20 April, 1956, p.885), but then went on to co-edit Urban Space and Structures with L. March, exposing the faulty planning technology underlying high rise.

105. Royal Institute of British Architects, Report of a Symposium on Family Life in High Density Housing (London, RIBA, 1957).

106. See Malpass, Professionalism in Architecture, Chs.3 and 4.

107. The Times, 12 January 1967, Supplement.

108. Jencks, Modern Movements in Architecture, describes it as 'the temple of of reverent Miesolatry', p.252,

109. But see Atkinson, High Buildings in Britain, pp.5-6.

110. Architectural Review, CXXII (1955).

111. N. Taylor, The Village in the City, p.79.

112. See C. Cockburn, The Structure of Urban and Regional Planning Research in Britain (London, Centre for Environmental Studies, 1969), Information Paper, No.2.

113. Municipal Journal, 6 May 1966, p.1701.

114. Institute of Civil Engineers, Symposium on High Buildings (London, Institute of Civil Engineers, 1955).

115. See for example, Municipal Journal, 18 April 1952, p.806, where the Borough Engineer at Elstree persuaded Laing to build the first 8 storey Easiform block in the area.

116. Park Hill, for example, was built by direct labour.

117. Taylor Woodrow Group, The Fulham Study.

118. Municipal Journal, 1 February 1957, pp.213-4.

119. Ibid.

120. See Fanning, 'Living in Flats'; Hird, 'Vertical Living'.

121. Municipal Journal, 14 November 1958, p.2996.

122. See J.P. Macey, 'Problems of Flat Life', Royal Society of Health Journal 79, (1959), p.183; M. Willis, 'Living in High Blocks of Flats'.

123. Muchnich, Urban Renewal in Liverpool.

124. Municipal Journal, 10 July 1964, p.2219.

125. See the report of a HCT Conference on 'Densities and Amenities for Housing Layout', in Municipal Journal, 1966, p.1102.

126. G.L.C. Height Preference Survey.

127. See F.J. Berry, 'Living High', Housing and Planning Review, February 1967 pp.4-6, and B. Frommes, 'Living in Flats', Housing and Planning Review, August 1969, pp.8-10.

128. See Willis 'Living in High Blocks of Flats', and the contribution by J. Westergaard to the RIBA Symposium on 'Families Living at High Density', reported in Municipal Journal, 31 May 1957, pp.1170-1.

129. (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1962).

130. Municipal Journal, 9 April 1954, pp .778.

131. Letter in The Times, 8 May 1957.

132. Letter in The Times, 11 May 1957.

133. See, for example, the debate reported in The Times, 26 January 1961,p.6.

134. See, for example, J. Morton, 'High Rise Flats', New Society, 3 July 1975,

135. See J. Dearlove, The Politics of Policy in Local Government (London, Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp.25-7.

136. For a description of the method of coding an item as concerned with high rise, see Appendix II.

137. Coverage was classed as 'pro' high rise if it advocated greater use of high flats or reported such advocacy; as 'anti' high rise if it advocated less use of high flats or reported such advocacy; and as 'neutral' if it did neither. See Tables II.1 and II.2 in Appendix II.

138. See Table II.3 in Appendix II.

139. See Table II.4 in Appendix II.

140. See Table II.5 in Appendix II.

141. A phrase beloved by the Newham Recorder.

142. This assymetrical use of influence methods by 'insider' and 'outsider' groups has of course been a major theme of the British literature on pressure groups. See S.E. Finer, Anonymous Empire (London, Pall Mall, 1958), in H. Ehrmann (ed.), Interest Groups in Four Continents (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1958); H. Eckstein, Pressure Group Politics (London, Allen and Unwin, 1960); A. Potter, Organised Groups in British National Politics (London, Faber, 1961).

143. L. Mumford and F.J. Osborne, The Letters of Lewis Mumford and Frederic J. Osborne (Bath, Adams and Dart, 1971), p.1.

144. Mumford and Osborne, Letters, p.40.

145. Mumford and Osborne, Letters, p.120.

146. Mumford and Osborne, Letters, p.213.

147. Mumford and Osborne, Letters, pp.120, 218-9, 226.

148. Particularly influential was Osborne's article, 'Town Cramming: The Art of Maximizing Densities', Town and Country Planning, Summer 1949.

149. Municipal Journal, 7 December 1956, p.2900, See also, Osborne's

150. The Times, 26 October, 1963, p.6.

151. Municipal Journal, 14 February 1964, p.467.

152. Crossman, Diaries, Volume One, pp.43, 44, 144.

153. The subsidy went up above £50,000 an acre and a restriction on subsidy payments linked to high rise was revised to refer to density levels.

154. Municipal Journal, 10 June 1966, p.1881.

155. CHAC, Living in Flats (London, HMSO, 1952)

156. Municipal Journal, 31 May 1957, pp.1170-1.

157. Maizels, Two to Five in High Flats.

158. See Jephcott, Homes in High Flats; Gittus, Flats, Families and the Under Fives.

159. Stewart, <u>Children in Flats</u>.

160. In addition to the NSPCC, groups such as the National Playing Fields
      Association attempted to persuade local authorities to provide play
      facilities in estates.

161. Gittus, <u>Flats, Families and the Under Fives</u>, p.116.

162. <u>The Times</u>, 6 April 1974, p.4. See also the Editorial.

163. <u>The Times</u>, 9 May 1974.

164. <u>The Times</u>, 7 December 1974. See also the Editorial.

165. There were, of course, other occasions when the issues involved in high
      rise were raised usually briefly. For example, see <u>Municipal Journal</u>
      21 February 1953, editorial.

166. Sources, <u>Hansard</u>, 5th series, 1946, vol.420, 341-464; vol.421, 227-42,
      667-80, 2592-4; 1955, vol. 546, 791-9, 1061-188, 2523-629; vol. 547, 1215-
      350; vol.548, 211-328, 761-880, 927-1048, 1091-200; 1961, vol.637,
      960-1088; vol.643, 10-352, 351-407, 455-88, 487-518; <u>Official Report</u>,
      H.C. Standing Committees, 1960-61, II, Housing Bill, 451-1961, p.17),
      558; <u>Hansard</u>, 5th Series, 1965, vol.722, 1284-403; 1967, vol.738,vol
      666-795; vol.742, 1535-711; <u>Official Report</u>, HC Standing Committees
      1966-67, III. Housing Subsidies Bill, 3-314.

167. Mumford and Osborne, <u>Letters</u>, p.120.

168. <u>Hansard</u>, 5th Series, 1945, vol.420, 385.

169. <u>Hansard</u>, 5th Series, 1946, vol.420, 388.

170. <u>Hansard</u>, 5th Series, 1946, vol.420, 394.

171. <u>Hansard</u>, 5th Series, 1955, vol 546,797.

172. See, for example, <u>Municipal Journal</u>, 13 August 1954, p.1837. For
      Parkin's speech see <u>Hansard</u> 5th series, 1955, vol.548, 831-2.

173. <u>Hansard</u>, 5th series, 1955, vol.548, 860.

174. One senior civil servant interviewed described this as a 'concerted move,
      carefully orchestrated' by Labour local authorities and M.Ps, and argued
      that behind it lay an attempt to mitigate MHLG pressure for realistic
      rents in the 1961 Act.

175. <u>Official Report</u>, H.C. Standing Committees, 1960-61, II. Housing Bill, 452.

176. <u>Official Report</u>, H.C. Standing Committees, 1960-61, II, Housing Bill, 484.

177. <u>Hansard</u>, 5th Series, 1961, vol. 643, 265.

178. <u>Hansard</u>, 5th Series, 1961, vol.643, 280.

179. See <u>The Times</u>, 12 May 1961, p.10, and Mrs White's letter published on 31 May,
      p.13.

180. <u>Hansard</u>, 5th Series, 1961, vol.643, 288.

181. The Conservative member of Mrs White's steering committee for the Maizels

research was Mrs Margaret Thatcher, who did not attend the Commons debate. One interviewee credited her with the authorship of an anonymous article in The Times women's page, (June 5, 1961, p.17), which argued that if British mothers had more initiative and moral fibre and took their children out more the problems would disappear.

182. Hansard, 5th Series, 1961, vol.643, 294-8.

183. Hansard, 5th Series, 1965, vol.722, 1290.

184. Hansard, 5th Seires, 1965, vol.722, 1298.

185. Hansard, 5th Series, 1965, vol.722, 1299.

186. Hansard, 5th Series, 1965, vol.722, 1326.

187. Hansard, 5th Series, 1965, vol.722, 1377.

188. Hansard, 5th Series, 1965, vol.722, 1393-4.

189. Official Report, H.C. Standing Committees, 1966-7, III, Housing Subsidies Bill, 3-314, especially 260-74.

190. Sources: interviews with former Ministry administrators and professional staff: Sharpe, Ministry of Housing and Local Government; Layton, Building by Local Authorities; Griffiths, Central Departments and Local Authorities.

191. Interview with former senior professional atMHLG.

192. Cullingworth, Housing and Local Government, pp.161-2.

193. Sources, Nevitt, Housing, Taxation and Subsidies, pp.106-12; Housing Subsidies Act, 1956; Housing Act, 1961; The Housing Program 1965-1970; Housing Subsidies Manual 1967. Figures for 1965 assume a median basic subsidy of £64 and of £81 for dwellings over three storeys; in fact the basic subsidy would vary sharply with storey height.

194. Osborne, 'Art of Town Cramming'.

195. This process began with the Housing (Review of Contributions) Order 1954 and continued with the Housing Subsidies Act 1956, and Housing Subsidies Order 1956 (S.I. 1956, No.2015) which abolished the general needs subsidy altogether.

196. See section 8.2 below. The L.C.C.'s Roehampton estate led to similar representations.

197. See Municipal Journal editorials, 1 February 9152, p.216, and 16 May 1952, pp.978-9.

198. Interviews with former MHLG adminstrator, and professionals.

199. Municipal Journal, 21 February 1953, p.

200. Speech in RIBA, High Flats: Report of a Symposium.

201. Official Report, H.C. Standing Committees, 1960-61, II, HousingBill, 478. See also Municipal Journal, 29 May 1959, p.1467.

202. See MHLG, The Density of Residential Areas (London, HMSO, 1952); Circulars 99/51 and 65/52; Municipal Journal, 19 September 1952, pp.1740-43.

203. See the interview in <u>Building</u>, 28 April 1972.

204. MHLG, <u>Flats and Houses</u>, 1958, p.   See also, <u>The Times</u>, 25 September 1961, p.3.

205. Interview with former MHLG administrator.

206. Sears and Meacher, 'High Flats in Finsbury', in Donnison and Chapman, <u>Social Policy and Administration</u> (London, Allen and Unwin, 1965).

207. The subsidy addition at four storeys was also reduced by £2.

208. Two interviewees denied that this provision had any effect, on the basis that non 'needy' authorities would not build high rise anyway. But see Community Development Project, <u>Whatever Happened to Council Housing?</u>, p.21 for a different view, and the account given by Nevitt of the discretionary high flats subsidy in the Housing (Financial Provisions) Act 1958, <u>Housing Taxation and Subsidies</u> p.110.

209. <u>Municipal Journal</u>, 16 March 1962, p.774.

210. (London, HMSO, 1963), Also drawn up by Bellamy.

211. Interview with former MHLG architect.

212. Ibid.

213. Interview with former MHLG administrator.

214. <u>Municipal Journal</u>, 6 October 1961, p.3210; <u>The Times</u>, 29 September 1961, p.5.

215. MHLG, <u>Residential Areas: Higher Densities</u> (London, HMSO 1962).

216. <u>The Times</u>, 4 May 1963, p.4.

217. <u>Guardian</u>, 12 November 1973, p.13; and see <u>The Times</u>, 3 May 1963, p.9.

218. See <u>Municipal Journal</u>, 9 January 1959, p.69.

219. See Crossman, <u>Diaries, Volume 1</u>, pp.80-1.

220. J. Ash, 'Families Living at High Density', <u>Official Architecture and Planning</u>, 29 (1966), 68-71. A mimeo version of this was available in 1963. MHLG, <u>Families Living at High Density</u>.

221. C. Nicholson and I, Reynolds, 'Living Off the Ground', <u>Architect's Journal</u>, September 1969.

222. Interview with M. Burbidge, senior sociologist at the DOE 25 June 1974. See also Burbidge, <u>High Density Housing</u>; Smith and Burbidge, <u>Density and Residents' Satisfaction</u>; Burbidge <u>Medium Rise High Density Housing</u>.

223. See Cullingworth, <u>Housing and Local Government</u>, pp.162-5; MHLG <u>The Housing Programme, 1965-1970</u>.

224. See Figures 1.1 and 1.2. Medium rise approvals in 1965 were 7,396 dwellings, in 1966 they more than doubled to 15,578 dwellings and in 1968 reached 16,223 dwellings. (England and Wales only).

225. See below, section 9.4.

226. Interview with former MHLG Architect.

227. Interview with former senior housing administrator, MHLG.

228. Circular 36/67, Housing Standards Costs and Subsidies, Appendix II, Cost Table. Costs are total building costs.

229. Cost data for 1967, obtained from MHLG, Housing Statistics, No.13, (1969), Table 18, p.31; tender approvals for local authorities excluding the G.L.C.

230. Municipal Journal, 18 August 1967, pp.2178-81.

231. Municipal Journal, 29 September 1967, p.2570; see also 22 September 1967, p.2504, 21 July 1967, p.1903 on architects' criticisms.

232. For discussions of this period see below sections 7.4, 8.4, and 9.4.

233. MHLG, Report of the Inquiry into the Collapse of Flats at Ronan Point, Canning Town (London, HMSO, 1968), Chs. 7 and 8.

234. Private Eye, 6 December 1968; see also the issues of 30th August and 8 November.

235. Construction News, 21 November 1968.

236. The Times, 7 June 1969, p.3; see also 19 June, p.4.

237. The Times, 20 January 1970, p.2.

238. The Times, 7 June 1969, p.3.

239. Secretary of State for the Environment, 'Notice of Approval' to the Greater London Development Plan (London, GLC, 1976).

CHAPTER FIVE

Theoretical Approaches to the Study of National Policy Making

Since our account of national policy making on high rise is now complete,
this chapter briefly reviews our findings in the light of the account of the
British political system suggested by some of the major theoretical approaches
in political science. A case study of this kind cannot easily form the basis
for developed theoretical argument, however important theoretical approaches
may have been in influencing the questions asked, the issues selected and the
methodologies employed. But it can usefully serve as a basis for the compara-
tive assessment of theoretical approaches, for the exposition of gaps in the
analyses, the testing of hypothesized relations in an empirical context and
the assessment of the different approaches' utility in empirical research.

We have chosen to examine the implications of our findings in the light of
four theoretical frameworks all of which have influenced this research at some
stage and in varying ways. Two of these approaches, pluralist analysis and
elite theory, are central themes in contemporary political science. The other
two, 'new pluralist' theory and the neo-Marxist critique, are less well known
but are especially relevant to the understanding of the political process in
advanced industrial societies.

PLURALIST ANALYSES

Pluralist analyses have dominated most recent accounts of the British
political system. The state apparatus is seen as made quite highly responsive
to the wishes of citizens by the central mechanisms of representative government --
electoral and party competition,[1] an extensive and equable interest group
process,[2] and the safeguards built into the recruitment and socialization of
political leaders ensuring deference to the public interest.[3] Political power
is seen as concentrated in the hands of elected officials operating in legally
defined contexts in close contact with a large number of separate elites[4] but
constrained by an open political process and rigorous public and media scrutiny.[5]

The ordinary citizen, interested minority groups and 'public opinion' are all seen as potentially important political influences sustained by a participatory political culture.[6]

Our research has discovered a very different pattern of influences on national policy making over high rise housing, however, one in which the pluralist emphasis on electoral and party political inputs, on the capacity of ordinary citizens to intervene or organize to affect decisions and on the control of public policy by elected officials seems misplaced. Rather a closed and narrow process of elite decision making, operating in a technical/ administrative context with a minimum of public debate and in terms of socially constructed trade-offs influenced overwhelmingly by production interests, effectively determined policy. Formal or explicitly political lobbying was relatively unimportant as an influence on policy. Rather the diffuse processes of ideological control and influence over the national local government system by the design professions and construction interests created a 'mobilization of bias' in favour of high rise housing,against which even well placed opposing groups such as the TCPA were quite ineffective. The importance of these processes also meant that formal or representative interest groups played little part in shaping the policy and particular firms and professionals dominated influence exerting activity on the issue.

The primacy which we have ascribed to construction interests as influences on policy, and the extent to which public authority dependence on contractual involvement lead to policy changes to appease sectional interests, are the most damaging findings for pluralist analysis. Of course, there is little novelty in the discovery of a high degree of business influence on government policy -- especially in fields such as business regulations or tariff fixing.[7] Here legitimate business interests are involved and conflicts of interest are fairly low level and non-immediate. But in the case of high rise the business interests shaping decision making were those of a very few firms and their influence directly affected an area of social policy in which it would be hard to discover legitimate business interests. We have argued that contractual

pressure effectively altered the accommodation provided by public authorities in ways which were clearly contrary to the interests of tenants and of the public housing drive as a whole, and that this pressure exerted a strong distorting influence on debate in the design professions and the national local government system.

Finally, one of the most striking features of our findings has been the extent to which it has proved impossible to construct a satisfactory account of policy change in terms of the system of actors. Such accounts were clearly incommensurate with the scale and development of the high rise boom. We have thus been lead to ascribe considerable efficacy to structural relations and variables in the economic and ideological systems in accounting for policy change. Specific policy influencing activity has emerged as significant only within these basic relations, and has occasionally been almost absent. For example, rural and suburban middle class pressures for urban containment exerted a crucial influence on housing construction policies. But almost no overt activity to try to influence policy on subsidies or forms of housing provision was discovered.[8] This influence was overwhelmingly a structural or contextual one. For pluralist analyses, such findings pose a severe problem, since they imply a potentially critical blind spot in pluralist methodology. This point is worth some further development.

Despite the predominance of pluralist accounts of politics in Britain, there have been very few systematic analyses of policy making by political scientists.[9] Rather the predominance has been established by textbooks and general discussions of the political system, by political histories and by short illustrative case studies. Three features of these cases studies' methodology have tended to produce pluralist conclusions automatically. First, the issues studied have usually been those which have generated controversy or been seen as important or 'key' issues within conventional approaches to politics. No systematic sample of issues has thus been considered.[10] Secondly, issues have been institutionally defined, as particular Acts of Parliament or

executive decisions, and have been analysed over very short time periods only up to the point of decision and largely in terms of overt activity.[11] There have been very few studies of policy implementation or the distributive consequences of outcomes. The stark contrast between Hewitt's account of who benefited from the introduction of the 1947 planning system and the analysis of this system's operations given by Hall et al. is indicative of the inadequacy of such an approach.[12] Thirdly, following on from these points, pluralist analyses are pervasively phrased in terms of a restrictive and subjective definition of interests as policy preferences.[13] This links in with the conventional definition of issues and the lack of analysis of outcomes to provide a reinforcing and fundamentally circular process in which conclusions are predetermined by methodology. In particular socially constructed trade-offs between issues which may encapsulate power relations become incorporated into the very structure of academic analysis and thus cannot be studied.[14] An · awareness of such possibilities involves the political scientist in difficult attempts to assess 'objective' interests (however these may be defined), and to probe beneath conventional accounts of policy options, as we have done in Chapter Three. In effect an independent analytical position must be defined before an accurate assessment of the issue can be obtained. Despite the dangers of other forms of circularity in such an approach, we believe that it has been successfully attempted here.

ELITE THEORY

The confinement of policy making activity on the high rise issue to elite groups and actors does not imply that our findings support elite theory approaches to politics. Essentially such approaches posit the existence of a cohesive ruling elite in which political power is concentrated over a wide range of issues and whose commitments can be seen as fundamental in interpreting social policy.[15] Decision making is not seen as confined to elected officials, but as extended beyond government institutions by interlocking organizational ties, informal influence groupings, friendship and socialization networks and close continuities

of values and social positions.[16]   Most British studies within this perspective
have concentrated on establishing similarities or dissimilarities in the social
characteristics of various elite groups, and almost no decisional research or
studies of elite interaction have been carried out.[17]

We have argued in Chapter One that a 'public housing apparatus' influencing
the development of national housing construction policy could be identified, and
that this elite grouping was substantially cohesive and controlled many aspects
of policy development. And certainly non-elites have emerged as 'passive
observers or at best sporadic participants but never directing agents'.[18] But
there are three features of our findings which militate against the acceptance
of an elite theory approach.

Firstly, the elite groups with which we have been concerned have been medium
level ones. The low political salience of the high rise issue meant that
Ministerial or Parliamentary involvement was negligible, and that influence
flows and activity took place at the administrative level in government. The
non-governmental actors and organizations were also quite far removed from
commanding institutional heights. In terms of overall levels of industrial con-
centration in Britain, for example, the top construction firms are still quite
small organizations.

Secondly, and as a corollary of our first point, the evidence of connections
at elite level between housing construction issues and other issue areas is
quite slender. The departmental structure of central government is far too
fragmented to conceive of much linkage,[19] and this is of course even more the
case in relation to the design professions. The contractual interests are a
rather different matter. In three other areas of public policy concerned with
the built environment - the motorway lobby,[20] the post-1953 property and city
centre redevelopment boom,[21] and the early 1970s switch to 'big hospital' solu-
tions in the NHS[22] - the top construction firms played key parts in conjunction
with a wide variety of other economic interests, including car manufacturers,
road haulage interests, elite motoring organizations, financial institutions and
medical technology firms. In each case too, the construction firms seem to have

dominated the professions involved. But these are all areas in which construction work is directly involved, and there is little to suggest from the existing literature on these topics that large construction firms form part of a cohesive elite, rather than one interest involved in a number of different coalitions.

Thirdly, the point which we made against pluralist approaches concerning the under-determination of accounts of policy development on high rise in terms of the system of actors, is equally applicable to elite theory approaches. The structural influences on policy cannot be captured within elite theory, in which the emphasis on narrowly political activity is in some writers even more accentuated than in pluralist analyses.[23] Nothing resembling a conscious elite 'conspiracy' on high rise could be discovered. The value consensus on the policy which was achieved partly reflected the extent of interaction and common interest within the public housing apparatus. But it was more basically determined by impersonal structural relations and their development, and only on quite detailed questions could it be ascribed to particular initiatives or actions by elite groups and organizations.

NEW PLURALIST THEORY

By 'new pluralist' theory we denote primarily the recent work of Bell, Galbraith, Etzioni and Sartori (sometimes collectively described as the post-industrial society thesis).[24] These writers have adapted pluralist theory to the changed political situation in advanced industrial societies by accepting Mills' claim that the traditional pluralist polity concerns only the 'middle levels of power'. Phenomena such as a vigorous interest group process are reinterpreted as non-rational and potentially disruptive elements from which the sophisticated administrative and planning processes of industrial societies increasingly need to be insulated.[25] The job of ensuring that administrators in the expanded state remain responsive to 'public opinion' and safeguard the public interest is seen as decreasingly fulfilled by representative or electoral

processes. Rather two other factors are important. Firstly, the professionali-
zation of administration provides these safeguards since its distinctive feature
is that a strong attachment to the public interest is built into professional
ideology, socialization and self-regulation.[26] Bell and Galbraith expect the
increasing dependence of modern organizations on the professions and the
'educational and scientific estate' to lead to a thorough-going socialization
of their goals, even in the case of business.[27] Secondly, the development of
liberal democratic states as decentralized administrative networks (i.e. the
growth of QUAGOs and QUANGOs, the multiplication of agency types and the
blurring of the public-private dichotomy),[28] is seen as leading to a fragmented
structure of elites, each influencing only a narrow range of issues and with
power quite widely dispersed into the 'technostructure' or administrative
levels of organizations.[29] Finally the advanced industrial state is seen as
the most efficient means of meeting the needs of ordinary citizens and as
overwhelmingly orientated to those needs. For example Sartori argues:

> Micro democracies can still be conceived in input, that is, as a
> demo-power. But macro democracies are best conceived and
> furthered in output, that is, in terms of demo-distribution. What
> can still be mightily improved is not the power end of the
> problem - more power to the people - but its end-result; more
> equal benefits or less unequal privations to the people.. It
> can hardly be denied that for the public at large, popular rule
> means the fulfilment of popular wants and needs.[30]

In relation to our findings new pluralist theory clearly represents a
significant advance on earlier pluralism and elite theory. The configuration
of decision making activity which it suggests is clearly appropriate to our
analysis, particularly in the stress laid on professional roles, on the restric-
tive scope of elite power, on the decentralization of power in the state
apparatus and on the predominance of technical/administrative factors in elite
debate and decision making.

The normative or theoretical conclusions which new pluralist writers
typically draw found little support in our analysis, however. Despite the
centrality of professional roles on housing construction issues, professionalism
alone proved an inadequate safeguard of the public interest. The dependence of

architects even within the state apparatus on contractual involvement to meet
output targets, and the operations of planners within a context prestructured
by the spatially defined interests of different social groups, meant that the
design professions were strikingly lacking in the independence or autonomy
suggested by new pluralist accounts. Furthermore the strong technocratic
elements in professional ideology seem to have swamped other components (such
as the social responsibility strand in architectural ideology) which would have
ensured responsiveness to 'public opinion', and to have legitimized persistent
decision making running contrary to majority preferences. In much the same
way, the fragmentation and decentralization of the state apparatus not only
removed high rise policy from any effective political scrutiny at the national
level, but also conduced to the penetration and capture of parts of this
apparatus and related professions by a sectional economic interest. Both main
components of the decision making configuration to which new pluralist theory
ascribes significance as defences of the public interest thus turn out in the
case of high rise housing to have <u>increased</u> the likelihood of large scale dis-
tortion of public policy.

THE NEO-MARXIST CRITIQUE

The essential features of neo-Marxist theory, in contrast to traditional
Marxist accounts of politics, are the acknowledgement of the relative autonomy
of the state in advanced capitalist societies and the definition of a non-
coercive state role within a functionalist account of state intervention.[31]
The first point is a belated recognition of the genuine separation of political
and economic power in liberal democracies, and neo-Marxist writers reject elite
theory's attempts to relink these power bases in terms of the values or back-
grounds of actors.[32] State intervention in their functionalist accounts is
seen as directed towards preserving the overall cohesion of the social formation,
that is with the legitimation of a social system within which private capital is
dominant, rather than with the short term defence of the interests of

capitalists.[33] 'Tight-fit' functionalist accounts tend to see liberal demo-
cratic states as making concessions only under pressure from working class
organizations or activity; 'loose-fit' accounts see a possible role for pre-
emptive concessions by the state.[34] The analysis of state policy is made
slightly more complex than in traditional Marxist accounts by the acknowledge-
ment of different 'fractions' of capital with conflicting interests.[35]
Monopoly capital is generally seen as most influential on state policy.

Neo-marxist accounts have rarely been applied empirically and they are
phrased in a much more general way than the other theoretical approaches
reviewed, so that it is more difficult to assess their applicability to our
findings. For many of the propositions involved no clear criteria of what
would count as proof or disproof seem to be available.

Nevertheless there are some considerable points of agreement with our
account. The neo-Marxist stress on the importance of class interest as
influences on state policy is especially relevant to the pursuit of the public
housing drive within an organizational framework and planning system fundamen-
tally inimical to its success. Their stress on the political influence of
capital, even where the area of social life controlled by the state rather than
by private firms has increased, is well born out by the importance of contractual
interests' influence on housing construction policy up to 1970, particularly by
their exploitation of their favourable position viz à viz local authorities and
the design professions. Both the main structural influences on policy which we
have outlined could thus be well integrated into such an approach. Our research
has shown empirically how diffuse social class pressures and specific influence
exerting activity by private firms could come to set an influential ideological
context for the development of state policy, without in any way positing the
conscious pursuit of either of these interests by decision makers.

Whether our findings could support the sweeping claims of neo-Marxist
theory that such influences, and the related distortion of state policy, are
inherent under capitalism seems problematic, however. Two major points of

objection must be made. Firstly, the relations which we have charted between large contractual interests and public authorites up to 1970 have not endured. With the abandonment of the 500,000 homes target and the collapse of industrialized building, large contractors' involvement in public housing decreased sharply, and the policy shift towards rehabilitation (begun in 1969 and carried to its limit under the Heath government), further damaged their interests.[36] Of course we would expect some variation in contractual relations with the state of demand, but the extent of this change goes well beyond this and must call into question any suggestion that state agencies' dependence on large construction firms is a permanent feature of public housing in Britain. Secondly, the influence of a small group of large contractors which we have charted cannot easily be interpreted within neo-Marxist accounts. Such firms cannot be seen as constituting a 'fraction' of capital, but on the other hand their interests were not those of capitalists as a whole. In so far as there is a general interest of capital involved in public housing construction policy, it is in keeping down housing costs as an element in wage costs. But this interest was systematically frustrated by the large construction firms' success in persuading public authorites to build high cost forms of housing.[37]

A final point more in line with neo-Marxist theory is worth making. We have argued that class and contractual interests produced a 'rationality deficit' in public housing up to the late 1960s. One major consequence of the growing problem of public housing construction programmes was a major decline in the credibility of and support for public housing as a whole, and a shift towards private house-building and the channelling of more state subsidies into private hands via rehabilitation.[38] In a general sense this shift could be seen as favourable to the interests of the middle class and of private property owners and as unfavourable for less well off and working class people, precisely the group who had suffered most from the operation of mass housing policies.[39]

Conclusions

This brief review of our findings has suggested that neither pluralist analysis nor elite theory in their traditional or classical forms adequately capture the nature of policy making in the extended state apparatus of advanced industrial societies. The descriptive accuracy of 'new pluralist' theory, particularly in its characterization of technocratic deicison making, is in contrast impressive, but it remains flawed in its lack of reference to structural processes and influences. Nor is 'new pluralist' optimism about the growth of technocracy justified by our findings. Rather elements of neo-Marxist analyses stressing the political power of private capital and questioning the interpretation proferred by decision makers of the purposes of state intervention were found to have considerable accuracy.

These must for the moment remain interim conclusions, for only in the light of evidence on local authorities' handling of high rise policy to which we turn in Part II can firm conclusions be drawn about the political process surrounding the issue.

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33. Poulantzas, Political Power and Social Classes, pp. 190-244; Habermas, Legitimation Crisis, pp. 36-7.

34. Pickvance, 'Explaining State Intervention', passim. The terminology used here is his.

35. Poulantzas talks of fractions, Political Power and Social Classes, pp. 77-85; Habermas, Legitimation Crisis, pp. 37-60, and O'Connor, Fiscal Crisis of the State, Ch. 1, develop sectoral models.

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P A R T   T W O
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LOCAL COMMUNITIES TACKLE MASS HOUSING

CHAPTER SIX

Urban Politics in a Nationalized Society.

The second part of this study focuses on how local communities in Britain

tackled mass housing in the post war period.   This analysis is important for

two reasons.   Firstly high rise housing was ultimately a policy pursued not by

the central state but by local authorities.   Thus it is only at the local

level that the operations of the political process on the issue can be examined

in detail.   Secondly, this local level analysis is an indispensable part of

the argument made in Part I that control of local policy was progressively

displaced from the local to the national level during the post-war period, for

it is only at the local level that adequate empirical support can be uncovered.

The uniformity of national trends in the use of high rise, in the absence of

such supporting evidence, is indicative only of surface correlations, potentially

explicable in a number of ways.   In contrast, the case studies of particular

local authorities given below can provide a radically different type of evidence

concerning the causation of policy change.

The study of the urban political process at the local institutional level

raises three major questions:

(i)   How can the focus of urban political analysis be theoretically defined?

(ii)   How does our study of local decision making differ from and connect with

the existing literature on British urban politics?

(iii) How can the case study method generate information of general validity

rather than information of relevance only to a particular locality?[1]

Each of these questions is treated briefly below, and a final section provides

some general information on the research procedures adopted in the case studies.

6.1:   The Definition of 'Urban' Research

Defining the scope and focus of 'urban' research has been an intractable

problem for social scientists.   Urban sociology until the late 1960s was largely

cut off from the sociological mainstream, and concentrated on very specific methodologically-defined areas such as ecological analyses and community studies.[2] In political science, the urban tag functioned only as 'a catch all adjective' loosely denoting political events taking place in or having a focus in cities.[3] The 'community' component in early community power studies was progressively displaced by an explicitly institutional focus, and in Britain an administratively orientated version of this approach has been dominant throughout the post-war period.[4]

Since the late 1960s, urban sociology has been revitalized as a field of study by various new conceptions of its role.   All of these have had in common, however, a move away from a _formal_, institutional or spatial designation of the urban field towards a _content_ definition, i.e. one in terms of certain social processes, such as housing (Rex and Moore), access to scarce urban resources (Pahl), the built environment (Harvey), and 'collective consumption' processes (Castells, Lojkine, Preteceille).[5]   We shall focus on the methodological implications of this last definition, since in our view it provides a basis on which many of the earlier problems of urban research in political science can be resolved.

Collective consumption is used by Castells to refer to

> consumption processes whose _organization and management_
> cannot be other than collective given the nature and
> size of the problems. [6]
>
> (my emphasis)

This includes social services, health care, educational and other community facilities, public housing and transport, and urban planning (which Castells argues is centrally directed towards collective consumption processes).[7]   It also includes 'problems relating to the organization and functioning of the consumption unit (the agglomeration), in so far as changes in the unit also have effects on the consumption processes in question'.[8]   Not all the service areas involved are controlled by local authorities, and all of them are pervasively influenced by policy formulated by the central state bureaucracy

and the national government.

This fairly broad notion provides a means by which consumption processes central to the city as social unit can be analysed in terms of state intervention and in relation to the goals and activities of major social interests. A very general theoretical background is provided for a view of local political institutions as one arena in which particular social conflicts may be condensed or reflected.

6.2: Part II as Urban Political Research.

The adoption of this content definition of urban politics does not entail or imply the adoption of the substantive analyses to which Castells et al are committed.[9] For our purposes, its chief utility is to make clear the status of the whole of this research as urban political analysis. Since local political institutions or city boundaries are not seen as defining a separate field of research, our local level case studies are freed from many of the assumptions felt to be necessary by previous researchers in urban politics. Thus we do not assume that local authorities retained effective control of housing construction policy, but set out to determine whether they did or not.[10] And we do not focus solely on the internal or endogenous politics of a particular authority or area,[11] but devote equal attention to external influences on the authority, from central government departments, the national local government system, the professions or industrial interests. Our research seeks to cover the full range of influences on local authorities' policies and relevant developments in the urban system, rather than confining the scope of analysis in advance as a definition of urban research in institutional or spatial terms implies.

Since decisions on housing construction policy were ultimately taken by local authorities, the local authority area and organization constitute the most important limits of each case study. But these studies are from the outset situated within the account of national policy given in Part I. Their functions

are both to specify this account, and to provide an analysis of the local and non-local influences on particular local authorities' housing construction policies. Treating the high rise housing issue in terms of collective consumption also implies a more direct focus on the impact of the policy on the urban system, which again cạn only be carried out at the local level.

Our local level research connects with the existing literature on urban politics and local government in a number of ways, however. Firstly, because the input orientation of previous research has been so pronounced, we have not devoted much attention to the general characteristics of electoral and party politics at the local level. Working outwards from this well-studied area, our attention has been focused on comparatively unexplored areas, such as the policy role of the local bureaucracy and the conduct of internal Council politics. Secondly, our case study narratives are in part structured by existing accounts of local politics. They assume a knowledge of the basic organization and conventions of local government and of the theory of local democracy.

6.3: The Use of Case Studies.[12]

Perhaps the most basic difference in this research made possible by the definition of urban politics in terms of collective consumption, is the use which we can make of local case studies.

The case study has several important limitations in conventionally defined urban politics. As the history of community power studies suggests, case studies within an institutional-spatial definition of urban politics confront in an acute form the problems of all inductive reasoning. Generalizations from one or a few cases can only be made in terms of their typicality, and ultimately differing results across cases/be interpreted either as indicative must of incorrect methodology in one set of studies,[13] or as indicative of the extent of variation across different areas.[14] The community power literature was bedevilled by these problems to such an extent that by the later 1960s,

researchers were abandoning case study research altogether in favour of the analysis of community output data.[15]

But these problems are not intrinsic to the case study method itself, as is widely supposed. Rather they are indicative of the limitations on the use of this method. The community power literature misused it by attempting to 'test' general but low level descriptive propositions concerning the configuration of power influences in communities.[16] This was more a response to the difficulties involved in analyses of the concept of power than it was an appropriate use of case studies.

Essentially our view of case studies has been stated by Mitchell, who sees them as the description of concrete or real sets of events in their full particularity.[17] Events are traced over some time period leading to a particular outcome which is interpreted theoretically. Within this broad description cases may be used at several levels; for example as apt illustration, solely to relate an abstract instance to a concrete setting without any development over time; or for situational analysis, in which a set of events of fairly short duration is analysed with a view to uncovering their theoretical implications. For Mitchell, however, the basic case study form must cover a longer duration and aim to establish necessary dependencies amongst elements in a given context. Unlike survey based methodologies which look for surface or existential correlations amongst phenomena, case studies are concerned to establish logical relations. It follows that for Mitchell the basis for generalization from a real case study is not the typicality of the case in any sense, but the logicality of the analysis of the case. The case demonstrates the operation of general principles in a defined context, (the real context). Problems of choosing a typical case in this approach disappear, and the uniqueness and particularity of each study is explicitly recognized.

The key element in this view of case studies is the level of theoretical interpretation which is aimed at. Unlike community power studies, we are concerned to use our case material to penetrate beyond surface correlations to

detect the more fundamental and general processes involved. The typicality of the cases selected is dissolved as a problem since we hope to detect a logic of action involved in policy development, to establish the existence of structural relations which can be taken to operate in other areas in substantially the same form.[18]

This conception of the role of case studies is obviously formulated from a particular theoretical perspective, one positing the existence of such structural relations. But this does not in our view imply that particular results will be produced by the method. There is no guarantee involved that a plausible account in terms of structural relations will be forthcoming. But the attempt to establish such an account places our use of case material on a radically different plane from that of previous research.

This view of case studies means that detailed, narrative accounts are necessary, so that the studies in Chapters 7 to 9 are quite full. Although these studies have inevitably been influenced by some perspectives on urban politics more than others, we have endeavoured to include material relevant to a wide range of theories; and Chapter 10 re-examines the 'urban' variants of the theories discussed in Chapter 5 in the light of our findings. We have chosen not to refer backwards and forwards to any external theoretical apparatus in the case study chapters, but to attempt to internalize our approach in the narrative, to cue theoretically important points and references to analyses developed in Part I. A heavy burden is thus placed on the reader, but this procedure was made inevitable by limits of space and by the need to avoid presenting the studies in ways which are repetitive of points made in Part I or of each other. Instead we have attempted to isolate to some degree and focus on the distinctive aspects of each authority's policy.

6.4: Research Methodology.

THE SELECTION OF CASES

Since the basis for generalization from our case studies is in no sense the typicality of the areas studied, the selection of cases did not pose a

central problem for the analysis. Nevertheless the selection was made with

a view to looking at authorities with different basic characteristics. The

cases chosen are:

(i) The London Borough of Newham (including the two county boroughs of West

     Ham and East Ham which existed up to the 1965 reorganization of London

     government).

(ii) Birmingham County Borough.

(iii) Bristol County Borough.

These cases were chosen to include one of the three types of authority

which we argued in Chapter 2 account for the vast bulk of the high rise stock

in England and Wales, viz. an inner London borough, a major provincial conurba-

tion authority and a large freestanding city. (The selection of Newham in

London was influenced by the consideration that it was the only authority in

the Group A boroughs where the analysis would not have to take account of L.C.C./

G.L.C. policy in the area, a task for which we clearly had insufficient research

resources.) The authorities were also chosen to provide a reasonable spread

in terms of their populations, areas, the size of their high rise stocks, their

propensity to use high rise, geographical situations and location in the urban

system, (Table 6.1).[19]

Table 6.1: Selected Characteristics of the Case Study Authorities.

	Newham L.B.	Birmingham C.B.	Bristol C.B.
Population (1972)	237,392	1,013,000	426,657
Area (1972) in acres	8,986	51,000	26,350
High Rise Flats	6,849	24,013	5,434
Proportion of Council Housing in High Flats 1972	28%	21%	14%

Clearly none of these authorities came anywhere near constituting an autonomous

labour pool, such as those defined by the Standard Metropolitan Labour Areas, but

the relations between the local government unit and the built up area seems to

be the most important for our purposes and forms a consistently central theme

in Chapters 7 to 9.[20]

Regionally all three cases are in southern England, partly because they were chosen with access from Oxford in mind. This has some important implications. Firstly, only Newham suffered the kind of post-war population loss experienced in some cities in the depressed industrial areas of north west England and Scotland. The population pressures underlying high rise may thus be more important in the case studies than in such areas. Secondly the level of housing stress and housing unfitness at the start of the post-war period was again probably less than in these regions, although it was undoubtedly extensive in Newham and Birmingham.

RESEARCH SOURCES

The primary sources of information used in the case studies were:

(i) Local authority documentary sources – these included minutes, papers, letters, reports, contract details etc. In Birmingham and Bristol full access was accorded, which was invaluable in allowing these very large authorities to be studied at all. In Newham this level of access was not obtained. Council reports and Committee Minutes were read in the copies available in Newham's public libraries, and access to some key Newham documents and to a collection of officer papers for East Ham was obtained.

(ii) Local press coverage provided an important alternative source of coverage of the public debate over high rise in all three areas. In Birmingham and Bristol library-compiled files of press cuttings covering planning, housing, construction and urban development issues were fully surveyed for the post-war period, together with a small number of specific references culled by other means. In Newham library indexed items proved inadequate, and a comprehensive content analysis of local press coverage of the high rise issue was carried out for the key 1965-70 period, (which is reported in Appendix II).

(iii) Department of the Environment files provided indispensable information which the local authorities concerned rarely seemed to have collected systematically, covering contract composition, dates of approval and completion, cost,

use of industrialized methods and in some cases contractor and estate location.
All three Housing Departments kindly provided lists of their high rise blocks,
with additional data on the numbers of flats in each, location and in Newham
and Birmingham, bedroom composition.

(iv) Secondary material of various kinds was also extensively used, some of it
kindly supplied by interviewees and covering published Council reports and
documents.[21]

(v) Interviews with 'housing influentials' were carried out to supplement the
documentary sources on specific points, and to gain an overall impression of
how those concerned viewed their authorities' policies.   Interviews were
confined to the committees and chief officers directly concerned with housing.
The head of the architecture and housing departments were interviewed in all
three areas, with more than one head being interviewed where retired chief
officers were available.   Committee influentials were identified by the
following procedure.   A list of committee members on the committee most
directly concerned with housing construction policy was compiled for the
entire post-war period.   Following the interpretation suggested by Dearlove,
all ordinary members serving for less than two years were classed as
'uninfluential'.[22]   All members achieving the post of Chairman or Vice-Chairman,
holding a similar position on a related committee at the time of their
membership (such as planning or housing management committees) or elected to
a leadership post in one of the main party groups on the Council, and all
members acknowledged as party spokesmen on the committee (i.e. the 'front
benchers' for the opposition party), were counted as influentials.[23]   Members
who served for longer than two years without achieving 'influential' status
but who usually played an active committee role, were classed as 'competents'.
Finally a fairly small number of committee members who served for long periods
of time without achieving 'influential' status, while at the same time rarely
contributing to committee discussion, were classed as 'loyalists', since their
sole committee activity appeared to be to support their chairman or party

spokesman.[24]   With these four categories formulated the following procedure was adopted for interview selection.   Firstly, all influential members in the period of high rise policy were approached, plus any competent members known to have been involved in major policy decisions.   Secondly, any deficiencies in the first list caused by the non-availability of interviewees or non-response were made up with interviews with particularly long serving loyalist or competent members.   Since our purpose was to construct a narrative, and not a picture of committee members' post hoc values concerning high rise we would argue that this procedure was a systematic and effective one.

In all thirty/interviews were carried out, fifteen in Newham, eleven in
-three
Birmingham and seven in Bristol.   This total is not large, partly because of high mortality rates amongst people qualifying for interviews, and because on the advice of the various Town Clerks' departments, approaches were not made to people judged too old or too frail.   These difficulties were only really serious in Bristol, however; in the other authorities very full and interesting accounts were obtained from a variety of committee and party standpoints.   Most of the interviews were taped and transcribed.   The interviews followed the suggestions of Dexter in aiming to sustain a dialogue with interviewees rather than being questionnaire directed.[25]   In each case, however, a standard list of questions was prepared and introduced piecemeal at differing points in the conversations.   Most interviews lasted for around an hour, although there was a considerable range from 40 minutes up to four hours. A majority of interviewees were extremely helpful and frank in their replies, and all of them gave their time most generously.   Certainly this evidence was an indispensable part of the narratives constructed below.

13. See J. Walton, 'Discipline, Method and Community Power: A Note on the Sociology of Knowledge', American Sociological Review, 31 (1966), 684-9.

14. C.M. Bonjean and D.M. Olson, 'Community Leadership: Directions of Research', Administrative Science Quarterly, 9 (1964), p. 290.

15. See T.N. Clark, Community Power and Policy Outputs (London, Sage, 1973).

16. C.M. Bonjean, T.N. Clark and R. Lineberry, Community Politics: a Behavioural Approach (New York, Free Press, 1971), for 'propositional inventories'.

17. Mitchell, 'The Use of Case Studies in Social Science Research'.

18. For examples of attempted applications of this kind of approach, see M. Castells and F. Godard, Monopolville: l'enterprise, l'etat, l'urbain (Paris, Mouton, 1974); and E. Cherki, 'Populisme et ideologie revolution-naire dans le mouvement des squatters', Sociologie du Travail, 18 (1976), 192-215. How successful these attempts can be counted it is difficult to say.

19. Sources, Municipal Year Book, 1972; Institute of Municipal Treasurers and Accountants, Housing Management and Maintenance Statistics, 1971-72 (London, Institute, 1973), Table 2.

20. In addition a pilot study of high rise building in Oxford C.B. was carried out: I would like to thank the City Architect, D.B. Murray, and his Chief Assistant Architect, Mr A. White, for their help and time in interviews.

21. I would like to thank here particularly Councillor Kebbell in Newham; J.E. Austin in East Ham; H. Walton and A.G. Sheppard Fidler in Birmingham; Mr Abbey in Bristol.

22. Dearlove, Politics of Policy in Local Government, 123-30, 115-23. See also Gyford, Local Politics in Britain, pp. 29, 32.

23. See Dearlove, Politics of Policy in Local Government, pp. 130-6, 138-9, 113-18; Gyford, Local Politics in Britain, 77-84; Newton, Second City Politics, Ch. 6.

24. See Newton, Second City Politics, Ch. 6, and Gyford, Local Politics in Britain, pp. 29-36, for more developed role typologies based on survey data. For the basic philosophy of our approach see E.J. Webb, D.T. Campbell, R.D. Schwartz, L. Sechrest, Unobtrusive Measures : Non Reactive Research in the Social Sciences (Chicago, Rand McNally, 1966).

25. L.A. Dexter, Elite and Specialized Interviewing (Evanston, North-western University Press, 1970).

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1. These issues are more fully treated in P. Dunleavy, 'The Politics of Collective Consumption; Urban Political Analysis in a Nationalized Society', Paper given to the P.S.A. Annual Conference at the University of Liverpool, 4 April 1977; and in a short book with the same title, forthcoming in 1979 from Macmillan.

2. R.E. Pahl, 'Urban Social Theory and Research', in Whose City? (London, Longman, 1970).

3. O.P. Williams, Metropolitan Political Analysis (New York, Free Press, 1971), pp. 5-6.

4. See F. Hunter, Community Power Structure (Chapell Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1953); R.A. Dahl, Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1961), for the development of community power studies. In Britain see W. Hampton, Democracy and Community (London, Oxford University Press, 1970); J. Gyford, Local Politics in Britain (London, Croom Helm, 1976).

5. See J. Rex and R Moore, Race, Community and Conflict (London, Oxford University Press, 1967); Pahl, Urban Social Theory and Research; D. Harvey, Social Justice and the City (London, Edward Arnold, 1973); M. Castells, The Urban Question (London, Edward Arnold, 1973); J. Lojkine, La politique urbaine dans la région parisienne, 1945-72 (Paris, Mouton, 1972), p. 2; E. Preteceille, 'Equipements collectifs et consummation sociale', International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 1 (1977), 101-23.

6. M. Castells, 'Theory and Ideology in Urban Sociology', in C.G. Pickvance (ed.), Urban Sociology : Critical Essays (London, Tavistock, 1976), p. 25.

7. M. Castells, 'Vers une theorie sociologique de la planification urbaine', Sociologie du Travail, 11 (1969), 413-44.

8. M. Castells, 'Theoretical Propositions for an Experimental Study of Urban Social Movements', in Pickvance (ed.), Urban Sociology: Critical Essays, p. 148.

9. See Dunleavy, 'Politics of Collective Consumption'; R.E. Pahl, 'Managers, Technical Experts and the State' in M. Harloe, (ed.), Captive Cities: Studies in the Political Economy of Cities and Regions (London, Wiley, 1977).

10. See T. Brown, M.J.C. Vile and M.F. Whitemore, 'Community Studies and Decision Taking', British Journal of Political Science, 2 (1972), 133-53.

11. This orientation is well illustrated by Gyford, Local Politics in Britain; J. Dearlove, The Politics of Policy in Local Government (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1973); K. Newton, Second City Politics (London, Oxford University Press, 1976).

12. This section draws extensively on an unpublished paper by Professor J.C. Mitchell, 'The Use of Case Studies in Social Science Research', given to the Nuffield College Politics Group Seminar, May 1976.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Newham.

7.1: The Urban Background.

The London Borough of Newham was formed in the 1965 reorganization of London government by the amalgamation of the county boroughs of West Ham and East Ham.   It lies just outside the old L.C.C. area to the east of Tower Hamlets but, as its inclusion in the G.L.C.'s Group A boroughs implies, its acute housing and social problems make it part of the real inner city of Greater London, (Figure 7.1).[1]

Newham is a depressed area.   'More than the old East End of Bethnall Green, Newham depicts the new "grey areas"'.[2]   Between 1951 and 1971 the borough lost over 20% of its population.   Today the number of residents at 231,000 is still declining at the rate of nearly 3,000 people a year, despite the growth of a sizeable coloured immigrant community.[3]

On almost any 'quality of life' index - such as the perinatal mortality rate, pupil-teacher ratios, lack of basic housing facilities, levels of air pollution, the provision of public open space, the extent of vacant land holdings, etc. - the Newham area is one of the worst parts of Greater London, (Table 7.1).[4]

Not surprisingly, Newham fails to attract many middle class residents. After Tower Hamlets, it has the largest proportion of semi-skilled, unskilled and service workers of any area in London.[5]   Migration from the Borough has additionally been age-selective.   Between 1951 and 1966 the area lost 12% of its population as a whole, but over 20% of those aged 15 to 44, while it actually gained 9% of the over 65s.[6]

In the 1970s much of the area's traditional economic base has run down or disappeared.   The giant Beckton gas works have closed, and the Royal Group of Docks has progressively declined in importance and will close in 1981.   Other

Figure 7.1: Newham in Greater London.

Group 'A' Boroughs   ━━━━━

Inner London   ━ ━ ━ ━

industries related to the docks have moved out to Tilbury or been displaced by clearance. The area's future is now heavily dependent on the outcome of the Dockland Redevelopment Project.[7] The roots of the area's current problems lie for the most part in its relatively short history.

Table 7.1: 'Quality of Life' Indices for Newham, 1971.

	Newham	G.L.C. Average
Stillbirths per 1,000 births	17.9	11.7
Perinatal mortality rate	30	21
Secondary pupil/teacher ratio	17.2	15.9
% of Secondary School pupils over 16	6.0	10.4
Awards for higher education as % of secondary school population	2.7	8.1
% households having exclusive use of hot water, fixed bath, inside WC	55	76
% households without access to inside WC	34	15
Average smoke pollution (m.c.m.)	71	n.a.
Average SO_2 pollution (m.c.m.)	267	n.a.
% of area public open space	4.3	10.2
% of area vacant land	11.0	5.4
% of population manual workers	70	52
% of residents with university degrees	1.2	4.6

HISTORY

West Ham was a small township by the fourteenth century, and developed slowly in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as a centre for 'offensive trades' - such as soap making and bone boiling - which were excluded from the London area proper.[8] But the major stimulus to its growth was the building of the Royal Victoria Dock in the early 1850s, followed by the Royal Albert Dock in East Ham later in the century. Between 1851 and 1901 the population of the Newham area increased eighteen fold, (Table 7.2).[9]

One of the first consequences of this rapid population growth was that virtually all of the area's housing was built within a fifty year period. In

West Ham the local vestry lacked the power to enforce adequate by-laws and housing was built in a virtually unregulated manner. Charles Dickens noted in Household Words in 1857: 'Cut off from the support of the Local Managing Act this outskirt is free to possess new streets of houses without drains, roads, gas or pavement'.[10] Parts of Canning Town were built on marshland below river level and liable to flooding. The worst of the jerry-building only came to an end in 1889 when West Ham became a County Borough. Around this time the bulk of new development shifted from the southern dock areas towards suburban housing in the north for the commuting middle classes moving out of East London. This suburban expansion spilled over into East Ham by the 1890s to such an extent that East Ham achieved county borough status by 1915.

Table 7.2: Population trends in Newham, 1801-1971.

Date	West Ham	East Ham	Newham
1801	6,500	820	7,320
1851	18,800	1,737	20,537
1901	267,358	95,989	363,347
1925	318,500	147,200	465,700
1951	170,993	120,836	291,829
1961	157,367	105,682	263,049
1966			259,620
1971	134,426	102,966	237,392

During the inter-war period the area's population continued to expand with little new building. Overcrowding increased in West Ham and by the 1930s the suburban expansion had already moved on. In West Ham the initial pattern of development became fixed in an environment of low overall amenity. Housing conditions were already poor and in the south of the borough large numbers of people were living below the poverty line.[11] The 1931 Census showed that densities were 4.6 persons per room in West Ham as a whole.[12]

The area's housing problems were scarcely touched by local authority housing until after 1945. West Ham Council built only 2,000 dwellings before

1939, most of them in an estate of four storey tenement blocks at Manor Road, which very quickly became the area's most notorious 'dump' estate in the post-war period.[13]   The small amount of council building stemmed less from the lack of political will on the part of the local authorities as from a shortage of land suitable for the kind of suburban development typical of the period. West Ham had elected Kier Hardie as the first ever Labour M.P. and during the 1920s the Labour Party extended its electoral dominance to the northern wards of West Ham and central East Ham.[14]   Both councils were Labour controlled from the mid-1930s and West Ham became a completely one-party Council in 1946, a situation which persisted until 1960.

HOUSING AND CLASS IN NEWHAM

Newham's ward boundaries were inherited with little change from the two county boroughs, (Figure 7.2).   All the wards have roughly the same population, the particularly large wards such as Customs House, South, Stratford and New Town having large areas of land vacant or occupied by transport industries.

There are very marked differences still between the eastern and western parts of Newham.   Politically the eastern area has been less inclined to elect Labour candidates in the 1960s.   In 1968 opposition councillors elected by the northern and eastern wards achieved parity in the Council with Labour councillors, (Figure 7.3).   Labour retained control by using the Mayor's casting vote in a tied aldermanic election, however, and since then have continued to dominate on Newham Council.   This electoral pattern can be explained primarily in terms of class.   Those wards with the most pronounced skew in their social composition towards manual and lower manual workers were the most consistent Labour areas, while wards with a social composition more akin to that of Greater London as a whole have at times elected Ratepayer or Tory candidates, (Figure 7.4).[15]

The relationship between class and housing unfitness is more complicated, (Figure 7.5).[16]   Some of the most working class wards have been almost

Figure 7.2: Ward Names and Boundaries, London Borough of Newham.

New Town
Forest Gate
Manor Park
Little Ilford
Park
Upton
Woodgrange
Kensington
St Stephens
Stratford
West Ham
Plashet
Castle
Central
Wall End
Plaistow
Canning Town
Barnesyde
Greatfield
Hudsons
Ordnance
Beckton
South
Customs' House and Silvertown

West Ham | East Ham

Ratepayer
Tory
Liberal
Labour
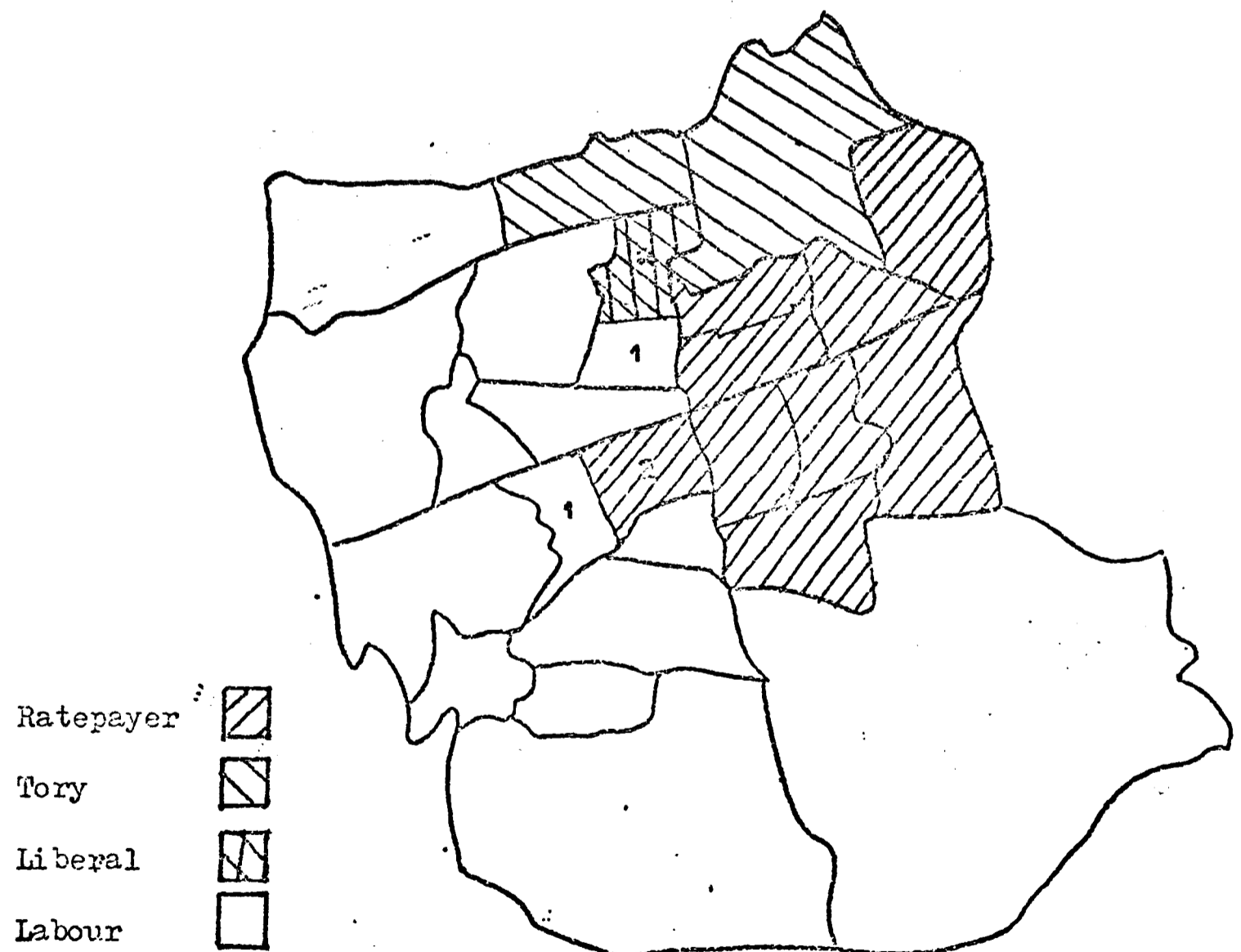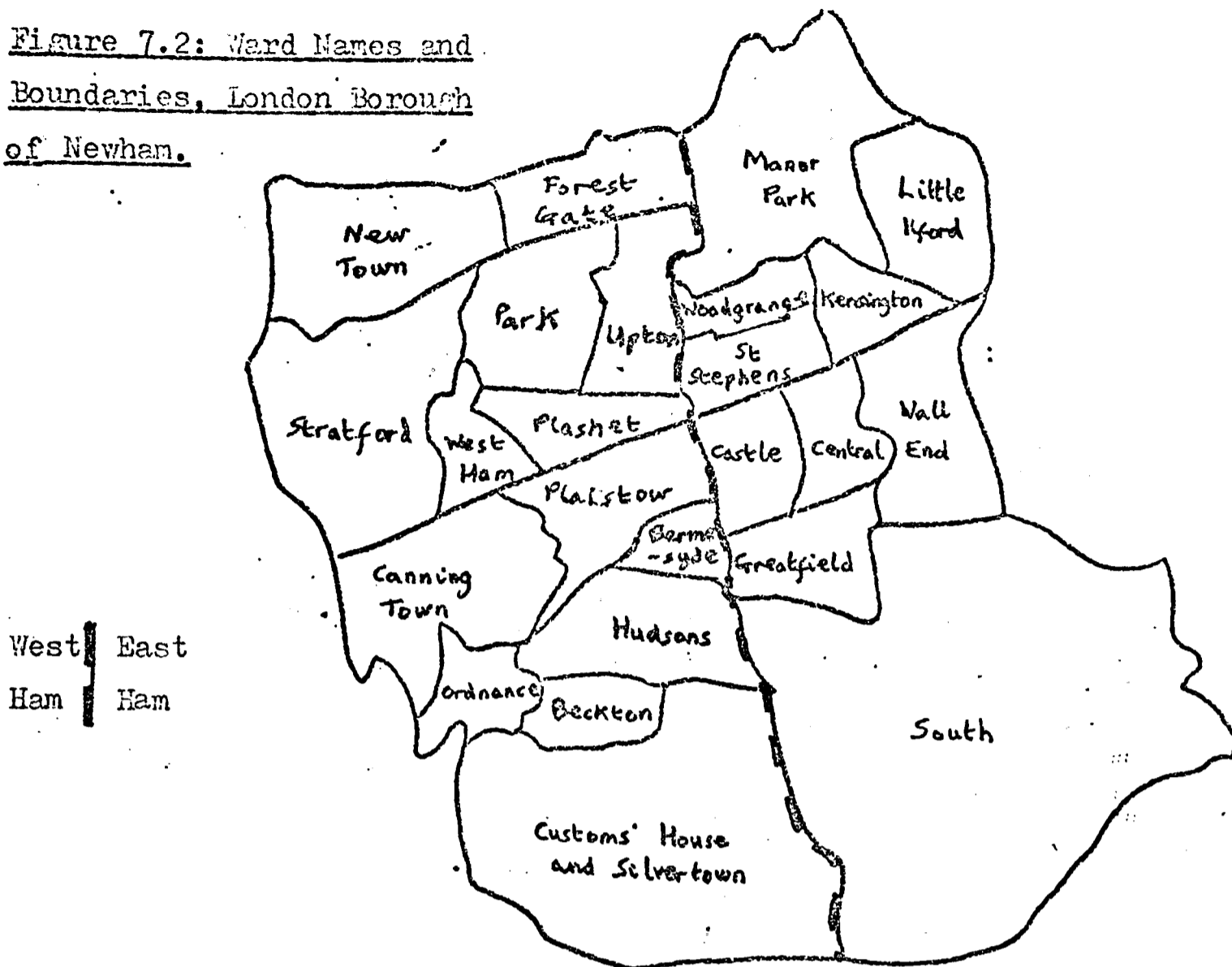
Figure 7.3: Election Results in the Newham Local Poll, 1968.

Figure 7.4: Class Structure
of Newham Wards, 1966.

Class struc-
ture skewed
towards:
Manual/lower
manual

Manual

Not skewed
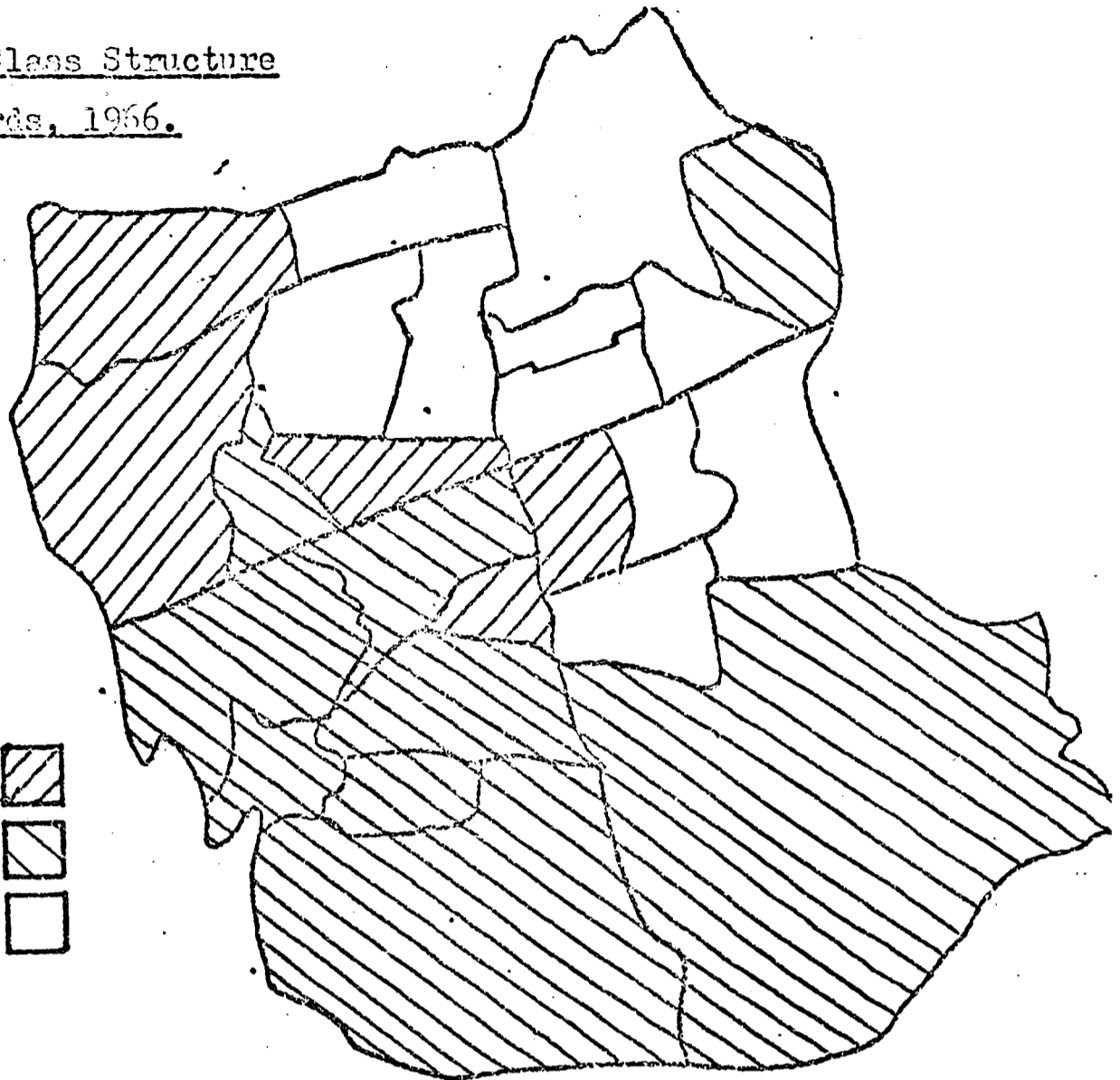
Proportion of
Unfit Housing:
Over 30%

20 - 30%

Under 20%
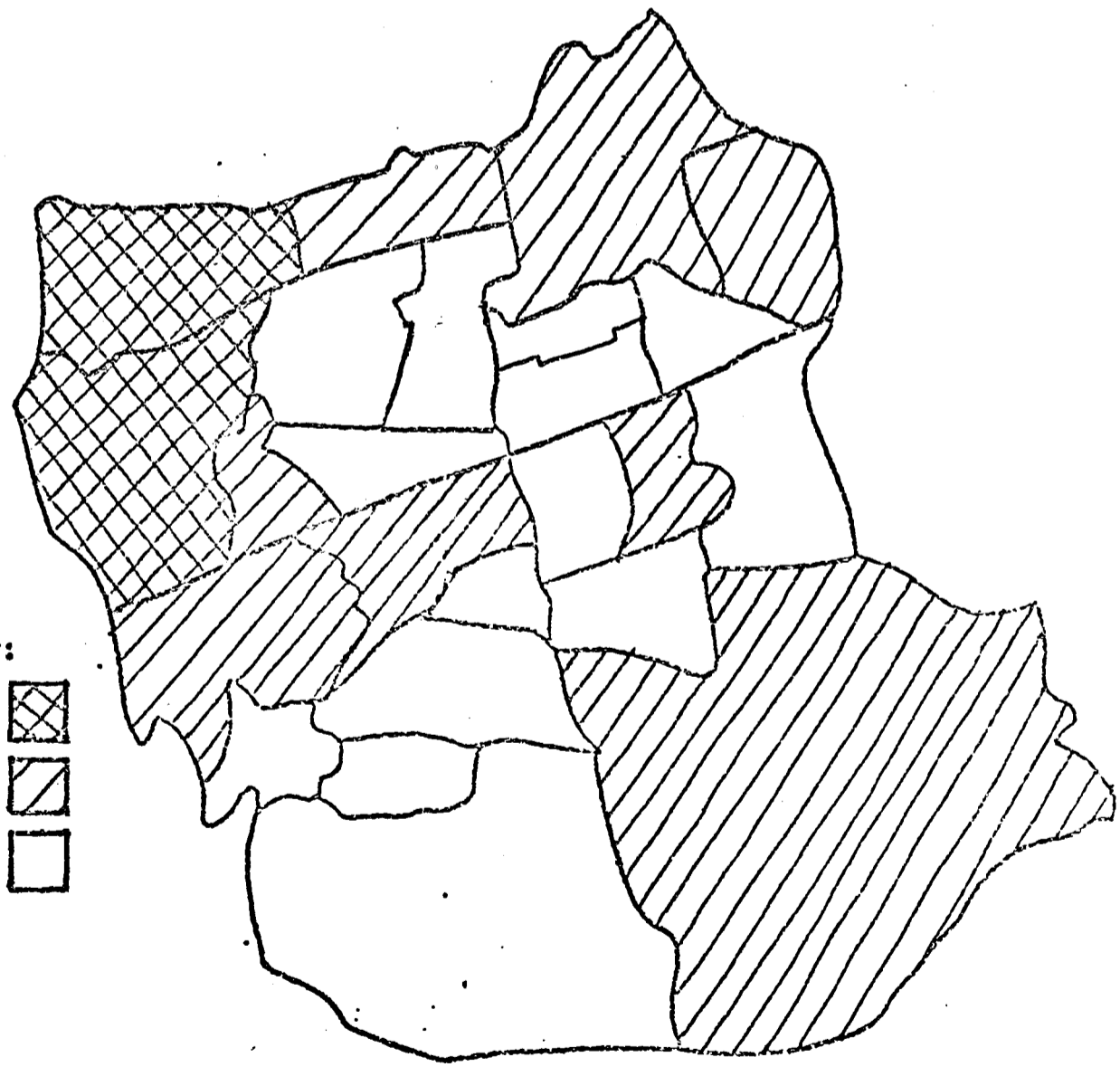
Figure 7.5: Newham Housing in Unfit and Poor Condition, 1970.

completely redeveloped with local authority housing. In Beckton, for example, over 90% of housing is owned by the local authority and less than 10% of housing stock is unfit. Many of the unfit houses lie in northern wards where private rental is still the dominant form of tenure, (Figure 7.6).[17] This is also an area of large multi-occupied houses and has substantial numbers of coloured residents, who rarely live in council housing.

The distribution of high rise housing is not related in any clear way to these variables, at first sight. High flats form over 30% of local authority housing stocks in a band of wards mainly in the central area of the borough, (Figure 7.7).[18] Large stocks of high flats are concentrated in a few wards in the western part of the borough, mainly in Beckton, Stratford, Plaistow and Plashet. A statistical analysis of the distribution of high rise in Newham described in Appendix / III suggests that high rise housing is built in wards with substantial amounts of council housing, high net residential densities and a fairly poor physical environment. In all about 21,000 people live in high flats in Newham, over half of them in family accommodation and nearly two thirds of them in blocks over 10 storeys high (Table 7.3).[19] There are 111 high rise blocks with 6,849 flats.

Table 7.3: Newham's High Rise Housing Stock.

Storey height:	5	8	9	11	12	15	21	22	23
Number of blocks:	3	43	1	14	6	20	1	14	9
Dwellings:	95	1,750	92	611	278	1,162	80	1,637	1,144
% of high rise stock:	1.4	25.6	1.4	8.9	4.1	17.0	1.2	23.9	16.7

Number of bedrooms:	Bedsit	One	Two	Three	Total
Dwellings:	30	3,217	3,233	369	6,849
% of high rise:	0.4	47.0	47.2	5.4	100.0%

Since access to officers' reports and papers was not available for West Ham or (in the main) for Newham, much greater reliance on interviews was necessary.

Figure 7.6: Housing Tenure,
Newham Wards, 1971.

Most Important
Housing Tenure:

Owner Occupied

Council Rental

Private Rental
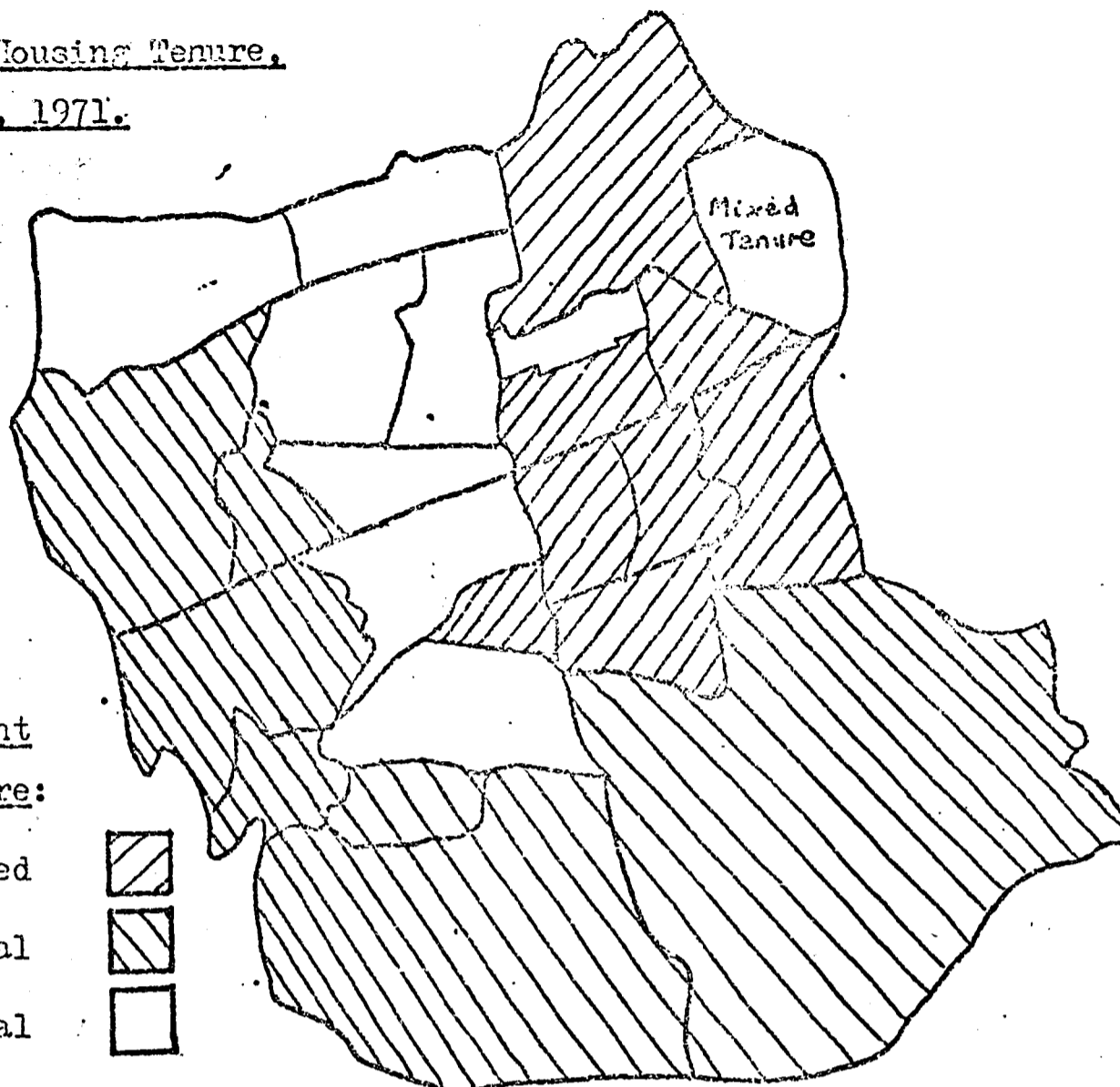
High Flats
in Ward:

Over 30% of
Council stock

500 or more
high flats

Under 29%
of Council
housing
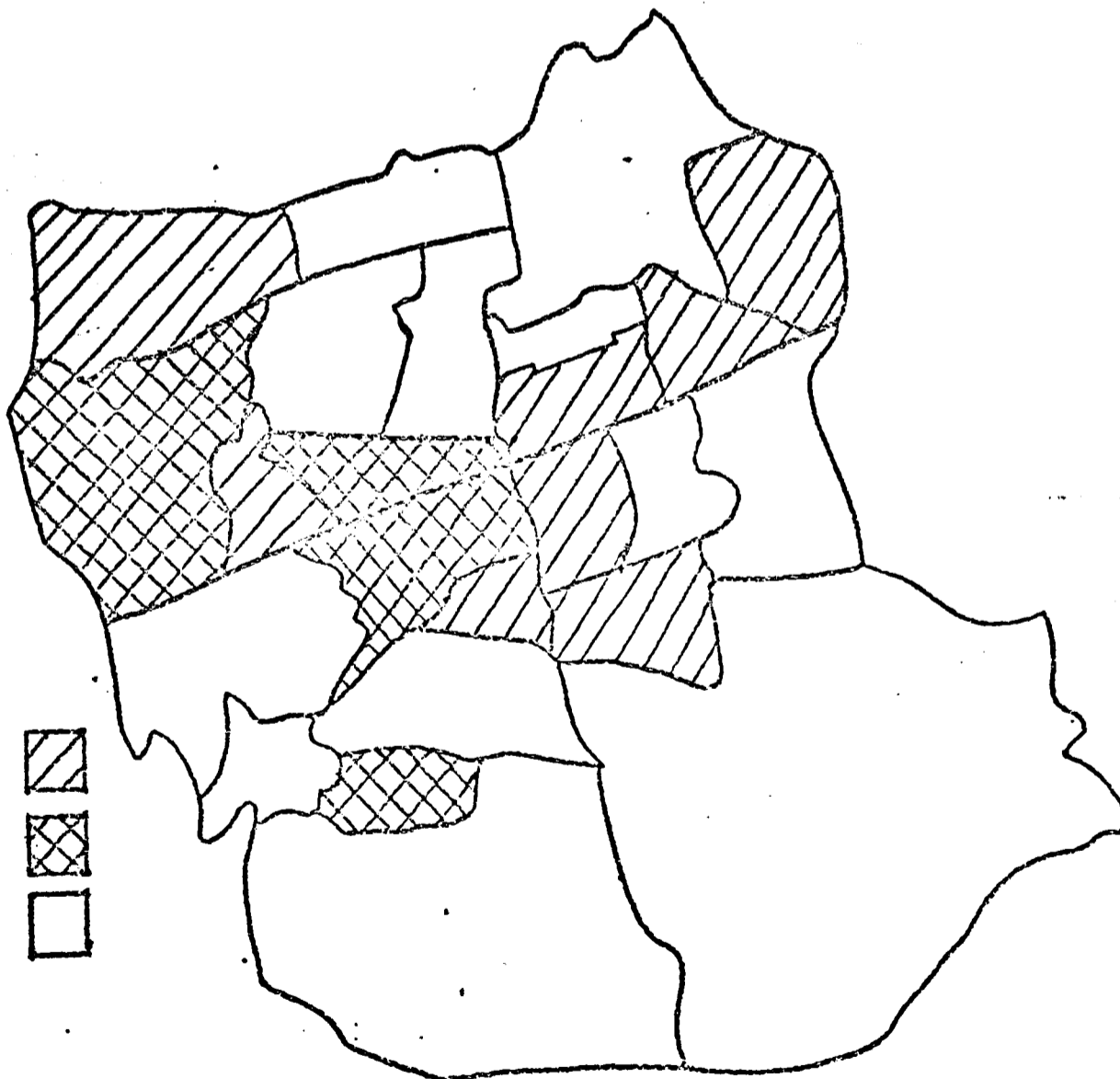
Figure 7.7: Distribution of High Flats in Newham, 1971.

I would like to record my thanks to the following members and officers for their generous and unstinting help:

<u>West Ham</u>

J.J. Atkinson	Chief Housing Officer, 1948-54.
T.E. North	Borough Architect & Planning Officer 1938-65.
K. Lund	Chief Assistant Architect, 1961-65.
Ald. S. Boyce	Leader of the Labour Group, 1940-65.
Ald. T. Davidson	Chairman of the Housing Committee 1953-58.
Cllr E. Kebbell	Chairman of the Housing Committee 1958-65.
Cllr Dunlop	Member, Town Planning & Reconstruction Cmtee 1952-65.
Cllr D. Lee	Member, Housing Cmtee 1954-65.
Cllr W. Ferrier	Member, Housing Cmtee 1956-65.

<u>East Ham</u>

J.E. Austin	Chief Housing Officer, 1945-65.
Ald. J. Hart	Leader of the Labour Group 1945-65.
Cllr E. Lonsdale	Ratepayer councillor 1960-65.

<u>Newham</u>

E.P. Davies	Housing Manager 1965-
T.E. North	Borough Architect & Planning Officer 1965-69.
K. Lund	Deputy Borough Architect 1965-69, Director of Planning and Architecture 1969-
Ald. S. Boyce	Leader of the Labour Group 1965-
Ald. J. Hart	Deputy Leader of the Labour Group 1965- , and Chairman of the Policy & Resources Cmtee.
Cllr E. Kebbell	Chairman, Housing Cmtee 1965-71.
Cllr W. Watts	Chairman, Housing & Town Planning Cmtee 1971-
Cllr E. Lonsdale	Leader of the Opposition 1965-
Cllrs Dunlop) Talbot)	Housing Cmtee Members 1965-74.
Cllrs Ferrier) D. Lee)	Housing Cmtee Members 1964-
J.J. Warren	Chief Executive, 1973-

7.2: Housing Policy in West Ham.

POST WAR PLANNING

West Ham faced acute housing problems at the end of the war, with some 27% of its housing stock destroyed during the blitz, and very extensive war damage.[20] Reconstruction planning began in 1941 following the election of Sam Boyce as leader of the Labour group, which had been criticized at the start of the war for its poor and inactive leadership.[21] The Borough Architect and Planning Officer was T.E. North, who had joined West Ham in 1931. North was invited to collaborate with Abercrombie in the drafting of the Greater London Plan, and several detailed design studies envisaging the use of high flats and houses in a 1:3 ratio were included in the final version.[22] Densities of 100 ppa were envisaged, although the high flat schemes had net density levels double this. A large reduction in the Borough population via overspill to a figure of 165,000, the strict separation of industrial and residential areas, and replanning in neighbourhood units were other features of the Plan.

These ideas were not immediately influential. Post-war rebuilding got under way mainly as large estates of houses, and the Housing Committee personnel proved slow to adapt to the change from being one of the smallest to one of the largest spending committees of the Council.[23] North received support for his ideas from the Town Planning and Reconstruction Committee, however.[24] Housing approvals went ahead quite fast in 1946-7 but in 1948 fell to just over 100,[25] partly because of central government cuts but also because of the lack of large sites for further estates. Redevelopment had to be switched into small, piecemeal schemes on bomb sites and acutely decayed housing areas; in the process the borough began building an increasing proportion of low rise flats.[26] In 1949 North tried to get the HC to agree to a scheme for six storey flats in the northern (lower density) area of the borough.[27] But with the subsidy structure of the time, the six storey scheme would have been 50% more expensive per flat to West Ham than a four storey

scheme and the HC rejected the idea, despite being impressed by high flats they had toured in other parts of London.[28]   This decision defined a limit for new development.[29]   But the low rise estates that were completed were clearly unpopular with tenants and councillors and soon ran into acute problems from vandalism and misuse of facilities.[30]

The unpopularity of the newest estates provoked the Chief Housing Officer, J.J. Atkinson, into two attempts to influence housing construction decisions, an area of policy over which he had had no influence hitherto.   Housing was still at this stage nominally under the Borough Engineer, and Atkinson's position was thus a weak one.   (In contrast North's prestige was very high at this time.   He had become a fellow of RIBA and in 1950 was awarded their 'Distinction in Town Planning' for his reconstruction work.[31]   In 1951 he became a member of CHAC, helping to draw up the plans for Macmillan's 'Peoples House', and in 1952 he was awarded the O.B.E.).[32]

Atkinson's first attempt in May 1951 was to secure a revision of the housing programme in the Draft Development Plan.   He called for a programme of out-Borough housing, arguing that at the 1950-55 rate clearance could take twenty years before any reduction of the housing waiting list could begin.   He rejected pressures to increase the Borough's population target which had been evident in Council debates, arguing:

> It is likely that any increase in the optimum population
> (target) would lead to a higher proportion of flats being
> built.   In view of the known unpopularity of flats in this
> area, any steps which would do this should be carefully
> considered.   It must be pointed out that the population
> now and at any time in the future is the number of people
> who choose to live within the Borough... [33]

This initiative failed to influence the HC, however, partly because the Draft Plan had already been approved, and partly because they refused to contemplate building outside the Borough and were worried that the Abercrombie population target was too low.[34]   In March 1952 Atkinson returned to the question of flat building in presenting the CHAC report Living in Flats to the HC.   CHAC, he argued,

consider that for the family with several children it
is well nigh impossible to provide in flats a wholly
suitable environment. The report emphasizes that even
with the highest densities it should be possible to
provide a proportion of houses.
COMMENT: The dislike of flats is particularly strong in
West Ham, where the people have not previously been accustomed
to this form of living. It is essential therefore that the
number of flats built should be the absolute minimum possible
within the Council's planning policy.[35]

The HC confined their immediate response to the provision of more
facilities for blocks of flats, particularly playgrounds. But in April, a
Council debate on the housing programme showed strong support for Atkinson's
position. The debate led to a decision to write to the Minister of Housing
and Local Government, then Harold Macmillan, enquiring about an increased
government subsidy under the forthcoming Housing Bill which would ease West
Ham's difficulties in securing tenders within Ministry cost limits, particularly
with schemes of houses. This produced a brusque reply from the Ministry in
which the Council was advised to put its own operations in order before coming
begging for more help from Whitehall. The Council was told to 'strain every
nerve' to get its capital and maintenance costs down to the national average.
'The responsibility for achieving costs comparable with those of other local
authorities lies firmly with the Council'. The special plea about the difficulty
of building houses within the cost limit received short shrift:

As to the general preference in West Ham for houses rather
than flats, the Minister has indicated that there are some
types of families for whom houses with gardens are preferable,
where they could be provided, but in some towns there is an
unwarrantable prejudice against flats so that excessive
amounts of land are being consumed in the provision at low
densities of ordinary houses. The national interest, the
Minister stated, required that this should be curbed and the
Council is advised to reconsider this in the national interest
as well as in their own financial interest. [36]

The HC sent a reply to the Ministry which pointed out that all their tenders
had fallen within the Ministry's cost limits and that the costs of land and
construction were far more in London than over the country as a whole.

As far as the policy of building houses rather than flats is
concerned (we) feel the Council has gone as far in the direction
of building flats as would be wise, and would conform with
densities under the Greater London Plan. At some future date
to have properties on hand which might prove difficult to let
would, we feel, be a far greater burden to overcome. [37]

With this the correspondence closed.   (Amongst other issues it left West Ham's

claim to special treatment on the lines of the L.C.C. boroughs unresolved.

The persistent Ministry policy of relating subsidy levels in the area to those

of outer rather than inner London was to cause similar representations, and

disputes at later subsidy reviews).

Table 7.4: The Housing Situation in West Ham, 1946-64; Annual Construction

and Demolition

Date	Public Housing Completion (1)	Private Housing Completion (2)	Clearance (3)	(1) - (3)	(1) + (2) - (3)
1946	–	2			
1947	116	5			
1948	691	12			
1949	255	12			
1950	186	29	not	available	
1951	210	37			
1952	246	72			
1953	253	79			
1954	448	101			
1955	794	255	56	738	993 ·
1956	640	25	37	603	628
1957	471	34	42	429	463
1958	610	29	130	480	509
1959	569	83	132	437	520
1960	447	78	218	229	307
1961	471	70	125	346	416
1962	425	71	363	62	132
1963	636	87	253	383	470
1964	593	58	285	308	366 ·

THE FIRST HIGH FLATS

Paradoxically enough, the Borough's first high flats scheme emerged soon

after this exchange of letters.   In July 1952 North brought forward a plan for

an integrated development of low rise flats, a nursery, library and shops plus

a ten storey block of flats for a site in a lower density area in the north of

the Borough.   This produced a decision from the HC to break their own 4 storey

limit:

notwithstanding their recommendation on an earlier scheme
this particular site would be most appropriate for the
purpose (of building a high block) and accordingly (we)
recommend that the officers be authorized to prepare a
scheme incorporating these features...In arriving at this
decision your Committee have had regard to the special
nature of the site and the low density of the surrounding
area in comparison with the Borough as a whole. [38]

This scheme took nearly two years to be designed and secure Ministry approval and towards the end of this period, the HC decided to build another high block on 'a little tiny site all on its own'.[39] North proposed a four storey development but the HC after discussion decided on a ten storey block to get more rehousing.[40] At this stage it was clear that high rise was being used simply to raise densities, a step made feasible by the more generous subsidies in the 1952 Act. The Housing department issued a statement claiming that:

> We are now building these multi-storey flats because
> the Council feel some attempt should be made to utilise
> the space we have got to its best advantage ... The areas
> in which any more of the new multi-storey flats will be
> built will have to be chosen carefully ... It is unlikely
> that any of the skyscrapers will be built in the south of
> the Borough where such building is more expensive because
> of the need for deep pile driving. [41]

These two schemes produced some far reaching changes which affected the later programme. Despite the larger subsidies, the construction costs of the high flats were still so high - 37% more than comparable low rise flats on one of the sites[42] - that a rent rebate scheme had to be introduced in mid-1957 when the first block was finally occupied, to offset the higher charges necessary.[43] And in late 1954 when the blocks went out to tender, West Ham adopted a system of selective tendering for the first time, which was used almost exclusively on high flat contracts.[44]

The costs and delays with the ten storey point blocks meant that no more were built, but the architects department produced instead a design for a cheaper eight storey flat block which was used to raise densities on some schemes until mid-1957.

1956-60: MORE OF THE SAME

The introduction of the progressive storey height subsidy coincided with the first review of West Ham's housing programme since the Development Plan. In all just 1,500 council homes had been completed in the period 1951-55, plus just over 500 private houses, (Table 7.4).[45] Councillors were bitterly

disappointed to find that North's new programme envisaged only 600 approvals a year despite the reorientation of national policy and the easing of programming limits.[46] This disquiet produced a revision of the officials' plans by Boyce and others in the Council leadership which incorporated a programme of out-Borough housing for the first time, toughened up the waiting list requirements and called for more high density and high rise building.[47]

North responded to this decision by producing plans for a fifteen storey block, only to have this opposed by the new Chief Housing Officer in committee.[48] HC members also intervened on two other schemes and forced North to adopt a single 11 storey type-block design in order to cut costs.[49] These two decisions effectively stopped any real development of high flat designs by the architects department, and over the next five years West Ham's high flat programme consisted almost entirely of these flats. The proportion of high rise increased from 13% in 1956 to over half by 1961, however, and large estates consisting entirely of high flats were planned for the first time, (Figure 7.8).[50]

1960: RAISING THE CEILING

In 1960 a number of changes combined to produce a major switch in West Ham's policy. Firstly, the chair of the HC passed to Councillor Kebbell, a younger member heavily influenced by North's views who felt that the Borough needed to mount a crash programme to clear the slums.[51] Secondly the Chief Housing Officer who had opposed North's plans for higher blocks in 1956 retired. And the reorientation of national policy towards 'needy' authorities implied an easing of Ministry programming restrictions on the Borough's programme.

Over the 1956-60 period, as slum clearance totals slowly mounted, so the inadequacy of the 600 houses annual target became increasingly apparent. Net housing gains in fact fell from over 730 dwellings in 1955 to just 62 by 1962.[52] North therefore brought forward with a favourable Treasurer's report, proposals to end the out-Borough programme and to increase approvals to 1,000

Figure 7.8: High Rise as a Proportion of West Ham Tender Approvals, 1946-63.
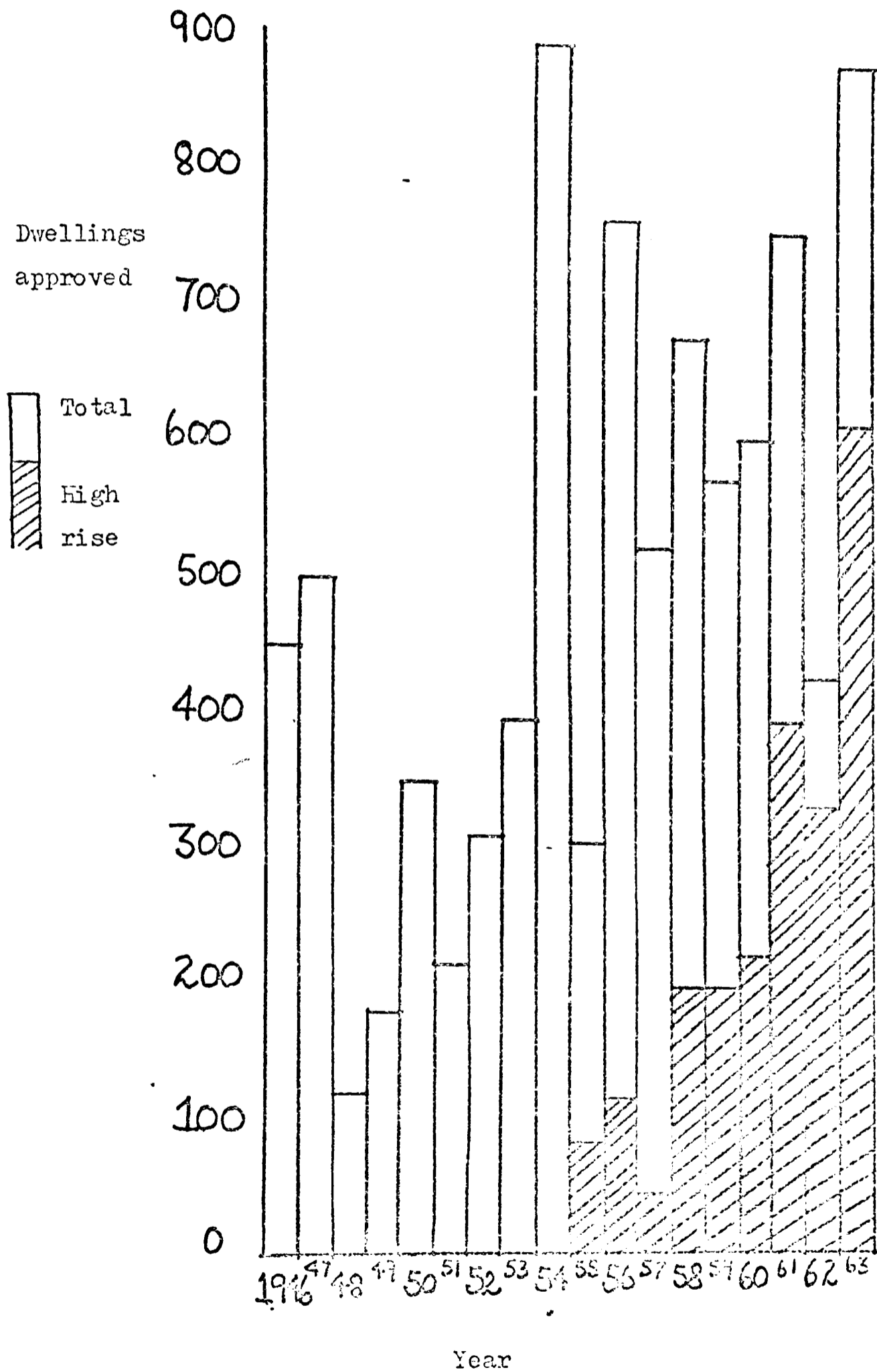
homes a year.[53]   But he claimed that only by building really high blocks up to 21 storeys could this be achieved, at the same time as some houses were provided for large families.[54]   Council members greeted this report with enthusiasm and approved the new limit, also endorsing the employment of private architects to design some of the blocks, and   an investigation into ways of procuring greater contractual commitment to West Ham's housing programme.[55]   In December 1960 the HC decided to create a fully fledged Housing Management department,[56] and the new appointee Dodson, preoccupied with this reorganization, gave North's ideas firm backing and did not oppose the adoption of a major high rise programme.[57]

The first schemes approved in 1961 were for sixteen storey blocks,[58] but later in the year designs up to twenty two storeys were approved, including what was at this stage, London's tallest residential block.[59]   The new programme showed a clear improvement on the blocks previously built in terms of design and styling, and rapidly began to win back for North's department the leading position which it had held in the immediate post-war period and lost in the interim through Committee restrictiveness.[60]   The employment of nationally known private firms was a key element in this change.   It is worth digressing briefly at this stage in order to look in more depth at the history of one estate designed in this period, to give something of the context in which detailed decisions were made and the consequences which flowed from them.

BARNWOOD COURT

The estate on which we shall focus, Barnwood Court, lies in the extreme south of the borough in a zone the Abercrombie Plan envisaged as suitable only for industry, (Figure 7.9).[61]   In the draft Development Plan, however, the Ministry arbitrarily insisted on retaining this small residential enclave of decaying houses, although it was some miles from the nearest shops and could barely maintain sufficient intake for its small primary school.   North

Figure 7.9: The Location of Barnwood Court.

(Residential areas are marked: ⌐ ¬)
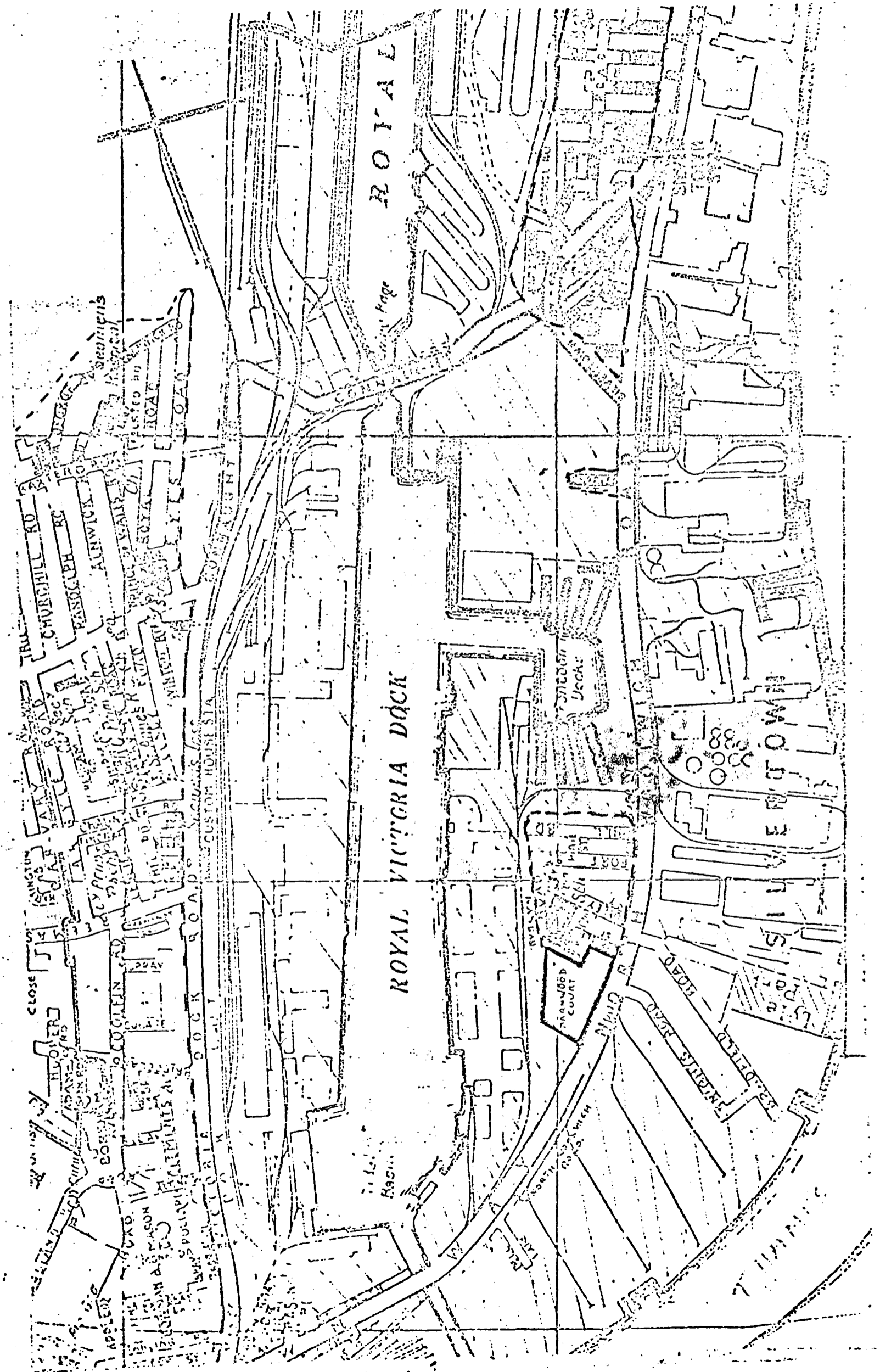
opposed this decision and was at a loss how to redevelop the grossly unfit housing.[62] He therefore 'hung on and hung on' through the CPO procedure and tried to persuade the Ministry's regional architect to get the area rezoned for industrial use. There was a fair chance that this would have succeeded but while the Ministry were making up their minds the ward councillor who was on the HC mounted a successful campaign to get some action taken on the area. And the Town Clerk's department refused to consider any change of use on the grounds that the Council would be open to damages claims from those dispossessed by the CPO if the land was not used for housing.

The architects department was thus forced to prepare plans for the area after all, and eventually opted for a very high density scheme to house 700 people in two tall blocks, as a way of making a clean break with the area's past and at the same time preserving a viable community. 'When it came to designing housing there', North told the Committee, 'there's only one thing for it which is to go higher so that at least people have some sort of a view. Because if you put houses back there all you'll see is the docks on the one side and the factories on the other'.[63]

In September 1961 the design brief was allocated to a nationally known firm of private architects (Stillman and Eastwick-Field) who produced stylish but expensive plans for two 20 storey blocks.[64] The Finance Committee insisted on the insertion of 15% more accommodation to meet the costs of the playground and community centre included.[65] This was accommodated by adding three more storeys to the blocks. But when the scheme was resubmitted in July 1962 the Finance Committee were still worried about the cost and held up approval for another three months while the Treasurer prepared a report 'on the average cost of construction of different types of dwellings'.[66] Finally the blocks went out to tender early in 1963 and the private architects obtained permission to negotiate a tender, which was not usual practice in West Ham at the time.[67] Tender negotiations with Laing, the firm recommended by the architects,[68] took until April 1964 by which time the bill for the scheme stood

at £1.17 million.[69] During this time also the block designs were changed, so that the final scheme accommodated 792 people in one and _three_ bedroom flats, ensuring a large child population.

Work on the estate was finished in the autumn of 1966 and a Tenants Association quickly established amongst residents in the first block. Their inaugural party attracted considerable press coverage, headlined 'Community Spirit of Outpost on the Point' in the _Newham Recorder_. Describing the estate the article went on:

> The 22 storey skyscrapers which form Barnwood Court are
> flanked on one side by dockland and on the other by factories.
> The nearest shops are an eight pence bus ride away and places
> of entertainment even further. But the residents of the airy,
> ultra-modern homes do not mind. They are determined to make
> it a little self contained community and provide their own
> entertainment. [70]

There were ambitious plans to equip the community centre when it was opened. 'Our aim is to get a real community here with something for everyone to enjoy' said the Association secretary. On August 1967 the community centre was opened by the Housing Committee chairman, Councillor Kebbell. This occasioned a further lyrical article, headlined 'The Flats folk say it with music', in which the Council's efforts on behalf of 'one of the remotest Borough outposts' were again detailed.[71] At the end of January 1968 the Civic Trust announced an award for the flats to go to the architects and the Council for their successful rebuilding of a community on 'one of the most dismal sites in London'.[72]

By this time, however, the honeymoon period was over, and the award was greeted with derision by the Tenant's Association committee. Their complaints centred around the unfinished nature of the scheme. Several courtyard shops, including one reserved for a chemist, had not been let, road works had apparently been abandoned half completed, and the block entrances were 'like going into a prison yard. We did hear that though the architects have suggested a way of making it brighter the council will not do anything about it'. There were also complaints of vandalism, lift control panels ripped off,

pram sheds destroyed, facilities abused and lift breakdowns. Plate glass
windows in the community centre were being smashed by 'teenage rowdies from
other parts of the Borough' and were being replaced only by sheets of corrugated
iron. 'Something has got to be done to stop this sort of thing', said the
Association Chairman, 'it can't go on like this'.[73]

Residents views were not mentioned in the local press in April when a
presentation ceremony for the awards was held at the Town Hall. The Trust
citation was quoted at length:

> The solution now seems to be so obvious and inevitable
> that it is easy to forget that so many similar attempts
> have failed... This must be one of the few housing
> developments where the environment is not immediately
> destroyed by washing lines on the balcony and the tenants'
> choice of curtains. The architects have recognized that
> these things do happen. [74]

On April 9th the BBC 2 <u>Man Alive</u> programme screened a documentary on the
flats which after voicing tenant grievances confronted them with the designers.
In North's view, 'the tenants didn't half let off steam. Everything was wrong!
But whilst they moaned like hell, we were holding this in almost palatial
conditions in the community hall I'd built them'.[75] To him a lot of the
complaints seemed to stem not from the buildings themselves so much as from
abuses of its facilities, such as the milkman jamming one lift in the mornings
in order to get his round done, or tenants giving up hobbies like carpentry
rather than use communal facilities which were provided. Other points were
matters of management. There was no area for children's ball games for example.
To the general complaints about the lack of community feeling in the flats, all
the Council spokesmen replied in terms which distinguished between providing a
suitable housing background for a community to develop, which they claimed the
Council had done, and providing a community ready made, which they rightly
claimed nobody could do.[76] Since they envisaged providing a favourable housing
background exclusively in terms of eliminating poor quality housing and producing
a dwelling with up to date amenities, they contrived to leave the impression that
the failings of the estate were really a reflection of residents' shortcomings.

Henry Raynor, writing in <u>The Times</u> TV column the following day seems to have absorbed this message most:

> The fortunate outsider, compelled neither to plan for the
> accommodation of too many people on too small a space, nor
> to live in what the planners have provided, became aware of
> the helplessness of everybody who spoke... Of course the
> outsider is puzzled by the unadaptability of people who miss
> an old neighbourhood but seem unable to create a new, and
> worried by a way of city life which forces authorities to think
> in terms of the number of people who can be packed into any
> available space. 77

As in most other blocks of tall flats in Newham, there was a considerable reaction amongst residents to the Ronan Point collapse.   In February 1969 a minor row about repairs to rogue electricity cables blew up after Kebbell had kept the nature of the repairs a secret to avoid 'spreading alarm and despondency'.[78]   In March 1970 a Council structural survey found the blocks to be 'at slight risk while gas was installed' and the flats were converted to all electric use.[79]

By this stage the flats were already looking the worse for wear.   Stories of ghosts in the basement areas became common, perhaps an indication of hostility projected onto the least attractive part of the blocks.[80]   The Tenants Association went through a bad patch following the withdrawal of the councillor chairman who had personal problems.[81]   The Association was later revived by another councillor and the Housing Department began to give flats in the scheme to young teachers and student doctors, partly because they were now difficult to let, and partly because in the Housing Director's view 'these people give the blocks a bit of a lift.'[82]

The estate now stands beside fast emptying docks which are due to be redeveloped, a redevelopment which may in time end the area's isolation.   In the interim the enclave seems to be running to seed at an accelerating rate, with only a pub and a battered community centre by way of amenities.

TALL BLOCKS AND HOUSES

Barnwood Court's history was repeated in a broadly similar fashion across

all the estates planned in this period.   The HC and the architects department were quite clearly aware of the feelings against high rise amongst people being rehoused from slum houses and the waiting list.[83]   But only in one instance did these feelings become overt, in 1962 when the three councillors and the local Labour party of Bermesyde ward unsuccessfully opposed a plan to build a 16 storey block in their area, which had had no high flats until then.[84]   (Although the Council was entirely Labour at this stage all three councillors had the whip withdrawn for a token period for voting against the Labour group's decision in Council).[85]

For the most part, the high flat programme proved acceptable to HC members because of its combination with a renewal of house building.   The new mix of 3 : 1 high rise to family houses (ironically the mirror image of North's proposals in the Abercrombie Plan) resulted in large phalanxes of high flats surrounded by streets of houses, which meant that little open space was provided even on large schemes, while on small sites tall blocks were built on their own at high densities.   Overall densities consistently reached levels over 150 ppa in this period, and high rise accounted for over 70% of all approvals by 1963.[86] These strands of West Ham's policy reached their most complete expression in the system building programme.

THE SYSTEM BUILDING COMMITMENT

The 1961-66 Programme was premissed upon, firstly, expanding the design capacity at the Borough's disposal by employing private architects, and secondly securing a better contractual involvement in West Ham's housing effort.   The Borough's contracting record, despite the adoption of selective tendering, was a poor one.   Analysis of the thirty high block contracts awarded between 1954 and 1964 (worth around £14.6 million) shows that on over a third more than eight tenders were invited, and on only one were there less than five bids.[87] Twenty eight firms entered tenders (plus the Works department) and eleven of these were successful.   But no consistent relations were established with firms nor were national firms involved.   Only three firms won more than one high rise

contract, one being a local firm and the other two London regional contractors who won contracts on less than a quarter of all their tenders. Costs in West Ham were high and building labour was attracted from the Borough by the massive office building boom in central London from the late 1950s.

It was largely to meet this difficulty of attracting capital commitment by large firms and of retaining labour that North began to think of industrialized building. The architects department had employed a non-traditional house building system in the mid-'50s with poor results,[88] and it was only when North's Ministry and CHAC contacts suggested a move towards industrialized <u>high rise</u> in 1959 that his interest in prefabricated systems was reawakened. His interest became serious in 1962 when he persuaded the whole HC to attend the CCA 'Housing from the Factory' Conference.[89] The committee members were very impressed by a Costain system at this Conference. In this a block of flats was built at ground level with each successive floor being jacked up for a new floor to be built underneath.[90] In response to a CCA offer a delegation inspected the system in action at Coventry[91] and the architects department negotiated with Costain on two specially designed blocks.[92] This deal fell through because of the prohibitive costs of the system[93] - (Costain's bid was 15% more than the final price of the blocks' tender let by open competition).[94] But the experience clearly opened up the HC to accept industrialized building and over the next year West Ham explored a number of other techniques, including Bovis' Tracoba system.[95] North was also one of the architects to take part in the seminal visit to inspect system building in Scandinavia organized by the Association of Municipal Corporations in June 1962.[96] He recalled that

> the system I was most impressed with was the one that we
> used eventually, (Larsen-Nielson)... . I'd been all over
> their main factory in Denmark. They're amazing people.
> Both Larsen and Nielson were there to talk to us, about a
> dozen architects! And they knew what was going on, oh yes!
> I must say it did impress me. I thought, 'This will be the
> answer to our growing problem of manpower shortage'... At
> that time I think they were the biggest producers of any system
> in the world. 97

In October North flew at his own expense to Vienna to inspect the Camus system, and reported back to the Committee in terms suggesting he was by then committed to adopting a heavy prefabrication system.[98]   Their interest led him to look for a site large enough to accommodate a worthwhile system building programme, and early in 1964 he suggested that industrialized building be adopted to develop a large clearance area at Clever Road in Customs House ward on which the C.P.O. had just gone through.   The architects department grouped all the high flats into Phase 1 of this development, envisaging four 23 storey blocks with 110 flats in each.[99]   The HC approved an investigation into systems suitable for this scheme, and North in practice looked at just the Camus and Larsen-Nielson systems. His report following these enquiries explained:

> 'System building', as it is called, is in my opinion far
> more suitable for tall blocks than for two and three storey
> dwellings.   I doubt whether any of the new methods can equal
> in all respects houses built in this country by traditional
> methods.   The investigations which have been carried out at
> this stage therefore are solely concerned with the construction
> of tall blocks of flats. [100]

The possibility of using industrialized building for building forms intermediate between houses and tall blocks was thus not considered.   North went on to claim that only the Camus and Larsen-Nielson systems were already being built by local authorities in Britain, (which was quite incorrect), and he later modified this to argue that he was 'confining myself to those (systems) with the highest degree of prefabrication'.[101]

The deputy architect and third in command in North's department investigated the Camus system being built at Liverpool by a regional contractor there and were not very impressed.[102]   Camus (Great Britain), the subsidiary of the French firm who licensed the system in Britain were unsure of the contracting arrangements which would apply in London, and West Ham's 500 dwelling order would not be enough to interest a general contractor there.   Even if other local authorities placed orders to get a total approximating Liverpool's 2,500 dwelling contract, a factory would still have to be built in London which would take at least a year. Although the Liverpool general contractor hoped to cut costs by 10% they made no

promises about shorter completion times.

The Larsen-Neilson system on the other hand was being manufactured under licence by the British firm of Taylor Woodrow-Anglian,[103] formed by the merger of Myton Ltd. (a Taylor Woodrow subsidiary), and Anglian Building Products (a major subsidiary of Ready Mixed Concrete Ltd., then a holding company for about fifty concrete producing firms with an authorized capital of £6 million).[104] Taylor Woodrow-Anglian was thus backed by the second largest construction firm and one of the largest concrete producing groups.[105] The firm could supply West Ham from their existing factory and were already building the G.L.C's Morris Walk development just across the river in Woolwich.[106] A five hundred dwelling contract could be built in two and a half years, saving six months construction time. 'Answers to questions about cost were extremely vague.'

There was, however, one major difficulty with a Larsen-Nielson contract:

> Taylor Woodrow-Anglian intimated that several large orders were
> imminent and any local authority wanting say, 500 dwellings,
> would have to use basic standard plans using components going
> through the factory. This is not a satisfactory condition as
> it means simply that an Authority would have to take what the
> contractor is doing at any particular time and not necessarily
> what it wants.
>   To overcome this difficulty a letter of intent would have
> to be given guaranteeing the construction of approximately 1,000
> dwellings spread over an agreed period of time. This would mean,
> in fact, negotiations with one contractor for three large con-
> tracts having the same tall block content as those under
> consideration.[107]

North at this stage seemed to have no doubts about simply doubling the scale of the industrialized building programme to accommodate the demand set out by Taylor Woodrow-Anglian's managing director, and he urged the Committee to inspect the systems and come to a decision 'as soon as possible' since,

> It would appear that many authorities are making enquiries of
> these firms and some are in an advanced stage of negotiation.[108]

The technical information contained in North's report was confined to the cryptic comment:

> The detailed construction of each system is different, especially
> at the joints, but both have proved satisfactory over a long period.

The report did not mention that the 200 foot high tower blocks for which the systems were envisaged were quite unlike anything built in the Larsen-Nielson system over its fifteen years in use,[109] although Camus blocks had been built up to 23 storeys high.[110]

The HC responded very favourably to this report and flew _en masse_ to Liverpool to inspect the Camus system, which they found unimpressive in appearance.[111] The Morris Walk development on the other hand convinced them that

> industrial methods and factory techniques should be used
> to _supplement_ the Council's house building programme. [112]

(my emphasis)

The HC refused to accept a package deal solution, however, and thus agreed with North's idea of giving a letter of intent to purchase 1,000 dwellings to Taylor Woodrow-Anglian, a decision which diverted a very large part of the building programme into industrialized building. By the end of 1964 two more clearance areas in Customs House at Mortlake and Eldon Roads had been earmarked for the system built high rise.[113] And tender negotiations with Taylor Woodrow-Anglian got successfully under way.[114] West Ham accepted the firm's insistence that the structural engineers for the blocks should be Phillips Consultant Engineers, an 80% owned Taylor Woodrow subsidiary, who were employed by Taylor Woodrow-Anglian themselves on the superstructure, not by the Council.[115] This was a most unusual step since it is normal for such engineers to be a firm independent of the main contractor and employed directly by the client to safeguard his interests in getting a structurally sound building. The Griffiths tribunal noted that it was 'desirable' for structural engineers to 'be entirely independent of the contractors'.[116] The letter of intent to purchase 1,000 Larsen-Nielson flats was finally signed early in 1965.

The large scale system building commitment posed a major threat to the Works Department which up to then had a privileged 'insider' position in tendering for contracts and which now felt under threat.[117] The Borough Engineer first

asked to be included in the system building programme, and when this proved impossible he and North negotiated a deal whereby some of the work on traditional high rise would be guaranteed to his department.[118]

In May 1965 control of housing passed from West Ham to the new Newham authority.

7.3: East Ham's Housing Policy.

POST WAR PLANNING

East Ham also suffered from the blitz, but the scale of housing destruction was quite unlike that in West Ham where docks and housing were intermingled. War damage to houses rather than sheer loss of accommodation was thus the major problem and the Borough's post-war housing effort grew rather slowly out of a large scale rehabilitation drive launched by the energetic Chief Housing Officer, J.E. Austin.[119] Austin, who was originally a public health inspector, was successful in establishing his own department after the war and in acquiring complete control of the planning, scheduling and contracting phases of housing construction.[120] The Housing Department had its own architectural and layout staffs and its own land bank which Austin used with little reference to the planning powers of the Borough Engineer and the Town Planning Committee. (For example, at one stage in the late 1950s he was negotiating in secret with the Port of London Authority to exchange an area of council housing standing in the way of P.L.A. expansion plans for a larger open area in Beckton Flats even though East Ham was at this stage supposed to be developing a plan for the flats area as a whole).[121] Austin's relations with the small Housing Committee were very close, and much of the decision making on the committee was confined to a leadership group consisting of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, the Mayor and a senior alderman, with the full HC ratifying these decisions post hoc.

As in West Ham, East Ham's basic planning policy was influenced very largely by the Abercrombie Plan which proposed a target population of just under 100,000 and densities of 100 ppa, except in the extreme north east of the Borough where

they would fall to 77 ppa.[122] The Council in 1946 refused to envisage a significant population fall, settling for a target only 3,000 less than their current population. But at the same time they were reluctant to approve early redevelopment proposals including blocks of flats. Both Austin and the Borough Engineer insisted that these desires were contradictory,[123] and Austin called for 'the acceptance of flat provision without prescription as to height', and a readiness to tolerate 'eccentric densities' well above 100 ppa on some developments.[124] Although the Council gave this approval in principle, East Ham's very slow start on permanent housing, which resulted in only 670 approvals in the five years 1946-50, left the question of Council members' attitudes to specific proposals unresolved for some years.

The Borough's first experiment with high rise came in 1950. The Council had by this stage become concerned about the prospect of continuing housing problems and sought to revise the Borough's population target upwards in order to enhance its programming priority and accommodate more people within the area.[125] At one small site in an unpleasant situation close to a tin factory Austin's architectural staff recommended using two higher blocks in order to create some open space.[126] The HC approved plans for eight storey blocks consisting entirely of three bedroom flats, including lifts so that 'perambulators may be conveyed to the top floor'.[127] This was a complete departure from the agreement in principle of 1946, when it was envisaged that flats would only be used to provide accommodation for single people or childless couples. In the event the blocks proved very expensive[128] and between 1951 and 1957 the housing department put forward no more plans for high flats in East Ham itself. An eight storey block was, however, included in an out-Borough estate in Essex despite the opposition first of Essex County Council (which was resolved only after arbitration by the Ministry regional architect),[129] and secondly of the local residents association, (which was by and large ignored, although a meeting was held in the area to outline the Council's proposals).[130]

1956-61: THE EMERGENCE OF A HIGH FLAT PROGRAMME

As in West Ham, the introduction of the progressive storey height subsidy produced a quick response from the housing architects. Austin put forward a succession of plans for small, eight storey flat blocks in 1956-8, with some marked variations between schemes. At one site only 25% of accommodation was in high rise,[131] but at most high flats accounted for three quarters of the dwellings and there was little open space provision.[132] In 1958 under a fifth of housing approvals was high rise, and in 1959 there were no high flats approvals at all, (Figure 7.10).[133]

The high flats total began to increase quite sharply from 1960 onwards, however, largely because of a revision of the slum clearance programme made in 1957. Austin reported to the HC that the Borough had lost 4,200 people in the period 1951-6 through out-migration, as well as a further 3,000 in out-Borough housing development, a trend which he attributed to the continued existence of bad housing and a waiting list of 6,000 families.[134] To cope with this adverse trend the HC agreed to reschedule several large sites for clearance in the immediate future and to try to make larger housing gains on redevelopments. Significant clearance and redevelopment began in 1959 at North Woolwich in the extreme south of the Borough, and reached a stable and modest level in the early '60s, (Table 7.5). The housing department produced plans for the first high rise estate at North Woolwich although the storey height limit remained at eight storeys. The estate attracted tenders from Wates who from an initial contract of £130,000 went on to win further contracts worth half a million pounds over the next two years.[136] In fact, from this point on all East Ham high rise contracts were shared between Wates and a local firm, and a policy of negotiating follow-up contracts with these firms after a run-off competition was adopted by the Housing Department.[137] Costs were kept very low since East Ham's basic block design was now relatively easy to build, given the advances in high rise techniques. The block designs were extremely conservative, being for the most part simple extensions of low rise designs.[138]

Figure 7.10: High Rise as a Proportion of East Ham Tender Approvals, 1946-63.

Figure 7.10: High Rise as a Proportion of East Ham Tender Approvals, 1946-63.
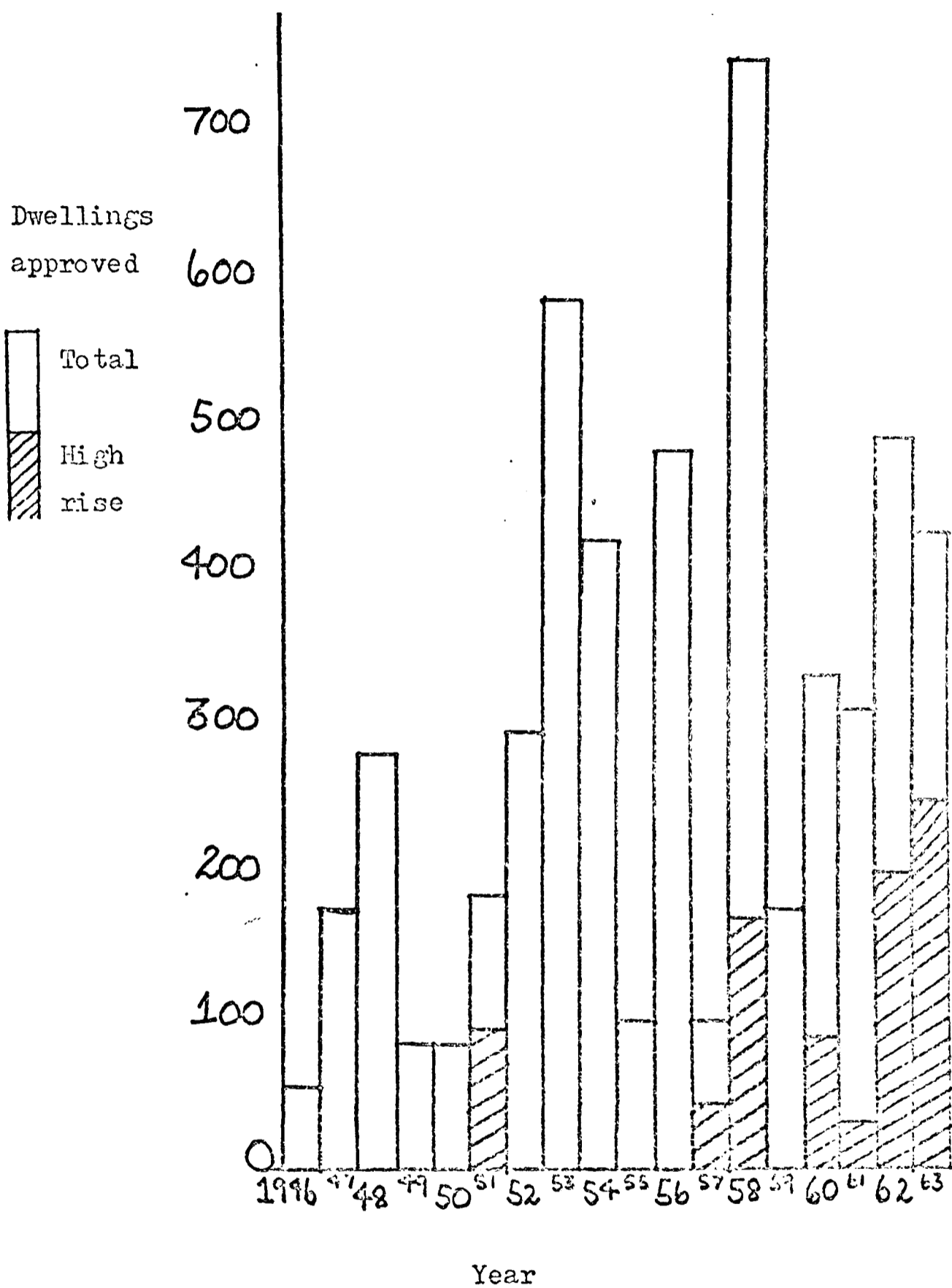
Table 7.5: The Housing Situation in East Ham, 1946-64; Annual Construction

and Demolition.

Date	Public Housing Completions (1)	Private Housing Completions (2)	Slum Clearance (3)	(1) - (3)	(1) + (2) - (3)
1946	-	2			
1947	50	-			
1948	200	1			
1949	233	2			
1950	128	-			
1951	48	2			
1952	161	3			
1953	300	15			
1954	325	423			
1955	534	4	26	508	512
1956	270	2	38	232	234
1957	253	-	42	211	211
1958	330	-	-	330	330
1959	313	-	108	205	205
1960	538	-	47	491	491
1961	359	-	121	238	238
1962	267	-	198	169	169
1963	323	3	49	274	277
1964	414	84	173	241	325

The second area brought forward for clearance covered a large part of

Little Ilford ward and entailed a complex trading of land between the HC and

the Education Committee which left Austin with a considerable loss of

accommodation as a result of redevelopment unless densities were increased.[139]

This was also East Ham's first attempt at comprehensive redevelopment and his

department quickly decided that if a suitably striking design was to be

produced the eight storey limit would have to be breached.[140] In 1961 Austin

secured HC approval for layout plans in which the initial designs for eight

storey blocks were replaced by fifteen storey blocks.[141] This decision

encouraged him to attempt the same change at two smaller sites, one of which

won an MHLG Good Design in Housing award in 1964.[142] These changes pushed

the proportion of the Borough's housing approvals in high rise up to 58% by

1963.[143]   But it did not indicate a fundamental change in attitude in favour of large scale high rise building.   Austin and the HC remained very conservative in their tastes, and the 15 storey blocks were in many ways further extensions of the previous designs.

The Little Ilford redevelopment, which involved clearing 837 dwellings on a 38 acre site, was the East Ham Housing Department's major planning and design achievement.[144]   Initially planned with two fifteen storey and six eight storey blocks it was 'densified' under Newham, so that the planned population was increased by almost 40% and the smaller blocks' heights were raised to twelve storeys,

1963-65, TRANSITION DIFFICULTIES

From July 1963 onward West and East Ham were due to merge to form the London Borough of Newham under the proposals of the London Government Act, although the final transfer of control took place only in May 1965.[145]   The first Newham Council was elected in 1964 and in the summer appointed North, the West Ham architect, to be Chief Architect and Planner, and an outside candidate E. Davies to be Housing Manager.[146]   Austin himself was due to retire but his relations with West Ham officers were not good, partly because his staff were passed over for some key Newham jobs, and partly because the post of East Ham Borough Engineer was given for a year to the West Ham officer appointed by Newham.[147]   A serious incident arose during 1964 when Austin found that an MHLG architect was opposing a scheme put forward by his department partly on the basis of an alternative plan prepared by the Engineer's planning staff but rejected by the Town Planning and Housing Committees.[148] An East Ham delegation to the Minister secured the removal of opposition to the scheme,[149] but the question of how plans were passed to the Ministry architect remained unsolved.   A joint working party of West and East Ham officers was not markedly successful in co-ordinating the two Boroughs' plans.   Although agreement was reached on some schemes, the clear pressure to increase densities

on the West Ham side led Austin to try and push as many of his schemes through to tender approval as possible before the May 1965 deadline.[150] In his last report to the HC he explicitly played down the trend towards greater high flat building in the early '60s:

> The realization that the Council do undertake house building as part of mixed development continues to stimulate demand for houses in lieu of flats. That flat life is indeed the price of "city living" is still not appreciated by many whose obvious and natural desires are for houses. The needs of the larger growing family are often satisfied only by parlour type homes with gardens and more provision of this type may well have to be seriously considered in future schemes. [151]

In one way, housing large families with children in high blocks, East Ham had been much less consistent than West Ham at that time, having built three bedroom multi-storey flats, for example. But on the whole Austin's department remained in close touch with tenant wishes and was mainly concerned in its designs to build something which was practicable and relatively familiar. This attitude was strongly held by most East Ham councillors and it remained an important influence on the type of scheme approved for the East Ham area under Newham.

7.4: Housing Policy in Newham, 1965-68.

1964-65: ASSIMULATING EAST HAM

Both West and East Ham Councils opposed the Newham merger, arguing that it was foolish to combine two of the three existing authorities with experience of the whole range of local government services.[152] For East Ham the merger implied a levelling down in its service provision in terms of housing and education particularly, a change made all the harder because of the pattern of control in the Newham Labour group.[153] In 1960 a 12.5p increase in East Ham's rates sparked a ratepayer protest movement, and against all local predictions the Ratepayer candidates consistently won Council seats from Labour over the next four years; by 1964 they held a third of the seats on the East Ham Council. As a result of their success two thirds of the Newham Labour group were from

West Ham wards, although western wards accounted for only a small majority of members overall.

West Ham dominance in housing construction matters was assured by the scale of its building programme, and strengthened by the appointment of North as Borough Architect in Newham.   In December 1964 Newham's Housing Committee (HC) considered a joint report by the County Borough officers' working party on slum clearance up to 1971, which consisted entirely of a spatchcock amalgamation of their existing programmes (Table 7.6).[154] The contrast between the two programmes was extreme, particularly on the proportion of fit housing scheduled for demolition and on the housing gains to be made.   North criticized the East Ham proposals as making no contribution to Newham's overall problems, while East Ham councillors objected to the idea that their area should now take on the burden of West Ham's past failures.   In the end the HC sided with North, asking for a review of East Ham proposals 'on the possibility of · developing at a higher density' and recommending 'that the "system building" programme currently being carried out in West Ham be continued and extended to include suitable sites in Newham'.[155]

Table 7.6:   The West Ham and East Ham Programmes, 1964-71.

	West Ham	East Ham	Newham
Demolitions:			
Slum properties	1,524	2,414	3,937
Non-slum properties	1,893	636	2,529
Temporary accommodation	208	576	784
Total Demolitions	3,624	3,626	7,250
New Completions	8,416	4,281	12,697
Proportion of demolitions fit properties	52%	18%	n.a.
Redevelopment gain (%)	132	18	n.a.

The decision produced an angry reaction.   The East Ham HC Chairman told the press:

> I'm speaking on behalf of the people of East Ham when I say
> we don't want that kind of thing here.   I've fought this
> idea for many-years and I would cry it from the rooftops if
> an attempt was made to make East Ham's development similar to
> West Ham's. 156

Of West Ham's tower blocks he remarked: 'I was shocked to see the surroundings people will be expected to live in'. A prominent Newham councillor from East Ham warned: 'I think it would be awful to spoil East Ham with higher blocks of flats. East Ham is built over as it is'. And Ratepayer and Liberal councillors denounced West Ham's housing as 'a mass of pigeon holes' and 'a series of Dartmoor prisons'.[157] The protests did not halt the 'densification' of East Ham developments - densities were increased by 40% at Little Ilford for example.[158] But the protests did succeed in deflecting proposals for the industrialized building programme away from the built up area of East Ham and in producing a running controversy over Newham plans for 22 storey blocks in the area.[159]

TRADITIONAL HIGH RISE

Newham's traditional high rise programme showed two major changes from that in West Ham. Firstly, as traditional developments became a progressively reduced and more peripheral factor in Newham's housing programme, densities were raised, so that on some sites net density figures of 215 ppa were being attained.[160] Secondly the Newham Housing Manager, E.P. Davies, seemed unconcerned about the problems of housing families in high rise, and as a result the proportion of larger flats in the high rise programme rose. At one clearance area, re-developed entirely in three 22 storey flat blocks, the progression was particularly stark. Phase One had no three bedroom flats; the second block had 59% two bedroom and 27% three bedroom flats; and the final block, approved in late 1968, had 66% two bedroom and 34% three bedroom accommodation.[161] At three other sites between a fifth and a third of the high flats had three or more bedrooms.[162] Density increases on these developments were accomplished by the simple elimination of family houses from the schemes.

. The decline in the standards apparently acceptable to the housing department reached its nadir in the redevelopment of the street market at Queens Road. The market was one of three in the West Ham area, one of which was redeveloped in 1959 as part of a road improvement/high flat scheme.[163] The

second, Angel Lane in Stratford, was the site of West Ham and Newham Councils' biggest property venture - a massive shopping and office block scheme which was first agreed in 1959 and finally completed in 1976.[164] North's vague plans for the rather run down Queens Road site were nipped in the bud in 1963 by the intervention of Samuel Properties Ltd. (a subsidiary of the Hill Samuel merchant bank). The company secretly bought up a large amount of property round the market and then approached West Ham with a proposal that they should jointly redevelop the area.[165] In return for the use of compulsory purchase to complete the land assembly operation, West Ham would get a rent for the ground space and a certain amount of council housing. Samuel's proposed to build at their expense a large office block, a new market, shops, and commercial multi-storey car parks. North recommended acceptance of the idea and a deal was worked out by the Borough Treasurer. At a later stage in the negotiations MHLG refused permission for the office block, but North intervened to save the deal, suggesting that the offices be replaced by a similar shaped block of council flats.[166] The final designs, drawn up for Samuel's by the leading private architects Covell, Matthews and Partners, included the original 200 council flats in a single 23 storey block built over a five storey car park, plus further council flats in a 9 storey block over two floors of shops.[167] On a negotiated contract with a Bovis subsidiary signed in 1968 the development cost Newham nearly £1.6 million, over £4,000 a flat and the scheme took four years to build.[168]

The final scheme included 213 flats in the 28 storey block, (of which half had two bedrooms and an eighth had three), and 92 flats in the smaller block, (of which three fifths had three bedrooms and 27% had two bedrooms). Altogether nearly 1,100 people are housed on 2.8 acres of land at net residential densities of 380 ppa;[169] there is no open space on site and the rest of the development is taken up by shops and car parks. In broader planning terms the scheme seems to have been equally disastrous.[170]

Even taking into account the Queens Road blocks, the flow of traditional high rise projects in Newham was decreasing through 1964-67 as a greater

proportion of the Borough's high rise programme was switched into system
building and it is this which accounts for the decline in the share of
approvals in high flats from over 82% in 1964 to 61% in 1967, (Figure 7.1).[171]

THE EXPANSION OF SYSTEM BUILDING

The system building commitment made by West Ham became the central element
in Newham's expanded housing programme.[172] The first contract for the Clever
and Eldon Road blocks was signed in December 1965 for £2.7 million, and the
second in late 1966 for £2.5 million (a 10% cost increase to £4,400 per flat).[173]
In September 1966 North reported to the HC his proposals for extending the
system building programme:

> The Newham Housing Programme is considerably larger than the
> combined programmes of the two old Boroughs, and the current
> four year programme as approved by the Minister of Housing and
> Local Government is the largest of the 32 London Boroughs. The
> labour force on residential development in the Borough has remained
> relatively constant over the last few years, and to cope with our
> expanding programme it is essential if we are to achieve our targets,
> that system building be continuously used in our Programme. [174]

This meant that 'approximately one third to one half of our Programme should
be built by industrialized methods', or in hard figures 'between 600 and 850
dwellings per year'. 'One system would not be capable of doing this ...
as I would suggest it is not advisable to have "all our eggs in one basket"'.

The report made two recommendations. The first, which was accepted by
the Committee almost without discussion, was that a further notice of intent
to purchase 1,000 dwellings in identical 23 storey tower blocks should be
given to Taylor Woodrow-Anglian, since the first contract was proceeding
satisfactorily. The new blocks would be built partly in Customs House, and
partly in some northern wards.[175]

Secondly North recommended that a further system should be employed for a
new type-plan tower block to form the basis of what his department now termed
the Beckton new town project. Beckton Flats are a large area of wasteland,
partly marsh, partly derelict gas works, lying north of the King George VI
dock which were the subject of intermittent planning by East Ham C.B. throughout

Figure 7.11: High Rise as a Proportion of Newham Tender Approvals, 1964-70.
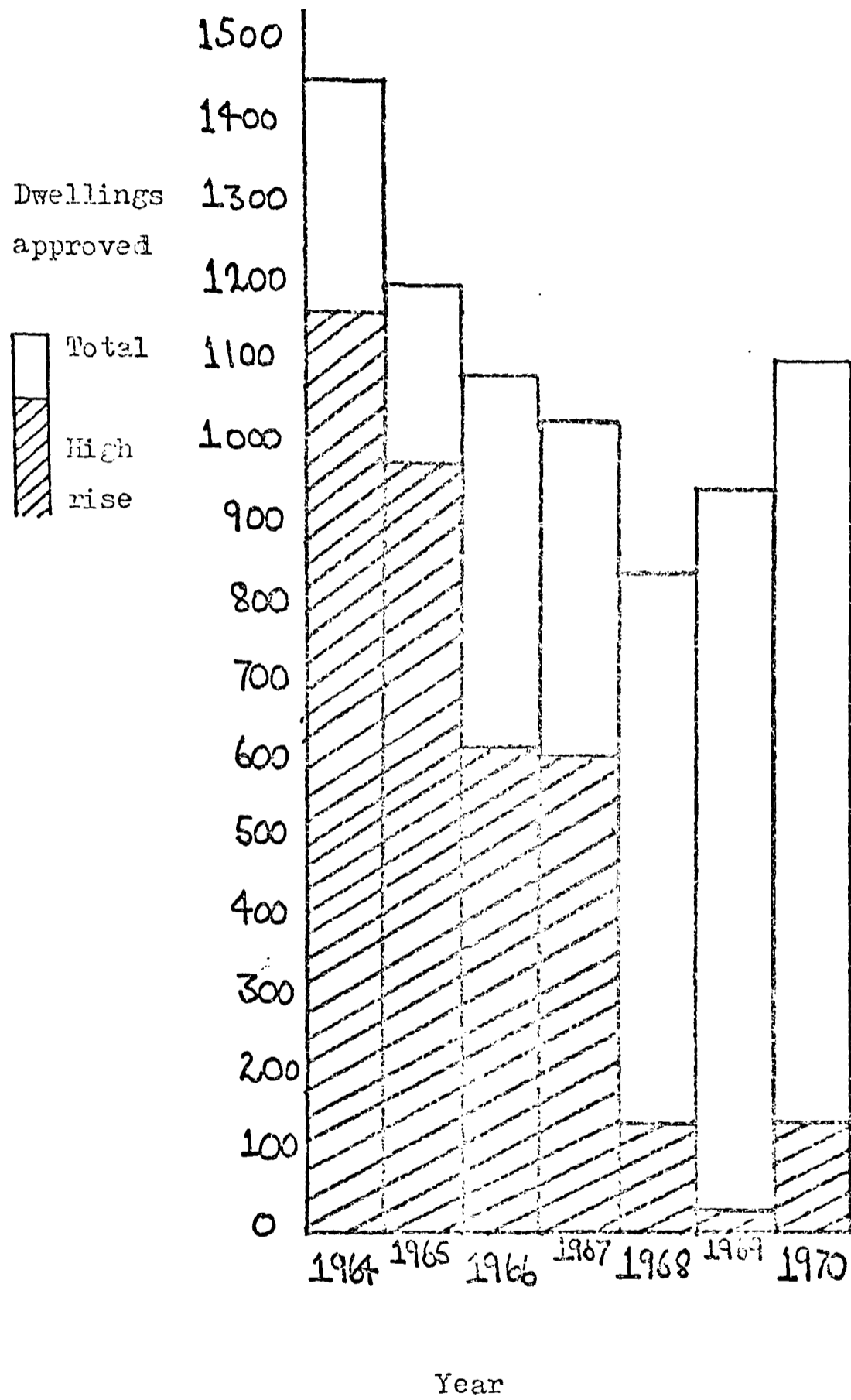
the post-war period.   Newham scrapped plans for a 1,000 dwelling low density development drawn up by Austin in the early '60s[176] and were now looking to the area to provide accommodation for around three times as many people - a very large redevelopment.[177]   North's report this time reviewed ten systems on a range of criteria, including the ability to build both high and low rise dwellings.[178]   He found three that fitted these criteria - Wates, Laing's Jespersen system and Cruden's Skarne system.   Crudens improved their standing by suggesting that they could also provide low rise flat components for erection by the Council's Works Department, which removed one major obstacle to the expansion of the system building programme.   North recommended that the HC inspect the three systems with a view to holding a competition for 1,000 flats in 23 storey blocks.   In the course of this investigation it transpired that the Jespersen system could not be built above 16 storeys so Newham's plans were modified to take account of this as an alternative.[179]   Council members were also impressed by the industrialized low rise they inspected and an extra 500 low rise flats were included in the competition.[180]

Like many previous schemes, Newham's plans got bogged down in the difficulties and expense of the Beckton site.   In mid 1967 the HC Chairman, Kebbell, announced the Borough's intention of building 'a small new town' for 12,000 people and claimed that the Council's resources were sufficient to carry through the scheme alone.[181]   Over the next six months this position became increasingly untenable, and was attacked by the Ratepayers who pressed the idea of securing G.L.C. involvement to lighten the cost burden on Newham.[182] Following a consultant's report which estimated the bill for draining the Beckton area alone at £5 million, the Labour leader Boyce began to negotiate towards a deal with the G.L.C., and a joint development was announced in December 1967.[183]   In practice throughout this period the competition for a second system hung in mid air and no progress on designs was made, although it was clear that a large scale commitment would be made soon.   In this period Wates and Crudens seem to have lost interest in a competition and Laing became likely to win the eventual contract.   North in fact began to look for

alternative sites for the second system to be built on.[184]

Finally, the system building programme was further expanded in 1967 when Taylor Woodrow-Anglian suggested to North that progress on their first contract was such that further blocks at the Clever or Mortlake Road sites could be built at substantial cost savings.[185] North responded by deleting two areas of family housing in these schemes and substituting two more 23 storey tower blocks consisting entirely of two bedroom accommodation, housing an extra 600 people on the estates and costing a further £1.2 million. Again the Housing Manager proved very willing to allow this densification process and the provision of family accommodation in high rise to go ahead.[186]

By early 1968 then the Newham system building programme included plans for 3,200 flats in tower blocks (capable of housing more than 10,000 people) and a possible further 500 low rise flats.

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT POLICY CHANGES

The withdrawal of the progressive storey height subsidy in November 1965 did not affect Newham very much since the Treasurer reported that 'whilst the height subsidy element would be less than at present, the overall level of subsidy for a tall block of flats would show an increase'.[187] The HC nonetheless wrote to the Association of Municipal Corporations to press for the restoration of the subsidy and sent a delegation to the Ministry itself to protest at the change.

The introduction of the housing cost yardsticks in April 1967 proved a much more serious blow, particularly since Newham's yardstick was set at only 10% above the national average, rather than the 12.5% addition given to Inner London boroughs.[188] At a joint meeting of the Housing and Finance Committees in July North outlined the consequences of the change as an end to all future high flat schemes and a switch to building 3 or 4 storey flats or maisonettes, which he described as 'a deplorable form of development'.[189] No more family houses could be provided, he claimed, and open space provision would be cut. The Committees strongly opposed the yardsticks and the Town

Clerk was instructed to write in protest to the Ministry and to seek help in this again from the A.M.C. At a press conference the Clerk declared that low rise flat developments 'were not acceptable to local opinion', were necessarily 'dreary and unimaginative' and would mean that the Council would not be able' to provide the open space and greenery in which the high blocks have been set'.[190]

The yardstick decision meant that the Newham architects had to revise schemes that would not reach tender approval before the end of June 1967 to meet the yardsticks. In practice there were two let-outs. Firstly, density limits over 165 ppa would be allowed in inner London if a justification for them could be provided. Secondly, where work on drawings and designs was well advanced but schemes would not meet the deadline, the Ministry would consider special pleading and allow ad hoc limits for subsidy purposes.[191] The result of these decisions was that six traditional high rise schemes at an early . stage in programming were redesigned as low rise estates by mid-1968.[192] But the industrialized programme apparently went ahead unaffected since a great deal of work on type plan designs had already been done and contract negotiations were well advanced, at least with Taylor Woodrow-Anglian. The HC decided to reduce density levels generally to around 120 ppa, but this was still a level which had been attained using mainly high rise before 1965.[193] By May 1968 then, Newham had definitely replanned less than 700 high flats, and further completions of several thousand dwellings in tower blocks were in the pipeline and liable to receive MHLG approval.

7.5: Ronan Point - Crisis of Legitimation [194]

The first wave of system built blocks in Customs House was to provide rehousing for nearly 2,000 people living in Beckton ward clearance areas, in Victorian terraces blighted for nearly fifteen years by the threat of redevelopment.

Until May 1968 there was no indication that anything would disturb the

normal process of rehousing and further clearance in Beckton. Residents in the clearance area complained about construction noise and may have felt vaguely worried by the discontents with Newham's high rise which were beginning to be noticed by the local press.[195] But all accepted that their homes would be pulled down within a year and that their housing future would be determined by the local bureaucracy without consulting them. The block at Eldon Road and the first Clever Road block were completed and occupied by people from other clearance areas. On May 16th in the Clever Road block, called Ronan Point after the Vice-Chairman of the Housing Committee, an old lady on the eighteenth floor lit her gas cooker early in the morning. An explosion occurred, the load bearing walls of her flat blew out and a phenomenon now known as progressive collapse took place. The living rooms of all the flats on one corner of the block collapsed on top of each other down to the podium, together with all the bedrooms above the sixteenth floor. Because virtually everyone was still in bed and some of the flats were unoccupied the death toll was only five people, together with 17 injured; in other circumstances it could have topped 30.[196]

The collapse produced an acute crisis in Newham's housing programme, with a drastic fall in the Borough's completions in 1968, and an even sharper fall in housing gains being made from redevelopment, (Table 7.7).[197] It also produced a marked change in the Council's relations with clearance area residents in Beckton. The Minister of Housing announced an immediate Tribunal of Inquiry into the disaster, and the media gave saturation coverage to the issue.[198] There were conflicting views about the cause of the disaster. The Times interviewed a wide range of architects, engineers and industrialized building manufacturers on May 16th and almost all of them 'insisted that the explosion was a rare chance for which no designer could make allowances. Mr Ove Arup, (a leading structural engineer), said that to construct buildings capable of withstanding "bomb type" explosions would be like designing them to withstand earthquakes'.[199] Taylor Woodrow-Anglian issued a statement to the

press in which they claimed that any other type of building would have suffered worse damage. 'Because floors were hinged to walls they swung downwards at one end instead of crashing on to floors below with both ends unattached.' The managing director, Mr Geoffrey Davis, said: 'The type of structure used here is no less structurally safe than any other form of traditional structure... There is not the slightest sign of structural failure'.[200]

Table 7.7: The Housing Situation, 1965-72; Annual Construction and Demolition.

Date	Public Housing Completions	Private Housing Completions	Slum Clearance	(1) - (3)	(1) + (2) - (3)
	(1)	(2)	(3)		
1965	1,335	112	767	568	680
1966	1,349	66	631	718	784
1967	1,678	98	726	952	1,052
1968	966	34	604	362	396
1969	748	29	504	244	273
1970	925	22	529	396	418
1971	1,170	114	947	223	337
1972	1,114	28	910	204	232

The Council's response was complicated by the results of the 1968 local elections which brought the combined Ratepayer-Tory-Liberal opposition to parity with Labour in terms of councillors,[201] although Labour secured their position by electing ten Labour aldermen with the Mayor's casting voting.[202] Nevertheless, the Labour leadership came under some criticism for the system building programme from the opposition and some dissident Labour members, and reacted to the collapse in an extremely defensive way. On May 17th, after legal advice to refrain from any action or comment possibly prejudicial to the result of the Inquiry, the leadership inaugurated a policy of refusing to discuss anything to do with system building.[203] Construction work on the four uncompleted and three unstarted blocks was not halted or slowed down in any way, nor was the occupied block at Eldon Road evacuated.

Meanwhile people in the Beckton clearance area reacted equally strongly.

By lunchtime on May 16th five Beckton residents independently of each other started collecting signatures for a petition against being rehoused in the system built high flats. They soon came together and, as one of them described it, 'from then on the whole thing sort of snowballed. People knocked on our doors asking to sign and we decided to form a fighting committee'.[204] This was the first time clearance area residents had possessed some form of collective organization in Newham. When they presented the petition to the Council two days later with 700 signatures, the newly appointed protest committee were told by the HC Chairman that it could not be discussed until after the Inquiry.[205] The petition stated 'under present conditions we will flatly refuse to leave our present slums to enter modern slums', to which a letter from the Town Clerk replied, 'whether the blocks become slums or not will depend on the people who live in them'.[206] The Housing Chairman remarked to the Press that it was unnecessary for the Beckton residents 'to talk of doing battle with anyone at this stage'.[207]

The Council leadership in practice used the Inquiry period to demonstrate their confidence in the system, a stance encouraged by TW-A. The firm told the first Inquiry sitting that the flats could not possibly be expected to stand the force of an explosion which they put at perhaps as much as 600 lbs per square inch.[208] A more helpful estimate was given by structural engineers appointed by the Treasury Solicitor who reported in July that the flats had failed at a pressure of around 3 lbs per square inch.[209] On the same day that these engineers told the Inquiry that they feared for the safety of thousands of residents in system built blocks, TW-A and Newham Council convened a special Press Conference to announce that two more blocks at Clever Rd had been completed and would be occupied immediately, a story extensively reported under headlines such as 'Ronan tenants want tower homes' and '"No fear" as families go back'.[210] The Housing Chairman later described this as 'an exercise in psychology', and explained: 'I am certain that if we had allowed the blocks to remain empty we would have received applications from tenants in (the

already occupied block) for rehousing'.[211]   The new blocks were also used
to launch a pet idea of the Labour leader, Boyce, and Kebbell known as the
Young Married Couples scheme, in which newly married people lived in a council
flat and saved a guaranteed sum each month towards the cost of a house built
for sale to them by Newham.   The one bedroom accommodation in the system
built high rise was earmarked for this scheme which could not go ahead unless
the blocks were occupied.[212]

To the Beckton Committee seeing construction work on the blocks continuing
at an increased rate and the new flats being occupied, it was apparent that
the Council's moratorium on discussion was a very one sided affair.   The
protestors called a public meeting to discuss their housing future, but
although it was made clear that Ronan Point would not be discussed Council
officials, the Council leadership, the local Labour M.P. and all the councillors
invited refused to attend, except for one of the three Labour ward councillors.[213]
The 200 people at the meeting made it obvious that they would not be rehoused
into the system built high rise.   'At one point in the meeting nearly everyone
was shouting that they were afraid to go into the tower blocks'.[214]   The
ward councillor was very evasive in his answers and had a rough ride.   He
explained the failure to stop work on the blocks by saying, 'If the Inquiry
finds everything in apple pie order we would lose a lot of money' (in
compensation to the builders).   After the meeting broke up in disgust the
Beckton Committee announced that as they were being 'cold-shouldered' by the
local Labour party they were turning for help to the Conservatives, who
announced their support of the residents' protest.[215]   This was an unwise
move since the six Tory councillors had little influence and all the Labour
councillors, including the discontented backbenchers, now felt free to ignore
the group.[216]

On July 30th, after a string of expert witnesses had criticized the TW-A
system,[217] the Newham architect blandly told the Inquiry that in his view
the flats were perfectly safe before the explosion.[218]   Three days later,

however, the Council learnt privately that the Inquiry was about to submit an interim report to the Minister pointing out that the flats had been found liable to progressive collapse, that the safety of all system built flats in Britain should be checked and that gas should be disconnected from all similar flats.[219] The Council disconnected the gas from their occupied blocks two days before the report became public, describing this as 'an extra precautionary measure'.[220] But public confidence in the Council's position had by now evaporated. Residents in the occupied flats began clamouring to be rehoused and the local press reported their misgivings prominently.[221]

Despite this change and the interim report's reference to 'a phased programme to strengthen the blocks' the Council leadership still did nothing to halt progress on the unbuilt blocks. TW-A made rapid progress on the contract. Between August and November the fourth Clever Rd block was finished but left unoccupied, the first Mortlake Rd block was structurally completed and the remaining three blocks were all built up as far as the first floor.[222] This is important since once the foundations and base were complete a change of building form became very expensive. And strengthening completed blocks was to prove more than ten times as expensive as strengthening the components at the manufacturing stage. 'Rush completion' of system built tower blocks, if it occurred, thus meant considerable extra expense for local authorities and larger strengthening contracts for system building firms.[223] After the interim report the Newham architect did meet with TW-A and Laing, and agree that the 2,000 flats in the second phase of the system building programme and covered by letters of intent should now be built as low rise blocks, instead of 24 storey towers.[224]

How much this decision was influenced by Ronan Point remains unclear. North brought forward plans for the two additional blocks on the Clever and Mortlake Road sites before the Griffiths Tribunal's findings were known and seems to have been taken by surprise at the Committee's opposition to further approvals before the system was given a clean bill of health.[225] This delay

probably forced him to give up an attempt to squeeze other high rise contracts past the Ministry's tightening yardsticks.

After the interim report the Council leadership began to define a 'realist' position in respect of Newham's commitments to system building around the theme 'Homes must not be wasted'.[226] Ratepayer councillors endorsed this view and the Liberal leader denounced the Beckton protest committee as 'a vocal minority trying to bring attention to themselves who will aggravate the problem'.[227]

On November 6th the Inquiry's final report was published and the basis of the Council's policy since May disintegrated.[228] The report apportioned no blame for the disaster to any of the individuals, companies or public authorities involved. It cleared the gas explosion of being the major cause of the collapse after it ascertained that it was of average intensity for a domestic gas explosion. Most of its criticism was reserved for the Larsen-Nielson system. The system was found to be liable to progressive collapse as a result of a number of causes, including fire and wind pressures as well as minor explosions. The joints in the system were found to fail at pressures of 3-12 lbs/sq in. which could be produced by fires or high winds in one in every 50 blocks during their sixty year lifetime.[229] Government sponsored Building Codes of Practice were criticized as blinkered and out of date. The National Building Agency and Building Research Station were censured for lack of awareness of the problems of system building, and the Ministry was reproached by implication for encouraging the use of methods which it had not the expertise to assess.[230] It was clear from all this that the failings of the system were so extensive and systematic that the collapse of Ronan Point could not be attributed in any sense to factors under Council control. The authority had merely gone along with national trends that proved to have been inadequately researched or assessed by anybody in Britain.

However, the report did make some specific criticisms of Newham and Taylor Woodrow-Anglian, particularly the arrangement whereby the company

employed an 80% owned Taylor Woodrow subsidiary as consultant structural
engineers instead of this being an independent firm responsible to the client.[231]
It also criticized the Newham architect and engineer over their procedures
for checking the structural calculations, commenting that 'their altogether
too casual approach appeared to treat compliance with the (building) by-laws
as a tiresome formality rather than an important safeguard'.[232]

Following the report a nationwide investigation into the structural
stability of all high flat blocks was launched, and the strengthening of
system built blocks to much higher standards was set in train.[233] Although
watered down by pressure on MHLG from system building firms, these requirements
imposed large costs on local authorities, alleviated only by an initial
MHLG promise of a 40% grant towards strengthening costs.[234]

The report threw Newham's entire housing programme out of gear. 330
families had to be moved out of the occupied tower blocks[235] and work on all
high rise blocks was finally stopped while the Housing Committee argued through
November and December about the future of the system built flats.[236] At the
end of November Labour backbenchers had succeeded in cutting the 220 extra
flats planned at the Beckton sites for which contracts had not yet been signed.
The structurally finished Mortlake Rd block was to be completed but the last
three blocks were to be the subject of negotiations.[237]

The Council leadership repeatedly pressed for the completion of the
original contract in its entirety arguing:

> We must bear in mind that we have committed the contractors
> to heavy expenditure, possibly as much as £500,000 and that
> our responsibility is a dual one. We are legally contracted
> for the works and cannot throw it out of hand... It is our
> duty to the homeless and the people on the housing list to go
> ahead with a scheme in the near future. [238]

The first argument captured the finance conscious Ratepayer councillors and
the completely specious second argument whittled away the dissident Labour
backbenchers. Although the decision over the last three blocks concerned the
fate of at least 1,000 Beckton residents the Newham leadership blankly refused

to meet the protest committee and their case was not voiced by any councillor.

At a series of meetings with Taylor Woodrow-Anglian, attended by Ministry observers, it became apparent 'that Taylor Woodrow-Anglian might conceivably invoke the penalty clause of their contract with the Council, which one councillor described as "a very substantial sum"'.[239] Although 'the general feelings of committee members with the exception of a few was that no more tall system blocks should be built in Newham.. the financial losses involved could be severe, possibly as much as £1 million'.[240] Alternative ways of carrying out the contract included reducing the blocks' height to 15, 12 or 11 storeys or building low rise maisonettes. When the results of negotiations were referred to the Housing Committee there was a stormy and deadlocked discussion only ended by Kebbell's decision, amidst protests, to close the meeting and leave the final choice of action with the Policy Committee. Kebbell declared: 'My own mind is quite made up on the subject. I am sure that if the original contract with Taylor Woodrow-Anglian was completed together with the necessary strengthening work I would be quite happy with the result'.[241]

The Policy Committee narrowed the issue down to either completing the original contract, or reducing the last three blocks to fifteen storeys, building additional low rise flats to fulfil the contract and paying the firm £50,000 agreed compensation. After observing that even the reduced height blocks 'would still be essentially high rise', they voted to complete the three blocks to 23 storeys, claiming they could not ask the ratepayers to pay £50,000 for nothing.[242] Reinforced by a three line Labour whip this view secured a unanimous Council vote of endorsement. One leading Ratepayer member explained the opposition parties' attitude:

> If there were any fears whatsoever no amount of compensation
> would deter the Council from changing the contract.. Many of
> us have really been opposed to tall blocks on humanitarian
> grounds, (and torn between) an emotional dislike of tower blocks
> and our responsibility to the ratepayers. [243]

No council member apparently pointed out that the reduction in height to 15

storeys would mean that at least 350 fewer people would have to live in high rise. The retreat before paying out compensation is particularly ironic since this was a very small fraction of the extra costs which Newham incurred by failing to stop work on the blocks between May and November 1968. Strengthening contracts, which had to be given to TW-A since the blocks used their system, eventually cost £1,000,000, (half of which was paid by the government), while rebuilding and strengthening Ronan Point cost a further £300,000.[244]

The Council voted to go ahead with all nine blocks strengthened to the highest government standard enacted after the Inquiry and accepted assurances from its officers that the blocks would be as safe as humanly possible. Some weeks after the vote TW-A revealed that this safety standard could not be attained.[245] The national standards had already been watered down in November 1968. Now Newham had to accept a further reduction in safety to a level where gas supplies had to be permanently disconnected from the blocks.[246]

In February 1969 the Housing Committee voted Taylor Woodrow-Anglian their third major contract, for 1,000 low rise flats, despite backbench Labour mutterings, after Kebbell had argued that not to do so would accentuate the disruption of the housing programme and that he was satisfied the firm would 'do the job that is wanted'.[247] Then in June the Council leadership wrote TW-A an extraordinary letter inviting them to contribute half of Newham's £600,000 bill for strengthening operations out of a sense of responsibility to the Borough's homeless and pending a settlement on legal liability for the collapse of Ronan Point.[248] Not surprisingly with a new £4 million order signed since the Inquiry and £1.3 million worth of strengthening contracts lined up, TW-A declined to make any payments or accept any liability.

Meanwhile the Council leadership had still refused to have any dealings with the Beckton residents committee (apart from a brief meeting before the Inquiry report), despite extensive press publicity for their case. In February 1969 when all the decisions about their housing had already been taken

the committee were told in a letter from the Town Clerk:

> The Chairman of the Housing Committee is of the opinion
> that very little could be achieved at this stage by
> meeting your committee.   But it is his firm intention
> at the appropriate time to call a meeting of all the
> residents' associations concerned to explain the position. .
> It is hoped, of course, that your association will be
> represented at this meeting. 249

The protest leader pungently described this as 'complete eyewash' since no

other associations of clearance area residents existed and no such meeting was

ever called.   He told the press: 'Approaching the problem in an orderly and

gentlemanly manner is getting us nowhere.... If you can't get anywhere peace-

fully and with commonsense, what is left?'250

What was left was a steadily escalating series of demonstrations and

meetings which were doomed to failure since all the relevant decisions had

already been taken.   A Conservative councillor sympathetic to the residents

asked the Council in March to consider guaranteeing clearance area families

freedom of choice about accommodation.   The Housing Committee Chairman

declared that clearance area residents would have to take the best dwellings

available: 'In asking for a hard and fast assurance Councillor _____ is being

immature, unrealistic, impracticable and obstructive'.251   At this point

members of the protest committee in the public gallery disrupted the proceedings.

The Beckton residents' relations with the Council leadership were henceforth

non-existent and they were later publicly denounced by the (supposedly impartial)

Mayor when opening a new tower block.252   In May the issue of freedom of

choice was raised again as a formal motion but this was voted out by the Council

without even reaching the Housing Committee.253   After this meeting the Beckton

committee picket got involved in an alleged assault on one of their ward

councillors after he had explained his vote against the motion by saying that

they were 'trying to hold the Council up to ransom'.254   With this extensively

publicized incident the local Conservatives, embarrassed at their inability to

control the increasing violence of the protest committee's actions and

pronouncements, quietly washed their hands of the affair and the improbable

alliance came to an end.[255]

During the summer of 1969 the issue went off the boil until in October the Beckton protest committee were at last invited to 'discuss' their rehousing with the Council leadership, only to be told that whatever their views the bulk of the residents would be rehoused in the last three blocks at Mortlake Road, construction of which would finish in March 1970. The committee left the meeting in an angry mood, declaring 'the big crunch will come when the Council give us new addresses and we refuse to go... This organization was formed specifically to fight an attempt to move us into tower flats and nothing has happened to weaken our determination'.[256] The protestors began planning their reaction to rehousing and mobilizing support to resist the move to the tower blocks, in vain as it turned out since nothing at all happened.

In the event the Council's forecast of rehousing dates was very optimistic and in February 1970 the Council organized two 'goodwill' public meetings, the main purpose of which was to tell the Beckton residents that their rehousing had been postponed for a further six months at least by delays in building the strengthened blocks. In the event these became the first and only occasion on which there was any opportunity for residents to tackle the Council leadership in public.[257] At the first meeting 100 people listened to the Housing Chairman's opening speech in 'tense silence' while the protest committee picketed the meeting. When the first questioner was told by a Housing Department official that virtually all the residents would be rehoused in the system built high rise he replied amidst cheers, 'You can take that and stuff it!' The Chairman immediately threatened to close the meeting and was answered by a chorus of 'It's up to you!' Asked if residents who refused one allocation in a tower block would be given another allocation he replied 'above derisive cheers': 'The Council do not usually make a second offer if the first is considered sufficient and the refusal reason thought to be inadequate'. After a running fire of bitterly hostile questions one man shouted 'You claim you're bettering us but you're not. You're nicking space

off us - you are going to give us less than we started with. It's a bloody farce!' As the tone of the meeting became very angry and many people began to leave, the Housing Chairman quickly closed the proceedings and the Beckton Committee claimed a moral victory for their boycott. The second meeting was even briefer and more embittered.[258]

The protest committee followed up their apparent success by holding a meeting of women members who reiterated their intention to oppose rehousing by force if necessary, and by organizing a picket of the Council at which many councillors refused to accept copies of their statement of objection.[259] But their support had already begun to decline. Many of the residents reacted to the Council's immoveable stance at the public meetings with a feeling of despair, and as the rehousing date receded further into the future so the protest movement began to decay. People had already begun to leave the area. Families prepared to move to flats in other parts of the borough began to be rehoused. People ineligible for rehousing left in search of more permanent accommodation and by the summer those who remained were overwhelmingly anxious to be moved out of the area.[260]

The climax of this process of decay came when the first families to move to houses received their allocations. Two of the protest leaders were offered and accepted houses and the committee fell apart, split by bitter personal animosities.[261] The immediate consequence of the break up was that the local press coverage of the issue ceased almost at once. In July a member of the defunct committee secured some publicity for the continuing plight of the area's residents who still had no information about when rehousing would begin.[262] The Housing Department promised to hold a meeting to let the residents know firm dates, which was never apparently held. Instead the residents were told individually that they would be rehoused over the next seven months as the tower blocks became ready for occupation. By April 1971 nearly 1,000 people had moved into the three blocks, leaving a few families holding out for houses or ground floor flats in the now empty area, surrounded

by vandalized homes and the wreckage of the former community.[263]

For the Beckton residents this result represented an unmistakeable, total defeat. They had failed to influence the Council's policy towards them in any significant way and their own organization had collapsed. Nor did the Beckton protest have much influence elsewhere in Newham.· Late in 1971 the residents in another large clearance area mounted a demonstration protest about the 'blitz conditions' in which they were forced to live and about their rehousing in flats instead of houses.[264] This petered out very quickly with no discernible effect. 'Normal relations' between the Council and residents in clearance areas had thus been re-established.

The treatment of this protest movement by Newham raises serious questions which were not answered by Council members interviewed for this study. Some members of the Council leadership repeatedly denied that there had ever been any protest over high rise in Newham. Another important member commented:

> In my opinion there was never sufficient protest —
> I'm not saying there wasn't any protest mind you —
> but it was never sufficient to influence the decision
> of Council. [265]

Virtually all those who acknowledged the existence of the protest movement argued that those involved were a small minority of Beckton residents and that they were artificially creating resistance to rehousing. Several thought the whole thing was a ploy designed to get the protest leaders offers of council houses. Only the Director of Housing was better informed:

> Interviewer: 'Do you recall a protest about this time by a
> group called the Beckton Ward Residents Committee?'
>
> Director: 'Oh yes. Very strong protest'.
>
> Interviewer: 'How did that work out in the end?'
>
> Director: 'Well' (surprised) 'like it had to. I mean
> we're open, the facts are available. We had
> protest meetings and we simply told the people
> the truth and said, "You want to get out of these

rotten slums. We've got to build the accommodation necessary for you. Here it is, on the doorstep, in high rise! And that's all we can offer you"... You know, there's a skill in dealing with people that achieved that result'.[266]

FINAL DECISIONS

The last high flats in Newham were approved in 1970 although tenants were still moving into newly completed and strengthened blocks as late as 1974.[267] The low rise system built flats proved to be cheap but unattractive[268] and in May 1972 (under a new Housing Chairman) the HC considered a report (from a new Borough Architect) containing feasibility studies on high density layouts with large numbers of houses. A level of 50% house provision at densities of 110 ppa was adopted.[269] Twenty eight years after the Abercrombie Plan, housing policy in Newham had almost come full circle.

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2. D. White, 'Newham - an Area of Urban Decline', New Society, 23 October 1975, pp. 201-4.

3. Ibid., p. 203.

4. Sources, Greater London Council, Annual Abstract of Greater London Statistics, 1971 (London, GLC, 1972), Table 2.07, p. 33; Table 2.12, p. 36; Table 7.07, p. 195; Table 7.18, p. 212; Table 7.05, p. 192; Office of Population Surveys and Censuses, Census 1971, County Report: London, Table 25, Part III, pp. 10-11; GLC, Annual Abstract of Greater London Statistics 1971, Table 11.05, p. 298; Table 4.01, p. 72; Table 1.01, p. 2; OPCS, Census 1971, Economic Activity Tables, 10 per cent sample, for Newham wards (held at Stratford Library).

5. OPCS, Census 1971, Economic Activity Tables; 10 per cent Sample, for Newham wards.

6. White, 'Newham - an Area of Urban Decline', p. 203.

7. See Department of the Environment, Redevelopment of the London Docklands, House of Commons, Paper 348, session 1974-5.

8. This account is largely taken from E.D. Idle, War over West Ham (London, Faber, 1943), pp. 15-48, and K. Lund, London Borough of Newham: Study of Post War Development (London, London Borough of Newham, 1971), pp. 1-3. See also the First Revision (1972) and Second Revision (1973).

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11. The New Survey of London Life and Labour (London, King, 1934), Volume VII, Maps 1, 3.

12. Idle, War Over West Ham, p. 21.

13. See, for example, Newham Recorder (hereafter NR), 8 August 1968, p. 45, '"Trapped" Families Who Just Exist'.

14. See Idle, War Over West Ham, pp. 30-2.

15. See M. Harris, 'Some Aspects of Social Polarization', in Donnison and Eversley, London: Urban Patterns, Problems and Policies, pp. 156-189, especially 180-1.

16. C. Buchanan and Partners, North East London: Some Implications of the Greater London Development Plan (London, C. Buchanan and Partners, 1970), Figure 34, pp. 51-2. The figure draws on the 1967 London Housing Survey.

17. Lund, London Borough of Newham: Survey of Post War Development, Part II.

18. Source, London Borough of Newham Housing Department, Multi-Storey Blocks of Flats in Newham (1974); DOE files on Newham housing crosschecked with London Borough of Newham, County Borough of West Ham and County Borough of East Ham, Minutes; Lund, London Borough of Newham: Study of Post War Development, passim.

19. Newham Housing Department, Multi-Storey Blocks of Flats in Newham..

20. Lund, London Borough of Newham: Study of Post War Development, p. 2.

21. Idle, War Over West Ham, p. 32 and passim.

22. See Abercrombie, Greater London Plan, pp. 170-1, 173-4.

23. For its pre-war position see Idle, War Over West Ham, p. 77.

24. Interview with T. E. North.

25. See Figure 7.8 below.

26. Interviews with North, Kebbell and others involved in post-war HC.

27. County Borough of West Ham, Minutes, Vol. 64A (1949), Housing Special Sub Committee, 5 August, p. 247 (hereafter given as WHM, 64A (1949)).

28. WHM, 64A (1949), HC, 7 October, 362(b); and Appendix A, 'Report of the Borough Treasurer and Borough Architect on the Proposal to Erect High Flats in West Ham'.

29. Interview with North.

30. WHM, 67A (1952), HC, 9 June, 87.

31. WHM, 65A (1950), HC, May.

32. WHM, 66A (1951), HC, 1 June, 29, and WHM, 66B (1951-2), Council Meeting, 24 June 1952, 118 (4).

33. WHM, 66A (1951), HC, 1 June, 32, Appendix B, 'Report of the Housing Officer on the Draft Development Plan'. This passage was underlined in the report.

34. Interviews with former HC members.

35. WHM, 66B (1951-2), HC, 17 March 1952, 843, Appendix A, 'Living in Flats', p. 845.

36. WHM, 67A (1952), HC, 30 May, 36.

37. WHM, 67A (1952), HC, 30 May, 36.

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39. Interview with North; WHM, 69A (1954), HC, 28 May, 36.

40. Interview with North.

41. Quoted in CDP, Whatever Happened to Council Housing?, p. 65.

42. Source, DOE files on West Ham Housing: computed average costs.

43. WHM, 72A (1957), HC, 3 June, 42; see also WHM, 68B (1953-4), HC, 28 February 1954, 810.

44. WHM, 69A (1954), HC, 13 Sept., 279; and 8 October, 335.

45. Sources, MHLG, Housing Returns, 1946-65, Appendix, Table I.

46. WHM, 71A (1956), Council-in-Committee, 25 September, 265.

47. WHM, 71B (1956-57), Council Meeting, 30 October, 1956, 337.

48. Interview with North; WHM, 72A (1957), HC, 5 July, 110; WHM, 72B (1957-58), HC, 28 March 1958, 630.

49. WHM, 73A (1958), HC, 15 September, 198.

50. Sources, DOE files on Newham Housing, crosschecked with WHM, HC (1947-65) and Newham Housing Department, Multi-Storey Blocks of Flats in Newham. For high rise estate contracts see WHM 72A (1957), HC, 3 June, 43; WHM, 74A (1959), HC, 3 July, 103; WHM, 74B (1959-60), HC, 26 February 1960, 599; and Municipal Journal, 9 August 1963, p. 2307.

51. Interview with Kebbell.

52. See Table 7.4.

53. WHM, 74B (1959-60), HC, 11 April 1960, 718.

54. WHM, 75B (1960-61), HC, 24 February 1961, 656, report by North on 'Future Development - "Point Blocks"'.

55. Interview with North, Kebbell and others; WHM, 75B (1960-61), HC, 24 March 1961, 729 and Policy Committee, 11 April 1961, 747.

56. WHM, 75B (1960-61), HC, 16 December 1960, 482.

57. Dodson had been Director of Housing at Coventry, one of the pioneering authorities building non-traditional high rise in the 1950s.

58. WHM, 76A (1961), HC, 22 June, 59.

59. WHM, 76B (1961-2), HC, 19 January 1962, 608; NR, 1 July 1965, p. 3.

60. Interview with North. Two of the private architect schemes received awards or commendations in 1968 from the Civic Trust, NR, 11 April 1968, back page. For comparison see the criticism of a West Ham scheme by the MHLG Chief Planner in NR, 26 October 1968, p. 72.

61. Source, Lund, London Borough of Newham: Study of Post-War Development, pp. 18-19.

62. This account is based largely on interviews with North, and Councillor Dunlop, one of the ward councillors.

63. Interview with North.

64. See Jensen, High Density Living, p. 214.

65. See WHM, 76B (1961-2), HC, 30 March 1962, 781; WHM, 77A (1962), HC,31 August,239.

66. WHM, 77A (1962), HC, 31 August, 239.

67. WHM, 78A (1963), HC, 26 May, 27.

68. WHM, 78A (1963), HC, 28 June, 132.

69. WHM, 78B (1963-4), HC 13 April 1964, 925; DOE files on West Ham housing.

70. NR, 10 November 1966, p. 43.

71. NR, 3 August 1967, pp. 12 and 37.

72. NR, 1 February 1968, back page.

73. NR, 1 February 1968, back page.

74. NR, 11 April 1968, back page.

75. Interview with North.

76. I would like to thank Councillor Talbot who took part in the programme for letting me hear his recording of the programme.

77. The Times, 10 April 1968, p. 13.

78. NR, 13 February 1969, front page, 'Fire Risk Shock in Tower Flat', 20 February 1969, front page.

79. NR, 19 March 1970, p. 3: 'Sky Flats - New Gas Shock'.

80. NR, 13 February 1969, p. 49.

81. NR, 14 May, 1970, p. 4.

82. Interview with E.P. Davies.

83. Interviews with North, Kebbell, Lee, Dunlop and others.

84. WHM, 77A (1962), HC, 29 June, 174; Council meeting, 24 July, 199; HC, 31 August, 238.

85. Interview with Councillor Ferrier.

86. Figure 7.8. For typical high rise and houses developments see WHM, 77B (1962-3),.HC, 9 November 1962, 444; 9 April 1963, 835; WHM, 78A (1963), HC, 21 May, 26; 9 September 1963, 294; WHM, 78B (1963-4), HC, 8 November 1963, 471.

87. Contract details taken from WHM, 1950-65, HC meetings. For the strikingly conservative interpretation of selective tendering used see WHM, 76A (1961), HC, 11 September, 286, Appendix.

88. See WHM, 69A (1954), HC, 2 July, 137, Appendix A, 'Unity System of Housing'; Appendix D, report of Housing Special Sub-Committee Meeting held 24 June 1954. About 70 houses were built.

89. WHM, 77A (1962), HC, 31 August, 242.

90. See Diamant, Industrialized Building; and the Costain's advertisement in Municipal Journal, 15 November 1963, p. 3512.

91. See WHM, 77B (1962-3), HC, 14 December 1962, 540, and 1 March 1963, 703.

92. WHM, 78A (1963), HC, 24 May, 27.

93. WHM, 78A (1963), HC, 30 August, 236.

94. WHM, 79A (1964), HC, 27 May, 34.

95. The HC reacted favourably to a Bovis P.R. meeting, WHM, 77B, (1962-63), HC, 29 March 1963, 796; but subsequent negotiations came to nothing.

96. WHM, 77B (1962-63), HC, 11 March 1967, 755.

97. Interview with North. And see his report, WHM, 78A (1963), HC, 28 June, 133.

98. WHM, 78B (1963-4), HC, 8 November 1963, 473; North's report is filed in the Committee Minute Book.

99. WHM, 78B (1963-64), HC, 28 February 1964, 769.

100. WHM, 78B (1963-64), HC, 3 April 1964, 890, Appendix, 'System Building', p. 895.

101. Ibid.

102. Ibid., pp. 895-6.

103. Ibid., pp. 896-7.

104. Stock Exchange, Official Yearbook, 1964.

105. See MHLG, Collapse of Flats at Ronan Point, p. 6.

106. See Municipal Journal, 29 March 1963, p. 889; the system was also adopted by Sunderland, Municipal Journal, 24 January 1964, p. 251 and 27 October 1965, p. 3586.

107. WHM, 78B (1963-64), HC, 3 April 1964, Appendix, p. 897.

108. Ibid., p. 898.

109. MHLG, Collapse of Flats at Ronan Point, p. 7.

110. See Diamant, Industrialized Building.

111. Interviews with Kebbell, Dunlop, Ferrier, North.

112. WHM, 79A (1964), HC, 27 May, 35.

113. WHM, 79B (1964-65), HC, 2 November 1964, 410, and 7 December 1964, 507; and 18 January 1965, 585.

114. See WHM, 79A (1964), HC, 28 September, 333.

115. WHM, 79B (1964-65), HC, 7 December 1964, 507; the decision was approved, 'as a matter of expediency'.

116. MHLG, Collapse of Flats at Ronan Point, pp. 6-7.

117. For the Works Department's previous position see WHM, 69A (1954), HC, 2 July, 136; WHM, 69B (1954-55), HC, 5 November 1964, 411.

118. WHM, 79A (1964), HC, 24 August, 228, 'Joint Report of the Borough Engineer and Borough Architect'.

119. By the end of 1948 East Ham had built only 250 permanent dwellings (compared with West Ham's 807), but had rehabilitated and repaired 6,233 houses war damaged to some degree at a cost of £7 million; J.E. Austin, 'Progress Report - Housing', for HC, 22 February 1965.

120. Interviews with J.E. Austin and J. Hart.

121. See the confidential report by Austin on 'Discussions with PLA Estate Officer in Respect of Land Development', to HC, 26 March 1962.

122. Abercrombie, Greater London Plan, pp. 130-1, and passim.

123. See the reports by Austin and by the Borough Engineer on 'Density, Housing Development and Population', to the Council-in-Committee, 16 July 1946.

124. Austin, 'Densities in Relation to Housing Development and Population', report to Council-in-Committee, 16 July 1946, p. 3.

125. See the report of the Borough Engineer on 'Development Plan - Optimum Regulation Target', to the Town Planning and Parks Committee, 19 June 1950.

126. See County Borough of East Ham, Minutes (hereafter EHM), volume 51 (1949-50), Housing Committee (hereafter HC), 5 September 1949, p. 52; Town Planning and Development Committee, 4 April 1950, p. 908; HC, 14 April 1950, p. 933; EHM 52 (1950-51), HC, 12 September 1950, 270.

127. EHM, 52 (1950-51), HC, 5 December 1950, 588.

128. Costing an average of £2,351 each; for the completed scheme see Municipal Journal, 31 July 1953, pp. 1649-52.

129. EHM, 55 (1953-54), HC, 5 April 1954, 570; EHM, 56 (1954-55), HC, 21 June 1954, 47.

130. EHM, 57 (1955-56), HC, 5 September 1955, 174, and 10 October 1955, 243.

131. EHM, 58 (1956-57), HC, 27 August 1956, 162.

132. EHM, 57 (1955-56), HC, 6 April 1956, 543; EHM, 59 (1957-58), HC, 24 February 1958, 454, and 31 March 1958, 510; EHM, 60 (1958-59), HC, 3 November 1958, 266, and 267, and 6 April 1959, 509.

133. Sources, DOE files on East Ham housing, crosschecked with EHM, 1950-65, and Newham Housing Department, Multi Storey Blocks of Flats in Newham.

134. Austin, 'The Housing Implications of Attempting to Retain in the Borough the Optimum Population Laid Down in the Development Plan', February 1957, draft report.

135. Sources, MHLG, Housing Returns, 1946-65, Appendix, Table I; see also EHM, 60 (1958-59), HC, 6 April 1959, 509; EHM, 61 (1959-60), HC, 6 July 1959, 99, and 21 March, 1960, 536, for North Woolwich.

136. EHM, 1960-65 and DOE files on East Ham housing.

137. See Austin, 'Housing Review', report to HC, 10 June 1963, p. 2; and EHM, 63 (1961-62), HC, 5 June 1961, 37; and 25 September 1961, 220; 19 February 1962, 446; EHM, 64 (1962-63), HC, 4, June 1962, 39; 16 July 1962, 99; 21 January 1963, 518; EHM, 45 (1963-64), HC, 10 June 1963, 391 9 December 1963, 350; EHM, 66 (1964-5), HC, 21 September 1964, 185; 30 November 1964, 282.

138. See, for example, NR, 9 February 1967, pp. 13, 45.

139. Interview with Austin; EHM, 62 (1960-61), HC, 27 February 1961, 473; Austin, 'Housing Review', HC, 4 June 1962.

140. Austin was encouraged in this by the 1962 Planning Bulletin, 'Residential Areas: Higher Densities, EHM, 64 (1962-63), HC, 27 August 1962, 159.

141. EHM, 62 (1960-61), HC, 27 February 1961, 473.

142. EHM, 63 (1961-62), HC, 19 February 1962, 446; EHM, 65 (1963-4), HC, 10 June, 1963, 37.

143. Figure 7.10.

144. See Austin, 'Little Ilford Proposals', report to HC meeting 16 July 1962; and Stratford Express, 15 January 1965, p. 9.

145. See F. Smallwood, Greater London: the Politics of Metropolitan Reform (Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), pp. 52, 65, 66-67, 88, 221-2.

146. London Borough of Newham, Minutes, Volume 1A (1964-5), Housing Committee, September 1964, p. 80; Town Planning and Development Committee, July 1964, p. 57.

147. Interviews with Austin and J. Hart.

148. This, at least, is one account given to me; see EHM, 66 (1964-65), HC, 1 June 1964, 24.

149. Ibid.

150. Interviews with West and East Ham respondents: Little Ilford was given MHLG approved in 1965, see Stratford Express, 15 January 1965, p. 9.

151. Austin, 'Housing Review', report to HC, 1 June 1964, p. 2.

152. Interviews with S. Boyce, J. Hart, E. Lonsdale, T. Davidson and others; see also Smallwood, Greater London, pp. 221-2; in 1966 Newham told the London Boroughs' Association that the merger had 'been a mistake': NR, 11 August 1966, front page.

153. See D. Peschek and J. Brand, Policies and Politics in Secondary Education (London, London School of Economics, 1966), Greater London Paper 11, Part II, for education in East Ham.

154. London Borough of Newham, Minutes, Volume 1A (1964-5), Housing Committee, December 1964, p. 126 - (hereafter LBNM, and HC).

155. LBNM, 1A (1964-5), HC, December 1964, p. 126.

156. Stratford Express, 12 February 1965, p. 1.

157. Stratford Express, 12 February 1965, p. 1; see also editorial, same issue, p. 14; and 5 February, p. 17; 19 February, p. 17.

158. This is the figure suggested by a comparison between Austin's report of 16 July 1962, and DOE files on Little Ilford; and see NR, 20 October 1966, p. 56.

159. NR, 28 April 1966, p. 1; Stratford Express, 29 April 1966, p. 1.

160. At David St and Leytonstone Rd; DOE files on Newham housing.

161. DOE Files on Newham housing, Carpenters Road, Phases 1, 2 and 3.

162. DOE files on Newham housing; Leytonstone Rd, David St, Dongola Rd.

163. WHI, 74A (1954), HC, 3 July, 103; Municipal Journal, 9 August, 1963, p. 2307.

164. See The Times, 16 June 1975, property page; and Stratford Express, 26 March 1967, p. 1; 14 July 1967, pp. 1, 17; NR, 3 August 1967, pp. 12, 37.

165. Interviews with North, Lund and other Newham respondents.

166. LBNM, 2A (1965), HC, July 1965, 308.

167. LBNM, 2A (1965), HC, September 1965, 555. See also NR, 16 September 1965, 14 October 1965, pp. 12 and 36; 28 April 1966, back page; 13 April 1967, 2 November 1967, pp. 18, 47; 24 June 1969, p. 49.

168. DOE files on Newham housing; LBNM, 3A (1966), HC, October, 443.

169. DOE files on Newham housing. Actual occupancy rates are undoubtedly lower.

170. Interviews with North, Lund; NR, 21 May 1970, p. 52.

171. Sources, DOE files on Newham housing, crosschecked with LBNM, 1965-70; WHI and EHI, 1964; Newham Housing Department, Multi-Storey Blocks of Flats in Newham.

172. A trend evident in HC interest in system building; LBNM, 1A (1964-5), HC, February 1965, 196; LBNM 2A (1965), HC, 26 April, 54, 59; Newham joined the North London Housing Group /LBNM, 2B (1965-66), HC, December 1965, 825/, and claimed it would play a leading role, NR, 25 November 1965, p. 66.

173. LBNM, 2B (1965-6), HC, December 1965, 829; LBNM, 3B (1967-67), HC, April 1967, 1129; DOE files on Newham housing.

174. Report by North, 'Newham Housing Programme - System Building', LBNM 3A (1966), HC, 12 September, 374; I would like to thank Mr. Warren for making a copy of this report available to me.

175. Ibid., p. 5.

176. Austin, 'Housing Review', report to HC, 1 June 1964.

177. NR, 29 December 1966, p. 52.

178. North, Newham Housing Programme - System Building'.

179. LBNM, 3A (1966), HC, October, 443, and December, 682.

180. LBNM, 3A (1966), HC, December 682: the low rise to be assembled by the Works Department.

181. Stratford Express, 23 December 1966; NR, 29 December 1966, p. 52.

182. Stratford Express, 23 December 1966.

183. Stratford Express, 22 December 1967, p. 13; NR, 11 January 1968, p. 8.

184. Interviews with North and Lund.

185. LBNM, 3B (1966-67), HC, January 1967, 832; April 1967, 1129.

186. LBNM, 3B (1966-67), HC, January 1967, 832: Davies argued that a need for more two bedroom accommodation had become apparent.

187. LBNM, 2B (1965-66), HC, December 1965, 825.

188. Circular 36/67, p. 28.

189. NR, 6 July 1967, 'Housing Control Starts Row'; Stratford Express, 30 June 1967, p. 1, 'Flats Only Warning'.

190. Ibid. See also, LBNM, 4A (1967), October, 421.

191. Circular 36/67, pp. 7, 8.

192. LBNM, 4A (1967), October, 421 showed a move towards including more family accommodation in high flats to evade the yardsticks; redesigned schemes included Greenhill Grove and the three Trinity Street contracts.

193. LBNM, 4A (1967), HC, November, 670, following a reference from the Council; see also NR, 9 November 1967, p. 64.

194. For a more general account of this issue see P. Dunleavy, 'Protest and Quiescence in Urban Politics: a Critique of Some Pluralist and Structuralist Myths', International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 1 (1977), 193-218.

195. See Stratford Express, 16 December 1966, p. 7; 17 February 1967, pp. 11, 16; 26 March 1967, p. 17; 20 May 1967, p. 3; 2 and 27 June 1967, p. 1 and p. 17; 2 July 1967, p. 7; 28 July 1967, p. 3; 11 August 1967, p. 14; 1 December 1967, p. 11.

196. See Stratford Express, 17 May 1968, p. 1, 'Crumpled like a Pack of Cards'; MHLG, Collapse of Flats at Ronan Point, Ch. 2.

197. Sources, MHLG/DOE, Local Housing Statistics, 1967-72, Nos. 1, 2, 5, 6, 9, Table 5; Nos. 13, 17, 21, 25, Table 4; and see NR, 19 December 1968, p. 34, quoting the Council's staff journal, The Newhammer.

198. The Times, 17 May 1968, pp. 1, 11; Guardian, 17 May 1968, p. 1; The Times, 18 May 1968, pp. 1, 3, 11.

199. The Times, 17 May 1968, p. 12.

200. Ibid.

201. Stratford Express, 17 May 1968, p. 3.

202. NR, 16 May 1968, p. 1; 23 May 1968, back page.

203. LBNM, 5A (1968), Emergency Committee, 17 May, 18.

204. NR, 23 May 1968, p. 1.

205. NR, 13 June 1968, p. 4.

206. NR, 23 May 1968, p. 1.

207. NR, 13 June 1968, p. 4.

208. Private Eye, 30 August 1968, p. 14.

209. And see MHLG, Collapse of Flats at Ronan Point, p. 39.

210. NR, 4 July 1968, p. 3; 18 July 1968, p. 3; The Times, 26 July 1968, p. 8; see also the detailed account of the staging of this announcement in Private Eye, 8 November 1968, p. 18.

211. LBNM, 5B (1968-69), Council meeting, 10 December 1968, p. 237.

212. Ibid; see also, NR, 1 August 1968, p. 11; in interview both Boyce and Kebbell claimed to have thought up the idea.

213. NR, 18 July 1968, p. 13.

214. This account is taken from NR, 1 August 1968, p. 47.

215. NR, 8 August 1968, p. 2.

216. Interviews with Labour HC members.

217. See for example, The Times, 24 June 1968, p. 3; 13 July 1968, p. 3; 24 July 1968, p. 2; 25 July 1968, p. 3; NR, 25 July 1968, p. 1; Private Eye, 8 November 1968, p. 18.

218. The Times, 30 July 1968, p. 2; NR, 1 August 1968, p. 4.

219. MHLG, Collapse of Flats at Ronan Point, pp. 69-70; The Times, 15 August 1968, p. 1, and 16 August pp. 1, 3.

220. The Times, 3 August 1968, pp. 1, 6; NR, 8 August 1968, p. 13; when the interim report was published the Newham Recorder headlined its recommendations, 'Government Backs Up Council Ban', NR, 22 August 1968, p. 45.

221. NR, 8 August 1968, p. 13; 22 August 1968, p. 2.

222. LBNM, 5A (1968), Town Planning and Housing Committee (TPHC), 4 December, 236.

223. Private Eye, 8 November 1968, p. 18; 22 November 1968, pp. 14, 15.

224. NR, 22 August 1968, p. 2.

225. LBNM, 5A (1968), TPHC, 11 November, 198.

226. See the NR editorial, 22 August 1968, p. 2.

227. NR, 22 August 1968, p. 45.

228. See the coverage in The Times, 7 November 1968, pp. 1, 10, 11; NR, 7 November 1968, p. 1.

229. MHLG, Collapse of Flats at Ronan Point, pp. 61-2.

230. Ibid., pp. 52-3.

231. MHLG, <u>Collapse of Flats at Ronan Point</u>, p. 7.

232. Ibid., p. 10.

233. See <u>The Times</u>, 13 November 1968, p. 15 and 14 November p. 4; 16 November, p. 10; 19 November, p. 3; 17 February 1969, p. 18; 16 June 1969, p. 8.

234. For the effect of this on Newham, see <u>NR</u>, 12 June 1969, p. 1; 6 November, p. 48 and 27 November, p. 27.

235. <u>LBNM</u>, 5A (1968), Joint TPHC and Policy and Resources Committee meeting, 14 November, 203; this 'evacuation' took nearly six months: <u>NR</u>, 28 November 1968, p. 15; 19 December, back page; 2 January 1969, p. 11; 23 January, p. 6; 24 April, p. 3.

236. <u>NR</u>, 14 November 1968, p. 43; 28 November, p. 1.

237. <u>LBNM</u>, 5A (1968), <u>TPHC</u>, 4 December, 236.

238. Councillor Watts, quoted in <u>NR</u>, 12 December, p. 53.

239. <u>NR</u>, 19 December 1968, p. 49.

240. <u>NR</u>, 24 December 1968, p. 1.

241. Ibid. see <u>LBNM</u>, 5B (1968-69), <u>TPHC</u>, 20 December 1968, 249, and TPHC/PRC, 30 December 1968, p. 250; <u>NR</u>, 2 January 1969, p. 5.

242. <u>LBNM</u>, 5B (1968-69), <u>PRC</u>, 15 January 1969, 279; <u>NR</u>, 16 January 1969, p. 11.

243. <u>NR</u>, 30 January 1969, p. 51; the paper had forecast a 'political storm' on the issue after the divided PRC vote, 23 January 1969, p. 17.

244. DOE files on Newham housing; <u>LBNM</u>, 7B (1970-71), <u>TPHC</u>, 1 February 1971, 320; <u>NR</u>, 26 June 1969, p. 7; the annual cost of the loan for strengthening operations was itself £60,000, <u>NR</u>, 25 December 1969, p. 7.

245. The vote for safety standards is at <u>LBNM</u>, 5B (1968-9), <u>TPHC</u>, 17 February 1969, 315. The revelation of difficulties in meeting standards was first published in <u>NR</u>, 8 May 1969, p. 1, which attacked the Council's secretiveness in a front page editorial, 15 May 1969.

246. <u>LBNM</u>, 6A (1969), <u>TPHC/PRC</u>, 6 May and 18 June, 54; <u>NR</u>, 5 June 1969, p. 13 and 19 June, p. 18; 26 June, p. 64.

247. <u>LBNM</u>, 5B (1968-69), <u>TPHC</u>, 10 February 1969, 307; <u>NR</u>, 20 March 1969, p. 4. The contract was worth around £3.9 million.

248. <u>NR</u>, 26 June 1969, p. 7, 'Sky Flats - "Pay half now and more later" demand'. A Parliamentary answer put Newham's strengthening bill at £1.8 million, <u>NR</u>, 23 July 1970, p. 45.

249. <u>NR</u>, 13 February 1969, p. 3.

250. Ibid.

251. <u>NR</u>, 13 March 1969, p. 1.

252. <u>NR</u>, 20 March 1969, p. 4.

253. <u>NR</u>, 1 May 1969, p. 1.

254. NR, 8 May 1969, p. 59.

255. NR, 22 May 1969, p. 7 - and see earlier Tory 'cool it' pleas. NR, 27 February 1969, back page. One of the Tories most involved, the Parliamentary candidate for East Ham South, subsequently left the Party; NR, 21 May 1970, p. 1.

256. NR, 2 October 1969, p. 45.

257. The account of this meeting is taken from NR, 12 February 1970, p. 4.

258. NR, 19 February 1970, p. 1.

259. NR, 5 March 1970, p. 11 and 12 March, back page.

260. Interviews with E.P. Davies, Dunlop and others; NR, 30 July 1970, p. 6.

261. Several councillors interviewed claimed that the only reason for the protest was to secure a house for these leaders: one man rehoused in this fashion became Chairman of the new Beckton Ratepayers Association.

262. NR, 30 July 1970, p. 6.

263. See NR, 24 December 1970, p. 5, and 3 December, p. 6; 21 January 1971, p. 3.

264. NR, 22 July 1971, p. 13; 16 September 1971, p. 44.

265. Interview with Councillor W. Watts.

266. Interview with E.P. Davies.

267. DOE files on Newham housing; NR, 12 February 1970, p. 46.

268. NR, 11 February 1971, p. 52; interviews with Dunlop, Lee and North.

269. LBNM, 9A (1972-73), TPHC, 12 June 1972, 40; a move on these lines had been called for by West Ham Ward Labour Party two years earlier, NR, 23 July 1970, p. 56.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Birmingham.

8.1: The Urban Background.

Birmingham's most striking characteristic is its size. Sprawling over 51,000 acres (nearly 80 square miles), the county borough's 1971 population was 1,013,000 people, the largest total in Britain outside London and far outstripping any other provincial centre except Glasgow. The city's economy remained buoyant for most of the post-war period, but from the mid 1960s a steady seepage of industrial and commercial jobs began, which was only partially compensated by the growth of professional services and the office boom. Between 1961 and 1971 the city population fell by 6.3%.[1]

Although surrounded on three sides by other authorities in the West Midlands Conurbation, (Figure 8.1), Birmingham until recently remained almost a whole-city authority. The western border with Smethwick always marred this picture, and in the post-war period the middle class suburbs of Solihull and Sutton Coldfield were also exceptions to this pattern. But continuous development now spills over the city boundaries at many points. In the 1974 local government reorganization the new Birmingham District annexed Sutton Coldfield, but not the vast corporation estate at Chelmsley Wood, built in Warwickshire next to the north-east city boundary in the late 1960s.

The two post-war patterns of ward organization display the classic ring formation on which the Chicago school of urban sociology focused so much attention, (Figures 8.2a and 8.2b).[2] After the ward reorganization in 1962 this pattern is particularly useful as a basis for background analysis. The major flaw in it is Edgebaston ward, where a very large proportion of the ward area has been controlled since the late nineteenth century by the private trust, the Calthorpe Estate. Originally the upper middle class area of the city, the Calthorpe Estate has been preserved as a middle class, low density

Figure 8.1: Birmingham County Borough in the West Midlands, 1966.

STAFFORDSHIRE

BROWNHILLS U D

WEDNESFIELD U D

WILLENHALL U D

TETTENHALL U D

WOLVERHAMPTON C B

WOLVERHAMPTON C.B.

WALSALL C.B.

WALSALL C B

ALDRIDGE-BROWNHILLS U.D.

ALDRIDGE U D

BILSTON M B

DARLASTON U D

SUTTON COLDFIELD M.B.

COSELEY U D.

WEDNESBURY M B

SEDGLEY U D

WEST BROMWICH C.B.

TIPTON M B

WEST BROMWICH C B

DUDLEY C B (Worcestershire)

WARWICKSHIRE

DUDLEY C.B.

BRIERLEY HILL U D

WARLEY C.B. C B

SMETHWICK

BIRMINGHAM C.B.

ROWLEY REGIS M B

OLDBURY M B

AMBLECOTE U D

STOURBRIDGE M.B.

HALESOWEN M.B.

SOLIHULL C.B.

WORCESTERSHIRE

MILES
0   1   2   3   4   5
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
KILOMETRES

BOUNDARIES ESTABLISHED ON 1st APRIL 1966

Local Authority   ———————

County   ———————

Conurbation, as defined
  in the 1966 Census

BOUNDARIES BEFORE 1st APRIL 1966

Local Authority   ·············

County   — — — —

Conurbation, as defined
  in the 1961 Census

Figure 8.2a: Ward Organization in Birmingham, 1949-61.

1949

Central Wards
Middle Ring
Outer Ring

Figure 8.2b: Ward Organization in Birmingham, 1961-74.

1962

Central Wards
Middle Ring
Outer Ring
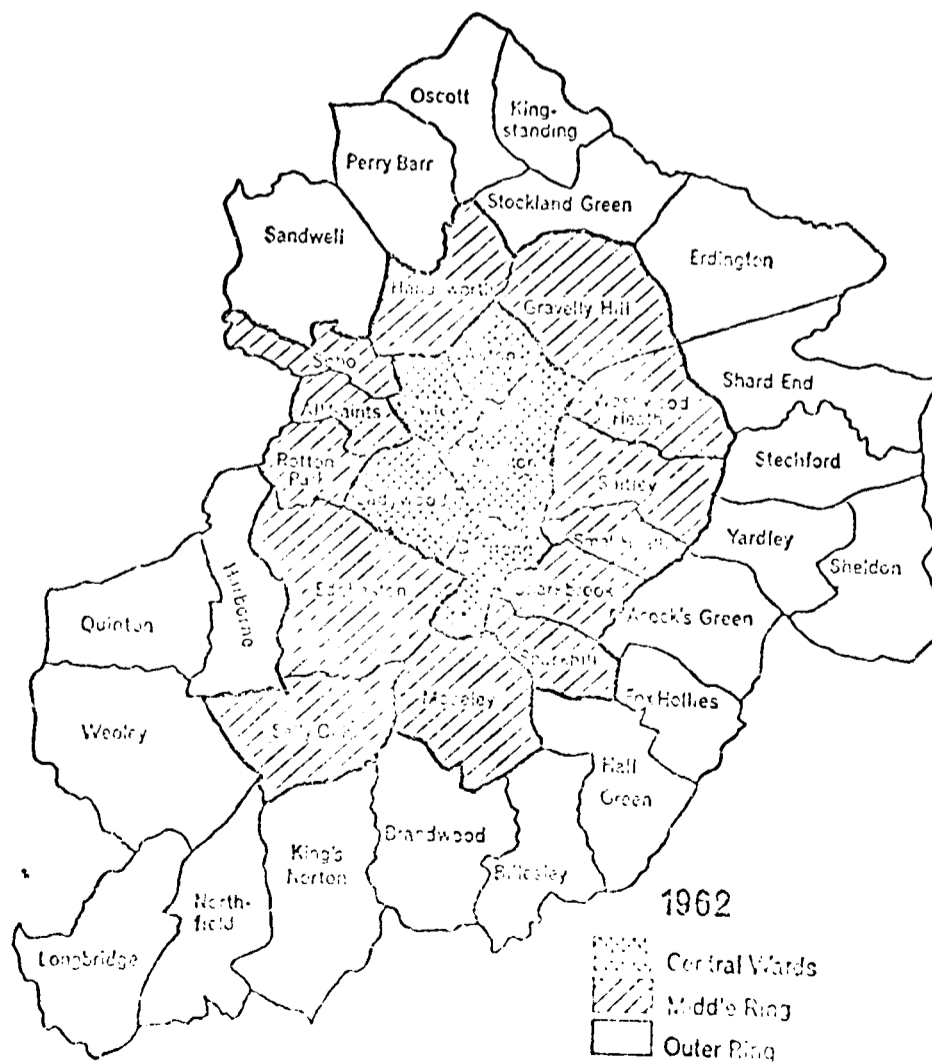
enclave in the middle ring of wards. The break up of large houses into flats

and some new building in the 1960s have increased densities in Edgebaston from

their 1945 level of 25 ppa.[3]

In 1971 42% of dwellings in Birmingham were owner occupied, 38% rented

from the Council and nearly 20% from private landlords. Within the city

there are marked variations in the importance of these tenures between areas.

In Perry Barr and Oscott over three quarters of all dwellings are owner

occupied, while in Duddeston, Newtown and Ladywood over 80% of all dwellings

are council owned. In Moseley, Edgebaston, Sparkbrook and Rotten Park over

40% of dwellings are rented from private landlords. All the wards with a

distribution of tenures highly skewed to the private rental sector lie in the

middle ring, (Figure 8.3).[4] Wards highly skewed towards council housing are

either in the inner ring or the outer ring. All wards skewed towards owner

occupation are in the outer ring. Private renting is not significantly

higher than the city average in any of the outer wards; in most it is well

below half the average.

The ring pattern is also reflected fairly accurately in the patterns of

lack of facilities discovered by the decennial censuses, (Figures 8.4a, 8.4b

and 8.4c).[5] The amenities covered change from each census to the next,

reflecting the progressive upgrading of standards of acceptable accommodation

in the post-war period. It seems fairly reasonable to incorporate this

upgrading in looking at the amelioration of housing conditions in these years.

One of the most interesting findings of such a representation is the extent to

which the proportion of households without facilities has been reduced most

in the inner wards, while the middle ring wards have fallen behind relative

to both the inner and the outer wards.

The relative importance of redevelopment and new building in improving

access to amenities.can be tapped first by looking at the gains and losses in

the ward housing stocks during the 1950s and '60s (Figure 8.5a and 8.5b).

The loss of dwellings from the central wards has been enormous, but has been
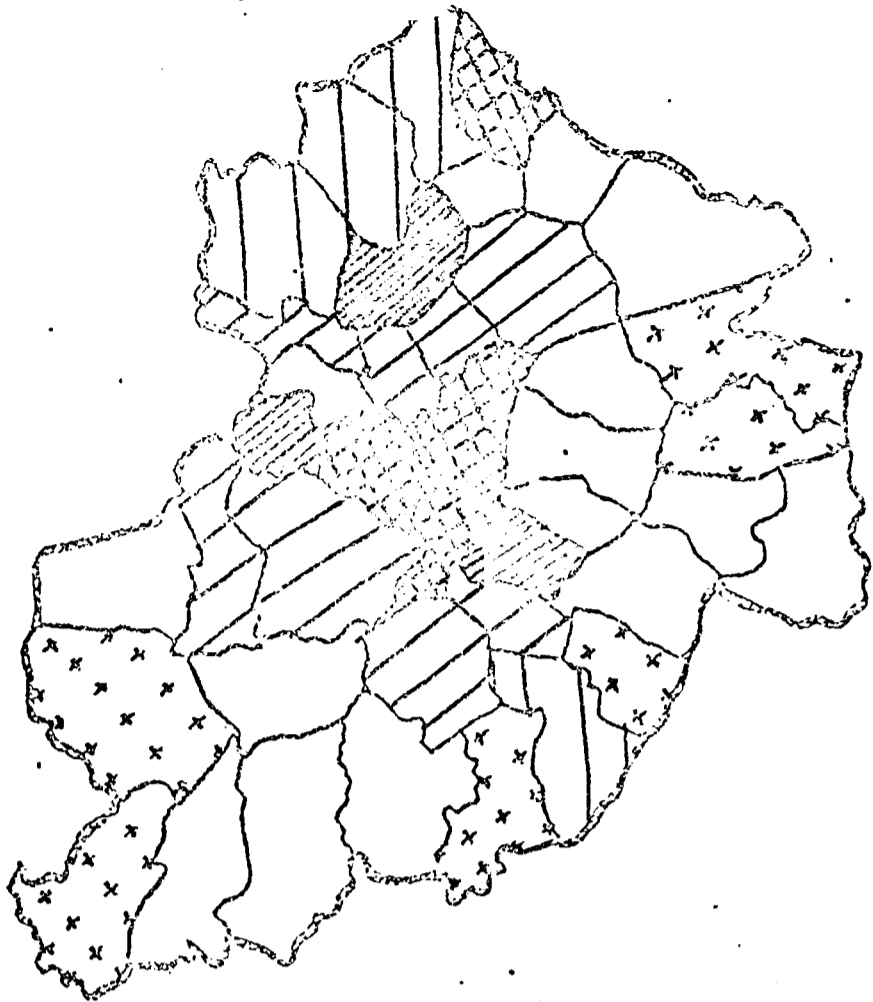
Figure 8.3: Housing Tenure in Birmingham Wards, 1971.

Figure 8.4: Households lacking Exclusive Use of One or More of Five
Amenities, 1951.

(Amenities included: piped water, cooking
stove, kitchen sink, water closet, fixed
bath)

Proportion
lacking amenities:

Over 80%

70 - 79%

60 - 69%

50 - 59%

40 - 49%

30 - 39%
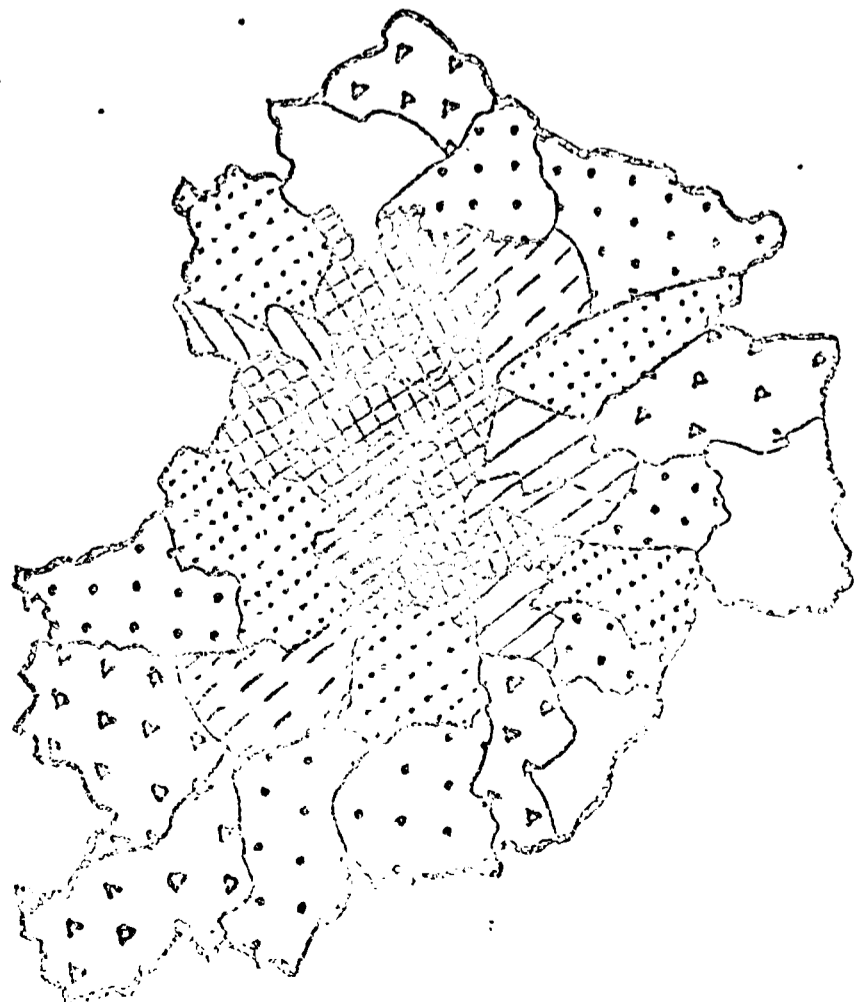
20 - 29%

10 - 19%

Under 10%

Figure 8.4b: Households Lacking
Exclusive Use of One or More of
Four Amenities, 1961.

(Amenities included: cold
water, hot water, bath, W.C)
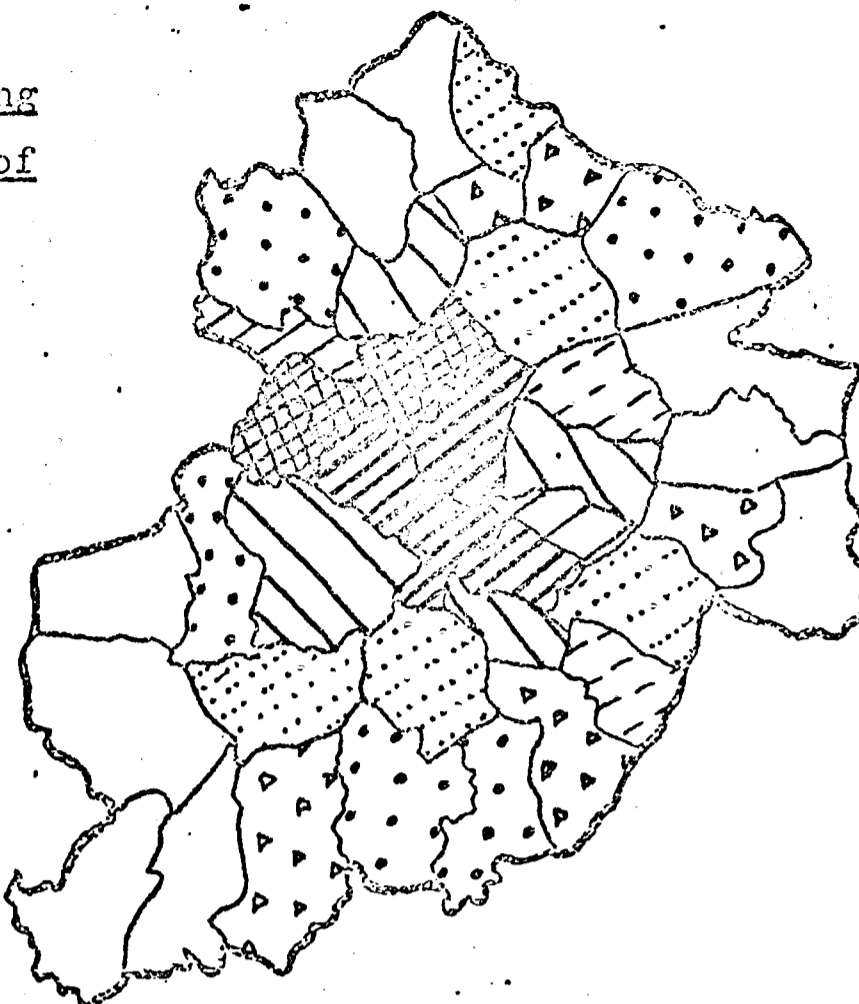
Proportion
lacking amenities:

Over 80%

70 - 79%

60 - 69%

50 - 59%

40 - 49%

30 - 39%

20 - 29%

10 - 19%

Under 10%

(Amenities included:
hot water, inside
W.C, bath)
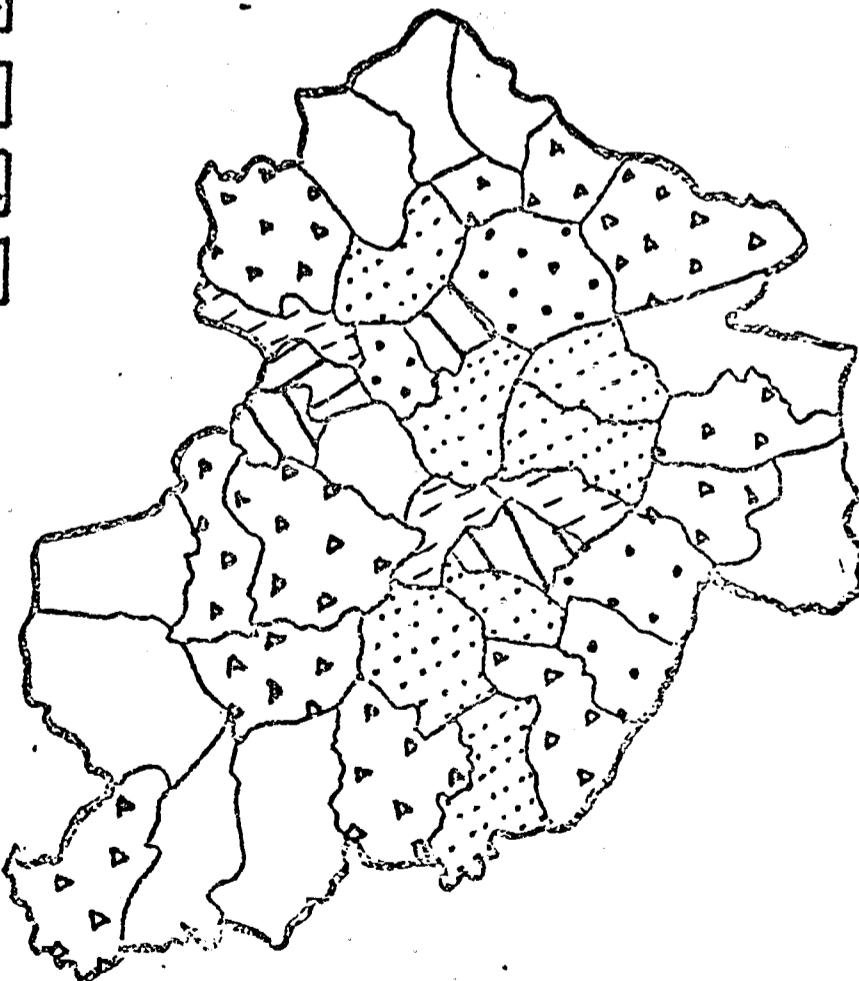
Figure 8.4c: Households Lacking Exclusive Use of One or More of
Three Amenities, 1971.

Figure 8.5a: Increases and Decreases in Ward Housing Stocks,
Birmingham, 1951-61.

(Overall City change in
housing stock: 6.2%)

Change in Ward Housing
Stock:

Increase over 50%

Increase 25 - 49%

Increase 5 - 24%

Increase up to 5%

Decrease up to 10%

Decrease 11 - 30%

Decrease over 30%
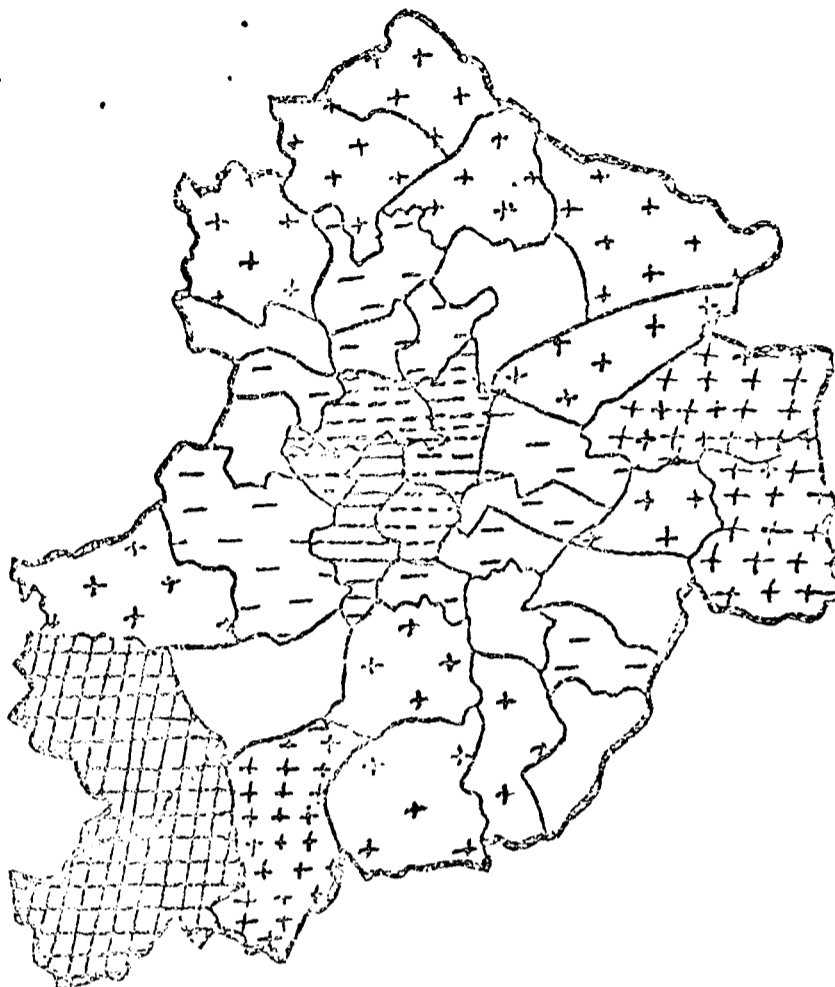
(Overall City change in
housing stock: 5.6%)
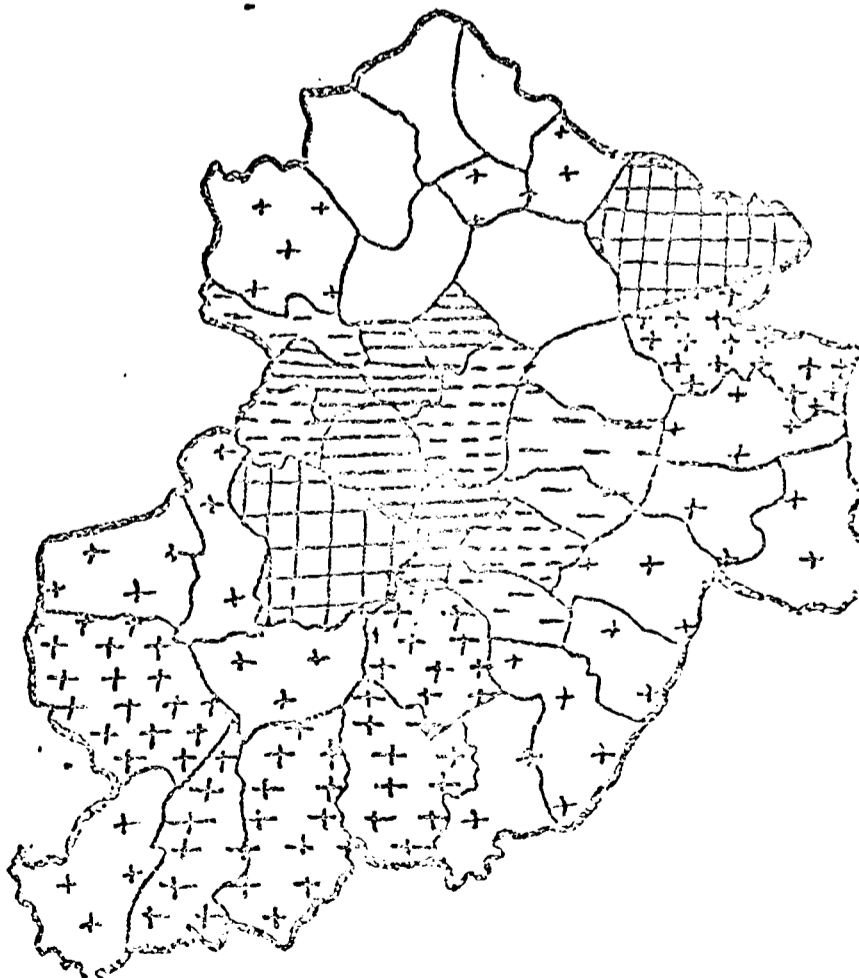
Figure 8.5b: Increases and Decreases in Ward Housing Stocks, 1961-71.

fairly evenly spread over the two decades, partly because of the long delays involved in redeveloping the very large comprehensive redevelopment areas first scheduled in 1947. (These figures should be interpreted with caution, since in clearance areas being processed at the time of each census the loss of dwellings could be temporary).

Secondly, the distribution of new local authority building between the wards has clearly played a key role in improving housing, particularly in the central wards, (Figures 8.6a, 8.6b and 8.6c).[7] Before 1949 council housing consisted almost entirely of three bedroom houses and building was concentrated in the eastern and southern boundaries of the city. In the 1950s, this concentration split into two areas where building was extensive, in the north east and south west outer wards. The 1960s saw an extension of these areas, plus the beginnings of large scale rebuilding in the central wards. The lack of any very significant council activity in the middle ring wards is particularly noticeable in this period. Finally it should be borne in mind that much development in the late 1960s took place outside the city boundaries at Chelmsley Wood, (not shown here).

One last indicator is worth noticing because of its close relationship with these housing policies. This is the proportion of people with parents born in the New Commonwealth, the best available indicator of race. The distribution of these people within Birmingham wards suggests that most coloured people live in the middle ring of wards in two areas around Soho-Handsworth and Sparkbrook, (Figure 8.7).[8] Very few coloured people live in any of the outer wards, while the proportion of coloured people in the inner ward populations is much lower than in neighbouring middle ring wards. This seems to reflect the national pattern of coloured people living almost entirely in areas of private rental tenure or of low price owner occupied houses, areas which now contain the worst housing conditions in the city. It would be difficult not to conclude that the absence of council activity in the middle ring wards has contributed to the very high concentrations of coloured people

Figure 8.6a: Areas of Council Housing Construction in Birmingham, before 1949.

(Total new council housing
in City: 53,295 dwellings)

Council housing built
in ward:

Over 4,000 dwellings

2,000 - 3,9999 "

i,000 - 1,999 "

500 - 999

Under 500 dwellings
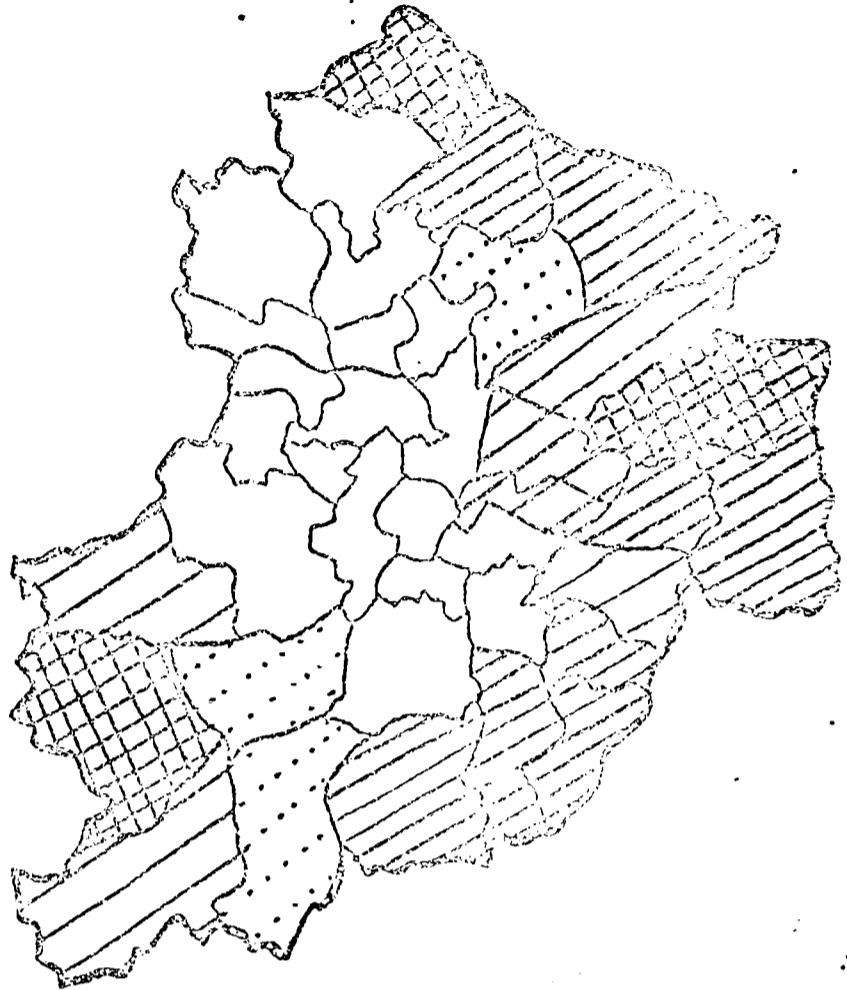
Figure 8.6b: Areas of Council Housing Construction in Birmingham, 1950-62.

(Total new Council housing
in City: 32,572 dwellings)
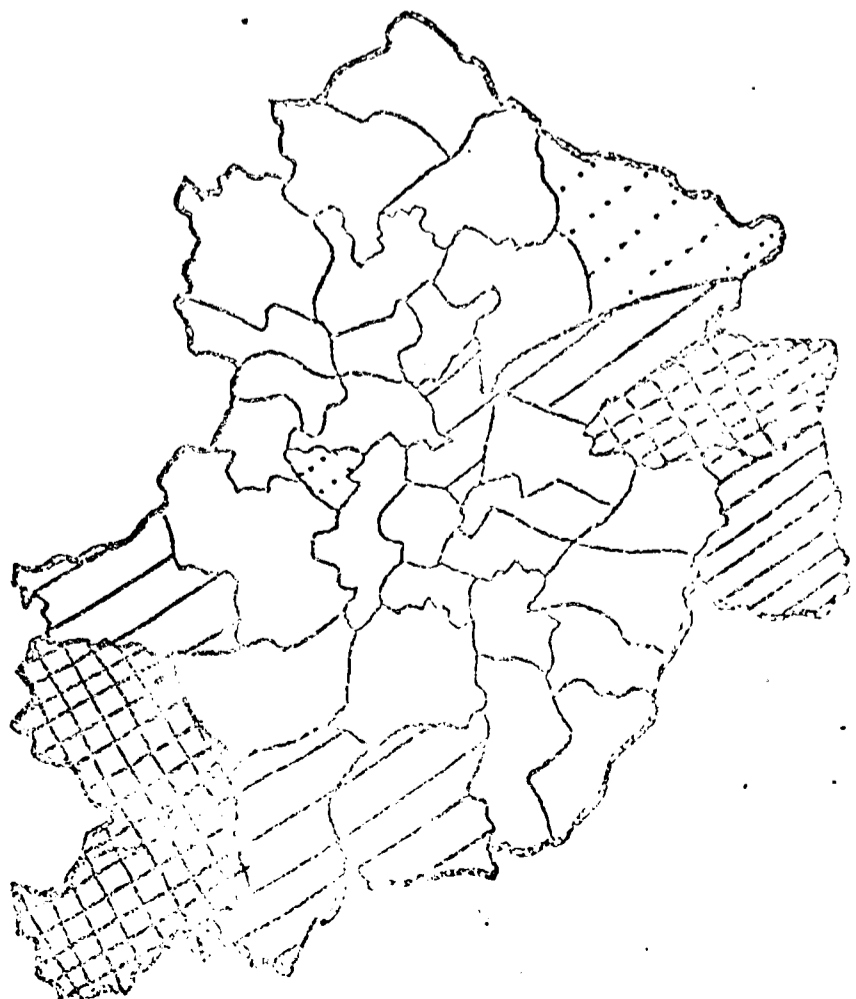
Figure 8.6: Areas of Council
Housing Construction in
Birmingham, 1963-73.

Council housing built
in ward:

Over 4,000 homes   ⊠

2,000 - 3,999 "   ▨

1,000 - 1,999 "   ▨

500 - 999 "   ▨

Under 500 homes   ☐
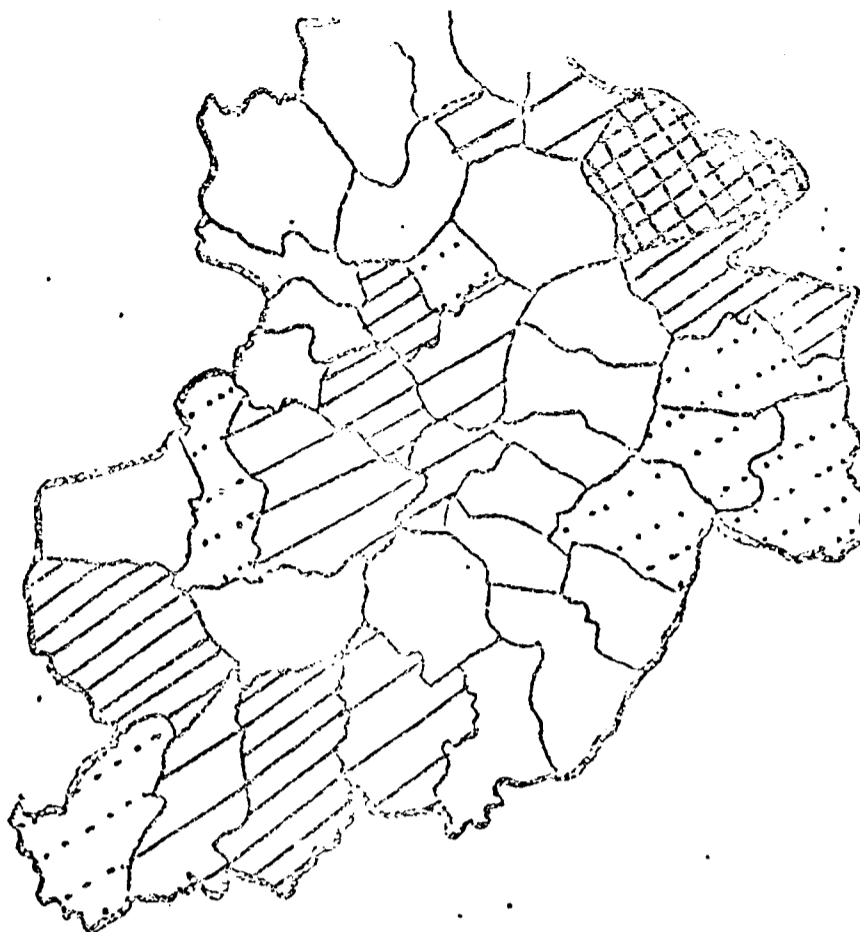
(Total new Council housing in City: 37,520 dwellings)

Figure 8.7: Distribution of People with Both Parents Born in the
New Commonwealth, Birmingham, 1971.

Proportion of ward
population:

40 - 50%   ▨

30 - 39%   ▨

20 - 29%   ▨

10 - 19%   ▨

5 - 9%   ▨

2 - 5%   ▨
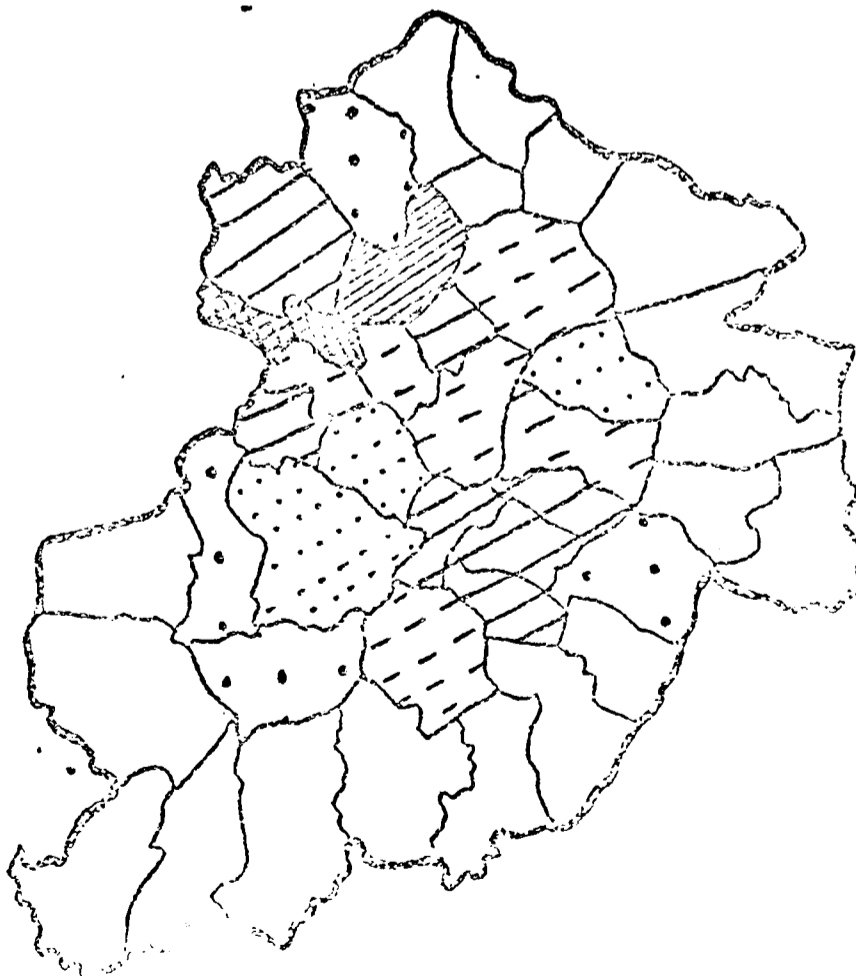
Under 2%   ☐

(City average: 8.8%)

in these areas, a concentration which in Birmingham's case has been powerfully stimulated by the arguably discriminatory policies implemented under the cover of local authority control of multi-occupation.[9]

THE POLITICAL BACKGROUND

Few other cities' historical and political background can have been as comprehensively and intensively studied as Birmingham's. Ken Newton's Second City Politics provides one of the most sophisticated treatments of urban politics available in Britain, while a number of papers originating from this research fill in considerable detail in other areas.[10] And the three volume official History of Birmingham now provides a valuable chronology running up to 1970. We used the third volume of this history, A. Sutcliffe and R. Smith's Birmingham, 1939-70, particularly intensively in the early stages of this research. Although this was actually found to contain some seriously misleading information relating to the high rise housing issue, there can be no doubt as to its high overall standard.[11]

To summarize this weight of background information would not be possible or desirable. Full references are given below and the essential context has been incorporated in the narrative.

HIGH RISE IN BIRMINGHAM

There are 24,013 high rise flats in Birmingham in a total of 463 high blocks, (including blocks in the Corporation's peripheral estates just outside the city boundaries). Virtually all these flats have one or two bedrooms. (Table 8.1).[12] The blocks range in height up to 20 storeys, and there are also some 488 flats in two 33 storey tower blocks. In March 1972 when the building of high rise came to an end, high flats accounted for 21% of Birmingham's council housing erected under the Housing Acts. This figure is considerably higher than that for other authorities in the West Midlands Conurbation where comparable figures were Warley 19%, West Bromwich 9%, Wolverhampton 10%, Sutton Coldfield 10%, Dudley 6%, Aldridge Brownhills 3%,

Stourbridge 4%, and Solihull 0%. It is also higher than the figures for other large British cities, such as: Liverpool 20%, Leeds 19%, Newcastle upon Tyne 16%, Manchester 11%, Sheffield 11% and Hull 10%.[13]

Table 8.1: High Rise Flats in Birmingham, 1974.

Storey height	Dwellings				% of high flats			
	Number of bedrooms				Number of bedrooms			
	One	Two	Three	All	One	Two	Three	All
5-9	1583	4160	795	6538	6.6	17.3	3.3	27.2
10-14	3845	5739	60	9644	16.0	23.9	0.2	40.2
15-19	1629	2495	198	4322	6.8	10.4	0.8	18.0
20 and over	1868	1641	-	3509	7.8	6.8	-	14.6
All storeys	8925	14035	1053	24013	37.2	58.4	4.4	100.0

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was fundamentally only possible because of the kind decision of Birmingham District Council's current Chief Executive, Mr F. Amos, to give me full access to the post-war Minutes and papers of the House Building Committee, the Housing Management Committee, the Public Works Committee and various other sources. The House Building Committee minutes and papers were surveyed systematically for the period 1950-70, and the other sources used as occasion demanded. Without this access it would certainly not have been possible to survey such a vast tapestry in the necessary detail and I would like to record my grateful thanks to Mr Amos and his patient and helpful staff.

In addition a total of 17 'housing influentials' were identified for interview purposes in the manner described in the Introduction to Part II. Of these, two members of the Committee had died. Four members failed to reply to letters and one declined, while one was living abroad. A total of nine interviews with Council members were thus carried out, (an effective interview rate of 64%), together with two interviews with chief officers. Interviewees were:

1) Alderman Harry Watton - Leader of the Labour group 1959-66, member of the House Building and Public Works Committees 1950-66.

2) Alderman Sir Charles Burman - Chairman of the House Building Committee 1950-52, member 1950-60.

3) Alderman Ernest Horton - Deputy Leader of the Labour group 1954- , member of the House Building Committee 1954-62 and 1963-4.

4) Alderman Apps - Chairman of the House Building Committee 1966-8 and member 1958-69.

5) Alderman Beaumont Dark - Chairman of the Housing Committee 1968-70 and member 1968-71; member of the House Building Committee 1967-8.

6) Lady Fisher of Rednall - Chairman of the Housing Management Committee 1965-6, member of the House Building Committee 1962-70.

7) Alderman G. Corbyn Barrow - Chairman of the Housing Management Committee 1964-5, and member 1960-65; member of the House Building Committee 1950-58.

8) Councillor Peter Hollingworth - member of the House Building Committee 1960-7.

9) Councillor A.L.S. Jackson - member of the House Building Committee 1952-66.

10) A.G. Sheppard Fidler - City Architect 1952-64.

11) J.J.A. Atkinson - Deputy Housing Manager 1954-64, Housing Manager 1964-68, Director of Housing 1968-76.

8.2: The Development of High Rise Policy.

Discussion of flats in Birmingham began at almost the same time as public housing development began to be envisaged.[14]   Joseph Chamberlain urged the inclusion of flats in the Corporation's first Improvement Scheme in 1875, and twelve years later the Council accepted the principle of working class flats, building their first two storey block in 1901.   In the mid 1920s a few more blocks were built although the bulk of the inter-war development was on suburban housing estates.   The 1930s flats boom revised the controlling Conservative council groups' attitude, however, and in 1935 the Council approved its first large scale development in four storey flats, a 'watershed'

according to Sutcliffe.[15]

Throughout the inter-war period, public housing policy was decisively influenced by the Public Works Department (which was responsible for all planning, engineering and housing construction work) and its powerful chief officer, Sir Herbert Manzoni.[16] By 1939 the city had completed over 48,000 council houses and rehoused 200,000 people and in the late '30s began to turn its attention to slum clearance. In 1937 Manzoni secured approval for the designation of Birmingham's first major clearance area (covering 267 acres in Duddeston and Nechells) and in 1938 the Public Works Committee (hereafter PWC) approved a five year clearance plan. This envisaged rehousing 25,000 families, three fifths of them in flats on cleared sites and the remainder on suburban housing estates.[17]

RECONSTRUCTION PLANNING

As in other areas the war not only halted these plans but considerably worsened the housing situation; some 12,000 houses were destroyed in air raids. Manzoni's planning expanded to meet this change and he secured Council approval for the designation of four more central clearance areas. In 1947 the Labour Council raised a massive loan to purchase all five areas, covering 1,000 acres and including 17,000 back-to-back houses and 13,000 other dwellings.[18] Their redevelopment was to take a further twenty five years.

Work on the city's Development Plan began, closely following the guidelines of Abercrombie and Jackson's West Midlands Plan. As approved in 1952 it provided for two density rings - an Inner Zone at 75 to 120 ppa covering a third of the city, and an outer area at 50 ppa (except for the Calthorpe estate which was preserved at a level of 30 ppa).[19] In practice, although the 120 ppa limit applied in later redevelopment areas, Manzoni's war time plans for Duddeston envisaging densities of 160 ppa achieved by massed high rise were not completely abandoned.

Post-war housing construction of 7,000 permanent dwellings by mid-1951, many in non-traditional systems, got under way very much on pre-war lines.

As Sutcliffe and Smith point out, the Council leadership was slow to adjust to the implications of urban containment policies so densities were low and flats were rare.[20]   In 1948, however, the PWC approved contracts for a war time design for six twelve storey blocks in Duddeston, (which amongst other features included _five_ escape staircases to ensure their acceptability to tenants), costing £2,500 a flat.[21]

In 1949 the Conservatives gained control of the Council after an election campaign fiercely critical of Labour's housing record.[22]   A Housing Conference was convened to speed up housing output, as a result of which control of housing construction policy was taken from the PWC and given to a new House Building Committee (HBC) under the chairmanship of an experienced civil engineering contractor, Sir Charles Burman.   Burman ran the Committee virtually single handed and insisted that all council members with connections with house builders or the construction trade unions be excluded.[23]   A complete break was made with the existing closed contractual relations between the Council and local builders, and large non-traditional firms such as Wimpey, Laing and Wates were invited to commit their resources to the city in return for large and continuing contracts.   By 1951 Birmingham's housing output jumped 75% up on the previous year to 3,500 dwellings, and in 1952 completions touched 4,800.[24]   This increase suddenly projected the problem of land availability in Council ownership into sharp focus.[25]   As a result of the rapid fall in the Corporation's land stock, the Public Works Department architects included flats for the first time.[26]   In 1951 they accounted for 4% of completions and a year later for a fifth.   Burman announced that flat building would have to increase, particularly in the suburbs: 'If drastic and far reaching proposals for flats were placed before the Council, I for one would not be shocked'.[27]

The contractual pressures for flat building were also established at this time.   Manzoni directed his department towards co-operation with the builders in producing designs for flats in non-traditional systems, and in 1953

Birmingham and Wimpey unveiled the first 6 and 8 storey 'no fines' blocks.[28]
Although Wimpey had only slight sucess in marketing these designs to other
authorities, Birmingham ordered over 1,000 of the flats in the next two years,
both for redevelopment areas and to increase densities on post-war outlying
estates.[29]   Contract prices fell steadily to £2,000 a flat and virtually all
one and two bedroom accommodation was provided in the blocks.   High rise
approvals and flat completions rose steadily, (Table 8.2 and Figure 8.8).[30]

SUBURBAN HIGH RISE

In 1952 Labour regained control of the Council, which they retained for
the next fourteen years.   The leader of the Labour group, Herbert Bradbeer,
took over as HBC Chairman and declined to run the one-man show created by
Burman.[31]   For ideological reasons Labour members also wanted an architect to
take over public housing, not least to improve the bleak designs which were
still current.   With many genuflections to Manzoni's tripartite skills, and
against strong Conservative opposition, control of housing construction and
designs (but not of planning or clearance timetabling) was vested in a new
City Architect.[32]   The new post went to A. Sheppard Fidler, the architect of
Crawley New Town, who quickly consolidated his international reputation by
improving Birmingham's housing design, introducing landscaping and mixed
development.   His position was weakened however by Manzoni's strict non-
interventionist interpretation of the division of planning and housing design
responsibilities.   The Public Works Department in designing new estates drew
up the road lines without consultation and only afterwards passed them to the
Architects Department to fill in the housing layout.[33]   Departmental relations
worsened throughout the 1950s until in 1962 Sheppard Fidler produced his own
plans for a major development, flatly contradicting Manzoni's designs.[34]   The
City Architect was also blamed in some quarters for the steady fall in housing
output which reached 3,000 in 1954, 2,500 in 1956 and 2,000 in 1959.   In
practice, housing output was restricted by government controls, high interest
rates, the lack of large sites for development and the extra time taken to

Figure 8.8: Proportion of Completions in Flats of Three of More
Storeys, 1954-73; and Proportion of Approvals in Flats of Five
or More Storeys, 1951-73, Birmingham.
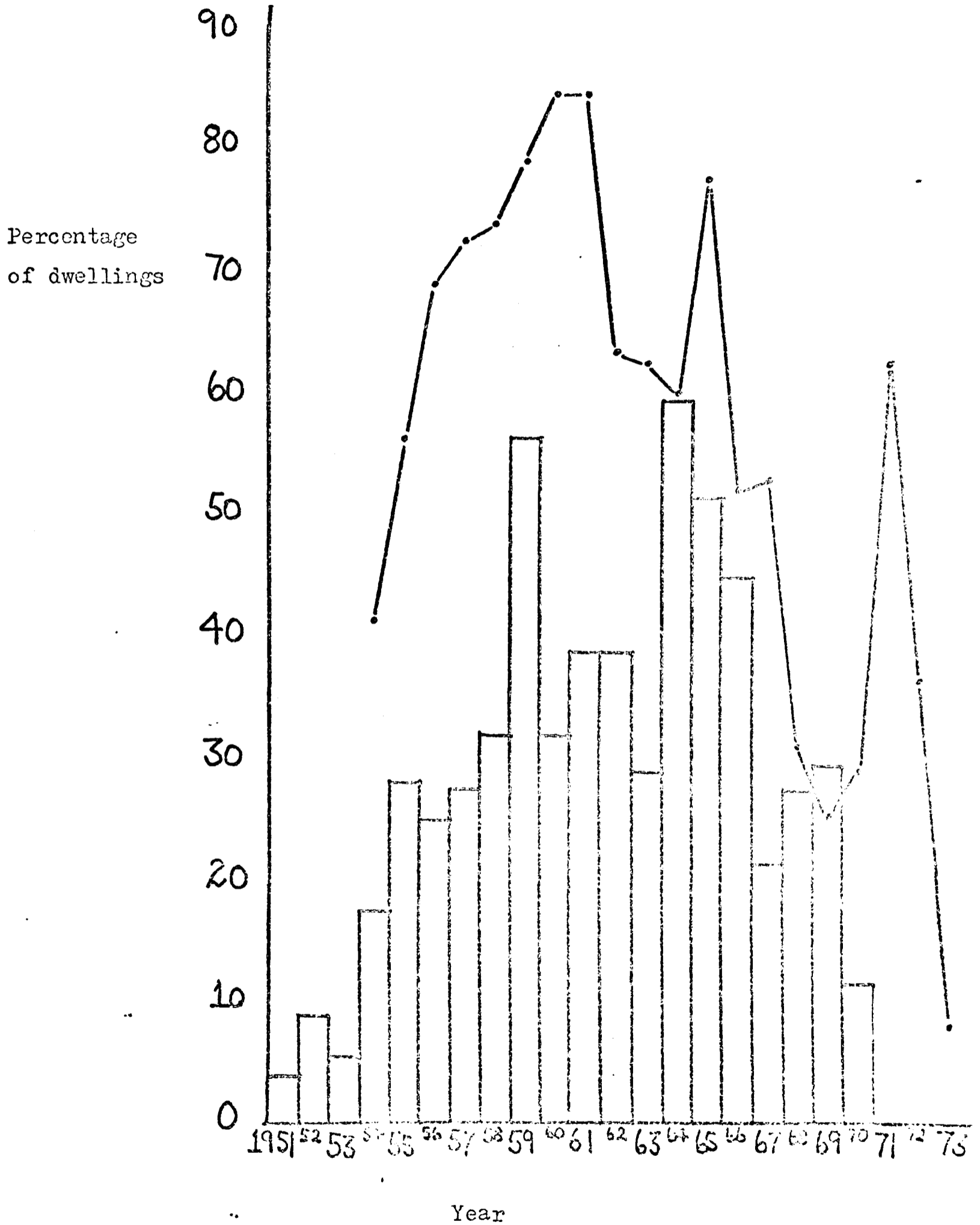
Flats over 3 storeys as a proportion of completions ——•——
High rise as a proportion of approvals ⊓

complete flats,[35] (which accounted for 85% of the city's housing output by 1960).

Table 8.2:   High Rise Approvals in Birmingham, 1951-70.

Year	High Rise Approvals	All Tender Approvals	% of Approvals High Rise
1951	180	4,654	3.9
1952	306	3,498	8.8
1953	180	3,249	5.5
1954	698	3,968	17.6
1955	761	2,687	28.3
1956	524	2,125	24.7
1957	486	1,775	27.4
1958	1,015	3,195	31.8
1959	1,143	2,018	56.6
1960	1,193	3,704	32.2
1961	336	856	39.3
1962	809	2,082	38.9
1963	668	2,292	29.1
1964	2,420	4,077	59.4
1965	4,487	8,741	51.3
1966	3,406	7,559	45.1
1967	1,931	8,989	21.5
1968	2,154	7,877	27.3
1969	430	1,461	29.4
1970	185	1,589	11.6
Total	23,312	76,392	30.5

Sheppard Fidler's main design innovation was to combine mixed development with the pre-existing trend towards suburban flat building.[36]   Shortly after his arrival, however, he discovered that Manzoni's architects had been designing high flat schemes for sites which because they were in low cost suburban areas did not qualify for the expensive sites subsidy.   A Birmingham delegation to MHLG initially won only sympathy and a promise of reform in the next legislative round, so that 'drastic cuts' in the multi-storey programme were forecast.[37]   Bradbeer posed the paradox that Birmingham might have to look for more expensive sites in order to lower rents.[38]   But negotiations went on over the next six months, largely because Macmillan was anxious to encourage the city in flat building as a means of defusing demands for a West Midlands 'satellite town'. In November by a process which remains obscure and was never explained at the time, the Ministry decided to grant special subsidies to Birmingham for its suburban flats, a decision which led

the local press to report, 'the road is clear for further suburban building'.[39]

Three months later Macmillan opened the city's first high rise blocks in

Duddeston and Nechells declaring, 'Birmingham has taught the whole country'.[40]

In October 1955 the Ministry announced the separation of the expensive site

and storey height subsidies, with virtually all the emphasis on the latter.[41]

The 1956 Act produced a marked switch towards building in the redevelop-

ment areas, but overall suburban building accounted for over two thirds of

all Birmingham's public housing between 1953 and 1960, and redevelopment areas

for less than a quarter, (Table 8.3).[42] Although high flats accounted for

only a third of planned suburban dwellings, (compared with three fifths in

redevelopment areas) the scale of the suburban programme meant that it none-

theless accounted for 60% of all high rise.   Residents in higher amenity areas

and neighbouring authorities objected strongly to the use of high rise.[43]

One Conservative councillor remarked in an interview:

> Sheppard Fidler wanted point blocks everywhere.   He
> put one right up against a really good house, what would
> now be a £50,000 house with a swimming pool and everything.
> And all these blithering flat dwellers were going to look
> straight down into this chap's swimming pool.. I protested,
> I said 'You don't put point blocks in nice residential areas
> like this! You'll ruin the privacy'. [44]

Table 8.3: Birmingham's Annual Housing Programme, 1953-60.

Building form	Area: Redevelopment Areas		Suburbs		Overspill		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Houses	260	4.4	4,610	27.5	844	46.1	5,714	23.2
Low Rise	2,055	34.3	6,549	38.9	942	51.5	9,546	38.8
High Rise	3,669	61.3	5,655	33.6	44	2.4	9,368	38.0
All Forms	5,984	100.0	16,814	100.0	1,830	100.0	24,628	100.0

% of building form

Houses	4.6		80.7		14.7		100.0	
Low Rise	21.5		68.6		9.9		100.0	
High Rise	39.2		60.4		0.4		100.0	
All Forms	24.3		68.3		7.4		100.0	

But although these decisions were defended in terms of giving flat dwellers

pleasant surroundings and good views,[45] no real policy of equalizing housing

amenities was pursued. Redevelopment area densities were still over twice those of new suburban estates.

One of the puzzles of Birmingham's housing policy in the 1950s is why high rise was used so extensively to achieve densities of 75-80 ppa in the suburbs when Sheppard Fidler's own redevelopment area designs demonstrated that densities nearly twice as great could be achieved using only low rise.[46] In a 1957 address he remarked:

> Most tenants would undoubtedly prefer to live in houses ..
> A house is the favourite choice of 80% of (local authority)
> tenants and there is no doubt that the desire for 'a place
> of one's own' is very strong in most of us. There is a
> general feeling, however, that at densities somewhere between
> 70 and 100 habitable rooms per acre (around 77 to 110 ppa)
> their exclusive use becomes unsatisfactory, while the Ministry
> handbook, The Density of Residential Areas categorically states
> that 'the absolute maximum density for 2 storey terrace housing
> is about 105 rooms per acre'. [47]

This explained high rise in clearance areas, but not in the suburbs. It seems then that high flats were being preferred on design grounds by the architects department and were not made necessary by a need to exploit the remaining available land.

The puzzle of low density high rise is compounded by the steady increase in storey heights throughout the 1950s. Eight storey blocks were introduced in 1954,[48] and in 1958 twelve storey flats[49] were used for the first time since the costly Duddeston blocks and the Aston estate of 1951-2.[50] At the same time a new 9 storey type block was introduced. In 1959 storey heights reached 14 storeys in the suburbs, and 16 storeys in redevelopment areas.[51] By 1960 nearly 27% of the city's housing approvals was in blocks of 15 storeys or more.[52]

Contractually Wimpey and other large builders dominated the city's high rise building, although local builders began to compete effectively on traditional contracts in 1957-8 for the first time, an involvement which slowly increased over the next few years.[53]

8.3: The Reorientation of Policy, 1958-63.

THE DECLINE IN FLAT BUILDING

According to Sutcliffe, the shift towards redevelopment after 1956 brought about far reaching changes in attitudes to flats: 'Hindsight distinguishes the year 1958 as the beginning of the end of Birmingham's brief dalliance with the suburban flat'.[54] In fact there was an HBC decision in 1958 to reduce the use of high rise outside redevelopment areas,[55] but although the decision was never formally reversed, this policy change was very temporary.

One of the reasons underlying the 1958 decision was an increase in worries about flat life. At the start of the flats programme a Birmingham Council delegation toured blocks in London and returned with the verdict - 'Life in a flat: it isn't so bad'.[56] Local newspapers such as the Birmingham Post and Mail editorialized in favour of flats criticized a local M.P. for 'repeating outworn parrot-cries about Birmingham's need for a "satellite" town and its not being "flat minded".'[57] In 1957 the Post argued that Council leaders were too cautious about flats: 'The great majority in the City accepts localized higher densities and higher cost as a way of preserving the amenity of open spaces within the city and outside. There is no blindness to the issues involved'.[58] Three years later the Evening Dispatch called for: 'really high building ... tall towers 20, 30 or 40 storeys high to release more space for sweeping parklands in the new Birmingham'.[59] These varied positions were strengthened by extravagant press commentary about urban sprawl, such as the Birmingham Gazette article headlined:

> OCTOPUS -- Where will it all end - this creeping
> red rash that is pushing the countryside further
> and further from our doors?
> While there's still time -- stop it! [60]

But in the late '50s more critical attitudes also began to be voiced. In 1955 it was reported that the first Duddeston flats were known as a 'concentration camp' and that 'many of the tenants are longing for a change to a house

with a little garden'.[61]   In 1957 David Eversley (then a TCPA activist and
secretary of the Midlands New Towns Society) published a scathing article
headlined 'Saucer City' attacking peripheral high flats and the failure to
redevelop central areas.   A Birmingham University survey had found 'a wide-
spread feeling against flats amongst tenants displaced from slum property ..
No one was found who would not rather have a house.   Everyone thought the
tall flats were unsuitable for people with children'.[62]   The Planning Chairman
replied only that 'these flats will be a real feather in the cap for Birming-
ham'.[63]   But the city's Housing Manager told a housing conference in 1958
that at least 80% of Birmingham's flat dwellers disliked their homes and
wanted to live in houses.[64]

The 1958 decision partly reflecting these criticisms and those of
Committee members, stemmed from a Ministry request for a cut of 500 dwellings
from the 2,700 planned for 1958.   The cut was met by postponing a large high
flat contract, which provided an occasion when criticism of high rise was
voiced.   But high rise continued to rise as a proportion of all approvals
despite this meeting and in 1960 the Conservative leader, Alderman Griffin,
raised another criticism of high rise in the context of a growing crisis in
the Housing Revenue Account.   He was reportedly 'staggered' to find that the
Council lost £78.60 annually on each high flat, compared with £51.50 on four
storey dwellings and £43.50 on low rise.   The loss from the city's high rise
stock already stood at £159,000 a year, and Griffin forecast a housing deficit
'because we are building more and more multi-storey dwellings and losing more
and more money in the process'.[65]   Since Labour were still at this time
committed to maintaining low rent levels of some kind, and the Labour group
was already deeply divided over increases,[66] this may have been one factor
restraining the use of high rise over the next few years.   In 1960 the
proportion of flats in Birmingham's housing output reached a peak of 85%, but
high rise fell from the 1959 approvals peak to average around 36% over the next
three years.[67]   At the same time the use of more expensive taller blocks

tailed off. No blocks over 15 storeys were approved in 1961 and very few flats over 10 storeys, (Table 8.4).[68]

Table 8.4: Approvals by Storey Height, 1951-70.

Year	Number				% of high rise				% of all approvals			
	5-9	10-14	15-19	20	5-9	10-14	15-19	20	5-9	10-14	15-19	20
1951	180	-	-	-	100	-	-	-	4	-	-	-
1952	306	-	-	-	100	-	-	-	9	-	-	-
1953	180	-	-	-	100	-	-	-	6	-	-	-
1954	698	-	-	-	100	-	-	-	18	-	-	-
1955	761	-	-	-	100	-	-	-	28	-	-	-
1956	524	-	-	-	100	-	-	-	25	-	-	-
1957	486	-	-	-	100	-	-	-	27	-	-	-
1958	733	67	215	-	72	7	21	-	23	2	7	-
1959	449	154	540	-	39	13	47	-	22	8	27	-
1960	422	593	178	-	35	50	15	-	11	16	5	-
1961	268	68	-	-	80	20	-	-	31	8	-	-
1962	301	136	372	-	37	17	46	-	14	7	18	-
1963	347	228	93	-	52	34	14	-	15	10	4	-
1964	136	1156	1012	116	6	48	42	5	3	28	25	3
1965	72	2763	992	660	2	62	22	15	1	32	11	8
1966	70	2100	182	1054	2	62	5	31	1	28	2	14
1967	72	514	430	925	4	26	22	48	1	6	5	10
1968	-	1146	494	514	-	53	23	24	-	15	6	7
1969	-	-	-	430	-	-	-	100	-	-	-	29
1970	36	43	106	-	19	23	57	-	2	3	7	-
1951-70	6041	8968	4614	3699	26	38	20	16	8	12	6	5

INDUSTRIALIZED BUILDING - THE FIRST ATTEMPT

The swing away from high flats in 1958-60 was temporary primarily because the early '60s saw a sudden worsening of Birmingham's housing situation. The growth of slum clearance combined with the gentle decline of public housing output under Ministry controls and financial pressures to whittle away to nothing by 1961 the increases in the local housing stock as a result of Council activities, (Table 8.5).[69] But in 1962 the city's housing output fell by half and for the first time the Council knocked down almost twice as many houses as it built. At almost the same time, Birmingham was able to buy a 350 acre site at Castle Bromwich Airfield for housing purposes (the availability of which caused the rejection of Birmingham's application for a city boundary extension to provide land for building at Wythall in 1960).[70]

Sheppard Fidler decided to seize this opportunity to shake off his association with falling outputs and to make a major effort to boost

completions. Although he simultaneously became involved in a long controversy with Manzoni over the planning of the development which eventually delayed the project, on the housing front he moved very quickly towards adopting industrialized building. He was particularly impressed by Liverpool's £9 million contract for Camus system built flats and became convinced that Birmingham should make a similar commitment, which would be large enough to attract a major firm to act as regional contractor in the system and build a factory for its manufacture.[71]

Table 8.5: The Housing Situation, 1946-73: Annual Construction and Demolition.

Year	Public Housing (1)	Private Housing (2)	Slum Clearance (3)	Net impact of (1) - (3)	Net impact of (1) + (2) - (3)
1946	417	492			
1947	888	670			
1948	1452	421			
1949	1251	443			
1950	2065	610	(Figures unavailable 1946-54)		
1951	3555	432			
1952	4817	662			
1953	4089	680			
1954	3105	832			
1955	3455	1824	1072	2382	4206
1956	2621	648	1364	1257	1905
1957	2490	747	1135	1355	2102
1958	2470	833	814	1656	2489
1959	2106	896	1471	635	1531
1960	2002	1277	1094	908	2185
1961	2139	989	2213	- 74	915
1962	1161	1067	2209	- 1048	19
1963	2349	1634	2446	- 97	1537
1964	2542	1436	2187	355	1791
1965	4036	1254	2930	1136	2390
1966	4728	1518	4061	667	2185
1967	9033	1640	5703	3330	4970
1968	8023	1907	5479	2554	4461
1969	7249	1839	4556	2693	4532
1970	5890	953	3119	2771	3724
1971	3412	1148	4405	- 993	155
1972	1444	1303	2966	- 1522	- 219
1973					

Sheppard Fidler began by trying to organize an HBC trip to France to see the Camus system. But although his views convinced his Chairman, Ernest Bond, they ran into opposition from the Labour leader, Harry Watton. (Watton had become leader in 1959 after challenging Herbert Bradbeer in the leadership

election.   His victory was the result of several years careful planning,

'gathering power unto myself' is how he described it,[72] and he replaced

Bradbeer's loose, rather bumbling leadership by vigorous activity and tight

group discipline, characteristics which led him to be known by some Labour

councillors as 'the Fuhrer'.[73] He quickly centralized power in the Labour group

and the Council under his control, and developed close links with the very

right wing Labour Party machine in the wards and constituencies run by

Harold Nash.[74] Watton's close friends, Denis Thomas and Bond, became the

chairmen of the PWC and HBC respectively.   Watton himself sat on both

committees and his support was obviously essential to Sheppard Fidler if his

initiative was to succeed.)

Watton insisted that the delegation include the PWC, that it look at the

full range of French systems, not just at Camus, and that it go at Council

expense rather than being paid for by Camus.[75]   The enlarged party, which did

not include Watton who stayed at home, seemed to have mixed views about their

trip.   Bond and some members of the HBC and Housing Management Chairman were

impressed by Camus.[76]   But another member recalled:

> Even we with our bit of expertise in the early days
> (of industrialized building) weren't fools.   When we
> went to look at Camus there were other French systems
> that we were supposed to be looking at.   But in fact
> though the champagne flowed happily at the Camus sites,
> all competitors were merely manned by an office boy in
> a hut .... and after some struggle he'd manage to find
> the keys to let us in.   In other words it was fixed in
> France that 'Camus are going to have Birmingham' and they
> tried to lead us by the nose.[77]
> Well, we'd got British systems as well!
>
>   (his emphasis)

At a meeting with Watton, Sheppard Fidler told him that he had decided to

recommend adopting Camus.   Watton recalled:

> I went up to the Town Clerk's room, and the City
> Architect pointed out to us what advantage we would get
> by adopting the Camus system for I think a place we were
> planning, perhaps a little bit slowly in retrospect, at
> Castle Bromwich Airfield.   But I was wary of this £10
> million worth of what would obviously be a concrete town,
> and eventually I said: 'Under no circumstances shall I
> recommend the HBC to give this sort of contract out.   In
> fact I shall see that they don't!' [78]

Sheppard Fidler pressed ahead, however, and in December 1962 with Bond's
support he presented a long, mainly technical report to the HBC backed up by
endorsements from Macey and the Housing Management Committee, arguing for a
Camus contract for around 2,500 flats.[79] He stressed the urgency of tackling
development at Castle Bromwich quickly, the strong backing of the Ministry,
the unprecedented level of industrial interest and the opportunity open to the
city to reduce its housing problems. His report came under fire from a number
of HBC members, including a local builders' merchant who claimed Castle Brom-
wich could be developed in two years by traditional builders. But two
decisive contributions were made by the Conservative housing spokesman, Counci-
llor Tom Matthews and by Watton. Matthews accepted that they 'should adopt
a radical system of building in order to step up the rate of production', but
not Camus. 'Systems evolved by British firms had not been investigated',
the Camus cost claims were highly dubious, the initial investment was too high
and the contracting arrangements unclear. Matthews ran a local joinery sub-
contracting business,[80] and he argued that if firms already working on
Birmingham high flat contracts were allowed to tender for a 1,000 dwelling
type block contract they could be as quick and as cheap as Camus. Watton
backed up this point saying,

> .. there has to be serious discussion of the points
> at issue. I have a feeling there is some pushing of
> the Camus system and that Castle Bromwich was being
> used for this purpose. I think there might be some
> exaggerated statements being made in support of Camus.[81]

He argued that the Camus system might not conform with the city's building
codes: 'The City Architect should have referred to the difficulties which
must exist with modern methods of unit construction'. The HBC then supported
two resolutions proposed by Watton. The first approved 'mechanized factory
housing' for speedy inclusion in Birmingham's programme. The second recorded
that they were 'impressed' by the Camus system, but referred back the City
Architects report for two months calling for additional material to be provided
on other systems and on possible building regulation problems.

In March 1963 Sheppard Fidler's second report claimed that there were no major problems with the building regulations (and certainly mentioned no structural problems), but this point was immediately dropped by the Committee.[82] Instead attention fastened on alternative systems suitable for building 9-20 storey blocks. Sheppard Fidler reviewed only the Larsen-Nielson, Coignet and Reema systems, which he claimed were either not as fully industrialized as Camus or were unavailable.[83] Committee members pointed out the omission of Concrete Ltd.'s Bison system for which Birmingham had placed a pilot contract for a 34 flat 9 storey block in June 1962, with the local firm of C. Bryant and Son acting as general contractor. For site acquisition reasons work on this block had not yet begun. The Committee now took the view that they had resolved 'in the light of this experiment to consider whether or not to proceed with a programme of building by industrial methods', and since the contract had not yet been started they could not come to a decision. This view, apart from contradicting the December 1962 decision in favour of industrialized building in principle, was completely new to Sheppard Fidler who saw the Bison block as relevant at best to a very small part of the housing programme.[84]

The link which Sheppard Fidler made explicit between Camus and high rise building also attracted strong criticism on cost grounds:

> If industrialized building systems were to be introduced the Committee would be thinking in terms of building up to 22 storeys, and we shall have to consider whether the expenditure involved could be justified, not only from the viewpoint of the ratepayer, but also the taxpayer. Bearing in mind the amenities which would have to be provided, it is by no means certain that the saving of land involved in the erection of multi-storey buildings would be sufficient to justify their cost as against 3 or 4 storey blocks.[85]

Information on how many units of accommodation would be lost by a completely low rise or housing estate development at Castle Bromwich was asked for, together with alternative costings.

Finally Sheppard Fidler's report was criticized because it 'did not deal fully with the possibility of utilizing the number of British systems now available', a patriotism that was clearly linked in discussion to members' desire to use firms already working in Birmingham rather than bringing in

outsiders. The Committee minutes recorded a view not taken seriously in December, that traditional builders could redevelop Castle Bromwich in two years, and it was resolved that even if industrialized building was used the whole estate could not be given to one contractor. Eventually the meeting ended by calling for a new report to discuss these further issues, particularly the housing mix planned for the estate.

Sheppard Fidler's final report on Camus was detailed and strongly worded.[86] He dismissed the claims that traditional building could redevelop Castle Bromwich in two years: 'in my view it would be physically impossible within this period'. He emphasized that only half the housing would be industrialized, and the remainder could be distributed 'among a few of the larger contractors to develop either in traditional methods or in their own structural techniques. The fears expressed by some members that the larger firms would not have the opportunity of making their contribution at Castle Bromwich are, therefore, groundless'. On the Bison block he observed only: 'a clear directive on the methods of building to be employed must be given well in advance of the completion of this block'.

On high rise his report did mark a retreat. At 80 ppa with 30-40% of accommodation in high rise, a contract of around 1,600 high flats would have to be brought up to 2,000 by building four storey blocks in Camus. He concluded:

> I am convinced that the Camus system is the most
> comprehensive industrialized system available and
> should be adopted at Castle Bromwich where the scale
> of building will produce worthwhile economies together
> with speedier building.

On the housing mix for the estate, Sheppard Fidler set out five options, (Table 8.6).[87] Although houses were tenants' preferred form of accommodation, his report concluded that Option 1 was not feasible, and that of the other options number 5 provided the largest number of houses. The Housing Manager, Macey, strongly endorsed a high density solution to maximize housing gains: 'any loss of housing at Castle Bromwich will have to be made up somewhere else'

and endorsed Option 5 on these grounds.   He did note, however, that he found

it hard to see why 38% of accommodation had to be in high rise at a density

of only 80 ppa.

Table 8.6:   Planning Options at Castle Bromwich, April 1963.

Option	Housing Mix	Dwellings		People		Cost per:		Total
		Total	p.a	Total	p.a	person £	dwelling £	Cost £m
1	1 & 2 Sty	2,712	12.5	13,908	64.4	619	3,177	8.62
2	1,2 & 4 Sty	2,892	13.4	13,428	62.1	674	3,132	9.06
3	All 4 Sty	3,732	17.2	17,076	79.2	724	3,315	12.37
4	Mixed Development (1,2,4, high rise)	3,492	16.2	14,766	68.4	774	3,275	11.43
5	As (4) but a higher density	4,260	19.7	19,280	80.0	835	3,388	14.43

The Committee decided the housing mix question first by discarding

Options 1, 2 and 4 as unlikely to secure Ministry loan sanction.   They settled

on Option 5 but demanded a lower density of 75 ppa to reduce the proportion

of high rise.   'Not only has the cost of multi-storey building now become

excessive, but it is well known that tenants prefer normal houses to multi-

storey blocks'.

From this point onward Sheppard Fidler's defeat was complete.   With little

further discussion the Committee finally rejected his proposal to employ the

Camus system.   Instead it was decided to call a conference of the major

builders already working in the city to discuss alternative methods of developing

the site.   Watton remarked about this defeat:

> As you probably know, anyone who doesn't get what they think
> right .. particularly anyone in a rather senior position when
> what they think is a wonderful idea gets turned down, he's apt
> to get a bit peeved about it.   And when the City Architect
> lost this one, .. he was very concerned about it.   As a matter
> of fact, a little time after that he gave us our notice and left.[88]

The long decision - making process over Camus had important implications.

News of the rejection of industrialized building leaked out and the complete

secrecy surrounding the decision attracted press criticism.[89] Planning on

Castle Bromwich was severely delayed and the first turf at the site was only

ceremonially cut in April 1964, a fact picked up by the QC for Warwickshire
at the later inquiry into Birmingham's claim for building land at Water Orton.
He asked Watton:

> QC: 'After four years of planning, through the initiative
> of the Council a piece of grass has been cut?'
>
> Watton: 'I prefer to see it as a symbolic representation of the
> speed with which Birmingham has started on this Castle
> Bromwich project'.
>
> QC: 'I could not put the words any better than you have,
> Mr Alderman'. 90

8.4: The Boom Years for High Rise.

BUYING BRITISH

In the light of the HBC's decision in April 1963 to reduce the proportion
of high rise in the city's output at Castle Bromwich, it is surprising that
over the next five years the same Committee approved some 15,000 high rise
flats. Over two thirds of Birmingham's high rise dwellings date from this
concentrated burst of building. The proportion of high rise in the housing
programme in fact rose to a post-war peak of 60% in 1964, and dropped to only
51% in 1965 and 45% in 1966.[91]

The very large output of high rise dwellings in these years, (which
reached a peak of nearly 4,500 approvals in 1965), was partly a consequence of
the overall expansion of Birmingham's housebuilding, (Table 8.2). This
expansion was itself due to sizeable increments to the land owned by the Council
for housing. The 350 acre Castle Bromwich site was supplemented in 1964 by a
smaller but still quite large site at Bromford Bridge Racecourse.[92] And in
December 1964, the new Minister of Housing and Local Government, Richard Cross-
man, made a personal decision to grant Birmingham's application to build on
over 1,500 acres of green belt land outside the city boundaries at Water Orton,
a development which became known as Chelmsley Wood.[93] The high rise housing
boom thus exactly coincided with an unprecedented increase in the building land
available to the Council. This accumulation of paradoxes is increased by
the location of high rise blocks built in 1963-68. Of the 13,401 known approvals,
38% were built on peripheral estates outside the city boundaries, a

further 19% were built in the outer suburbs inside the city boundary but still

up to four miles from the city centre, while another 11% were built in the

inner suburbs. Just over 4,200 flats (32%) were built in the redevelopment

areas, (Table 8.7).[94]

Table 8.7: Location of High Rise Flats Approvals, 1951-70.

Year	Location (where identified)											Uniden- tified
	Redevelopment Areas		Inner Suburbs		Outer Suburbs		Peripheral Estates		Total Identified		
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No
1951	–	–	–	–	180	100	–	–	180	100	–
1952	90	29	216	71	–	–	–	–	306	100	–
1953	–	–	180	100	–	–	–	–	180	100	–
1954	–	–	90	13	584	87	–	–	674	100	24
1955	135	18	192	25	434	57	–	–	761	100	–
1956	–	–	160	31	364	69	–	–	524	100	–
1957	198	41	192	40	96	19	–	–	486	100	–
1958	584	58	257	25	174	17	–	–	1015	100	–
1959	453	48	270	28	83	9	144	15	950	100	193
1960	490	44	–	–	320	28	355	32	1165	100	68
1961	300	89	36	11	–	–	–	–	336	100	–
1962	578	71	–	–	185	23	46	6	809	100	. –
1963	34	12	34	12	176	63	36	13	280	100	328
1964	276	13	386	19	436	21	986	47	2084	100	336
1965	942	23	350	9	1134	28	1587	40	4013	100	474
1966	884	29	602	20	914	30	628	21	3028	100	378
1967	986	54	60	3	–	–	796	43	1842	100	89
1968	1154	54	–	–	–	–	1000	46	2154	100	–
1969	76	18	354	82	–	–	–	–	430	100	–
1970	36	19	149	81	–	–	–	–	185	100	–
1951-70	7216	34	3508	16	5080	24	5578	26	21382	100	1950

One of the most interesting aspects of Birmingham's return to high rise

building despite the presence of countervailing forces in the 1958-63 period,

is the very different contractual pattern which developed, (Table 8.8).[95]

During the 1950s Wimpey built just over a third of the city's high rise, and

Laing, Wates and other national firms a further quarter. Four local firms,

Stubbings, Morriss and Jacombs, Bryant and G. Whittal accounted for a quarter

of all high rise between them, although they did not win contracts with any

great regularity.

After the hiatus in high rise approvals in 1961-3, the new burst of high

flat building showed a completely different contractual pattern. Over the

five years 1964-8, Bryant leapt to prominence, being awarded 66% of all high

Table 8.8: Contractual Trends in Birmingham's High Rise Housing, 1951-70.

(High flats Approvals)

Year	National Firms				Birmingham Firms				Direct Labour	Unidentified
	Wimpey	Wates	Laing	Other	Bryant	Stubbings	Morris	Other		
1951	180	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
1952	90	–	–	–	–	–	–	216	–	–
1953	180	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
1954	366	308	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	24
1955	416	–	135	210	–	–	–	–	–	–
1956	96	108	–	–	–	160	160	–	–	–
1957	198	96	–	–	–	160	–	–	32	–
1958	316	–	273	–	120	–	–	36	270	–
1959	–	270	154	–	–	270	177	–	79	193
1960	382	108	–	–	204	110	210	179	–	–
1961	–	–	–	–	108	–	–	60	100	68
1962	–	144	–	372	34	46	–	–	213	–
1963	–	–	–	–	178	–	–	–	102	388
1964	208	–	–	–	1734	276	–	–	100	102
1965	626	92	–	120	2481	126	304	144	368	228
1966	806	368	–	–	1814	168	58	–	150	42
1967	348	–	–	–	1433	–	–	–	150	–
1968	192	–	–	–	1832	–	–	–	130	–
1969	354	–	–	–	76	–	–	–	–	–
1970	–	–	–	–	185	–	–	–	–	–
1951-60	2224	890	562	210	324	700	547	431	381	217
1961-70	2534	604	–	492	9875	616	362	204	1311	828
1951-1970:	4758	1494	562	702	10199	1316	909	635	1692	1045

% of all High Rise Approvals)

Year	Wimpey	Wates	Laing	Other	Bryant	Stubbings	Morris	Other	Direct Labour	Unidentified
1951	100	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
1952	29	–	–	–	–	–	–	71	–	–
1953	100	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
1954	54	44	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	3
1955	55	–	18	27	–	–	–	–	–	–
1956	18	21	–	–	–	31	31	–	–	–
1957	41	20	–	–	–	33	–	–	7	–
1958	31	–	27	–	12	–	–	4	27	–
1959	–	24	13	–	–	24	17	–	7	17
1960	32	9	–	–	17	9	18	15	–	–
1961	–	–	–	–	32	–	–	18	30	20
1962	–	18	–	46	4	6	–	–	26	–
1963	–	–	–	–	27	–	–	–	15	58
1964	9	–	–	–	72	11	–	–	4	4
1965	14	2	–	3	55	3	7	3	8	5
1966	24	11	–	–	53	5	2	–	4	1
1967	18	–	–	–	74	–	–	–	8	–
1968	9	–	–	–	85	–	–	–	6	–
1969	82	–	–	–	18	–	–	–	–	–
1970	–	–	–	–	100	–	–	–	–	–
1951-61	34	14	9	3	5	11	8	7	6	3
1961-71	15	4	–	3	59	4	2	1	8	5
1951-71	20	6	2	3	44	6	4	3	7	5

(Morris refers to Morris and Jacombs Ltd).

flat approvals (9,300 dwellings). Wimpey gained only 14% of these contracts, Wates won only a few hundred flats while Laing dropped out of high flat tendering altogether. No other local builder experienced such a massive upsurge in contracts. The 1964-8 increase in high rise building was thus almost entirely an increase in the work going to Bryant.. This in turn is explicable completely in terms of Bryant's adoption of the Bison method of industrialized building.

The Bison system was developed by Concrete Ltd. in 1962 out of their previous floor and column techniques, and produced pre-cast concrete flats on the lines of heavy prefabrication systems but with much smaller units.[96] Concrete's marketing problem was that they lacked main contracting resources and needed a general contractor to actually build the flats. In 1960 Stubbings won a Birmingham contract for a traditional 16 storey block using Bison elements with Concrete acting as major sub-contractor.[97] Not until Bryant took over as general contractor in the Midlands did Concrete achieve a major breakthrough, however.

Bryant originated as a private firm in the 1930s, and in the post-war period was run primarily by Mr A.C. (Chris) Bryant as a building and civil engineering contractor, carrying out road building, site works and private housing in the 1950s, but relatively little council housing. In 1959 a new company, Bryant Holdings Ltd., was created to hold the capital of this firm and in 1960 went public with an authorized capital of £1.25 million.[98] A period of rapid growth and diversification of subsidiaries followed, one of which, Bryant Design and Construction Ltd., under the architect Miel Rys Davies designed the first complete Bison block in 1961.[99] A year later Bryant won a contract for a prototype Bison block in Birmingham and in 1963 decided to commit themselves fully to marketing the system throughout the Midlands. Bryant gave the name Bryant Co-ordinated Construction to their strengthened involvement as main contractor and clinched the deal by winning two contracts at Rugby and Kidderminster.[100]

Bryant were well placed to sell the Bison system to the mainly Labour controlled major housing authorities in the region. Their publicity in the early 1960s was handled by the one man P.R. firm run by Dennis Howell, Labour M.P. for Small Heath and an ex-city councillor.[101] In 1963 he became a Director, and made a speech at the Labour Party Conference opposing nationalization of the building industry and advocating an industrialized building programme which capitalized on the success of large firms.[102] At about the same time local politicians including the HBC Chairman Ernest Bond were regular visitors to Bryant social functions, and a senior figure in the Labour group Alderman W.T. Bowen became a Bryant director.[103] Bowen who had been displaced from the Labour leadership in 1952 by Bradbeer,[104] helped Watton to win the post in 1959 and was very close to him and a powerful member of the General Purposes Committee. Watton described his leadership of the Labour Group in these terms:

> While I, all right, I was the Boss, they were a very
> qualified and talented Group, some of them. I mean
> you don't tell the Alderman Bowens of this world, people
> like that, what to do! 105

In October 1963, six months after the rejection of Camus and with the Castle Bromwich development still bogged down, Bowen arranged a trip by the HBC (of which he was at no time a member) to see the first two completed Bison blocks at Kidderminster,[106] which were the focus of an extensive Bryant publicity drive (Figure 8.9).[107] Although Birmingham's own Bison prototype was still being built,[108] the visit proved a turning point in Birmingham's use of high rise. One informant described the visit in these terms:

> Bowen persuaded Watton that the (House Building) Committee
> should go out and look at these flats when they were up, go
> out in a bus, a big party. And of course I was asked if I
> wanted to come along and said 'O.K, I'll come' .. They were
> just ordinary, standard shape blocks - perfectly normal flats
> with doors and windows and bathrooms and everything. You've
> got to remember at this time we were building a hundred to a
> hundred and fifty schemes at a time, flats and all kinds ...
>
> Anyway, we went in a bus to the site. They had the blocks
> laid out so (sketches) and the way to the blocks was through
> this great marquee - which was loaded with drinks and, er,
> food.. So we stayed there quite a long time and then we went
> out and looked at the flats. Well by this time they could
> have been inlaid with gold! In fact they looked pretty awful
> from the outside - they had this grey and white panelling.
> Inside they were all right.

Figure 8.9: Bryant Advertisement, 1963.

132 HOMES IN 43 WEEKS
PROGRESSIVE KIDDERMINSTER FIRST TO BUILD INDUSTRIALISED FLATS WITH BRYANT CO-ORDINATED CONSTRUCTION

* FIRST BLOCK COMPLETED IN 29 WEEKS

BRYANT CO-ORDINATED CONSTRUCTION provides a complete range of Technical Services for the comprehensive development of housing projects, ranging from Site Investigation, Foundation Engineering, Layout and Design, Computer Planning and Programming, to Construction – and guarantees economy of design and EARLY completion. All this means – economy (from single blocks upwards); an early starting date (because estimating and design times are reduced to the minimum); an early completion date (because unit-construction means rapid erection); comfortable accommodation with privacy (the structure is sound-resistant and incorporates high thermal insulation); flexibility in elevation treatment and layouts.

Industrialised Housing Systems are in the news – but Bryant Co-ordinated Construction plus the Bison Wall-Frame System is the FIRST in the field. First at Kidderminster – First in Great Britain. Only the co-ordination of a progressive construction company with a progressive pre-fabricated unit system manufacturer can achieve results as at Kidderminster – and it's the resolute and progressive Housing Committees that take full advantage of Bryant Co-ordinated Services to help solve their problems.

Architect: Niall Rhys-Davies, Dip.Arch., A.R.I.B.A., Dip C.D., A.M.T.P.I., in association with The Borough Engineer and Surveyor, J. G. Stewart A.M.I.C.E., M.I.Mun.E., M.I.W.E.

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HOUSING PROBLEMS ARE SOLVED WHEN YOU CONSULT

BRYANT

> We went round and at the end we went into the marquee
> again and had some more drinks.   Somebody asked me what
> I thought of the flats, and I said (shrugs) 'They're
> perfectly normal average flats, like hundreds we've done'.
> Things went on and as we were leaving, at the exit,
> Harry Watton suddenly said, 'Right, we'll take five blocks'.
> Just as if he was buying bags of sweets!   'We'll have five
> of them', he said, 'and stick them on X' - some site he'd
> remembered we were just starting on.
>
> Well I can tell you - I almost walked out on the spot.   I
> mean, all Committees get this done to them from time to
> time, but this! .. That was Watton trying to please Bowen
> you see. 109

At a meeting on November 7th the HBC decided to follow up the visit by placing

a negotiated contract for twelve standard plan 11 storey blocks with Bryant

and Sheppard Fidler was instructed to find sites for them.[110]

Interestingly enough, when contracts for the blocks came up for approval

Councillor Matthews, the Conservative spokesman whose views played such a

large part in securing the HBC rejection of Camus, declared an interest, and

continued to do this on a series of negotiated Bryant tenders over the next

three years.[111]   Since he ran a joinery business it seems reasonable to suppose

that his interest concerned the sub-contracting arrangements for these flats.

He, of course, continued to play a part in all other HBC decisions over this

period.   In January 1964, for example, he drew the Committee's attention to

the partial collapse of a block of system built flats in Paris:

> He thought this should be noted with a view to all
> concerned taking the greatest care in the erection
> of similar flats in Birmingham. 112

From this point on Bryant/Concrete assumed a dominant position in

Birmingham's high rise drive.   When the prototype Bison block was at last

finished late in May 1964, the Post reported enthusiastically:

> Birmingham Corporation, members of which have been
> cautious in adopting Continental methods of industrialized
> housing, yesterday officially received its first block of
> factory-made flats built by an all-British system. 113

Bond spoke of the 'incredible efficiency' of the two contractors and pointed

to the follow up order for twelve blocks as an indication of confidence in the

system.   In characteristic style Chris Bryant used the occasion to maintain

pressure for system building by attacking Ministry obstruction, declaring
'the homeless of Britain cannot afford the luxury of "normal Whitehall speed" '.
He went on to point out:

> We are capable of higher production, but it is in the
> interests of both the city and the construction industry
> to have larger areas prepared for development. · It is
> obvious we can be most efficient when we are allowed to
> have continuous development. 114

THINKING BIG

In January 1964 Sheppard Fidler announced his intention to resign and go
into private practice at the end of the municipal year.   This decision was
not provoked, as Sutcliffe and Smith suggest, by his failure to secure control
of planning for the architects' department, but by the decisions made on
industrialized building.[115]

The new Chief Architect was Sheridan Sheddon, who had been Sheppard Fidler's
deputy in charge of school building until 1961, when he took over as Chief
Officer in Leeds, then one of the foremost authorities using industrialized
building.[116]   Sheridan Sheddon came back to Birmingham with Watton's strong
support as the man to get housing output moving again, but he was already a
sick man.   He held down the job with increasing difficulty through two long
illnesses before resigning early in 1966.   This development brought to the
HBC's attention Alan Maudsley, the newly appointed Deputy City Architect who
got the job in April 1964 as 'the best of three poor candidates'.   In deputis-
ing for Sheridan Sheddon he secured far more influence and contact with housing
matters than his control of school building would suggest.[117]

In November 1964 Sheridan Sheddon carried out a complete reorganization
of the housing division of his department designed to boost housing output.
In place of the high quality design orientation introduced by Sheppard Fidler,
he secured HBC approval of the following objectives for the Division:

> 1. Increase housing output to 4,000 dwellings a year immediately,
>   and more later.
> 2. Reduce the cost of dwellings.
> 3. Use industrialized forms of construction to save labour.

4. Increase the labour force on existing contracts and
ensure labour for future contracts by:
    (a) providing continuity of work for contractors
      by rational programmes, and
    (b) attracting new national firms to work on
      Birmingham's housing. 118

The Division was divided into four sections.   All design, research and

standardization work was taken over by one section.   Two more were concerned

with landscape design, and with programming work, which was completely

transferred to administrative staff.   The last section dealt only with

contracts and was in turn sub-divided into four units, each of which was given

the specific objective of letting contracts for 1,000 dwellings a year in the

first instance.   These changes were certainly effective.   Feverish letting

of contracts in the last two months of 1964 boosted the city's approvals by

nearly 50% to 4,077 dwellings by the year end.   And approvals then more than

doubled to 8,741 in 1965, 7,559 in 1966, 9,000 in 1967 and 7,877 in 1968.[119]

One of the most fascinating aspects of this change in contracting practice

was an enormous expansion in the proportion of the city's housing drive

included in contracts with a high rise component.   Throughout the early '60s

this was around two fifths, but in 1964 it rose to over two thirds, and in

1965 to nearly nine tenths of all approvals, (Table 8.9).[120]   In 1964 the

rise reflected a simple re-expansion of high flat building, but the peak years

of 1965-66 were also marked by the inclusion of very large numbers of low rise

dwellings in integrated contracts with high flats for the first and only time

in Birmingham's history.   Three quarters of all low rise dwellings included in

high rise contracts over the post-war period were approved in these two years,

which also saw a rapid rise in average contract sizes.

The main beneficiary of this change was again Bryant.   In late 1963 members

of the HBC inspected a prototype Bryant industrialized house, for which the

company were building a factory in Handsworth, a ward with some of the city's

most acute unemployment problems.   Bryant claimed major construction time and

cost reductions could be made with the design and the HBC reaction was

favourable.   Bond told the local press:

Table 8.9:   High Rise Contracts and Contract Sizes, 1951-69.

(Approvals)

Year	High Rise Contracts			Low Rise in High Rise Contracts		Average Contract Sizes	
	No of Contracts	No of Dwellings	% of all Approvals	No of Dwellings	% of all Approvals	High Rise	All Approvals
1951	1	180	3.9	-	-	-	91
1952	2	306	9.1	12	0.3	-	57
1953	1	180	5.5	-	-	-	61
1954	6	934	23.5	236	5.9	156	66
1955	5	761	28.3	-	-	152	61
1956	4	524	24.7	-	-	131	76
1957	4	508	28.6	22	1.3	127	57
1958	12	1338	41.9	323	10.1	112	71
1959	8	1143	56.6	-	-	143	65
1960	9	1428	38.6	235	6.4	159	95
1961	5	336	39.3	-	-	67	30
1962	7	809	38.9	-	-	116	53
1963	9	901	39.3	233	10.2	100	65
1964	15	2744	67.3	324	7.9	183	107
1965	27	7702	88.1	3215	36.8	285	159
1966	23	5473	72.4	2067	27.3	238	172
1967	8	1961	21.8	30	0.3	245	145
1968	8	2450	31.1	269	3.8	306	154
1969	2	430	29.4	-	-	-	42
1951-69	156	30120	40.3	6993	9.3	193	90

The whole party (of members) has been favourably impressed
by what it has seen.. The important thing is that for two
and three storey building this is a British system. We have
heard so much about Continental systems and at last we have a
British system which seems to solve the problem of large
housing authorities on speed and cost. 121

A new Bryant subsidiary was set up to market the system and in November 1964
Bryant won their first integrated contract for Bison high rise and Bryant
houses at Castle Bromwich.[122] By 1965 Bryant low rise approvals reached
1,395 and a year later 1,863. A very large part of these approvals was
accounted for by integrated high rise contracts for over 500 dwellings,
(Table 8.10).[123] These included the Druids Heath estate, proudly proclaimed
'the largest industrialized building project in Britain'.[124] In 1967, however,
the practice of integrated contracts came to an abrupt end, largely it seems
because of the housing cost yardsticks. To get round their restrictions,
high rise flats were let in large contracts with very high site densities and
no low rise, all the largest contracts going to Bryant. Over the period

between late 1964 and 1968, Bryant won £25,500,000 of business on high rise

contracts over 500 dwellings (out of a total worth nearly £31 million and

covering 8,700 dwellings). All of these contracts except Bryant's first large

tender were negotiated.

Table 8.10: Large High Rise Contracts, 1964-68.

| Date | Place | Firm | Number of dwellings | | Tender | Cost £m |
			High Rise	Low Rise		
1964	Castle Bromwich	Bryant	736	–	SC	2.60
1965	Castle Bromwich	Bryant	900	–	N	2.84
	Druids Heath	Bryant	450	582	N	3.35
	Atholl House Farm	Direct Labour	250	313	N	1.83
1966	Bromford Bridge	Wimpey	580	403	N	3.30
	Bells Lane	Bryant	350	569	N	3.24
	Chelmsley Wood	Bryant	216	669	N	2.88
1967	Holloway Circus	Bryant	488	–	N	1.99
	Chelmsley Wood	Bryant	796	–	N	2.96
1968	Chelmsley Wood	Bryant	748	–	N	2.92
	Redevelopment Areas	Bryant	752	–	N	2.69
1964-8			6,166	2,538		30.65

Tender: SC = Selective Competition   N = Negotiated

The movement away from integrated contracts in 1967 did not harm Bryant
[125]
Low Rise, which was by then the most successful low rise only system in Britain.

Instead approvals jumped to nearly 3,500 dwellings a year in 1967 and 1968.[126]

The low rise market in Birmingham remained much more diversified than that on

high rise, with Wimpey, Laing, Wates and local builders also important, and

entry by two large new firms, Mowlem and Reema in 1966.[127] But Bryant's

success did mean that Birmingham remained completely separate from the national

trend in using Bison only for high rise.[128] Repeated attempts by Concrete

to market Bison Low Rise to the city failed in 1963-5. (Concrete quickly

accepted this position, however. In September 1966 their Chairman,

Kenneth Wood, argued that local authorities should move over to dealing with

two contractors:

> One of these would be responsible for both the multi-storey
> blocks and medium rise building. .. the other would be the
> 'small house' specialist providing in large quantities a range
> of system built 2 storey dwellings. 'One large contract, one
> main contractor' is a concept so inbuilt that it may take some
> shifting. But the use of two specialist contractors seems the
> logical approach and its ultimate acceptance is inevitable.)[129]

The concentration of work in large negotiated contracts and the success of Bryants in having these contracts awarded to them aroused scarcely any attention in Council. In March 1965, a Conservative councillor queried the HBC's report over the suspension of Standing Orders on 14 contracts worth £5,300,000 awarded to Bryant:

> Bryants might be offering the best price. But how is this to be known unless the work was offered to contractors all over the country and they had the opportunity of tendering?

Bond replied:
> Although on the surface (this was) a valid point, careful consideration shows that negotiation was necessary if the continuity and speed of the house building programme was to be held. 130

The Labour group proved keen to maintain contract relations established in 1964-5, and in 1966 when Labour had lost control Bond opposed the awarding of a contract to Mowlem:

> Local builders had assured the Council that they had the spare capacity, and an outsider could not import more labour. 131

But the Conservatives also favoured contractual policies very favourable to large firms. When the City Architect announced a 50% jump in output early in 1965, the _Post_ reported:

> Councillor Matthews (the Conservative spokesman) attributed the boom to the adoption of a policy Conservatives had been advocating for years. This was that bigger contracts should be placed with individual contractors so that once they were on site continuity of work could be obtained.
> Once a contractor had secured a scheme in open competition, the local authority should be prepared to negotiate other contracts with him on the site _for as long as five years_.
> At this stage, work should go out to tender again to ensure the work was being done 'at the right price'. 132
>
> (my italics)

This generous view exerted a major influence on contracting for the peripheral estates such as Chelmsley Wood, where continuity of work could plausibly cover many thousands of dwellings.

8.5:   The Boom Collapses.

THE CONTEXT OF DECISION MAKING, 1966-70

In 1966 there were a number of far reaching personnel and political changes.   Watton had to resign the Labour leadership and go into hospital after becoming seriously ill, and was succeeded by Alderman Frank Price, the managing director of the highly successful Birmingham property developer Murrayfield Real Estate Company and at the same time a prominent member of the PWC.[133]   Shortly before the local elections a group of backbench Labour rebels led by Stan Yapp staged a successful revolt against the reappointment of certain Chairmen whose outside interests allegedly conflicted with their positions.[134]   But in the event Labour lost control of the Council to the Conservatives for the first time since 1962.

The Conservative leader Griffin did not appoint Matthews to chair the HBC, despite his record as the Party's 'housing spokesman'.   Instead he moved to the chair of the Estates Committee and the senior Conservative on the HBC, the 76 year old Councillor Apps took over.   He proved a very weak chairman, anxious not to 'sit on the officers laps',[135] and he left the handling of press relations to Matthews who remained an HBC member.[136]

At virtually the same time Sheridan Sheddan finally resigned and the HBC decided to appoint Maudsley to his post without advertising.[137]   In two years Maudsley had moved from being third in line in the Lancashire architects department handling mainly school building to control of the largest public housing programme in Britain outside the G.L.C.   Apps gave him virtually carte blanche remarking: 'I knew he was the man for the job'.[138]   His standing rose dramatically with the city's soaring output and the award of six MHLG Good Design in Housing awards between 1967 and 1973.[139]   In 1967 Maudsley became architectural representative on the A.M.C.'s Housing Committee, in 1968 he was appointed a member of CHAC, and in 1970 he was awarded a C.B.E.[140]

Maudsley disposed of considerable patronage as Chief Architect over which

there was virtually no other control, particularly on the allocation of
negotiated contracts and the employment of private architects.   Between
1966 and 1972 Maudsley entered into a corrupt relationship with a two-man
architectural practice, Ebery and Sharp Ltd, which transformed their firm into
one of the largest practices in the country employing nearly 50 staff.[141]
The firm were employed mainly on the post-contract phases of the Chelmsley
Wood estate, checking that construction was properly carried out, and received
£1.3 million worth of work on Maudsley's recommendation.[142]

In 1974, Maudsley, Ebery and Sharp were arrested on conspiracy to corrupt
and fifteen other charges.   Birmingham newspapers forecast a six week trial
and the calling of hundreds of witnesses,[143] but as soon as the prosecution
Q.C. had finished his opening speech all three defendents changed their plea
to guilty on the conspiracy to corrupt charge and the trial ended with the
other charges left to lie on the table.[144]   However, on the last day of the
trial Sharp's Q.C. made a speech to the court claiming that the charges
considered were 'only the tip of the iceberg'.   Sharp, he said, now wanted
to tell 'the unvarnished truth'.   The Post report continued:

> (The Q.C.) said that Birmingham's housebuilding boom had
> produced handsome profits and continued: 'The principal
> company was a public company called Bryants.   In the years
> this court is concerned with, contracts worth £70 million
> were placed in the hands of Bryants'

At this point the judge interrupted to prevent the Q.C. naming the company
which featured in his allegations.   The Q.C. then

> claimed that before his relationship with Maudsley began,
> Sharp had seen Maudsley socializing with directors of
> (the unnamed company).   One of the directors of the company
> had handed Maudsley 'rolls of money'.   The company had
> approached Sharp in an attempt to use Ebery's Jersey bank account
> as a clearing house for payments to Maudsley.   One payment
> involved a project of 1,253 homes for which Maudsley was to be
> paid £10 a house.   By the end of 1966 when the present corruption
> had begun, Sharp had seen what had gone on..
> Maudsley's absolute power helped to create the climate for
> corruption. 145

Sharp later gave a detailed account of his involvement with Maudsley to the
Birmingham Post.   He claimed he ingratiated himself with Maudsley by playing

golf with him (badly) and drinking at their local Conservative club:

> Just prior to Mr Maudsley being appointed City Architect
> he told me, 'I am going to give you, Jim, the biggest job
> you ever had in your life'.   He had only been City Architect
> for a few days when he called me into his office.   He had a
> great sheet of paper on the floor covering areas 4 and 5 of
> Chelmsley Wood - virgin pieces of land.   He gave me those two
> jobs, and there was a quarter of a million pounds worth of work. [146]

Once hooked Sharp and Ebery began to meet requests for gifts, loans and money.

But according to Sharp two Bryant directors also financed and took part in

trips and holidays with Maudsley -- to London, Copenhagen, Tokyo and Ireland

in 1966, 1967 and 1970.   These formed part of what the Post described as

'a sustained programme of high style living paid for by Bryant directors and

James Sharp'.[147]   These revelations produced a long police inquiry and in

mid 1977 four leading Bryant directors were arrested and charged on various

corruption counts.

The close links between Maudsley and Bryant, however they may be

characterized, seem to be directly relevant in understanding Maudsley's

consistent opposition to the increasing pressures against high rise building

after 1966.

PRESSURES AGAINST HIGH RISE

High rise approvals fell from 4,500 in 1965, their peak year, to 3,400 in

1966 and to 1,900 in 1967, when they accounted for barely a fifth of all

approvals, the lowest proportion since 1954.[148]

There were several reasons for the change.   The Tories' 1966 election

manifesto included a commitment to building more council houses rather than

flats, as well as building houses for sale.   But this did not lead to any

policy change since the Conservative group was anxious not to disrupt the

development of the housing drive.   Far more serious was circular 36/67, on

which Maudsley reported

> The effect of the new cost limits is to force local
> authorities to abandon multi-storey construction except
> in those cases where it is essential to achieve the
> required density, ... and to encourage high density low
> rise schemes with a reasonable proportion of dwellings in
> 3 and 4 storey flats and maisonettes. 149

In fact Birmingham seemed to have little or no difficulty in securing loan sanction for high rise flats, which were now grouped into very large contracts with very high _site_ densities (up to 300 ppa) which were used to justify loan sanction approval.   At the same time the location of these flats in estates of houses was apparently used to convince the Ministry's regional office that densities were below 120 ppa.[150] Not until 1969 did the Ministry office insist on taking the same density - the estate density for both purposes. (This situation seems to have reflected the very close relationship between the city and the MHLG Principal Regional Officer, who was an enthusiastic exponent of industrialised building.[151] Loan sanction on the city's schemes was often given at very early stages, often months before final approval of a negotiated contract by the HBC,[152] and unused allocations to other West Midland authorities were more than once redistributed to Birmingham in order to maintain its hectic progress on housing contracts.[153] The Regional Office never apparently saw anything unusual or amiss in the city's contracting arrangements, principally because progress in some other areas seemed outstanding. For example, the cost of three bedroom houses in the city rose by only 20% between 1962 and 1967, compared with a national increase of 50%.[154] And in 1969 a National Building Agency report argued that productivity on the city's housing developments was twice the national average).[155]

A further reason for the fall in high rise approvals was that by 1968 the Housing Department was finding it difficult to let them.[156] In fact the Housing Officer, Atkinson, called for an embargo on all further flat building in the north-east of the city where 5,000 high rise dwellings were completed in eighteen months at Castle Bromwich, Bromford Bridge and Chelmsley Wood. The city had reached 'saturation point' and was having to 'dig deep' into its waiting list to find tenants, he claimed.[157] Refusals were so common that some flats stood empty for months. In the PWC backbench pressure aroused by the same developments succeeded in procuring a recommendation by the City Engineer of a new 100 ppa central redevelopment density, with potentially lower densities

in areas like Nechells Green (which already had over 30 high blocks).[158] A conference of the PWC, HBC and Housing Management Committee at the end of 1967 nearly produced a decisive shift away from high flats, but a rearguard action by Maudsley and some HBC members pinned the proportion of high rise in new development at 15%. This defence primarily stressed the disadvantages of building large numbers of low rise flats, although the architects department had already moved over to building high density estates of houses.[159]

Pressure against high rise continued to grow throughout 1968, however. In May the Conservative leader Griffin pushed through an amalgamation of the HBC and Housing Management Committee against strong Labour opposition.[160] The displacement of a number of long standing HBC members and their replacement by people interested in housing management produced a new orientation towards the 'social' consequences of housing construction policy. Two developments reinforced this orientation. Firstly, the expansion of the city's housing output produced a growing dissatisfaction amongst tenants of older flats who saw people from the waiting list being rehoused not in flats but in houses after diminishing periods, often as little as two years.[161] In contrast, transfers from flats to the new houses was very rare and flat tenants saw this situation as acutely unfair. After a campaign on this issue was launched by several backbench councillors,[162] the HC agreed to open a special transfer list to give flat dwellers a chance to transfer to a house.[163] By the end of 1969, a few months after its opening, the list was so enormous that the initiative collapsed and the HC decided to consider only applications from families with three or more children.[164] Yet flat dwellers continued to hope for transfers. In 1972, by which time households with less than three children must have known that their chances of getting a house were extremely slim, there were still 11,050 families on the list (about 27,500 people). Of these families, 570 had three or more children, 2,000 were families with two children, and 2,500 families with one child: (so at least 18,400 people in families with children wanted to transfer from flats). There were also 3,200

childless couples and 2,750 single people on the list.[165]

Secondly, this daunting evidence of the unpopularity of flats was supplemented by mounting criticism from tenants in the new industrialized estates of the accommodation provided. The most acute problem was that of dampness. Complaints about damp first reached major proportions in July 1967 when tenants in the high flats at Druids Heath complained.[166] For some months Maudsley claimed to the Committee that everything was under control, although the press reported that a large party of workmen was kept continuously employed on remedying defects including pervasive dampness and badly fitting doors and floors.[167] When complaints began to be heard from the high flats at the Castle Bromwich estate, Bryant and Concrete met the HDC Chairman Apps and 'agreed to accept full responsibility and to carry out suitable preventitive measures entirely at their own cost, indemnifying the Corporation for sixty years against any possible loss due to the recurrence of this trouble'.[168] The dampness problem seemed to have receded as the first industrialized estates began to dry out but in 1968 the cold, wet winter produced a new and massive series of complaints from all the industrialized estates. In March 1969 Atkinson presented a report which for the first time set out the extent of Birmingham's problems from water penetration, rising damp and condensation.[169] Several thousand flats and houses were affected, some estates particularly badly; for example, at Druids Heath 32% of the Bryant houses had condensation problems. Atkinson considered that many of the problems stemmed directly from the speed with which the estates had been built. Concrete panels containing enormous quantities of water had not been cured (left to dry out) for sufficient time but erected, trapping the water in the dwellings of the unfortunate tenants. Despite the efforts of the Housing Department, the dampness problem rumbled on for years. In 1970-1 the Housing Committee set up a special Dampness Sub-Committee which, in addition to the thousands already spent, authorized expenditure of £50 to £100 on nearly 2,000 dwellings with chronic dampness problems.[170]

CITY CENTRE HIGH RISE AND THE PROPERTY BOOM

A final strand in the development of Birmingham's high rise policy was the building of tower blocks in the city centre, as well as in redevelopment areas and peripheral estates. This use of high flats was integrally bound up with the property boom. The trend originated in Frank Price's success in persuading the HBC to 'buy the airspace' above Murrayfield Real Estate Co.'s Yardley development for two 12 storey blocks.[171] It was continued by the design by Sharp for the winning Bryant - Samuel Properties tender for the shopping centre at Chelmsley Wood which included several dramatic blocks.[172] In early 1964 Watton's enthusiasm for 'bringing life back to the city centre' produced an HBC decision to build a 20-storey block above the redeveloped New Street station,[173] and in 1966 four 16 storey blocks were included in the plans for the ill-fated Civic Centre site, (which had been under development since the 1930s).[174]

In 1965 the leading Birmingham office block architect James Roberts produced plans for a Property and General Investments Ltd. proposal for a site on an inner ring road roundabout, including a commercial development, multi-storey car parks and two 33 storey blocks of Council flats, named 'The Sentinels'.[175] After this plan lapsed discussions with various other firms failed to find anyone to take on the whole development. Then Roberts suggested with PWC and architects department approval that the flats could be built by themselves with the commercial development later. By this stage only Bryant and Bernard Sunley Ltd. (a London firm with no previous work for the City Council) were left in discussions and after considering preliminary costings for the blocks the architects department began final negotiations with Bryant.[176]

When the giant tower scheme was made public in March 1966 it attracted a good deal of unfavourable comment, the Post editorialising: 'It is reasonable to wonder when these grandiose schemes are conceived whether proper regard is paid to the human and social needs of tenants'.[177] In December the PWC referred

the preliminary tender to the Housing Management Committee for comments, on the initiative of a Labour member Mrs Fisher.[178] Shortly afterwards she attended the opening ceremony at the New Street block (built by Bryant on a negotiated contract) at which the following incident took place: (as described in the HMC Minutes)

> Mrs Fisher said that at the opening (of the New Street flats) she had been approached by the contractor concerned who had intimated that he understood she had been opposing the multi-storey blocks to be known as 'The Sentinels'. She retorted that this was not in fact so although she had been instrumental in arranging for the observations of the Housing Management Committee to be sought, bearing in mind possible management problems with a 32 storey scheme. She indicated that she felt it was most improper that an approach of this kind should have been made to her. 179

After the Conservative leader Griffin had 'expressed concern that the contractor should have directly approached and questioned Mrs Fisher about her objections to the scheme', the Housing Management Committee referred the incident to the Town Clerk and advised the HBC to seek competitive tenders from a wider range of firms rather than negotiating with Bryant.[180] Before the next HBC meeting Maudsley wrote to the Town Clerk stressing that negotiations had already gone on with a large number of firms (but not on the flats – only contract) and that Bryant had been given the contract,

> on the grounds that they were already well aware of the city's standards and methods of working and it is therefore a comparatively easy exercise to negotiate with them. If we now go forward in our negotiations with Bryants I am reasonably confident of obtaining a reduction on the first stage tender costs. If, on the other hand, there is any suggestion of widening the scope of the firms tendering then there is little doubt that serious delay would result and an increase in cost would be almost inevitable. 181

Maudsley, Apps and Matthews were consulted by the Clerk, but since they tended to pooh-pooh the incident the matter was dropped and the HBC approved negotiations with Bryant.

Controversy over the city centre schemes continued in 1967 when only a quarter of the New Street flats could be let after being offered to everyone on the housing waiting list at £5 a week.[182] Eventually the remainder were let

on the open market at 'economic rents'. When the final tender for the
Sentinels project came up the total cost of the 488 flats was nearly £2,000,000
and the rents at £7.50 a week were unlikely to attract Council tenants.[183]
Despite opposition in the PWC to housing 1,300 people in a tiny area in such a
scheme, the project went through, although the battle carried into the Council
Chamber after allegations that the contract was improperly approved before
receiving planning permission from the PWC.[184]

A year after approval had eventually been given, Bryant submitted revised
plans for the Sentinels commercial redevelopment on which Atkinson commented to
the Housing Committee:

> In housing management terms each scheme produced has
> worsened the position so far as the occupants of the
> flats are concerned. The parking spaces have been
> reduced, the prices increased and the building overlooking
> the north block increased in height. 185

A protracted battle between the Housing Department on one side and Maudsley,
the Estates Officer, City Engineer and PWC on the other, resulted in permission
being given to Bryant to build a 'purely commercial' scheme in which the city
had to lease one floor of the car park at a high price.[186] When the
commercial development was finished in 1974 the Housing Chairman publicly
described it as 'planning gone mad':

> You only have to look at it to see how ludicrous it is.
> It is going to cause hell for the residents. The car park
> is blocking out light on 6 or 8 floors.. I am ashamed of
> the planning decision that was taken here. 187

FINAL DECISIONS

In 1968, despite the pressures against high flats which we have detailed,
high rise approvals rose to 27% of the total and were still at 2,150 dwellings,
more than double the figure in any year before 1964.[188] The Ronan Point
collapse and Inquiry report, however, brought about a clear shift in
Councillors' attitudes against high rise. Although 1,600 Bison flats were
approved for 1969 after the Griffith report, Maudsley assured the HC that
Concrete Ltd. would carry out any necessary strengthening on new blocks.[189]

But in April 1969 following a consultant engineer's report Birmingham had to disconnect and replace all gas appliances at a cost of £400,000 in 86 system built blocks, and begin strengthening operations costing hundreds of thousands of pounds more.[190]

In April 1969 the Housing Manager Atkinson produced a report on the last large peripheral estate to be developed in Birmingham, Woodgate Valley. The report detailed the failure of Birmingham's existing peripheral estates arising from their remoteness from the city centre, the lack of employment opportunities for women, high transport costs involved in journeys to work and the comparative scarcity of social and community facilities. Within the constraints of finance Atkinson claimed that the only inducement the Corporation could offer to people to move six miles out of the city centre to Woodgate Valley was an improvement in their housing conditions, and he effectively argued that this entailed providing tenants with houses and not flats.[191] The HC decided to build 6,000 houses and no flats on the site, and the Chairman told the press that Birmingham had turned its back on high rise.[192]

The architects department still brought forward further proposals for high rise in redevelopment areas, although these were few and far between.[193] Finally in March 1970 the Committee refused to negotiate two new contracts with Bryant after Griffin had 'recalled that this was the system which had required strengthening' and instead called for competitive tenders.[194] The criticism of high flat schemes voiced at this meeting marked their final demise in Birmingham.

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2. Source, Sutcliffe and Smith, Birmingham 1939-70, pp. 182-3.

3. See Sutcliffe and Smith, Birmingham 1939-70, pp. 457-61.

4. Source, A.B. Neale and G. Haine (eds.), Abstract of Birmingham Statistics, 1972-3 (Birmingham, City of Birmingham, 1974), Number 17, Table 68, p. 108.

5. Sources, Abstract of Birmingham Statistics, 1955-7, No. 4, Table 88, p. 90; Abstract of Birmingham Statistics, 1964, No. 9, Table 71, p. 109; Abstract of Birmingham Statistics, 1972-3, No. 17, Table 69, p. 109.

6. Sources, Abstract of Birmingham Statistics, 1955-7, No. 4, Table 5, p. 87 Abstract of Birmingham Statistics, 1962, No. 7, Table 62, p. 100; Abstract of Birmingham Statistics, 1964, No. 9; Table 68, p. 105; Abstract of Birmingham Statistics, 1972-3, No. 17, Table 65, p. 104. Dwellings are occupied dwellings.

7. Sources, Abstract of Birmingham Statistics, 1950-51, No. 2, Table 83, p. 68; 1952-4, No. 3, Table 84, p. 67; 1955-7, No. 4, Table 96, p. 97; 1958-9, No. 5, Table 107, p. 92; 1960-1, No. 6, Table 67, p. 103; 1962, No. 7, Table 69, p. 110; 1963, No. 8, Table 74, p. 115; 1964, No. 9, Table 77, p. 119; 1965, No. 10, Table 75, p.111; 1966-7, No. 11, Table 81, p. 125; 1967-8, No. 12, Table 76, p. 121; 1968-9, No. 13, Table 76, p. 123; 1969-70, No. 14, Table 74, p. 113; 1970-71, No. 15, Table 72, p. 113; 1971-72, No. 16, Table 66, p. 107; 1972-73, No. 17, Tabel 73, p. 115.

8. Abstract of Birmingham Statistics, 1972-3, Table 15, pp. 27-8.

9. Sutcliffe and Smith, Birmingham 1939-70, pp. 375-81.

10. See K. Newton, Second City Politics (London, Oxford University Press, 1976); D.S. Morris and K. Newton, Birmingham Council and Birmingham Population in the Context of England and Wales (Faculty of Commerce and Social Science, University of Birmingham, Discussion Paper F.1); The Social Composition of Birmingham Council, 1930-66, Discussion Paper F.2; The Occupational Composition of Party Groups on Birmingham Council, 1920-66, Discussion Paper F.3; Chairmen and Non-Chairmen of Birmingham Council, Discussion Paper F.4; Ward Volatility and Social Class, Discussion Paper F.5; Profile of a Local Political Elite: Businessmen on Birmingham City Council, 1920-66, Discussion Paper F.6; and 'Marginal Wards and Social Class', British Journal of Political Science, 1 (1971), 503-7; and 'The Social Composition of a City Council, 1925-66', Social and Economic Administration, 5 (1971), 29-33; K. Newton, 'Turnout and Marginality in Local Elections', British Journal of Political Science, 2 (1972), 251-5; P. Davies and K. Newton, 'An Aggregate Data Analysis of Turnout and Party Voting at Local Elections', Sociology, 8 (1974), 213-31.

11. See also the following Research Papers from the History of Birmingham Project: A.R. Sutcliffe, The Production of Municipal Houses in Birmingham, 1939-66, No. 5; R.J. Smith, Housing in Birmingham Immediately After the End of the Second World War, No. 4; and The Changing Housing Stock of Birmingham 1945 to 1966, No. 7. Our principal ground for concern is the tendency of the official history to be phrased in terms of council members' decisions, even when the authors must have known that decisions were effectively made by officers: the official history is thus trapped

within the ideology of local government. See also A. Briggs, History of Birmingham, Volume II: Borough and City, 1865-1938 (London, Oxford University Press, 1952).

12. Source, City of Birmingham Housing Department, Multi-Storey Flats.

13. Source, CIPF data analysed in Ch. 2.

14. The account in this paragraph is taken from A. Sutcliffe, 'A Century of Flats in Birmingham 1875-1973' in Sutcliffe (ed.), Multi-Storey Living, pp. 181-99.

15. Sutcliffe, 'A Century of Flats in Birmingham', p. 196.

16. See, for example, Institute of Municipal Engineers, City of Birmingham - Redevelopment (London, The Institute, 1950).

17. Sutcliffe and Smith, Birmingham 1939-70, pp. 222-3.

18. Sutcliffe and Smith, Birmingham 1939-70, pp. 224-5.

19. City of Birmingham, Development Plan, 1952 (Birmingham, City Council, 1952). And see Birmingham Post, 5 October 1951.

20. See Sutcliffe and Smith, Birmingham 1939-70, 123-31.

21. See Sutcliffe, 'A Century of Flats in Birmingham'; Birmingham Gazette, 27 November 1948; Birmingham Mail, 1 February 1949.

22. The 2,000th post war house in the city was not completed until 13 August 1948, according to the Birmingham Mail; by the end of 1949 the housing waiting list had 68,563 households on it, Evening Dispatch, 28 November 1949.

23. Interview with Sir Charles Burman. See also Birmingham Mail, 10 June 1949; Birmingham Gazette, 16 June 1950.

24. See Table 8.5 below.

25. See the statements on land shortage by Alderman Pritchett in Birmingham Gazette, 15 June 1949 and Birmingham Post, 25 November 1949; by Manzoni, in Birmingham Mail, 30 September 1950; and by Alderman Humphreys, BM, 5 December 1950.

26. 'More Flats Plan to Meet Land Famine', BG, 4 August 1951; and BP, 21 December 1951, editorial on flats.

27. Municipal Journal, 13 July 1951, p. 1618.

28. Municipal Journal, 1 May 1953, p. 889. And see ED, 24 June 1952.

29. See Evening Dispatch, 2 March 1951, 24 June 1952, 19 February 1953; BM, 18 May 1953; BM, 26 June 1956.

30. Sources, DOE files on Birmingham housing; Birmingham House Building Committee Minutes, 1951-68, (hereafter HBCM), Housing Committee Minutes, 1968-70. A total of 701 high flats (2.9 per cent) could not be identified; this seems an acceptable margin of error.

31. Interviews with former members of HBC.

32. See Sutcliffe and Smith, Birmingham 1939-70, pp. 429-30.

33. Interview with A.G. Sheppard Fidler.

34. See Sutcliffe and Smith, Birmingham 1939-70, pp. 437-8; see also the statements by H. Watton in BM, 21 May 1964.

35. Interview with A.G. Sheppard Fidler; Sutcliffe and Smith, Birmingham 1939-70, p. 231.

36. See Sheppard Fidler, 'Post-War Housing in Birmingham'.

37. See BG, 22 May 1958, and 6 June 1953 (quote source); and BP, 6 June 1953.

38. BG, 19 June 1953.

39. BG, 28 July 1953 and 2 November 1953 (quote source).

40. BM, 5 February 1954.

41. Birmingham had also been pressing the Ministry for more subsidy for flats in general, BM, 18 May 1953; concern over multi-storey rents was by this time acute, BG 14 July 1953.

42. Source, House Building Committee, Reports, 1951-9 (Birmingham, House Building Committee, 1951-9).

43. See for example BM, 4 July 1951; BM 21 May 1952; BP, 1 August 1951; BM, 4 July 1952; BP, 19 June 1956; BP, 14 September 1957; BP 9 November 1960.

44. Former Conservative HBC member.

45. See BM, 29 January 1959.

46. Sheppard Fidler, 'Post War Housing in Birmingham', pp. 36-39.

47. Municipal Journal, 6 September 1957, p. 1873.

48. Evening Dispatch, 2 March 1953; see also BM 20 June 1957.

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50. See on Aston BM, 2 January 1953; the Duddeston and Nechells blocks were attacked by Osborne in Town and Country Planning and Bradbeer had said similar flat building was unlikely, BP, 24 March 1954. Similar criticism in 1957 were angrily rebutted by Sheppard Fidler, BP, 4 October 1957.

51. These plans were formulated in 1957, directly after the subsidy change, see BP, 12 April 1957 for Sheppard Fidler's reactions; and BM, 6 June 1957; ED, 5 July 1957, 6 September 1957; BP 4 October 1957.

52. See Table 8.4, above.

53. See Table 8.8, above.

54. Sutcliffe, 'A Century of Flat Building in Birmingham',

55. In fact the issue was bound up in a complex web of other problems, notably the City's reaction to an MHLG request for programme cuts and some manoeuvering by Conservative HBC members described by Watton as 'mere political chicanery', see BM, 2 March 1958 and BP, 26 April 1958.

56. BG, 28 June 1952.

57. BM, 16 July 1952; see also BP, 21 December 1951.

58. BP, 4 October 1957.

59. ED, 6 April 1960, 'City MUST build up!'

60. BG, 10 February 1955.

61. Birmingham News, 25 June 1955.

62. BM, 20 March 1957.

63. BM, 28 March 1957.

64. J.P. Macey, 'Problems of Flat Life', paper given at the Public Works and Municipal Services Congress, 12 November 1958.

65. BM, 16 February 1960; flat building had already been linked to rent increases, BM 22 October 1959; and the costs of high rise had been discussed and dismissed in a BM editorial of 4 October 1957.

66. See Sutcliffe and Smith, Birmingham 1939-70, p. 117.

67. See Table 8.2 above.

68. Sources, DOE files on Birmingham housing, crosschecked with HBCM, 1951-68, HCM, 1968-70. A total of 701 high flats could not be traced.

69. Sources, MHLG, Housing Returns, 1951-65, Appendix, Table I; MHLG, Local Housing Statistics, Nos. 1, 2, 5, 6, 9, 13 (1967-72), Table 5 until 1969, Table 4 thereafter.

70. See Sutcliffe and Smith, Birmingham 1939-70, pp. 143-6. For press reaction see ED, 6 April 1960; BM, 19 August 1960.

71. Interview with A.G. Sheppard Fidler.

72. Interview with H. Watton.

73. Sutcliffe and Smith, Birmingham 1939-70, p. 105; A. Sutcliffe, 'Political Leadership in Labour Controlled Birmingham', Local Government Studies, 2 i (1976), 15-32.

74. See A. Howard, 'The Chamberlain Legacy', New Statesman, 87 August 1962, p. 170; Sutcliffe and Smith, Birmingham 1939-70, p. 104.

75. Interview with H. Watton.

76. Interviews with former HBC members; report by Chairman of Housing Management Committee, HBCM, 13 December 1962.

77 Interview with former Conservative HBC member.

78. Interview with H. Watton.

79. This account is taken from the reports and minutes in the HBCM, 13 December 1962; this was the only item of discussion at the meeting.

80. Interviews with former HBC members; Matthews listed his occupation in the Council record as 'Company Director'.

81. HBCM, 13 December 1962. The remainder of this paragraph is from the same source.

82. The account of this meeting is from HBCM, 7 March 1963, and the reports by officers bound in with the minutes.

83. This report gave some details of the Sectra and Skarne systems but noted that they were in situ methods and thus unsuitable.

84. Interview with Sheppard Fidler.

85. HBCM, 7 March 1963. The remainder of this account is from this source.

86. This account is taken from the reports and minutes in HBCM, 4 April 1963.

87. Source, Report by the City Architect, bound in with HBCM, 4 April 1963.

88. Interview with H. Watton.

89. See BP, 20 November 1965, on the 'largely unexplained' decision.

90. BM, 21 May 1964; at the inquiry Watton claimed that it was 'entirely untrue' that the PWC and HBC had been in disagreement about the Castle Bromwich Plans - see Sutcliffe and Smith, Birmingham 1939-70, pp. 437-8.

91. See Table 8.2 above.

92. See Sutcliffe and Smith, Birmingham 1939-70, p. 437.

93. Crossman, Diaries, Volume 1, pp. 87, 400, 622; see also BM, 2 November 1964; 22 December 1964; BP, 2 April 1965; HBCM, 6 April 1965.

94. Sources, DOE files on Birmingham's housing; HBCM, 1951-68, HCM, 1968-70; Birmingham Housing Department, Multi Storey Flats. The unidentified locations are in addition to the 701 flats for which contract details were not traceable.

95. Sources, DOE files on Birmingham's housing; HBCM, 1951-68; HCM 1968-70. Unidentified contracts are in addition to the 701 flats for which contract details were not traceable.

96. See Diamant, Industrialized Building; Municipal Journal, 8 August 1957, pp. 1685-6; 22 September 1961, p. 3035.

97. Municipal Journal, 3 November 1961, p. 3460.

98. See Stock Exchange, Official Yearbook, 1962

99. Municipal Journal, 25 January, p. 218.

100. Municipal Journal, 12 April 1963, p. 1029; contracts were signed at a Press Conference in Birmingham.

101. A. Roth, Business Background of M.Ps, 1967 (London, Parliamentary Profiles, 1967).

102. The Times, 1 October 1963, p. 16.

103. Interviews with former HBC members and Officers of Birmingham City Council.

104. See Sutcliffe and Smith, Birmingham 1939-70, p. 102.

105. Interview with H. Watton.

106. See The Times, 5 November 1963, p. 5: 'The main objection to the flats may be on aesthetic grounds. From the outside the flats do not appear to be either elegant or distinguished'.

107. Municipal Journal, 8 November 1963, p. 3396.

108. It was not completed until March 1964.

109. Interview.

110 HBCM, 7 November 1963;

111. See HBCM, 6 February 1964; HBCM, 3 September 1964; 5 November 1964; 17 June 1965; 18 November 1965; 7 April 1966; 1 September 1966; 2 February 1967; Matthews had interests in contracts with three other firms - a small local firm, a Tersons contract and a Maxim Ltd. contract for Bison Low Rise.

112. HBCM, 16 January 1964.

113. BP, 26 March 1964.

114. BM, 25 March 1964, 'City Building Hustle reminder to Government'.

115. Interview with A.G. Sheppard Fidler; see Sutcliffe and Smith, Birmingham 1939-70, p. 438. They correctly link his resignation to his association with falling outputs, however, pp. 440-1.

116. See Municipal Journal, 22 January, pp. 257-64.

117. Quotation from interview with former HBC member. See also HBCM, 6 February 1964; 4 June 1964: 2 July 1964, (when the HBC commended him for deputizing before Sheridan Sheddan's arrival); and 16 December 1965 (when Matthews moved a motion thanking Maudsley for deputizing during his chief's first illness).

118. HBCM, 19 November 1964. 'Report on the Housing Division'.

119. Table 8.2.

120. Sources, DOE files on Birmingham housing; HBCM, 1951-68; HCM, 1968-70.

121. BP, 10 July 1963.

122. HBCM, 5 November 1964.

123. Sources, DOE files on Birmingham housing; HBCM, 1964-8; HCM, 1968.

124. BP, 20 November 1965; see also Municipal Journal, 10 December 1965, pp. 4229-31.

125. See MHLG, Housing Statistics, Table 17 (1965-8); if high rise systems are / Bryant Low Rise was clearly ahead of other systems.   excluded

126. MHLG, Housing Statistics, No. 13 (1969), Table 17, pp. 23-30.

127. HBCM, 1 September 1966.

128. Between 1964 and 1967 Bison contracts grew faster on low than on high rise.

129. Municipal Journal, 2 September 1966, p. 2873.

130. BP, 6 January 1965.

131. BM, 6 October 1966.

132. BP, 5 March 1965.

133. See Sutcliffe and Smith, Birmingham 1939-70, pp. 103, 108.

134. D. MacShane, 'Birmingham Smells Corruption', New Statesman, 20 February 1976.

135. Interview with ex-Alderman Apps; see for example BM, 21 November 1966.

136. Interview with ex-Alderman Apps.

137. Sutcliffe and Smith, Birmingham 1939-70, p. 441.

138. Interview with ex-Alderman Apps.

139. See HBCM, 14 September 1967; 7 December 1967; 19 September 1968; Sutcliffe and Smith, Birmingham 1939-70, p. 441.

140. CM, 14 November 1968; HCM, 25 June 1970; see also BM, 20 February 1967.

141. BP, 19 June 1974, p. 7.

142. BP, 19 June 1974, p. 7.

143. BP, 19 June 1974, p. 1. The paper had even   designed a special 'Birmingham Corruption Trial' logo.

144. BP, 20 June 1974, p. 1.

145. BP, 22 June 1974, p. 1. And see the Editorial on p. 9.

146. BP, 15 January 1976, p. 7.

147. BP, 15 January 1976, p. 1.

148. Table 8.2.

149. HBCM, 1 June 1967, Report by City Architect on 'Cost Limits for Housing Schemes as Part of the New Subsidy Structure'.

150. See HBCM, 7 December 1967; HCM, 18 September 1969; and BP, 11 July 1969.

151. See BM, 16 March 1965.

152. D.O.E. files crosschecked with HBCM show this happening frequently on high rise contracts, 1964-8.

153. Interviews with former HBC members; the threat of transfers elsewhere was also used to secure HBC approval of contracts against objections, see HCM, 12 December 1968.

154. See the article by J.A. Maudsley, 'A Housing Record - by System Building', Municipal Journal, 24 May 1968, p. 1289.

155. National Building Agency, Public Housing in Birmingham (London, NBA, 1969); BP, 17 October 1969).

156. See BP, 18 August 1967.

157. BM, 19 January 1968.

158. BP, 4 January 1968.

159. HBCM, 25 January 1968; 21 December 1967; BP, 16 December 1967; BM 19 January 1968 and 7 May 1968. On high density low rise see HBCM, 21 December 1967; BM, 6 October 1966.

160. BP, 26 January 1968; HBCM, 25 January 1968.

161. See BM, 19 January 1968.

162. See BM, 4 October 1968.

163. Interviews with former HC members, including Beaumont Darke, the HC Chairman who claimed to have made this initiative.

164. Interview with Beaumont Darke.

165. BM, 2 October 1972.

166. HBCM, 6 July 1967.

167. See HBCM, 20 July 1967; 12 October 1967; 26 October 1967; BP, 23 October 1967.

168. HBCM, 6 July 1967.

169. J.J. Atkinson, 'Dampness in Post War Dwellings', report in HCM, 20 March 1969.

170. See HCM, 10 July 1969; 5 February 1970; 19 February 1970; 16 April 1970; 20 May 1970; see BM, 20 February 1969; 28 February 1969 and 2 March 1969; BM, 25 July 1969; BP, 29 January 1971 - source for figures. The issue even sparked a rent strike at one block, BM, 12 April 1972.

171. Interview with former HBC members. See also ED, 29 September 1960.

172. BP, 17 December 1965. Blocks were also built at the Castle Vale and Newtown shopping centres.

173. Against Bond's opposition; interview with H. Watton; HBCM, 6 February 1964.

174. See Sutcliffe and Smith, Birmingham 1939-70, pp. 449-5; HBCM, 7 April 1966.

175. BM, 5 February 1965.

176. Letter by A. Maudsley bound in with HBCM, 5 January 1967.

177. BP, 21 March 1966.

178. HBCM, 16 December 1966.

179. Report of Housing Management Committee bound in with HBCM, 5 January 1967.

180. Ibid.

181. Letter in HBCM, 5 January 1967.

182. DM, 19 October 1966; Sunday Mercury, 23 July 1967.

183. BM, 22 December 1967.

184. BP, 8 February 1968.

185. HCM, 13 November 1969, report by J.J. Atkinson, 'Car Parking at the Sentinels'.

186. HCM, 19 February 1970; 5 March 1970.

187. BM, 1 October 1974.

188. Table 8.2.

189. HCM, 12 December 1968.

190. HCM, 22 April 1969; BM, 22 April 1969; BP, 24 April 1969.

191. City of Birmingham Housing Department, 'Land in North Worcestershire : Housing and Social Provision', HCM, 20 March 1969; see also HCM 10 July 1969 and 11 December 1969.

192. BM, 19 April 1969.

193. HCM, 18 September 1969; 8 January 1970.

194. HCM, 30 April 1970.

CHAPTER NINE

Bristol

9.1: The Urban and Political Background.

Unlike Birmingham or Newham, Bristol is a free-standing city. Although it forms part of a standard metropolitan labour area of around 630,000 people, encompassing Bath and Weston-super-Mare, the city's population of 427,000 people accounts for the vast bulk of this total.[1] Covering some 26,000 acres (about 41 square miles), Bristol is half the size of Birmingham but is still a very large authority encompassing large amounts of open space.[2] Continuous urban development has spilled over the city boundary at Filton to the north and at Magotsfield and Kingswood to the east, (Figure 9.1).[3] To a greater extent than either Newham or Birmingham, Bristol nonetheless approximates the ideal of a 'whole city' authority.

HISTORY

Bristol of course has been an important port since mediaeval times and by the early eighteenth century was second only to London in its volume of trade.[4] During the industrial revolution the city slipped back and it was not until the construction of the river mouth docks at Avonmouth and Portishead in the late nineteenth century that its economic base began to revive. Further Avonmouth dock extensions in the 1900s and 1920s, combined with the growth of the aircraft industry at Filton to produce a steady population figure through to 1951, although extensions of the city boundaries in 1888, 1917 and 1951 produced increases in the city-wide total, (Table 9.1).[5] Since 1951 the city's population has been very slightly declining, by 1.2% in the period 1951-61 and 2.6% in the following decade.[6]

THE POLITICAL BACKGROUND

Bristol's recent political history is not well documented although work by Clements and Miller does shed important light on some aspects of its development.

Figure 9.1: Land Use in Bristol in the Early 1950s.

River
Severn

River
Avon

City
Centre

1955:

City Boundary ——

Open Space ⬚

Major Employment Areas ◹

Redevelopment Areas ▨

Council Housing Estates: pre war ⊟

Council Housing Estates: post war ⊞

Other Built Up Area ⊡
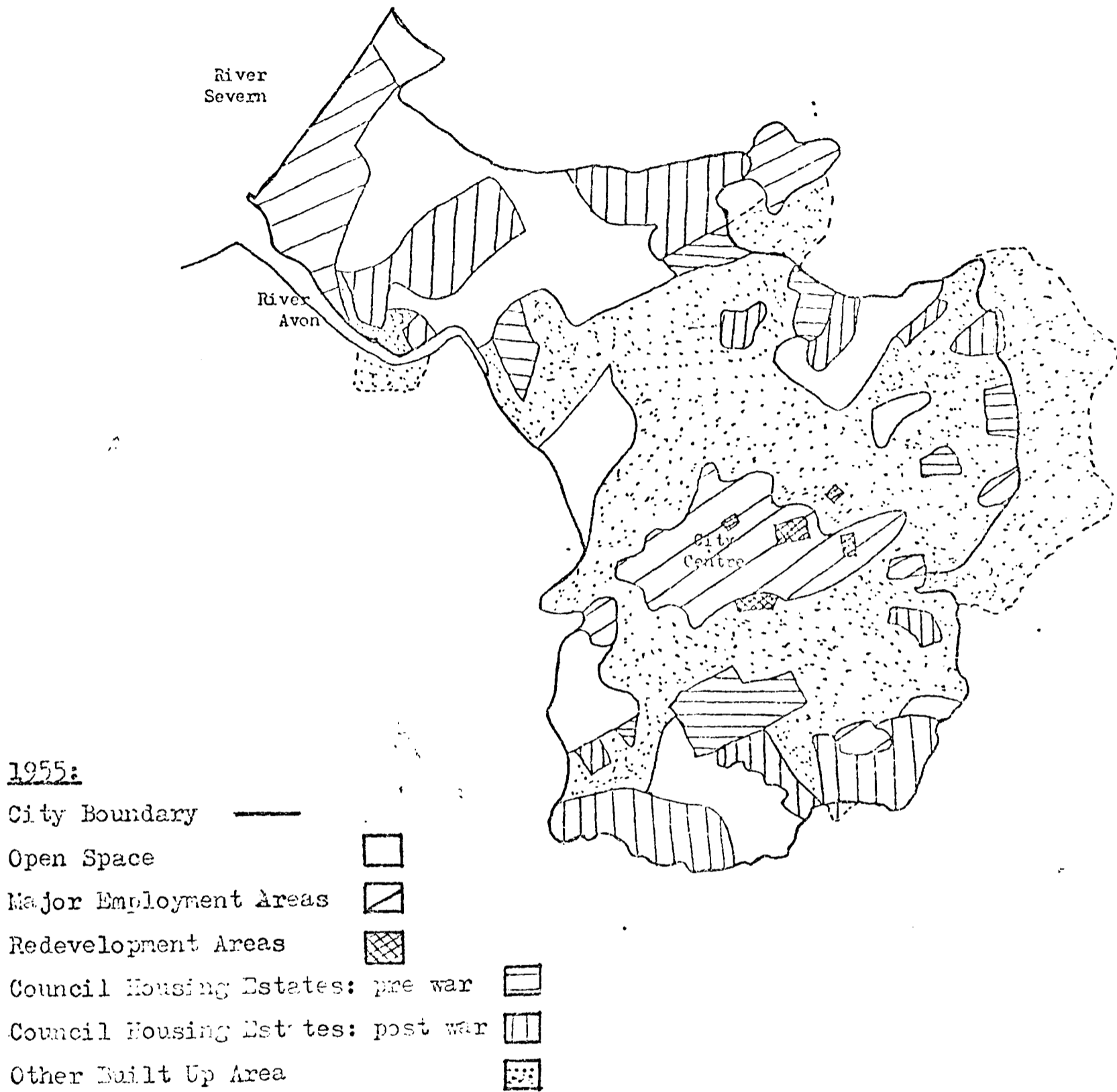
Table 9.1: Bristol's Population and Area, 1801-1971.

Year	Official Population	City Area (acres)	Estimated Population of 1954 Area
1801	43,306		68,088
1811	49,493		82,277
1821	52,889		98,445
1831	59,074		119,783
1841	78,443		142,825
1851	137,328		159,128
1861	154,093		179,063
1871	182,552		219,610
1881	206,874		260,259
1891	221,578		300,624
1901	339,042	17,460	
1911	357,059	17,460	
1921	377,018	19,669	
1931	397,012	19,669	
1951	442,994	26,350	
1961	437,048	26,350	
1971	426,657	26,350	

Several points are worth mention. Firstly, the local Conservative party did not campaign as such in local elections until 1974. Instead a supposedly independent group of 'Citizen' councillors, deriving from a Conservative-Liberal anti-socialist alliance in the 1920s, represented Conservative views, the Liberals withdrawing from the arrangement in 1947. This largely spurious distinction did give a certain non-partisan character to aspects of Council politics.[8] Secondly, Bristol politics has been characterized by a relatively bi-partisan attitude on some matters. Since the first Labour victory of 1937 the majority group has taken all the Chairmanships, but aldermanic seats were allocated in proportion to party strength and a system of formal Committee leadership was established in which 'Shadow Chairmen' were consulted, served on official delegations etc.[9]

Party control rested with the Labour party until 1960, (except for a period of equal representation in 1949-51, and of Citizen control in 1951-2). Labour then lost control for three years, regained it for four years, lost it from 1967 to 1972, and since regained control. In addition to these Labour-Citizen fluctuations in office, the composition of the Council changed every year quite markedly.

Clements has shown the close association between voting and the class composition of ward electorates between 1954 and 1964, although specifically local campaigns by groups protesting against Council clearance activity lost Labour seats in traditional strongholds between 1959 and 1961.[10] Central and eastern wards normally return Labour members, while wards north of the city centre return Citizens, (except along the Avonmouth council estates).[11]

HOUSING IN BRISTOL

In 1971 49% of the City's households were owner occupiers, 31% rented from the Council and 20% from private landlords. Private rental accommodation is concentrated in the inner ring area surrounding the city centre, much of it in housing over a hundred years old and interspersed with lower quality owner occupied housing, some of which still lacks facilities such as an inside W.C.[12] Newer owner occupied housing has been developed in successive periods outward from the inner ring. Council housing is concentrated around the peripheral areas in large inter-war and post-war estates.[13] Most post-war development took place along the edge of the Avonmouth Industrial Estate and near the city's southernmost boundary with Somerset. A total of 66 Council estates with 43,000 dwellings, covering about 19% of the City's land area are involved. There are also a number of small but very densely developed central clearance areas.

HIGH RISE IN BRISTOL

There are 5,434 high rise flats in Bristol in a total of 87 tall blocks. Information on the bedroom mix of the flats is unfortunately not available, but most of the accommodation has one or two bedrooms, with a small proportion of three bedroom flats, mainly in the earlier blocks. The blocks range in height only up to 19 storeys, (Table 9.2).[14] In March 1972, by which time the building of high rise had come to an end, high flats accounted for 14% of Bristol's accommodation built under the Housing Acts. This is considerably higher than the figures for other authorities in the area around Bristol, such as Bath 5%,

Table 9.2: High Rise Flats in Bristol, 1974.

Storey height	Dwellings No	%	Blocks No	%
5-9	1084	19.9	32	36.8
10-14	2991	55.0	41	47.1
15-19	1359	25.1	14	16.1
All storeys	5434	100.0	87	100.0

Weston-super-Mare 3%, Cardiff 3%, Gloucester 2% and Newport 1%. The two adjacent urban districts, Magotsfield and Kingswood, have no high flats. High rise is also a more important element in Bristol's purpose built housing stock than in some very large conurbation authorities, such as Manchester 11% and Sheffield 10%, and more important than in other large free-standing cities, such as Hull 10%, Nottingham 9% and Leicester 3%.[15]

DEPARTMENTAL ORGANIZATION

Unlike Newham and Birmingham, the City Architect in Bristol played a straightforward technical service role and was not supervised by the Housing Committee. The co-ordination of construction policy, clearance and many aspects of design control was vested in the Housing Manager as Secretary to the Housing Committee.[16] Finally density zoning and the granting of planning permission was controlled by the City Engineer and Planning Officer.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was made possible by the kind decisions of the Chairmen of the Land and Administration and Housing Committees of Bristol City Council to grant me complete access to the post-war Minutes and papers of the Housing Committee and the Planning and Public Works Committee, and various other sources. I would like to thank them and the Bristol City Clerk, Mr J.A. Brown for this permission. The Housing Committee Minutes and papers were surveyed systematically from 1950 to 1972.

A total of 11 'housing influentials' were identified for interview

purposes in the manner described in Chapter 6, a comparatively low number because of a pattern of rapid circulation of members which seemed to characterize a number of Bristol committees, and during the 1960s owed a good deal to the regular ebb and flow of party fortunes in the annual elections. Of these members four had died and one could not be traced, while three members failed to reply to letters, (possibly because the interviewing period unfortunately coincided with the District elections). A total of only three Committee members were thus interviewed, and this combination of circumstances means that we have restricted the use of interview material to a background role. However, interviews were also carried out with three chief officers and another housing officer, bringing the total to seven. Interviewees were:

1) Councillor C.E. Merrett - Leader of the Labour Group since 1975, Vice-Chairman of the Housing Committee 1963-5, and member of the Committee 1957-60 and 1961-65.

2) Councillor Geoffrey Palmer - Chairman of the Housing Committee 1960-3 and 1967-72, member 1950-76.

3) Councillor Mrs Bloom - member of the Housing Committee 1960-67.

4) J.B. Abbey - Housing Manager 1950-61.

5) H.C. Harris - Housing Manager 1961-67, Deputy Housing Manager 1950-61.

6) A.H. Clarke - City Architect 1957-74, Deputy City Architect 1952-57.

7) H.R. Hunt - Assistant Director of Housing 1974-   , on the staff of Housing Management Department since 1953.

9.2: The Early Development of High Rise Policy.

EARLY PUBLIC HOUSING

Public housing in Bristol began in 1919 and during the inter-war years the largely Citizen controlled Council built nearly 13,000 dwellings, four fifths of them three-bedroom houses on suburban estates.[17] Discussion about the use of flats began in the mid 1920s as the Corporation turned its attention to a number of small areas of acutely decayed city centre housing.[18] A visit

from the Minister of Health in 1934 during which he made a speech calling for more flat provision to provide slum clearance accommodation 'reasonably near the centre of tenants' work and interests' seems to have played a key part in the Citizens' general acceptance of flats.[19] Although opposed by some Labour councillors as 'warehousing the people, not rehousing them',[20] several four-storey flats schemes went through with little controversy and were not affected by the Labour victory of 1937. The chair of the Housing Committee was taken by councillor Charles Gill, a right wing Labour member who ran the Committee in markedly autocratic style until his death in 1957 and developed very close relations with Citizen housing spokesmen.[21]

RECONSTRUCTION PLANNING

War damage in Bristol was not very serious in housing terms, with only 3,200 houses destroyed in small pockets near the docks and industrial areas.[22] The availability of bomb sites such as Redcliffe meant that there was initially little attention paid to slum clearance, and policy on flats was slow to develop since the guidelines of the city's planning were set by the 1930 Bristol and Bath Regional Planning Scheme, drawn up by Abercrombie and Brueton, rather than by a war-time exercise.[23]

The 1940s pattern of housing development continued on mainly pre-war lines, supplemented by a large pre-fab and non-traditional housing commitment.[24] By 1948 Bristol had completed the largest number of post-war dwellings of any city outside London[25] but it was clear that the pressure of demand on housing maintained by the city's buoyant economy necessitated a change of direction. The 1951 Development Plan envisaged an increase of 23,000 people in the city's population by 1970; and a need for 60,000 new dwellings plus overspill to decant 42,000 people. The local authority housing programme was seen as follows:[26]

Housing estates	13093 dwellings	49.2%
Bomb site areas	2837	10.7
Clearance areas	7350	27.6
Infilling	1753	6.5
Conversion of large houses	1600	6.0
Total	26633	100.0

The plan called for a programme of 19,000 dwellings by 1957, of which 10,000 (52%) were to be in flats, with an annual public housing programme of 'a minimum construction of 2,000 dwellings', supplemented by private housing of 1,000 dwellings a year.[27]

The emphasis on flats was rather odd considering the quite low level of gross residential densities discovered in the Plan survey - between 30 and 50 ppa - with only three small areas of net densities of 120 ppa or above. It was also surprising in view of Bristol's successful negotiation of a boundary extension into Somerset along its southern edge, in exchange for the ceding to the County of the detached Portishead dock area.[28] Bristol HC were able to plan four large estates on this area providing accommodation for 11,600 families,(although Somerset's overspill obligations were also reduced to accepting just over 1,000 Bristol households). Negotiations with Gloucester-shire were a different matter, however, and although the County agreed to accept 7,000 dwellings for Bristol overspill the City Council only built 1,700 houses there in the 1952-60 period, after which out-County building ceased.[29] The Council and local press took a serious view of the difficulties of an overspill agreement, in July 1954 the Bristol Evening Post commented:

> 'Unless results are obtained in the near future, a "big stick" may have to be wielded in the form of Ministerial pressure.'

By the mid-'50s Bristol was sending delegations to meetings of major urban authorities protesting about their shortages of land and the HC considered:

> 'There is simply not enough room left within the city boundaries to build enough houses. Already the density of several Corporation estates has been increased so that more can live there, but the maximum has now been reached.' [30]

The concern about land, together with the start of redevelopment on bomb sites and in clearance areas, prompted the City Architect, Nelson Meredith, to reorganize his department in 1952. The housing division was split into two sections, one concerned with the design of the large, peripheral housing estates and the other to work solely on the production of schemes of multi-storey

flats.[31] A year later designs for two five and eight storey blocks on bomb sites were accepted by the HC. The designs were in a 'modern tenement' style which remained characteristic of Bristol's designs until Nelson Meredith's retirement in 1957.[32] During this time the use of high flats was somewhat extended and a number of small four and five storey blocks were built on one of the peripheral housing estates.

The recasting of subsidies in 1956, particularly the abolition of the general housing subsidy, produced major developments in Bristol's housing policy. Approvals of new public housing fell by nearly half between 1954 and 1956, and they continued to decline slowly for the rest of the '50s. At the same time the proportion of high flats in the city's approvals rose from around 8% in 1954 to nearly 30% three years later, and high flat approvals remained consistently above this level for the next ten years, (Table 9.3).[33] Taking advantage of the progressive storey height subsidy, the architects department brought forward plans for a fifteen storey block in the Barton Hill redevelopment area in 1956, a scheme which was proudly described as the tallest block yet built in any English city outside London.[34] The general level of storey heights also rose to 10-11 storeys and a consistent level of high flat approvals running at about 250 dwellings a year was established.

Over the 1950s as a whole, three fifths of all high flats were built in redevelopment areas with the remainder on peripheral estates.[35] In contractual terms, the largest builder of high rise was Laing who dominated the city's non-traditional house building drive up to 1954 and then found themselves with a difficult market on houses. But local builders won most contracts and Laing's share was only a fifth of the total.[36] Contract sizes were small because after the initial Barton Hill tall block the block designs were conservative. In 1957 the new City Architect, A.H. Clarke, abolished the special multi-storey housing section[37] and the high rise programme seemed to have stabilized at a modest level around a third of the city's output. In fact the strains involved in the 1956 central government policy change quickly

produced a reversal of this situation.

Table 9.3:   High Flat Approvals in Bristol, 1953-69.

Year	Storey height			All High Flats	All Approvals	High Flats as % of All Approvals
	5-9	10-14	15-19			
1953	110	--	-	110	2219	5.0
1954	193	70	-	263	2034	12.9
1955	--	-	-	-	1565	-
1956	--	-	98	98	1104	8.9
1957	110	151	-	261	903	28.9
1958	24	266	-	290	824	35.2
1959	119	152	-	271	801	33.8
1960	108	129	-	237	535	44.3
1961	--	249	--	249	352	70.7
1962	25	532	347	904	913	99.1
1963	10	581	172	763	1718	44.4
1964	--	616	--	616	972	63.4
1965	113	371	366	850	1186	71.7
1966	-	-	--	-	238	-
1967	--	-	263	263	349	75.4
1968	--	47	-	47	689	6.8
1969	24	-	102	126	130	96.9
Total	836	3164	1348	5348	16532	32.3

9.3:   The 1960 Housing Crisis and the Citizen Intervention.

SLUM CLEARANCE, KINGSDOWN AND THE 1960 ELECTION

The major source of strain on the public housing programme after 1956 was the slum clearance drive.   Bristol's HC opposed the withdrawal of the general housing subsidy which threatened their ability to complete their peripheral estates and cut their housing output from a post-war peak of 2,200 in 1955 to 800 dwellings by 1958.[38] The only way this drop could be made up was by an increase in clearance activity and the Labour group seems to have been pressur-izing the Medical Officer of Health to represent areas, adopting a policy of assuming that any house reaching 100 years of use would have to be demolished.

In 1958 the HC approved a twelve year clearance programme of 800 dwellings a year, and anticipated knocking down 24,500 dwellings by 2001.[39]

In practice clearance had been under way for some years before the 1956 Act. Barton Hill was represented in the early 1950s despite the protests of a local Protection Society formed to fight redevelopment, partly because of the character of the scheme proposed.[40] Jennings' account of a 1953 public meeting in the area recorded:

> The meeting was good-tempered .. (but) derisive laughter greeted attempts to prove that the majority would benefit from the scheme. Opposition to building in multi-storey flats was general; when one official, after expounding their convenience and the necessity for them, agreed that he himself lived in a "nice little house", the whole audience chanted "That's what we want. A nice little house in a nice little garden, with a nice little fence around it". Anxious mothers pictured themselves nine or more storeys up when their baby screamed or their toddler fell down in the promised communal playground; shift workers made searching inquiries about sound proofing.. Yet there was a reasonable hearing for officials when they claimed that the only alternative to building upwards was moving out to the overspill area [41]
>
> (my emphasis)

The Housing Chairman Gill responded to residents' objections only by confessing 'that he himself did not like flats - "But what can we do when land is short?"[42] The Barton Hill residents failed to secure changes in Council policy despite their efforts, but as clearance rose after 1955 and began to affect areas of less acute housing stress so resistance to Council policy increased.

In the late '50s the Council announced plans to demolish half the houses in Easton ward, prompting the formation of the highly successful Easton Home Defence Association, whose candidate in the 1959 election toppled one of the Labour ward councillors.[43] Early in 1960 in response to the threat of a similar success at the next election, the HC made property owners in Easton an offer to renovate their homes with grant assistance, substantially reducing the numbers of homes scheduled for demolition.[44]

The Easton example prompted action by other neighbourhood groups including one in Kingsdown, an area of run down but pleasant housing on a steeply sloping site north of the city centre which was programmed for clearance in 1957.[45]

Council redevelopment plans featuring 17 and 8 storey blocks produced strong
opposition also from the influential Bristol Civic Society, since the site was
one of major landscape importance. On the same grounds the Royal Fine Arts
Commission demanded to be consulted in 1958.[46] The Council's attitude to
these interventions was hostile and nine months before the C.P.O. Inquiry a
senior housing official told the Guardian: 'One thing is certain - those houses
will have to come down.'[47] Following the concessions in Easton ward, the
Kingsdown Association renewed its attempt to procure a stay of execution even
though the C.P.O. had gone through including 200 fit houses. In May 1960 the
Citizen election manifesto came out against further clearance, and one of their
spokesmen promised to review existing clearance schemes, including Kingsdown,
if elected. The Kingsdown Association wrote to the city's three newspapers
pointing out this pledge and contrasting it with the attitude of the new Labour
HC Chairman, Councillor O'Neill, who they said 'completely evaded the issue'
when questioned at election meetings. The Association accused the Labour group
of 'UNJUST discrimination towards the working class district of Kingsdown' and
asked 'all fair minded citizens to question Labour candidates at the election
about their destruction of 200 homes'.[48]

PRIVATE HOUSING AND COUNCIL LAND HOLDINGS

A second important housing issue at the 1960 election concerned Council
land holdings, which the Citizens claimed were preventing private house building
from contributing to the city's housing drive, which at between 250 and 350
dwellings a year (except in the immediate decontrol period) fell far short of
the Development Plan target of 1,000 new homes a year.[49]

How far Corporation land holdings affected this is difficult to decide.
At the beginning of 1960 the HC held over 60 acres in the inner city, but these
were hardly likely to be sites attractive to private housebuilders.[50] In the
suburbs the Committee held very little land,[51] but on the southern urban
periphery the Corporation held 600 acres.[52] Most of this was an airfield site

which was suddenly closed in 1957, in the process freeing much nearby land from restrictions on building. Bristol immediately applied to revise its Development Plan to use the land for housing, permission for which was finally given by MHLG on December 18th 1959.[53]   A further 3,540 dwellings were to be built on 226 acres of the site and the land problems which had so worried the Council in the mid-'50s seemed to have receded for good.[54]   It is unlikely that much progress on this development could have been made by May 1960 but the Citizens, particularly their 'shadow Chairman' Geoffrey Palmer, made an attack on this landholding and plans to revitalize private housing central elements in their campaign.[55]

THE CITIZENS IN POWER

On gaining control of the Council, the Citizens quickly set about changing previous Labour policies.   In his first HC meeting as Chairman, Palmer introduced motions to cancel three C.P.Os already submitted to the Ministry for approval, and to ban any further building of Council houses on housing estates or suburban sites.[56]   He also called on the Housing Manager, Abbey, to submit reports on HC land which 'could be sold by negotiation with the Builders Association for development by private builders' and on derelict land holdings.   In line with the ban on housebuilding he asked for a progress report on multi-storey building and prospects for its expansion.   Combined with attacks on the Housing Department's staffing, a motion demanding a scheme for selling council houses to be prepared within four weeks, and another demanding details of all outstanding complaints and repairs, these blitzkreig tactics seem to have demoralized the Housing Department and Abbey was unable to stop the Citizens trying to implement their complete manifesto in the space of about a month.[57]

On June 13 the HC decided to stop all further house building, throwing away a large part of an approved three year programme, some Citizen members claiming that the back of the housing problem had been broken.[58]   Two weeks

later Abbey submitted a report on high rise building in which he had no option but to try and replace as much of the axed suburban programme as he could with high flats in the inner city redevelopment areas, (although he also saved some old people's flats from the wreckage). He pointed out that the high rise programme could only respond slowly to these new demands and could only be expanded if the representation of clearance areas could be speeded up:

> Much sterner measures must also be adopted with regard to the rehousing of families to be displaced from areas awaiting development, and the Committee must be prepared to take legal action to obtain possession of properties where a reasonable offer of other accommodation is refused. 59

(my emphasis)

This passage of the report was accepted without comment by the Committee.

On the question of how high rise approvals could be increased to offset the axing of housing estate development Abbey noted that:

> Unless the City Architect has or can obtain sufficient staff to tackle some of the outstanding schemes almost immediately, the Committee may feel that consideration should be given to negotiating with some of the large firms of building contractors who have already prepared designs of high blocks of flats which could be amended to suit the requirements of the Committee . 60

This suggestion was seized on by the Citizens as the only hopeful note in the report and approved in principle unanimously, despite the objections of Clarke the City Architect who seemed to doubt his department's ability to prepare contracts on a non-competitive basis. 61

In the ensuing weeks the Housing Department was approached by a large number of contractors, 62 and at Wimpey's expense the HC visited Birmingham to find out how their negotiated contract system operated. After this trip Clarke proposed that Bristol should straightforwardly duplicate Birmingham's procedures, with the site layout and overall dwelling specification prepared by his department and the actual block design being carried out by the contractors' architects. 63 Early in September the HC agreed to negotiate four high rise contracts with Laing and Wimpey and to look at offers from other firms. 64 In fact, the two leading firms gained virtually complete control of Bristol's high rise programme, building over four fifths of all the city's '60s

high rise, (Table 9.4).[65] Local firms were completely eliminated from high rise contracts after 1960, and the only serious competition to the two firms thereafter was the London based Tersons firm who won four contracts in 1962-3 but performed remarkably badly on completion times and won no more contracts.[66] No other firm won more than one contract.

Table 9.4: Contractual Aspects of Bristol's High Rise Programme, 1953-69.

(High rise contract approvals)

Year	Laing	Wimpey	Other non-local firms	Local firms	All high rise contracts	(% of total in high rise)
1953	-	-	-	110	110	93
1954	70	-	-	264	334	79
1955	-	-	-	-	-	
1956	-	-	98	-	98	100
1957	-	-	-	252	252	100
1958	176	-	-	152	328	88
1959	-	-	100	219	319	85
1960	188	-	-	49	237	100
1961	187	62	-	-	249	100
1962	347	316	216	25	904	100
1963	239	327	268	-	834	98
1964	391	89	142	-	622	99
1965	725	116	-	-	841	99
1966	-	-	-	-	-	
1967	-	233	-	-	233	100
1968	-	-	68	-	68	69
1969	162	-	-	-	162	78
1953-60	434	-	198	1046	1678	90
1961-69	2051	1143	694	25	3913	98
1953-69	2485	1143	892	1071	5591	95

% of all High Rise Contract Approvals:

1953-60	26	0	12	62	100
1961-69	52	29	18	1	100
1953-69	44	20	16	19	100

Number of contracts:

1953-60	4	-	2	15	21
1961-69	12	9	7	1	29
1953-69	16	9	9	16	50

Average Contract Size:

1953-60	109	-	99	70	80
1961-69	171	127	99	-	135
1953-69	155	127	99	67	112

CLEARANCE AND MINISTRY INTERVENTION

Had the Citizens carried out a revision of slum clearance programmes on the lines promised at the elections, these policy changes would not have been disastrous. In practice, however, the Citizen stance on slum clearance was reversed almost as soon as they gained office at a meeting with the Minister of Housing and Local Government, Henry Brooke, in July 1960. The Bristol Clerk's record of this occasion is worth quoting at some length.[67]

In response to Palmer's opening exposition of Bristol's view the Minister commented:

> Slum clearance was a very human task and full consideration had to be given to the human side, but nevertheless, the work must go on. He repeated: "We must continue the slum clearance drive".

> Mr Palmer said people could be rehoused more quickly by individual action than by Clearance Area procedure. The Minister replied: "You certainly may be able to rehouse people living in that house more quickly if you are dealing with 'penny numbers'.". Mr Palmer said that individual action would also include efforts to purchase the houses involved. The Minister stated that he was sure owners should be given every consideration but sometimes elected representatives had to do things citizens did not like.

The Minister then flatly refused to revoke the C.P.Os already confirmed at Kingsdown and elsewhere and elaborated on his powers to appoint an Inquiry and take over direct control of the city's housing programme if electors made representation that the Council was not carrying out its duties under the 1957 Housing Act. 'The Minister said this provision should be borne in mind'.

Palmer and his Vice-Chairman attempted to argue their case in relation to an individual fit house included in a C.P.O., but the Minister intervened to defend Bristol's Medical Officer of Health against criticism, commenting:

> "One must pay very careful attention to the professional experts".
> Mr Palmer stated that under the 1957 Housing Act many houses could because of dampness, cracks etc. be classified as unfit, although in fact they were not unfit. The Minister replied that this was not so. He said a house could be deemed to be unfit for human habitation if and only if it was so far defective that it was not reasonably suitable for occupation in that condition. In answer to a question by the Medical Officer of Health the Minister said: "It would be quite wrong to say that our Inspectors believe that Bristol has been employing hard or rigid standards. Broadly speaking my Inspectors have told me that they have not found Bristol out of line with other authorities" .

At the end of the meeting Brooke rammed home his message:

> "I am extremely anxious that slum clearance should go on
> and go on fast.   I should be anxious that large numbers of
> houses which are represented by the Medical Officer of Health
> were being turned down by the City Council.   I should be ·
> beginning to wonder whether, in fact, slum clearance was going
> on as fast as it should be".
> Mr O'Neill said he felt that great attention should be paid to
> the representations of the Medical Officer of Health.
> The Minister wished to have the Council's proposals for dealing
> with the balance of the 10,000 unfit houses and said that he
> hoped there would not be any slowing down of the programme.
> He informed the deputation that the Prime Minister had charged
> him with responsibility for ensuring that the slum clearance
> programme was proceeded with.

When the Bristol delegation returned home they decided that they had no

other option than to drop their plans to withdraw C.P.Os.   Indeed Palmer

even bowed to strong Ministry pressure to increase densities on the Kingsdown

redevelopment as well as letting the C.P.O. go ahead.[68]   Eventually the

future slum clearance programme was reviewed in November 1960, slightly scaled

down to include 5,000 unfit houses and modified to favour property owners'

interests with more rehabilitation and purchase by agreement provisions.[69]

The meeting with MHLG also resulted in a modification of the Citizens'

plans to sell off Council land to private builders.[70]   Initially Palmer

envisaged negotiated sales operated via the local Housebuilders Association at

initial cost to the Council plus development cost - in effect giving the

builders involved a present of the rise in a site's land value since the Council

acquired it.   The justification for this was to avoid builders bidding prices

up and to eliminate the scarcity element from the price.   When this plan was

explained at the meeting it received a cool reception:

> The Minister said that the normal safeguard would be to sell
> by tender in the open market because that safeguards the Council
> against any suggestion that land is being sold to friends.   He
> said that if a local authority consults the District Valuer and
> proceeds to sell at a price fixed by him, neither the Ministry
> nor any local ratepayer could effectively contest it.   He did
> think, however, that the Council would be putting themselves in
> great danger by selling at cost price plus costs of development. [71]

The HC still decided to go ahead with negotiated sales but the scope of access

was widened and the District Valuer given more freedom to fix a 'fair' price

for land.[72]   The absence of a complete 'knockdown' price slowed up land

sales until 1961-2 when private housing demand picked up.   But many local

builders, plus to a great extent the estate development divisions of Wimpey

and Laing, purchased large areas of land at what were probably lower than

market prices.[73]   .

In their three years in office the Citizens sold off 250 acres of land

(more than offsetting the 226 acres airfield housing site acquired in 1959).
                        private
A total of 3,900 houses was built at Stockton and Whitchurch at densities

of around 50 ppa.[74]   But the vast bulk of these were completed in 1964-66,

four to six years after permission for local authority housing was given.[75]

In the interim the Council housing programme was severely disrupted.   ·

CITIZEN POLICIES AND THE HOUSING CRISIS, 1959-63

The overall effect of the three Citizen decisions - to concentrate all

public housing in high flats, to go ahead with clearance and to sell off

Council land for private housing at reduced but not peppercorn prices - produced

the worst deterioration in Bristol's housing situation in the post-war period.

In 1961 local authority completions were planned at 914 homes before the

Citizen policy switch - in the aftermath they collapsed to 387 dwellings.[76]

Completions rose in 1962 to 818 but collapsed again in 1963 to the lowest total

built since 1945.   At the same time clearance activity reached a post-war

peak of 1,200 dwellings in 1962 and private housing rose only 25% above the low

levels of the 1950s.

These violent changes in the City's housebuilding performance came on top

of the effects of the Conservative's 1956 Act, which from 1958 on meant that

local authority housing was barely compensating for the reduction in housing

stocks produced by clearance, (Table 9.5).[77]   The Citizens' actions in contrast
                                      ٠
produced a Council housing programme which in 1961-2 built 1,300 fewer houses

than it demolished, a disastrous period from which the city only began to

recover in 1965, a year and a half after the Citizens left office.   Nor was

the reduction in Council activity made up by private building. The normal

addition to overall housing stocks of one or two thousand homes a year fell to

just 21 homes in 1961, and in 1962 became an overall loss of 416 dwellings.

Table 9.5: The Housing Situation, 1946-73 - Annual Construction and Demolition.

Year	Public Housing (1)	Private Housing (2)	Slum Clearance (3)	Net impact of (1) - (3)	Net impact of (1) + (2) - (3)
1945	7	-	-		
1946	277	-	-		
1947	1279	-			
1948	1866	117			
1949	2170	96			
1950	1606	213	(Figures unavailable 1946-54)		
1951	1655	387			
1952	1695	242			
1953	1480	289			
1954	2105	244			
1955	2242	1259	131	2111	3370
1956	1935	272	150	1785	2057
1957	1413	337	257	1156	1493
1958	769	237	671	98	335
1959	635	289	714	- 79	210
1960	936	436	891	45	481
1961	387	423	789	-402	21
1962	818	467	1705	-883	-416
1963	274	809	289	- 15	794
1964	1074	1605	298	776	2381
1965	1482	1115	313	1169	2284
1966	1365	831	96	1269	2100
1967	860	847	254	606	1453
1968	385	867	193	192	1059
1969	590	519	160	430	949
1970	150	856	87	63	919
1971	636	626	134	502	1128
1972	261	730	149	112	842
1973					

The crisis produced a marked increase in the incidence of housing stress,

again coming on top of the low performance of the late '50s. In the autumn

of 1957 the Labour group closed the housing waiting list with 8,100 'live'

applications, 'owing to the effects of financial restrictions on the output of

new dwellings'.[78] Two years later the list was reopened and even after the

pent up flood of applications which followed, the 'live' total had fallen to

5,700 households by March, 1960, a reduction of nearly 30% over the two and a

half years. Under the Citizens the list increased consistently, despite a

weeding out of lapsed applications in 1962. In March 1964 there were 10,60 families waiting for a Council home, an increase of nearly 90% on the figure when the Citizens took office.[79]

In addition to the worsening chances of obtaining a Council tenancy, the Citizen period was also marked by a decline in standards of Council housing provision. The level of high flat completions rose from 11% of the city's output in 1959, to 28% in 1960, 45% in 1961 and 92% in 1962,[80] while high rise approvals doubled from 34% in 1959 to 71% in 1961, reaching a figure of 99% in 1962, ensuring that after construction lags high flats continued to account for 60-75% of Bristol's housing output through 1964-66.[81]

POLICY IN THE HIGH RISE BOOM

The total switch of the public housing programme into high rise encountered two kinds of limitations. The first was a lack of cleared inner city sites, which led the HC to devise plans for increasing densities on their last peripheral estate at Hartcliffe.[82] Initially the HC proposed a high rise development at densities of 180 ppa (in a zone of 50 ppa), but the city planners cut this to 150 ppa and a scheme of five 11 storey blocks was approved, despite protests from the ward Labour party.[83]

Density increases also proceeded on inner city sites, and although the planners objected to two more 15 storey blocks at Barton Hill (which already had a planned 785 dwellings in twelve high blocks),[84] they allowed increases elsewhere, notably at Kingsdown where the Ministry refused loan sanction without extra dwellings.[85] The revised scheme of three linked 17 storey blocks produced strong opposition from the Royal Fine Arts Commission who noted that Kingsdown was 'one of the most remarkable sites for housing they have seen for some time, providing an opportunity for a scheme designed to take the fullest possible advantages of its unique position' and commented baldly, 'they were not satisfied that this opportunity had been taken'.[86] The public debate which followed was highly critical of Bristol Council's standards of design, particularly after Clarke defended the scheme as determined by the need to

provide adequate car parking.[87]   Although the HC made a number of attempts

to 'bounce' the scheme through, and were extremely hostile to external

criticisms, the extra dwellings inserted by the Ministry were finally deleted

at the Commission's insistence and the blocks reduced to 14 storeys.[88] The

scheme was finally completed in 1968, more than ten years after the original

designs were made public.

The second and key limitation on housing completions was the extra

construction time required for high flats compared with houses.   The switch

to negotiated tenders and contractor designed high rise was supposed to

accelerate construction, and in November 1961, (before any of the new contracts

had been completed), the Housing Department claimed that these changes 'had

cut nearly a year from the time taken to build some of the flats'.[89] At the

same time the Labour spokesman O'Neill tried to persuade the HC to stem the

increase in the Housing Waiting List by giving a contract for 500 houses to be

built quickly.   Although the Citizens had pledged in 1960 that any shortfall

on high rise completions would be made up in this way,[90] Palmer now refused to

alter their policy, commenting only:

> Arrangements with several organizations large enough to
> cope with at least half the city's house building would
> result in a big improvement in the future. [91]

In practice the architects department adapted very unsuccessfully to the new

procedures.   In January 1962 Clarke confessed that on three contracts

negotiations with Laing on architects department designs had produced 'tenders

far too high for me to recommend their acceptance'.[92]   As a result the three

schemes, which varied between 5 and 12 storeys were simply scrapped, and

replaced by standard Laing 15 storey blocks which had already been successfully

negotiated.   Laing also lost two contracts to Tersons after negotiations

failed.[93]

The Citizen majority had meanwhile coined their own account of the failure

of their policy, expressed in an October 1961 resolution congratulating the HC

on its 'present policy to make every effort to ensure the erection of the

maximum number of dwellings during the next three years within the limits imposed by the availability of labour'.[94] In fact no one had ever suggested that labour constraints were affecting Bristol before this date, but like the bogus land shortage of the 1950s, the conventional wisdom had some effect on policy. As the industrialized building campaign got under way in 1962, and following a two day visit to Bristol by Dame Evelyn Sharp in April, Palmer and Clarke inspected the Larsen Netson system in Copenhagen[95] and a large HC delegation visited France.[96] Following this their report argued that labour constraints would affect 'any acceleration or increase in the rate of production of new dwellings by traditional construction' and recommended approval in principle of a five year industrialized programme for 500 dwellings annually.[97] This kind of cautious involvement was unlikely to attract the large firms by this stage and Clarke held abortive talks first with Costains, Laing and Taylor Woodrow Anglian,[98] and later with Gloucester, Newport and Cardiff about a possible consortium to place a larger order.[99]

Laing were the main contractors interested in Bristol and in November 1962 the press commented on one of their tower block opening ceremonies under the headline, 'Battle of the Pre-fab Flats goes on'. Palmer told Laing's luncheon guests that 'Bristolians could look forward to seeing many flats similar to these built in the future', but was lukewarm about industrialization. Laing's regional director stressed that they

> were tremendously proud to be associated with another milestone in the development of Bristol. They were confident that they could double their existing Bristol programme of 600 homes a year.
> Laing's technicians had spent five weeks on the Continent and in Scandinavia studying pre-fab systems. The first obstacle to be overcome was that someone would have to build a factory for the purpose and this would be very costly . [100]

Laing's pressure for their Sectra system[101] continued with visits by their Chairman, Sir Maurice Laing and other directors, and a notable celebration of their 10,000th post-war dwelling for Bristol.[102] But they were hamstrung by the relative difficulty of contract negotiations with the City Architects

department, and by the involvement of Wimpey in the housing programme,[103] who were of course the only major company not to move over to system building during the industrialization campaign.

9.4: The Policy Runs Down.

POLICY UNDER LABOUR, 1963-7

In the 1963 elections Labour regained control of the Council. But although the change in control led to an abandonment of the most distinctive Citizen policies, including a diversification of housing output, there were many continuities in policy across the two periods. The primary reason for this was a marked rightward shift in the composition of the Labour group, made clear in the election of Councillor Jenkins as leader in 1963.[104] On the HC, the new Chairman O'Neill was on good terms with Palmer and a fervent right winger following his election to the Executive of the E.T.U. in the 1961 anti-communist drive.[105]

In June 1963 the Labour HC members decided on a substantial boost to the housing programme, which was by then facing a shortfall of 1,000 homes in its output for the next year.[106] Additional type block contracts were given to Wimpey and Laing, and a contract for 500 houses to be built quickly on the few areas of suburban land left by the Citizens was given to Laing after the Housing Manager reported that 'this firm is anxious to resume work on the building of houses for the Corporation'.[107] (Laing's anxiety reflected their continuing poor performance on negotiated tenders which led to one of their contracts being let on·the open market in September).[108]

Between 1963 and 1965 overall approvals were higher than at any time since 1956, and high rise numbers (at 63% of the total in 1964 and 72% in 1965) rose to 836 dwellings by 1965.[109] After 1964 the policy of building high rise on peripheral estates ceased, and the emphasis moved to redevelopment areas, (Table 9.6).[110] Overall, however, there was only a slight increase in the concentration of '60s high rise in inner areas, largely because of the

'densifying' blocks built on peripheral estates, but nearly two thirds of all high flats were nonetheless built in redevelopment areas. The decline in clearance activity under Labour, down to 300 houses a year in 1965, thus had clear implications for the future of high rise. Bristol's planners also seemed to be trying to lower densities in redevelopment areas at this time, the City Engineer's plan for Bedminster RA producing an angry reaction from the HC demanding higher densities, more housing provision and higher blocks.[111] Eventually the Planning and Public Works Committee permitted a 13% increase in the housing provided but this was still much less than the HC had hoped.[112]

Table 9.6: Location of High Rise Approvals, 1953-69.

Year	Redevelopment Areas	Suburbs	
		Inner	Outer
1953	48	-	62
1954	135	-	128
1955	-	-	-
1956	98	-	-
1957	110	-	151
1958	266	24	-
1959	100	-	171
1960	188	49	-
1961	-	249	-
1962	589	-	316
1963	335	61	357
1964	290	83	243
1965	826	-	24
1966	-	-	-
1967	263	-	-
1968	-	47	-
1969	126	-	-
1953-60	945	73	512
1961-69	2429	440	950
1953-69	3374	513	1462
% of all High Rise Approvals:			
1953-60	62	5	33
1961-69	64	12	25
1953-69	63	10	27

The declining prospects of a future, large scale high rise programme meant that Bristol failed to follow up its approval of industrialised building in principle although visits to systems continued to be made in 1963 (Sectra)

and 1964 (Reema and Coignet).[113] But the Housing Manager reported that the industrialized building label now covered their existing arrangement with Laing and Wimpey and the HC seemed to have let the matter drop completely thereafter.[114] The background to this lack of enthusiasm, which was never publicly stated, was that the Labour group under the right wing leadership had decided by mid 1965 to run down public housing again and instead to encourage private development. This was the situation discovered by Crossman when he visited Bristol in November:

> The Labour party is still in power on the city Council and wanted to discuss their large scale redevelopment. There are still huge areas in the centre which need redevelopment and I had assumed they would ask for an enormous programme. So I told (a meeting of the Labour Council group) they could have a capacity programme provided they would adopt system building, which they don't much like. They took it all quite quietly, but afterwards the leader of the Labour group and the chairman of the finance committee took me aside and told me that their real trouble was very different. They just didn't want to build anymore council houses because, even with my new greatly improved subsidies, this would increase the debt on which interest payments were so overwhelming. They have over-built and they have got too big a capital-investment programme. They would much prefer to sell the land for owner occupation. When I found that Bristol had already built 45,000 council houses, I said "Of course you needn't build any more, this suits me perfectly", and told them to read my new White Paper. They seemed very surprised . [115]

In 1966 Bristol's approvals fell from a 1963-5 average of over 1,000 dwellings to less than 250 houses, (without any high rise), and the level remained at less than 350 homes in 1967. From 1965 when completions were 1,500 dwellings they fell to 150 dwellings by 1970, by which time Council building was having hardly any positive effect on local housing stocks, (Table 9.3). This re-orientation of public housing towards a minimal, background role meant that Bristol was quite separate from the national trend in not adopting industrial building.

Two other strands of policy helped to produce a sharp break in high rise building in 1966. Firstly, the decline in approvals and the difficulties of negotiating with Clarke's department meant that Laing and Wimpey were no longer prepared to maintain the close relations with Bristol necessary for contract

negotiation.   In 1964 Wimpey negotiations failed for the first time[116] and

in October 1965 the HC decided to start offering contracts on the open market

after a failure of several negotiations with Laing.[117] This was averted only

when Laing offered to cut their previous tender prices by 15%, an offer the

HC accepted.[118]   Some months later Laing told the Housing Manager that they

would welcome the introduction of selective rather than negotiated tendering,[119]

but in early 1966 the HC upset the duopolistic Wimpey – Laing competition which

the Housing Department had planned on four out of six contracts, and demanded

the consideration of bids from six firms.[120] In the event, Laing and Wimpey

won all the high flat contracts.[121]

KINGSDOWN II

The second and crucial factor leading to a change of the city's high rise

policy was the change in Ministry attitudes, which began to affect Bristol much

earlier on because of its declining housing effort and failure to adopt system

building.   Clarke recalled that more than once in the 1960s he was made aware

that:

> Bristol was quite exceptional in the percentage of housing
> in multi-storey.. This cropped up in Whitehall.   Looking
> down the list we stood like a sore thumb nationally. [122]

The occasion on which the change of Ministry attitudes became apparent

concerned the second stage of the ill fated Kingsdown scheme, which was

designed by the architects department as four eight storey slab blocks.[123]

In July 1966 the scheme was submitted to the MHLG South West regional office for

preliminary comments and produced a long letter in which the Regional Architect

contrasted the economic mix of building forms for the density (140 ppa) – which

was 40% high rise and 60% low rise flats – with Bristol's proposal of 91% high

rise and 9% low rise flats.[124]   In terms of capital costs this would cost an

extra £40,000, and the additional subsidy would cost MHLG £131,000.

> Apart from the economics of the scheme, the redevelopment shown
> on the layout is not the type best suited for the area.   It is
> considered that the redevelopment should be something on the
> lines of the old London squares with buildings not more than 4
> or 5 storeys in height.   This would preserve the atmosphere of

the neighbourhood which once had considerable charm and could have again.

We note that the scheme has been designed in line with the Council's policy not to erect three and four storey flats unless they can be linked by direct access to multi-storey flats in which lifts are available. However, in view of the comments given above, formal approval to the layout as submitted could be given only with considerable reluctance. The Council may therefore wish to review the matter and we should appreciate your further comments. 125

On the same day as the Ministry letter arrived, the Town Clerk received a

letter of protest from the Bristol Civic Society about the secrecy surrounding

the plans, and the Royal Fine Arts Commission shortly afterwards insisted on

being consulted.[126]   The local press reported the HC's decision to press

ahead nonetheless, and criticized the weak Ministry intervention:

This will be as good as a wink to Bristol to go ahead.   There is no reason to believe, when so much that is ugly has been erected already, that there will be any change of heart now - even at Whitehall's behest. 127

In fact MHLG shortly afterwards backed down in view of the Council's advanced

state of negotiations with Wimpey on a contract.[128]

The Civic Society submitted a detailed critique of the scheme during the

summer claiming that it was 'out of scale with the surrounding areas' and that

'the social quality of the layout leaves much to be desired'.[129]   HC reaction

was firmly resistant to any changes, the press describing their verdict as:

'Objections to the rebuilding of Kingsdown with tall blocks of flats are

unreasonable and more than three years too late',[130] an ironic view since the

HC had tried to insist on complete secrecy for the scheme until a contract had

gone through.

The controversy rumbled on through the autumn but reached a decisive

point when the Royal Fine Arts Commission wrote to the Council in December

saying that the scheme seemed to have been designed with only three things in

mind - the HC's opposition to low rise flats without lifts, a calculation that

lifts were only economic in flats of eight or more storeys, and 'a wish to make

use of a particular industrialized system for point blocks'.

The Commission believes that there are other equally important
considerations to which equal if not more weight should be given
before any final decision is taken on this scheme, including:
(a) The fact that the same density can be achieved with other
forms of layout, not involving high buildings.
(b) The need for a layout which will provide a really attractive
environment for those who will live in the new buildings.
(c) The need for a standard of architectural design that will
match the importance of the scheme, for the benefit both of those
who live there and of the city as a whole .

The letter went on to observe:

The Commission much regrets that it was not consulted at a much
earlier stage on this scheme, especially having regard to the
discussion that took place in 1963 in connection with the first
phase of the Kingsdown redevelopment. [131]

On the same day as this damning verdict arrived the MHLG Principal Regional

Officer circulated all the HC members stating that in view of the Commission's

argument the Ministry could not give loan sanction to the scheme unless it was

redesigned. [132]

The HC sent a delegation to discuss the new decision but eventually were

forced to accept a scheme of 4 and 5 storey flats with lifts. [133]   But at the

1967 elections the Citizens again won back control of the Council and threw out

the revised scheme still being prepared. [134] Instead they decided to use the

site for private housing and commissioned a leading firm of private architects

whose sophisticated lower density low rise scheme [135] was accepted without

criticism by the Bristol Civic Society and Royal Fine Arts Commission. [136]

FINAL DECISIONS

The change of MHLG attitudes signalled by Kingsdown meant that the housing

programme approved in May 1967 mentioned no specific high rise projects, while

densities were said to be 'under continuous discussion with the Ministry'. [137]

In September the Ministry cut Bristol's 1967-8 programme from 580 to 158

dwellings, postponing tender approvals to the next year. [138] Shortly after the

HC discussed the future of a site at Redcliffe adjoining an estate of 700 high

flats in eleven tall blocks.   Clarke proposed to build two 17 storey blocks

there, but since the site was adjacent also to a major Bristol church and since

the housing programme had been cut so badly that development would be delayed anyway, the Citizen majority threw the scheme out.[139]   Following Palmer's lead they then decided not to use the site for housing at all but to sell it for commercial development, although some members who had voted against Clarke's 'prison blocks' now tried to retain it for housing.   Palmer put a firm gloss on this decision in talking to the press, which reported:

> Apart from a few projects in hand, Bristol will build no
> more multi-storey flats.   There are now more than 50 tall
> blocks in the city and there is no need for any more, says
> Chairman of the City's Housing Committee, Alderman Geoffrey
> Palmer.   He told me this after yesterday's Committee meeting
> which wiped away any misapprehensions in councillors' minds
> about the future of a site at Redcliffe..
> Some Labour members apparently thought that the Redcliffe housing
> scheme was merely postponed, but it is now clearly established
> that it is OUT. [140]

The final seal on the high rise boom came in April 1968 when negotiations with Laing on the last 15 storey block planned for Barton Hill failed to produce a tender within the 10% yardstick tolerance and consequently would not qualify for loan sanction at all.[141] Laing wrote suggesting a lower density development, which the HC accepted.   The firm commented:

> This situation is disappointing but, quite frankly, no longer
> surprising.   Our experience leads us to the conclusion that
> the Ministry yardstick figures are not in any way compatible
> with the building costs of multi-storey flat projects such as
> the scheme at Barton House. [142]

A revised scheme including one six storey block also failed to qualify and early in 1969 a completely low rise scheme was substituted.[143]   Later in 1969 the HC approved one more high block in a redevelopment area planned several years before.[144]   With this the building of high rise in Bristol came to an end.

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CHAPTER TEN

Structures, Actors and the Explanation of Local Politics

The preceding three chapters do not fit very well with existing accounts of urban politics in Britain, or with the theory of local democracy.[1] Much of the analysis has concerned non-local and non-'political' influences, and the role of electoral politics and elected representatives at times has seemed tangential to the explanation of policy change.

We argued in Chapter Six that the relatively well developed literature on local government and local political input processes would enable us to focus more attention on less studied aspects of local policy making.[2] In fact, the case studies have revealed that despite a very considerable diversion of research effort into an attempt to discover a conventionally 'political' process on high rise, no such process could be uncovered. Contrary to the expectations with which we approached the research, very little local debate took place over high rise housing policy, and its development seems closely similar to the evolution of national policy.

Given that local decision makers are closer to the 'grass roots', and in particular were clearly aware of tenant resistance to high rise, the uncontroversiality of the topic and the absence of any developed political activity around it pose a prima facie problem which perplexed (and occasionally depressed) me. From this perplexity came this brief attempt to analyse the inapplicability of the existing literature and to put forward an alternative perspective on urban politics.

The first section of this chapter presents in a very condensed form the significant common elements in the case study narratives, and the second and third sections review them in relation to a variety of actor-orientated and structural accounts of urban politics, (which are basically local or urban variants of the theories discussed in Chapter Five).

10.1:   The Local Issue System.

The local issue system can be represented in terms which are apparently less complicated than those of the national issue system, (Figure 10.4). But we have already noted in section 4.1 the channelling of multiple influences from the professional associations, the construction industry and other sources to local authorities via the Ministry of Housing and Local Government.   These pressures stand out from other influences on local policy in being largely unmediated by detailed perceptions of the local authority's own situation. Three other key influences on local policy formulation were mediated by these perceptions; construction industry pressure for high rise contracts, trends in the local government system as a whole in the use of high flats, and the housing preferences of tenants and potential tenants.   The mediating perceptions themselves were focused on, firstly, an estimate of the housing problems faced by the local authority, and secondly, an estimate of the availability of land for public housing development.   These perceptions were collectively defined by actors in the local authority, usually without detailed analysis and without being subjected to public debate or scrutiny.   They formed the basis on which housing management departments and individual councillors in all three authorities generally felt free to screen out of the policy process clear tenant pressures in opposition to high rise.   They played a key role in shaping the attitudes of architect-planning and housing management departments to trends in the national use of high flats.   And they served as the constant backdrop against which architects departments and housing committees made decisions about contractual policy in response to construction industry pressure.   Housing committee views in all three areas drew principally on diffuse interpretations of the local authority's situation formulated by council members, interpretations which themselves to a great extent reflected the information passed on by chief officers.

Once the committees made the decision to build high rise, powerful feedback processes were set in train which broke down vestigial committee resistance

Figure 10.1: The Local Issue System.
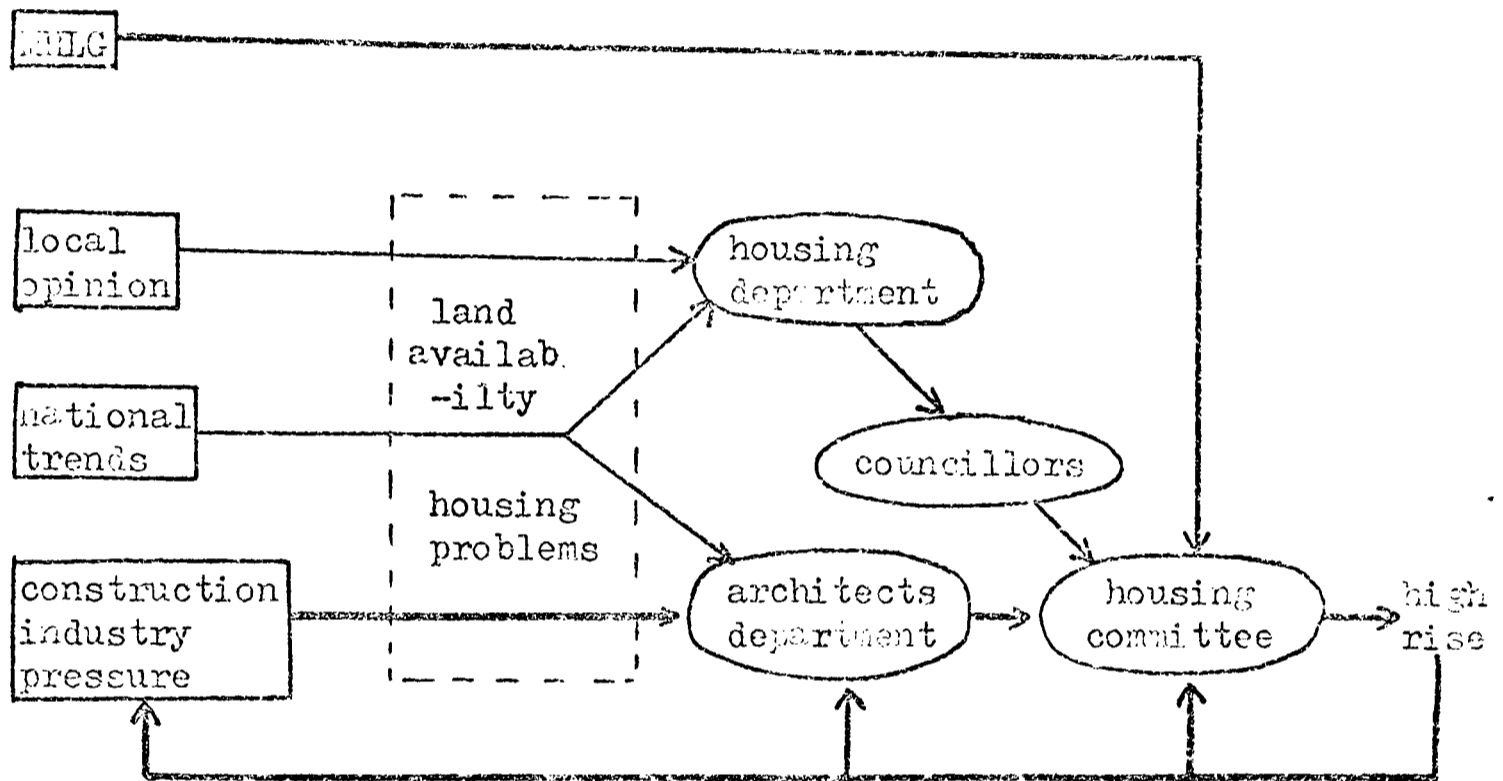
Influence flows ———

Key influence flows ━━━━━━━

Mediating perceptions ⌐ ⌐

to this form of rehousing, strengthened the architects departments' confidence in using the building form, and which in general seem to have stimulated further contractual pressure for high flat contracts. This direct feedback to committees and architects departments was clearly unrelated to the original mediating perceptions of the authority's housing problems and available land. Overt contractual pressure at later stages of the policy was still likely to be assessed in relation to these perceptions, but the feedback/routinization element was not similarly scrutinized. This was the situation from which the cumulative over-use of high flats during the later 1950s developed into the high rise boom of the 1960s in all the areas. Industrialized high rise can be understood principally in terms of the sudden strengthening of Ministry and contractual pressure, a disjunctive development which firmly constituted the important influence paths shown in Figure 10.1 during the peak years of the boom, even in Bristol which did not actually adopt heavy prefabrication systems.

To specify the role of each system element in relation to the inputs received we return once again to the five system operations discussed by Cortes, Przeworski and Sprague and deployed in section 4.1.[3] The perceptions of individual councillors generally played an identification role. Housing committees initially resisted pressures for high flat building somewhat, causing a slight cumulation of pressure in the early 1950s, except in Birmingham where committee resistance was evident only intermittently in the 1958-61 period. Thereafter the committees exerted little distinctive influence on policy until the inputs favourable to high rise began to break down. Housing management departments generally exerted a conservative influence, delaying and reducing tenant opposition inputs and to a lesser extent inputs from national trends. Architect-planning departments proportionately transformed their input flows in all cases but in differing ways: in Bristol and East Ham this was a conservative transformation; in Birmingham, West Ham and Newham it underscored these flows.

The switch in policy away from high rise was not produced by and did not produce major changes in the <u>contours</u> of the issue system. Ministry influence remained strong, but the input sign changed from strongly pro- to strongly anti-high rise over the period from late 1965 to April 1967. Construction industry pressure continued to be exerted but the easing of the contractual situation for local authorities which followed the public expenditure cuts and the introduction of the housing cost yardsticks meant that the balance of influence swung back from the peak of industrial influence in 1967 towards the local authority and smaller firms. At the same time the imitative-legitimizing effect previously represented by national trends declined very rapidly, particularly after the Ronan Point disaster and the unfavourable media coverage which began to be directed at high rise. New trends in high density low rise designs and the abandonment of the drive to produce 500,000 houses a year by 1970, combined to lift some of the filters previously used to screen out inputs from tenants and the local community from 1968 on. And of course, the feedback processes favourable to high rise began to dry up. The pattern of inputs overall altered very little, however. Some of the signs changed from positive to negative; the screening out of some inputs was reduced, and others began to be modified where previously they had been accepted without question.

10.2: The System of Actors and Local Policy.

The variety and sophistication of actor-orientated accounts of local politics make them difficult to assess adequately as a group. Here we can only touch briefly on two key aspects of the case study material - concerning the range of actors and influences involved in housing construction decisions, and the character of political control of the policy - and then consider the success of four actor orientated explanations in accounting for the development of high rise policy.

THE RANGE OF ACTORS INVOLVED

There were some marked differences in the extent of involvement of actors in decision making in the three areas.

As a preliminary point it is worth noting that, quite apart from the doubt which surrounds the localness of any local election,[4] it was not possible to see high rise policy as involved in electoral politics. So far as can be determined, it never featured in party election material (although more house building was advocated in the Birmingham Conservatives' 1966 manifesto)[5].

Newham clearly presented in the period of our study the limiting case of a closed and strong local authority, virtually never affected by genuine electoral competition, dominating and controlling an extremely weak interest group process and run for very long stretches of time by the same small group of Council leaders.[6] Even favoured and integrated groups such as the local Trades Council were rigorously excluded from 'political matters',[7] although the Trades Council did call on Newham in the summer of 1968 to stop building high rise since it 'endangered family life'.[8] Tenants associations were confined to non-political matters by their Council formulated constitutions.[9] All the constituency Labour parties were extensively manned by councillors, and Labour ward branches produced only one intervention on high rise.[10] Although Labour (and other) councillors interviewed quite clearly undertook a large amount of surgery work, much of it on housing problems, this only intermittently seems to have influenced their views on Council policy. The Council's handling of the Beckton protest seems to have reflected quite a strong hostility in the local authority and local Labour parties to any genuinely independent groups. Finally Newham Council had initially quite close relations with the local press, but in 1967-70 one of the paper's criticisms of high rise and other policies produced a marked worsening of relations, including an HC complaint to the Press Council on 'irresponsible' reporting.[11]

Birmingham's greater electoral competition and more vigorous local
media broadened the range of inputs into housing construction policy, despite
the pronounced atrophying of Labour party internal democracy and Trades Council
influence under the Watton-Nash regime.[12] The Conservative party itself
originated no known interventions in this area of policy, (although there was
some internal opposition to the continuation of the public housing drive when
the Party gained control of the Council in 1966).[13] The interest group process
on housing is more difficult to characterize. Newton's evidence of extensive
interest group contacts with the Council[14] was certainly borne out in the
multiplicity of contacts with housing associations, tenants associations
and residents groups at the official level. But these contacts very rarely
reached committee level. For example, the sporadic skirmishing in the 1950s
with suburban residents associations and neighbouring local authorities on
high block locations only once precipitated an HBC discussion, when the housing
programme was disrupted by objections to a C.P.O. The HBC Chairman told the
press on this occasion: 'Our job is to provide as many houses as possible
and we will not stand selfishness'.[15] These attitudes changed quite markedly
during the 1960s, so that the campaign in 1969 on behalf of long term flat
dwellers won a speedy, if almost completely symbolic response.[16] And the
dampness problem in high flats was successfully raised by backbench committee
members following isolated complaints voiced at public meetings.[17] But basic
policy questions were really only raised in public at two points - as a result
of Eversley's 1957 attack, and in the aftermath of Ronan Point.[18] Both these
were occasions when newspapers generated the controversy, although in the
late 1960s their criticisms reflected the growth of (unorganized) tenant
resistance to high rise.

The corollary of the relatively scarce and weak inputs from representative
interest groups in Birmingham was the extensive informal influence of local
business interests (particularly in construction and property development) on
council members and officers, and indeed the direct involvement of many members

with these interests.[19] But while these close relations influenced the form of housing construction policy after 1964 it is difficult to see that different relations would have implied substantially different policies, (except where direct corruption occurred). In particular industrialized high rise on peripheral estates and city centre high rise would have been built even without Bryant's influence.

Urban politics in Bristol was much more open in many respects. Internal Labour party politics was more democratic - at least by the late '60s - than in either of the other areas.[20] But a local Labour branch was only once involved in the high rise issue (at Hartcliffe),[21] and the Citizen group remained largely cut off from direct contacts with local Conservative party organizations.[22] The interest group process was vigorous, especially during the opposition to clearance in 1956-65. The firm Council stance at Barton Hill was substantially modified by encounters at Easton and Kingsdown, and these conflicts did feed directly and successfully into the electoral process in 1959 and 1960, producing in turn the Citizen's attempt to reap electoral benefits by capitalizing on opposition to clearance.[23] But there were other influences involved - notably the Bristol Property Owners' Federation - and the actual development of policy under the Citizens was directed much more to satisfying them than to the interests of tenants in clearance areas.[24] Other interest group involvement was quasi-elite in character, notably the success of the Bristol Civic Society in securing attention on Kingsdown, although even here Council hostility to external groups was evident at many points and effective policy change came from MHLG and Royal Fine Arts Commission objections rather than local pressure. Other groups involved in housing issues had less success. For example, in the winter of 1975-6 a thousand households in multi-storey flats were sent surcharges averaging £250 each, in addition to paying a standard basic heating charge of £120 a year, these crippling bills being the results of the Council's long standing policy of building all-electric high blocks with extremely costly storage or underfloor

heating systems. Tenants' protests at their impossible situation secured no redress until two tenants associations paid outside heating consultants to report on alternative forms of heating provision.[25]Finally,informal influence from local business interests was quite important, and was certainly evident in the Citizens' attempt to sell cut price land to local builders and in the development of the city's office and property development boom.[26]

POLITICAL CONTROL

In the Newham study an attempt was made to develop Dahl's decisional analysis to provide some quantitative index of the distribution of power on the high rise issue within the local authority.[27] To do this all high rise contracts were taken as defining basic decision units, and 'policy decisions' were identified as all decisions affecting more than one basic decision. For each policy decision three 'possible political acts' were identified - initiation, opposition and effective decision;[28] (Dahl distinguished only initiation/opposition). A comparison of the actualisation of these acts shows that Newham had a markedly lower level of controversy over high rise than either of the two county boroughs, (Table 10.1). An index of the distribution of involvement in actual political acts was then computed, which showed that over 80% of actions on the high rise issue in all three authorities could be attributed to the housing and planning officers, chairmen and

Table 10.1: Actualization of Possible Political Acts, Newham Authorities, 1949-72.

	West Ham	East Ham	Newham
Policy decisions	12	7	19
Possible political acts	36	21	57
Possible acts above minimum (1)	24	14	38
Actual acts	29	16	27
Actual acts above minimum (2)	17	9	8
(2) as a proportion of (1)	71%	64%	21%

committees, (Table 10.2). Committees retained a good deal of control in
West Ham and in Newham after 1968, but at other times and in East Ham they
lost power to the officers. Involvement in successful actions (ie actions
on the winning side) closely resembles that in Table 10.2, although officers had
a slightly lower success rate than politicians (whose actions tended to be
effective decisions - which are definitionally successful). All success
rates were high, usually 80-100% of actions being on the winning side, a
product of the relatively low level of controversy, particularly in Newham.[29]

Table 10.2: Involvement in High Rise Policy Decisions, Newham Authorities,
1949-72.

(% of actual political acts)

	West Ham	East Ham	Newham
Architects department	35	( )	42
Housing management department	11	(47)	7 .
Housing Committee chairman	7	19	14
Housing Committee	28	6	(
Planning Committee	0	6	(20
Policy Committee	0	0	15
Other Committee	3	0	4
Other department	4	13	0 .
Council	3	0	0
Individual councillor	3	0	0
Number of political acts	29	16	27

This kind of analysis was not possible in Birmingham or Bristol owing to
lack of research time, appropriate interviewee response rates and some
essential data. But both authorities' decision making showed clear
similarities to the patterns in the Newham Councils. The Birmingham HMC,
because it focused its members' attention much more directly on housing
construction policy, and because of the presence of Watton and other Council
as members, was certainly much more influential than any committee in the
Newham authorities. This was partly accomplished by a reduction in the role

of the HBC chairman, however.   In Bristol, committee initiatives were much

more important than in Newham, although this difference would not be captured

by these indices.   Otherwise the major difference was the increased role of

the housing department vis-a-vis the architects department.[30]

These indices are useful in codifying general impressions, despite the

inevitable quirks of measurement which they introduce in doing so.   But they

give only a _formal_ picture of activity on the issue.   They do not in themselves

give any indication that the system of actors was an important source of

influence on the development of policy, or that different patterns of influence

and political treatment of the issue would have resulted in different outcomes.

Nor do they provide more than the barest outline of the pattern of relations

between actors themselves.   We shall briefly sketch in a number of additional

points about this aspect of the case study material.

Firstly, it is important to note that our analysis did not break through

to the level of intra-departmental decision making.   Actions are thus

attributed in the narrative to chief officers which may have resulted from a

long and involved process reflecting quite other influences, as in the case

charted by Malpass.[31]   Actual design responsibility or design policy was

devolved down to the level of project architects and group leaders in West Ham.

As the Chief Architect explained:

> I think the group leaders would get together
> occasionally - all of this was voluntary.   I
> didn't decide anything...   I would express my
> views I suppose, but not in such a way that I
> damped their ardour. [32]

Throughout the period, the simplification of dwelling types and the increase

in contract sizes tended to push design issues higher up the departmental

hierarchy, until with the adoption of system building the scope for individual

design solutions was squeezed out altogether.[33]   A similar trend was evident

in Bristol, even though the city did not adopt system building; the shift to

contractor designed blocks went much further than the architects department

intended because of the chronic negotiations difficulties on their designs

relative to the contractors' standard blocks.[34]   Finally, Birmingham carried

this process through earlier, (in the early '50s when large firms' type plan

designs were adopted),[35] and further, (notably in the 1964 reorganization which

placed the professional staff in a thoroughly bureaucratized context dominated

by pressure for greater outputs).[36] In all these cases, decisions previously

internal to the architects department became increasingly bound up in its

external relations, traditionally an area in which Chief Officers' and higher

managements' work is concentrated.   Chief Officers thus became increasingly

involved in setting their departments' housing construction policy, but just

how extensive or restricted their influence was remains uncertain.

Secondly, the indices considered above overestimate the role of committees

at the expense of chairmen, since we tended to assign doubtful cases of

'effective decision' to the Committee.   Overwhelmingly the chief officer -

chairman nexus dominated interviewees' accounts of decision-making, and back-

benchers seem to have accepted or occasionally criticized but rarely directly

opposed their proposals.   One Newham member described HC scrutiny in these

terms:

> •   Well, the committee would be shown a sketch plan up on the
> wall and a financial estimate.   Later you got this back with
> a detailed financial plan showing the expenditure heads, but
> you couldn't disagree really with what the officers said.

Backbenchers were also hampered not just by lack of expertise, but often by

strong locality orientations.   Another Newham respondent observed:

> There were a couple of times when members from areas I didn't
> know well, such as East Ham, asked me for my help on certain
> schemes.   When this happened I made a point of going over
> there to see the area before I committed myself one way or
> another.   But in the normal run of affairs, when my help hadn't
> been asked, my natural inclination was to hold to the officers' and
> chairman's judgement.

In all three authorities the extent of the housing chairman's predominant

influence on the member side was acknowledged, although in Birmingham his

position could be turned by the Labour group leadership.[37] Equally virtually

all respondents saw his role as closely integrated into the administration and

as part of the overall leadership group on the Council. This was summed up
by the Newham Labour leader:

> The Chairman as far as the Committee is concerned
> seems to be in a very similar position to the officers
> as far as the Council are concerned. They're what I
> call management.[38]

Thirdly, the Committee influence on policy was reduced by a number of
factors including the routinization of decision-making on high rise once the
initial policy decisions in favour of its use had been made; the wide gap
between the incremental approvals of individual schemes and the actual
transformation of large areas of the cities; the lack of any settled policy
review procedures; the subordination of policy making to the tempo of contract
design and letting; the relatively late stage at which concrete designs could
be appreciated by members without technical expertise - all these meant that
committee scrutiny of policy was never particularly effective. Interviews
often suggested that members' grasp on their authority's policies was quite
vague, even if they had been Chairman or Vice-Chairman at some stage.
Typical of such cases was an influential and very competent Birmingham member
who declared at the start of our interview that high rise had been adopted
'purely and simply to get land. You'll find that all our multi-storey blocks
are near the city centre'. At a later stage of the interview the respondent
was presented with a table showing the area distribution of Birmingham's high
rise stock, from which it was clear that over 60% of the city's high flats
were located at the urban periphery and many indeed were outside the city
boundary altogether. Asked to explain this, he was obviously at a loss to
reconcile it with his earlier view:

> We might just have got ourselves into this stage of
> thinking that this was necessary for the housing programme...
> Perhaps we just woke up one day and found we were surrounded
> by them. I mean, there was nobody watching the situation
> like you're doing with your graphs. The architect certainly
> never came to us and showed us a table like that... I'm quite
> surprised at those figures. I don't know why we did that.

Because of this diffuse knowledge of the overall contours of Committee policy,
we were unable to find any very significant differences in the level of Commit...

scrutiny associated with the balance of member types (ie, influencial/
competent/loyalist/uninfluential member representation on the Committee) or
the balance of political representation.[39]

ACTOR ORIENTATED ACCOUNTS OF LOCAL POLICY

Four approaches to urban political analysis in terms of the system of
actors involved have provided important explanations of the development of
local policy.   (i) The first mode of explanation, which is closest to the
conventional view and to the ideology of local government itself, is the
institutional or public administration approach, which dominated academic
discussion of British urban politics until the late 1960s.   Parts of this
literature treat local government solely as an administrative entity, and hence
tend to see local authorities as acting in a direct way as agents of the central
government.[40]   Those writers who ascribe an independent area of policy
formation to local government tend to emphasize a straightforward 'electoral
chain of command' model of influences on policy.[41]   Essentially the focus of
analysis is on institutions' formal or legal powers and on legitimate input
processes in which 'public opinion' is seen as transmitted fairly directly to
local decision makers,[42] or policy change is ascribed to responsible non-local
public authorities.[43]   Little attention has been paid in these studies to the
characteristics of individuals holding positions of authority, to informal
processes of policy influence or to the mediation of input processes by political
parties or interest groups.

Our local research has shown that public administration approaches were
well supported by the distribution of involvement and influence on the high
rise issue within the local authority, and surprisingly enough by the non-
involvement of local parties or interest groups in policy formation.   But the
nature of the influence process within local government, in particular the
informality of most influence exertion, the concentration of influence with a
small number of 'housing influentials', the unresponsiveness of these decision-

makers to public opinion and the lack of public debate about high rise -

all these did not accord with the explanations suggested by public administration

approaches. Finally, the extensive influence of local and non-local business

and professional interests, and the informal character of Ministry control and

advice, present very serious obstacles to the acceptance of such an approach as

appropriate to the development of local policy on high rise.

(ii) Pluralist analysis basically develops a behavioural version of the

institutional view. The models of electoral influence offered are usually

cast in terms of responsible party government or a local variant of Schumpet-

erian theory.[44] 'Public opinion' influences are seen as extensively mediated

by parties and local interest groups, with policy closely reflecting these

pressures and the views of local decision makers.[45] A good deal of attention

is paid to the values, sources of information, role conceptions, socialization

and recruitment of local politicians, and to aspects of the political process

seen as acclimatizing them to the mores of local democracy.[46] Much more

emphasis is also placed on informal influence processes (such as interest group

bargaining) than in public administration approaches, and some decisional

research has been conducted.[47] Pluralist approaches place little stress on

non-local influences of any type, although the importance of central government

policy changes is acknowledged. A leading pluralist textbook, Gyford's

Local Politics in Britain, makes no mention of the role of the national local

government system, the professional associations, national pressure groups or

politicians, industrial and commercial interests or other non-local organiza-

tions as influences on local authority policies.[48]

Pluralist analysis was less relevant to our case studies than the public

administration approach, despite its more realistic approach to the exercise of

power. The lack of party political or interest group involvement on the high

rise issue, and the ability of local decision-makers to ignore or filter out

of the policy process the unorganized expressions of tenant resistance to high

rise, certainly projected the burden of ensuring responsiveness onto local

leaderships. Their failure to exert effective control of policy or to protect tenants' interests cannot be explained in terms of deficiencies in their recruitment or socialization, however, even in Newham. Rather it is indicative of the limited extent to which the conventional political process affects local policy. The representation of high rise building as a technical solution to obvious problems depoliticized the issue, and meant that even local political leaderships had very little direct involvement in setting basic housing construction policy: their interventions undoubtedly affected the _form_ of policy, but within parameters overwhelmingly laid down in the national issue system or by the local bureaucracy.

(iii) _Elite theory_ applications to urban politics have primarily been developed in the American community power literature, and apply most successfully to the weak political control/non partisan election systems of some U.S. cities.[49] The theory posits an effective influence or control of local political institutions by external 'community influentials', principally by _local_ social and economic elites.[50] This approach has very rarely been applied in Britain.[51]

Our research, like most previous work, has found little support for the simple elite control hypotheses put forward by Hunter and others.[52] The concentration of decision making on high rise in recognized channels in the local authority, and the lack of influence of a single, cohesive local elite in any of the three areas make elite approaches clearly inapplicable. The influence of local business interests in Birmingham provides almost the only evidence of the local elite affecting policy, and then within a nationally determined context of policy change.

(iv) Finally the _neo-elitist critique_ of pluralist community research argued for a shift in focus away from public activity in the 'decision making arena' towards non-decision making processes determining the issues reaching the community's agenda. Bachrach and Baratz posit the existence of a mobilization of bias to protect 'dominant interests' leading to the suppression of

grievances and the existence of latent issues.[53]   Again, however, dominant

interests are seen as local elites and neo-elitist approaches focus on the

activities of particular decision-makers, maintaining a spatially defined

focus.[54]   Saunders' work is at present the only application of this literature

in Britain.[55]   .

This approach undoubtedly captures central aspects of the political process

on high rise which are left unexplained by other actor orientated accounts.

The routinization of the political process on high rise, the exclusion of

housing construction issues from local political agenda, and the imbalance

between local production interests and consumer interests in influencing

council policies certainly constituted a 'mobilization of bias' on the issue.

And the Beckton protest in Newham demonstrates the existence of suppressed

grievances on high rise which could only be articulated after an abrupt break

in the power relations between the local authority and public housing clients.[56]

But the sources of this configuration of urban politics cannot be seen as local,

nor can the dominant values structuring the political process be characterized

in terms of community elites or interests.   The decisional analysis in

Chapters 7 to 9 was carried out with neo-elitist theory in mind, yet very

little 'non-decision making' activity could be detected.   Apart from the

manipulation of the Beckton protest, local decision-makers were not involved

in the overt suppression of grievances, for the basic structure of the public

housing programme and the overall political and ideological patterning of the

issue excluded the expression of public housing clients' views without

recourse to non-decision making.

All four actor orientated accounts of urban politics have points applicable

to our case study material, but none of them seems to represent a clearly

adequate analysis.   Essentially this is because all these approaches treat

the locality as the key locus of influence and decision making, and involve

ascribing central importance to the local system of actors in explaining the

development of high rise policy in the areas studied.   We do not believe such

an argument can be sustained on the basis of the case studies. On the contrary, they seem to demonstrate that the system of actors responded to rather than encapsulated the fundamental determining forces of the high rise boom. Although at the level of observable activity many decisions influencing policy can be attributed to actors or organizations in the locality, at a more satisfactory explanatory level they can be understood as the working out of a fundamental logic of development, the determinants of which were non-local structural forces. Actors and organizations in many cases acted fairly consciously in response to such forces; their actions were not idiosyncratic or voluntary in the extended sense suggested by actor-orientated accounts of urban politics. Rather they represented the expression of more basically determined options and interests.

10.3: Structural Determination and Community Autonomy.

While the problem of distinguishing non-local from local political influences on urban policy has been recognized in some political science studies, the closely related distinction between actor influences and structural determination has been given little attention. In particular the epistemological basis of a structural account is still undeveloped, and we must again rely on some basic methodological advances made by Castells.[57] His rough sketch of influences on urban practices mediated by the system of actors will serve as a basis for our brief analysis here, (Figure 10.2).[58]

STRUCTURAL INFLUENCES: I PARAMETERS

One basic form of structural determination evident in the case studies, and recognized by community output studies, concerns the socio-economic background of the local authority area.[59] The ecological development of the three urban areas defined a physical background which either predisposed decision makers to mass housing solutions (as in Newham and Birmingham) or did so only for limited areas (as in Bristol). Ecological form affected

Figure 10.2: Influence Flows Determining Urban Practices.
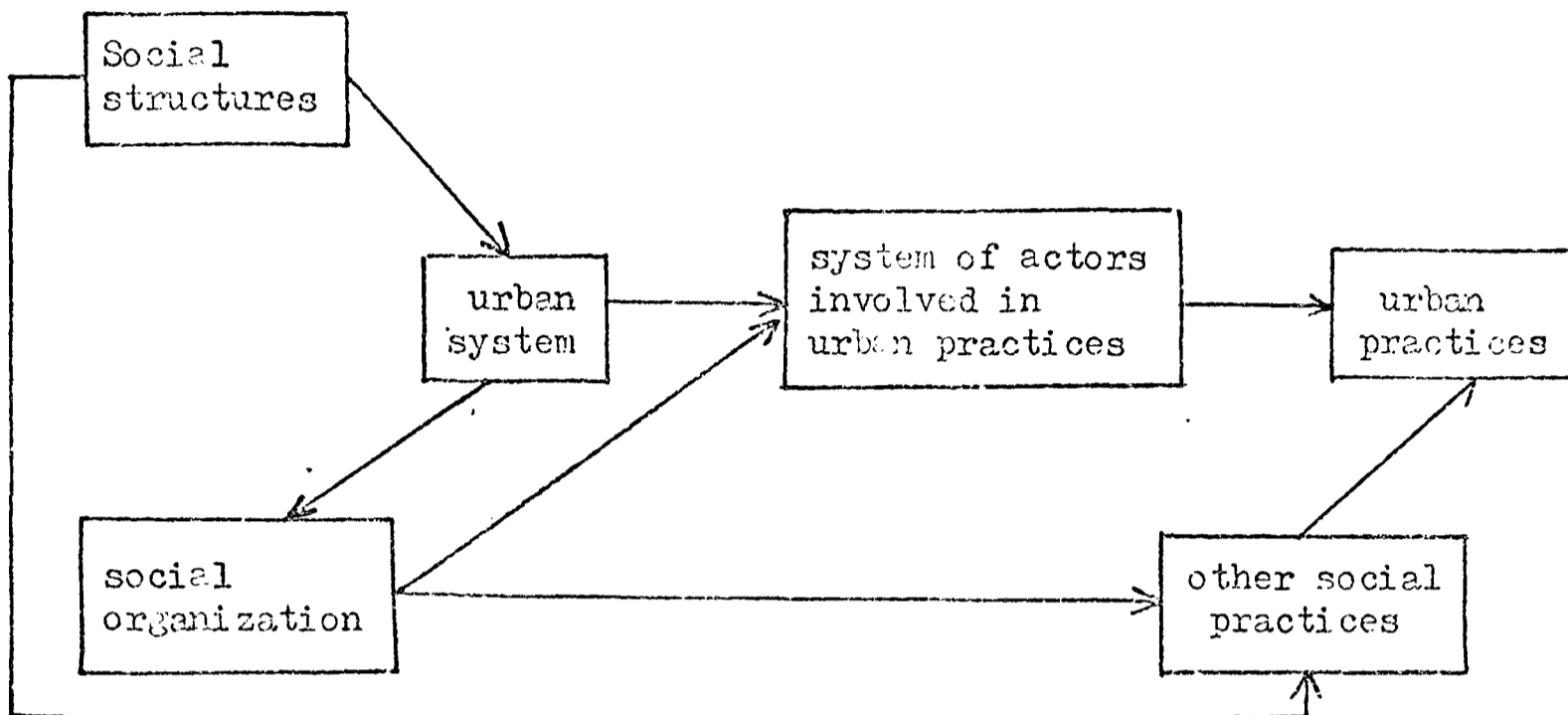
policy only via an interaction with the stratification and organizational systems which was not locally defined but applied throughout Britain. Its effects, such as the concentration of a relatively powerless public housing clientele in inner city areas, the exclusion of major redistributive options and the internalization of housing authorities' programmes within limited and arbitrary urban tracts, were evident in all three case studies.[60]

The consequences of this interaction varied from the creation of acute land scarcity for public housing in Newham, to the favourable position in Bristol following the Portishead deal with Somerset and the Whitchurch airfield purchase. Newham, unlike Bristol, was locked in from the outset to a vicious spiral of high density redevelopment to try to reduce its housing waiting list,[61] and was never able to meet more than a fraction of its needs outside its area. Birmingham stood in between these positions. The concentration of boundary extension possibilities in semi-developed areas and the stiff resistance of the city's neighbouring authorities to any expansion, certainly increased the pressure on land within its boundaries.[62] But again land constraints on public housing were eased by 'windfall' purchases in the early 1960s even before extensions were granted.

These objective background influences fed into the policy process via a structure of nationally determined perceptions of local authority situations and appropriate public housing responses. Thus despite their favourable situation the Bristol Labour leadership convinced themselves that they faced a land shortage problem on a par with major conurbation authorities in the mid 1950s,[63] and even reinterpreted the artificial scarcity of public housing sites created by Citizen policies in terms of their earlier convictions after regaining control in 1963.[64] In a similar way Birmingham built many thousands of high flats at low densities around 80 ppa during the city's worsening land shortage of the 1950s, and continued the policy largely unchanged after its large land acquisitions, almost entirely because of the acceptance of assumptions about the relationship of building form to density defined outside

the locality.[65] This structuring of decision making was also evident in the Newham authorities, despite their generally higher development densities. Other mediating perceptions of the same type concerned tenant resistance to high rise (which tended to be seen as ill informed or as genuine but parochial,[66] and the justification of high rise in terms of the ultimate view of city redevelopment embodied in urban planning orthodoxy – which often carried more weight with decision-makers than the actual changes being brought about in their areas.[67] These general mediating perceptions, largely unrelated to local conditions, produced complex relationships between ecological development and Council's housing construction policies, relationships which in our view remove the basis of some voluntaristic accounts of local policy formation. Actors formulating policy did so within a context effectively pre-structured by the ideological positions adopted by the design professions, central government, the construction industry and the national local government system. (At the same time, of course, some of their decisions fed into the ideological currents in the national local government system, contributing towards the definition of other authorities' decision contexts and to the redefinition of their own subsequent decision contexts).[68]

STRUCTURAL INFLUENCES: II INITIATIVES

The dynamic impact of developing structural pressures on the authorities is evident in two sources of local initiatives, central government intervention and movements of capital.

a) Central government intervention clearly influenced the development of the high rise housing boom in all three areas, by the subsidy change of 1956, by the pressure directed towards the adoption of industrialized building and the related expansion of contractual influence, and by the subsidy and yardstick changes of 1965-7.

Early Ministry pressure for the initiation of high flat building was evident in the 1952 letter to West Ham and in the special arrangements devised for Birmingham's suburban high rise in 1953 – both of which had direct effects

on local policy. The 1956 subsidy change then made high flats a standard element in housing policies in all the authorities covered. Only in Birmingham between 1958 and 1963 was this questioned, when the precariousness of the Housing Revenue Accounts gave the extra costs of high rise acute salience.[69] In Bristol, the worsening debt situation of the late '60s did not lead to any reappraisal of high rise per se, although the level of high building must have made a considerable difference to the debt total. In all three authorities, rent rebate schemes were accepted as an essential corollary of high flat building, although they were also pre-requisites of differential and 'realistic' rents to which Labour Councils were supposedly bitterly opposed.[70]

In the early 1960s Ministry pressure in all three authorities increased the use of high rise. In Bristol this operated by preventing the revision of clearance plans, combined with an acceptance of exclusive high rise building by semi-industrialized methods. In Birmingham and West Ham pressure behind the industrialized building campaign produced the change. This support continued and increased through to 1967 so that MHLG eventually adopted an explicit policy of withholding programming allocations unless system building was employed.[71]

Finally the Ministry change of heart over high rise in 1967 had an immediate influence on high flat approvals. In Bristol the Kingsdown II fiasco resulted in an extensive design rethink, although the architects department only finally abandoned high rise when its schemes started to fall outside the 10% tolerance limit altogether. In Birmingham Ministry influence was equally strong, despite the idiosyncratic interpretation of site and estate densities allowed by the MHLG regional office until 1969. In Newham the effect was straightforward after May 1968, although it became bound up with the post-Ronan Point reaction.

b) Movements of capital exerted extensive influence on local authority policies because of their direct effects on the attainment of outputs and the implications

of this for future MHLG allocations. Because construction firms in the
1950s and '60s could involve their resources in a variety of markets and in
a large number of authorities in a period of high demand, their willingness to
tender for contracts was crucial for/a Council's housing performance. In all
three areas contractual pressure influenced the context of local authority
relations, leading to the adoption of selective or negotiated tendering,
and to system building or package deal construction. But the influence of
the industry was not confined to such areas, but spilled over pervasively
into the determination of housing construction policy.

Industrial influence powerfully defined the choices and trade-offs open
to all the case study authorities, and the developing patterns of contractual
involvement brought about fundamental changes in housing construction policy.
In West Ham the association of high flats and selective tendering helped
increase levels of high rise approvals in the 1950s, and the declining
attractiveness of selective tendering more than any other factor then pushed
the authority into the adoption of system building. The doubling of the
planned Larsen-Nielson commitment to retain some design control, and the rapid
enlargement of the system built programme by 1967 reflected the intensification
of industrial pressure. The close collaboration between Newham Council and
Taylor Woodrow-Anglian after Ronan Point, and the firm's success in safeguarding
their interests despite the disaster, are indications of the extent of Newham's
dependence on corporate involvement to maintain outputs.

In Birmingham the 1949 deal with the large housebuilding firms led
directly to the inauguration of flat building and later high rise housing, an
area in which contractual influence on designs and policy change became most
obvious in the 1950s. The weakening of this set of relations, and the fall
in outputs which resulted, led directly to Sheppard Fidler's attempt to radically
reconstitute it. The failure of his initiative was in part due to the lack
of contractual pressure behind it. In contrast Bryant's vigorous marketing
not only resulted in the growth of an extraordinary pattern of contractual

relations and massive concessions on contract sizes, negotiated tenders and continuity of work, but also produced a complete reversal of the policy movement away from high rise made by Council members from 1958 to 1963. But unlike Newham, Birmingham was not dependent on a single firm. The scale of its programme would have attracted any large contractor, and several could easily have been accommodated in a competitive involvement. That this did not happen was only a development and intensification of 'normal' relations, however.[72]

In Bristol contractual pressure behind high flat building had some influence on the expansion of high rise approvals following the end of the non-traditional housebuilding programme. But its major importance was in defining a key option in the Citizens' 1960 policy change, and in then expanding the package deal commitment in ways which increased densities and storey heights. The reduction of the public housing drive and disengagement of the large firms which resulted also signalled the switch back to house building.

In all three areas then, contractual influence and pressure can be seen as constituting a central dynamic of the development of high rise policy.

10.4: Mass Housing and the Local Community.

The analysis of this chapter has demonstrated that local authority decision making on the high rise issue was more determined than determinant, and that explanations in terms of structural pressures and influences substantially account for the development of local policies.

It is worth re-emphasizing here the nature of the lack of 'community autonomy' on housing construction policy. The formal powers of local authorities, their ability to make decisions over a wide range of issues in a manner they chose, were not really involved.[73] Nor was the loss of autonomy due primarily to Ministry regulation of local policy, for until 1967 there was no such regulation of high rise housing policy. Rather local authorities lost power to non-urban elements in the social system and to forces outside the formal state apparatus - to the construction industry, to the design

professions, to the national local government system, and to the Ministry
acting informally as the mediator of these and other social influences.   In
addition national level political-ideological structures decisively constrained
local authorities on the nature of the redevelopment process, the levels of
amenity provided in different urban areas, the form of coercive non-consultation
of tenants employed to expedite development, perceptions of land availability,
etc.

The development of local policies in the three areas studied showed a
fairly clear trend for local autonomy to decrease over the period.   Specific-
ally local influence on high rise policy continued in Birmingham until the late
1940s, and in West Ham, East Ham and Bristol until the early '50s.   During
the period actors in the local authority still exerted a direct influence on
policy.   Once the initial adoption decision was made, however, the determina-
tion of policy moved progressively away from the local level.   The distinctive-
ly local influences on high rise were primarily unfavourable to the policy;
the decision to disregard them, particularly to effect reductions in public
housing amenity against tenant opposition, was thus a threshold which, once
crossed, opened the way to the cumulative over-use of high rise.

This interpretation was strongly supported by interviewees' explanations
of local policy, which were overwhelmingly characterized by the lack of
reference to specific local influences and the ascription of effective
determining power to vaguely perceived national level pressures.   At first
these views seemed to me to be a rationalization of a now failed and unpopular
policy, an attempt to shift the blame onto other actors and organizations.
More basically there is a well known tendency for actors to give a situational
explanation of their actions (i.e. one in terms of environmental influences),
where observers would tend to give a dispositional explanation (i.e. one in
terms of actors' dispositional make-up).[74]   But the inescapable under-determina-
tion of any local level, actor-orientated account of policy development fairly
quickly led to the revision of this initial impression and to the above attempt

to formulate a structural account. This account fits well with and gives additional meaning to the genuine perplexity of many interviewees trying to explain how, despite a sustained public authority effort, improvements in the standards of housing provision had fallen so far short of the post-war planning ideals. As one Newham councillor observed:

> This is the reason why we have areas such as this. I mean, we've been trying to rebuild this area since 1945! When you look at the area - it's over thirty years now isn't it? - the bloody Romans could have done the job quicker! It's not locally it's the problem, but nationally.

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1. See Gyford, Local Politics in Britain, and D.M. Hill, Democratic Theory and Local Government (London, Allen and Unwin, 1974).

2. See above section 6.2.

3. Cortes, Przeworski and Sprague, Systems Analysis for Social Scientists, pp. 33-4.

4. See Newton, Second City Politics, Ch. 2; Davies and Newton, 'An Aggregate Data Analysis of Turnout and Party Voting in Local Elections'; K. Newton, 'Turnout and Marginality in Local Elections', British Journal of Political Science, 2 (1972), 251-5; D.T. Denver and G. Hands, 'Turnout and Marginality in Local Elections: a Comment', (with a rejoinder by K. Newton), British Journal of Political Science, 2 (1972), 513-16.

5. Sutcliffe and Smith, Birmingham, 1939-70, p. 440; interviews with former HBC members.

6. Gyford, Local Politics in Britain, p. 74, argues that under Boyce the West Ham Labour group, 'largely avoided political principles as a topic of debate and concentrated on enjoying patronage, power and prestige'.

7. Interview with S. Boyce: 'We only allow Trades Council to ask the group questions on trade union matters, not on political matters: political matters come through the Labour party'.

8. NR, 18 July 1968, p. 13. The Trades Council backed this up with a petition sent to the Newham housing committee.

9. On a list of associations supplied to me by the Newham Housing Department in July 1974, three of the thirty five associations were actually being run by councillors.

10. The protest in Bermesyde in 1961.

11. The Stratford Express was commented on adversely by all Labour interviewees; and see LBM 4B (1967-68), HC, 9 April 1968, 1138. For the general relations of Councils to local papers see D. Murphy, The Silent Watchdog (London, Constable, 1976); and 'The Unfreedom of the Local Press', New Society, 19 December 1974; H. Cox and D. Morgan, City Politics and the Press (London, Cambridge University Press, 1973); I. Jackson, The Provincial Press and the Community (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1971); Gyford, Local Politics in Britain, pp. 117-23.

12. Sutcliffe and Smith, Birmingham, 1939-70, pp. 115-19.

13. Interviews with former Conservative HBC members.

14. Newton, Second City Politics, Chs. 3 and 4.

15. BP, 14 September 1957.

16. See above, section 8.4.

17. See City of Birmingham, HBCM, 15 July 1967.

18. See EM, 20 March 1967, 'Saucer City'.

19. See D. MacShane, 'Birmingham Smells Corruption', New Statesman, 20 February 1976, 219-20; BP, 15 January 1976, pp. 1,7; BM, 14 February 1976, p.1; Private Eye, notes sections of issues 14 June to 20 September 1974; 7 February 1975; 13 June to 11 July 1975; 8 August 1975 to 17 October 1975; 14 November 1975 to 6 February 1976; 5 and 19 March 1976; 30 April to 28 May 1976; 25 June 1976; 6 August 1976; 15 October 1976; 12 November 1976.

20. See Clements, 'Political Leadership in Bristol and Avon'.

21. Bristol Evening Post, 23 November 1961.

22. Clements, 'Bristol', in Sharpe (ed.), Voting in Cities.

23. See above section 9.3.

24. See BHCM, 21 November 1960, 1123 and 1137.

25. Information obtained from an interviewee in the Bristol housing department.

26. See Socialist Commentary, September 1971, pp. 7,8.

27. For the original approach see R.A. Dahl, Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City (New Haven, Yale University Press, 196), Ch. 14.

28. By 'effective decision' is meant the making of a definite choice, rather than the ratification of initiatives. This tended to be assigned to the housing committee except where interviewees suggested very little freedom of action remained.

29. The success rates of sporadically involved actors were much lower, but the cases of involvement were very few.

30. The role of parties in influencing the character of committee discussions was slight, and only a few instances of competitive party political voting or debate were found: see Sartori, 'Will Democracy Kill Democracy? Decision Making by Majorities and by Committees'.

31. See Malpass, Professionalism in Architecture and the Design of Local Authority Homes, and 'Professionalism and the Role of Architects in Local Authority Housing'.

32. Interview with North.

33. Interviews with North and Lund.

34. Interviews with Clarke, Harris and Palmer.

35. Interviews with Sheppard Fidler and former HBC members; Sutcliffe and Smith, Birmingham, 1939-70, pp. 435-7.

36. See Birmingham HBC, 19 November 1964, and BM, 20 February 1967.

37. For example, over city centre high rise and the non-adoption of the Camus system.

38. Interview with S. Boyce.

39. In the three Newham authorities tables showing the balance of member types and rates of personnel turnover were constructed for the housing committee, and comparisons made with data on the influence of chairmen at different times. No linkage could be detected, apart from a consolidation of chairmen's power with time and a certain tendency for competent members to move off a committee with a well entrenched chairman.

40. See W.A. Robson, Local Government in Crisis (London, Allen and Unwin, 1966); R.M. Jackson, The Machinery of Local Government (London, Macmillan, 1965); J.J. Clarke, Outlines of Local Government of the United Kingdom (London, Pitman, 1969).

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42. See J.H. Warren, 'Local self-government: the basis of a democratic state', Public Administration, 28 (1950), 11-16; H.V. Wiseman, Local Government at Work (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967).

43. D.N. Chester, Central and Local Government (London, Macmillan, 1951); West Midland Study Group, Local Government and Central Control (London, Routledge, 1956).

44. See Dearlove, Politics of Policy in Local Government, pp. 31-39 and Newton, Second City Politics, Ch. 2 for critical discussions of these views. And L.J. Sharpe, Voting in Cities, pp. 1-14.

45. Newton, Second City Politics, Chs. 3,4,5; Dearlove, Politics of Policy in Local Government, Chs. 3 and 8; Gyford, Local Politics in Britain, Chs. 3 and 4; W. Hampton, Democracy and Community (London, Oxford University Press, 1970).

46. See I. Budge, J.A. Brand, M. Margolis and A.L.M. Smith, Political Stratification and Democracy (London, Macmillan 1972); Dearlove, Politics of Policy in Local Government, Chs. 6-10; Newton, Second City Politics, Chs. 6 and 8; L.J. Sharpe, 'Elected Representatives in Local Government', British Journal of Sociology, 13 (1962), 157-72.

47. R. Saran, Policy Making in Secondary Education (London, Oxford University Press, 1973); P. Kantor, 'Elites, Pluralists and Policy Arenas in London', British Journal of Political Science, 6 (1976), 311-34.

48. Local authority associations are mentioned once (p. 135).

49. See K. Newton, 'City Politics in Britain and the United States', Political Studies, 17 (1969), 208-18; D.H. McKay, 'Political Science and Urbanism in Europe; Some Lessons from the American Experience', European Journal of Political Research, 3 (1975), 303-17.

50. See N. Polsby, Community Power and Political Theory (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1963), Chs. 2 and 3.

51. Miller, International Community Power Studies; P. Saunders, Who Runs Croydon? Power and Politics in a London Borough (London University Ph.D Thesis, 1974), deploys some techniques from elite studies. For a critique see D. Farlie and I. Budge, 'Elite Background and Issue Preferences' in I. Crewe (ed.), British Political Sociology Yearbook, 1: Elites in Western Democracy (London, Croom Helm, 1974).

52. See F. Hunter, Community Power Structure (Chapel Hill, North Carolina; Chapel Hill Books, 1953); A.J. Vidich and J. Bensman, Small Town in Mass Society (Princeton, New Jersey; Princeton University Press, 1968).

53. P. Bachrach and M.S. Baratz, Power and Poverty: Theory and Practice (London, Oxford University Press, 1970), Chs. 1-3; and see P. Dunleavy, 'An Issue Centred Approach to the Study of Power', Political Studies, 24 (1976), 423-34; S. Lukes, Power: a Radical View (London, Macmillan, 1975); R. Merelman, 'On the Neo-Elitist Critique of Community Power', American Political Science Review, 62 (1968), 451-61.

54. See Bachrach and Baratz, Power and Poverty, Part II; M. A. Crenson, The Unpolitics of Air Pollution (Baltimore, John Hopkins Press, 1971), passim; J. Gaventa, Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley (Oxford University D.Phil. thesis, 1975).

55. P. Saunders, 'They Make the Rules: Political Routines and the Generation of Political Bias', Policy and Politics, 4 (1974), 31-58; and Who Runs Croydon?

56. See P. Dunleavy, 'Protest and Quiescence in Urban Politics', for a full statement of this argument.

57. M. Castells, The Urban Question (London, Edward Arnold, 1977), pp. 1-6, and Ch. 12, 'Theoretical Tools for the Study of Urban Politics'.

58. Castells, The Urban Question, p. 264. We have simplified his diagram.

59. See, for example, T.R. Dye, Politics, Economics and the Public (Chicago, Rand McNally, 1966); I. Sharkansky (ed.), Policy Analysis in Political Science (Chicago, Markham, 1970); K. Newton, 'Community Performance in Britain', Current Sociology, 26 (1977), 49-86.

60. See above sections 3.3 and 3.4.

61. For the low dividends in terms of waiting list reductions see NR, 23 September 1965; 25 April 1968, pp. 50-51.

62. But how acute this pressure was remains unclear. Three former HBC members in interviews said that they had been misled as to the scarcity of land.

63. Municipal Journal, 25 May 1956, p. 1206.

64. Interview with Councillor Merrett.

65. On the other hand, Birmingham was among the first authorities to build large high density house estates, so that the continuation of high flat building after 1966 cannot be ascribed to the acceptance of inaccurate assumptions about the relation of building form to density; Sutcliffe and Smith, Birmingham, 1939-70, p. 440.

66. About a third of councillors interviewed attributed hostility to flats to inexperience with this form of accommodation; this seems a decreasingly plausible explanation in the post war period.

67. Over half of all West Ham/Newham respondents claimed that high density high flat building was intended to be temporary and that subsequent clearance (never completed) would have provided the open space and amenities lacking in initial development.

68. For some conspicuous examples see Sheppard Fidler's address to the RIBA High Flats Symposium and North's use of his CHAC position to attack mandatory housing cost yardsticks; RIBA, High Flats: Report of a Symposium, section 8; Municipal Journal, 22 September 1967, p. 2504.

69. High rise costs were principally used for ulterior reasons, however, to push the Labour group towards accepting rent increases or as grounds for opposition to Camus.

70. One senior MHLG administrator claimed in interview that the high flat subsidies were calculated to do this.

71. See Circular 21/65, and Crossman, Diaries: Volume One, p. 384.

72. For a related argument see M. Bulmer, 'Tammany Hall Beside the Wear', New Society, 24 November 1977, 403-4.

73. The exception being the threat of legal sanctions used by Brooke to warn Bristol off any attempt to withdraw confirmed C.P.Os in 1960.

74. See E.E. Jones and R. Nisbet, 'The Actor and Observer: Divergent Perceptions on the Causes of Behaviour', in E.E. Jones, D.E. Kanause, H. Kelly, R. Nisbet, R. Valins and B. Weiner, Attribution: Perceiving the Causes of Behaviour (Morrestown, New Jersey: General Learning Press, 1972).

AFTERWORD

Two Concluding Comments

We have already summarized our main findings in their appropriate

theoretical contexts in Chapters Five and Ten, and it is unnecessary to

recapitulate them here. However, there are two rather disparate concluding

comments that we would like to make, the first concerning an area of our

argument which may require some clarification, the second concerning changes

in housing policy in the period after that covered in this research.

I : THE STRUCTURE OF GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

The necessary development of this study in two Parts with differing

methodological approaches may have left an area of slight ambiguity in our

accounts of national and local policy making where they concern the structure

of governmental relations. It may therefore be useful to briefly review our

findings on governmental relations in isolation from the details of the

empirical analysis.

Essentially we have shown that there were five types of influence flows

between central and local government on the high rise issue, which are repre-

sented in Figure A.1:

(1) Central government policy exerted a strong and direct influence on local

authority decision making - (Main examples: the encouragement of flat

building in the early 1950s, the 1956 subsidy change, the industrialized

building campaign, the 1965-7 changes).

(2) The detailed structure of relations between central government and local

authorities constrained central government's influence between major policy

changes; the fact that local authorities retained direct control of the

provision of housing restricted central government influence, and created

a certain dependence of central government on local authorities for

outputs - (Main examples: the ability of local authorities to over-

build high rise, the weakness of Ministry cost controls).

<u>Figure A.1:</u> The Structure of Governmental Relations on High Rise Housing
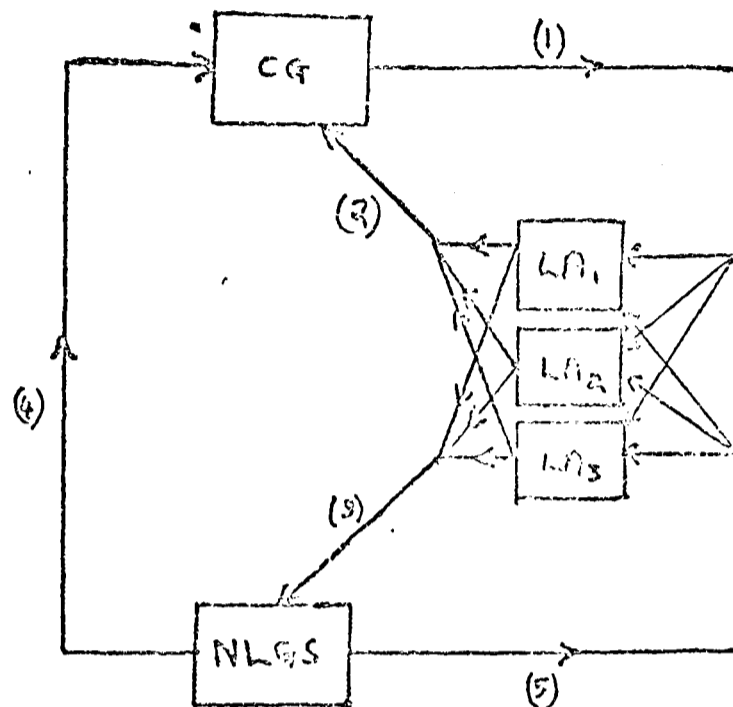
(3) Local authority outputs contributed to trends in the national local government system.

(4) Trends in the national local government system further constrained central government's detailed controls, strengthening the processes outlined in (2) above.

(5) Trends in the national local government system influenced individual local authorities' decision making.

In our view this pattern of governmental relations applies quite generally to issues in which both central and local government policies are involved: for example existing research into the politics of comprehensive education suggest a closely analogous pattern of influences and constraints.

II. THE LEGACIES OF HIGH RISE

Ten years on from the peak year of the high rise housing boom, the shape public housing construction policy looks very different. Only in Glasgow an few areas of London are high flats still being completed, most of them in

'tenement' estates reminiscent of flats of the 1940s. Even in the heart of the conurbations most new local authority building consists of houses or small blocks of low rise flats. Slum clearance policy has been almost completely revised over the last decade and (despite fluctuations in 1974-76) rehabilitation is playing an increasingly important role in state policies. Political support for further council housing construction seems to have reached a post-war low point, with the Labour government's 1977 Housing Policy Review anticipating a fall-back role only for state provision, and the Conservative Party committed to very extensive reductions in the size of the public housing sector. The construction industry is in the trough of a severe market slump, and the largest building firms and private design practices have substantially lost out on public housing work and channelled their resources abroad, particularly into the Middle East. In short the actors, organizations and policies with which we have been concerned have substantially altered.

Yet the high rise issue is not dead. Media coverage in the 1970s has remained higher than before 1968, and like 'new town blues' before it, the social malaise produced by high flat life has become one of the most familiar and exaggerated clichés of contemporary discussion on housing and planning issues. This continuing topicality owes a great deal to the worsening problem of the high flat stock, with regular series of dramatic events thrusting the issue back into prominence. In 1977, for example, newspaper and T.V. coverage was precipitated by a fire in a 31 storey Glasgow block, the suicide of a young mother in Birmingham who jumped with her child from the balcony of her tower flat, and plans by Liverpool Council to demolish three unlettable high rise blocks. Other issues, such as the racial polarization of some high rise estates in London, and the effects of extensive sales of council houses on efforts to rehouse children from flats, seem certain to keep the problems of high rise in the news for some time to come.

But the continuing relevance of this analysis is not confined to the physical legacies of the high rise housing boom and the lives of those people

affected by them. For in many ways the most important consequence of this
period of public housing policy has been its impact on contemporary debates
and arguments about housing issues. The perceived failure of public housing
represented by high rise has been used to support virtually all the policy
changes of the last decade. Many commentators have seen in it the unrestrained
working out of the design professions' 'arrogance' or 'meglamania', and called
for greater public participation in planning issues. High rise also played a
central role in the extraordinary consensus of the early 1970s on the need for
rehabilitation: to critics of public housing on both the right and left mass
housing policies seemed to indicate the enormous problems of building low cost
modern homes in inner urban areas and the comparative advantages of renovating
older ones. The reaction after Ronan Point also crystallized the opposition
of many inner urban residents to the sweeping clearance and redevelopment
policies previously pursued, which in turn directed professional attention to
the social benefits of piecemeal or organic renewal. Finally, and most
significantly of all, the high rise housing boom cast a sizeable blight on the
public image of post-war Council housing. The policy lent itself to analysis
in terms of the inherent inefficiency, bureaucratic indifference and
unresponsiveness of state intervention compared with market provision. The
orientation of public housing in the 1960s towards unpopular and high cost
forms of accommodation seems to have slowly but quite decisively reduced the
levels of public support for council housing, and to have strengthened support
for private house ownership.

The balance sheet of the policy changes carried out in the 1970s has yet
to be written. But when it is, these ideological effects may prove to have
been some of the most important and enduring legacies of the high rise/mass
housing era.

APPENDIX I

Housing Authorities, Construction Firms and Industrialized High Rise
1963-73

This appendix presents some further tables showing housing authorities' use

of industrialized high rise and contractual aspects of this, relevant to the analysis

of section 4.3.

Table I:1 : Housing Authorities Experienced in the Use of Industrialized High Rise,
1963-73

(Cumulative numbers)

Year	London Boroughs	County Boroughs	Municipal Boroughs	Urban Districts	Others	All Authorities
1963	6	29	13	3	1	52
1964	10	40	22	8	2	82
1965	19	46	26	14	6	111
1966	26	49	32	21	8	136
1967	28	51	36	28	8	151
1968	28	54	38	31	8	159
1969	28	55	38	32	8	161
1970	28	55	38	32	8	161
1971	28	55	38	32	8	161
1972	28	55	38	32	8	161
1973	29	56	38	32	9	164

Source: D.O.E. unpublished files on industrialized housing.

Table I.2 : Housing Authorities Awarding Contracts in Industrial High Rise, 1963-72

Year	London Boroughs	County Boroughs	Municipal Boroughs	Urban Districts	Others	All Authorities
1963	4	27	13	2	1	47
1964	9	26	13	5	2	55
1965	15	23	7	7	5	57
1966	22	17	11	9	3	62
1967	16	21	9	7	1	54
1968	10	17	7	3	1	38
1969	14 ·	8	2	1	-	25
1970	4	5	1	1	-	11
1971	2	2	1	1	-	6
1972	2	3	-	-	-	5

Source: As Table I.1.

Table I.3 : Average Contract Sizes on Industrialized High Rise by Housing Authority Type, 1963-73

Year	G.L.C.	London Boroughs	County Boroughs	Municipal Boroughs	Urban Districts	Other	Number of Contracts
1963	195	96	175	135	117	57	72
1964	240	116	210	175	126	127	83
1965	140	120	182	81	105	87	111
1966	261	313	208	111	175	63	101
1967	162	330	264	89	315	156	96
1968	225	199	363	154	328	619	65
1969	523	436	258	57	146	-	33
1970	584	157	145	84	136	-	12
1971	72	199	196	-	254	-	9
1972	722	516	94	-	-	-	5
1973	-	219	49	-	-	31	5

Source: D.O.E. unpublished files on industrialised housing.

Table I.4 : Contractual Relations of Seven Large Firms by Authority Type.
Industrialised High Rise (1963-73)

Number of Authorities dealing with:	London Boroughs	County Boroughs	Municipal Boroughs	Urban Districts	Other	All
WIMPEY (no-fines system)						
Alone	2	17	17	14	3	53
Plus one other firm	1	9	3	-	-	13
Plus two other firms	3	4	-	-	-	7
Plus three other firms	-	5	-	-	-	5
Plus four or more firms	-	3	-	-	-	3
Total	6	38	20	14	3	81
CONCRETE (Bison system)						
Alone	3	6	9	5	1	24
Plus one other firm	-	5	2	-	-	7
Plus two other firms	3	4	-	-	-	7
Plus three other firms	2	4	-	-	-	6
Plus four or more firms	-	3	-	-	-	3
Total	8	22	11	5	1	47
LAING (various systems)						
Alone	-	1	2	2	1	6
Plus one other firm	2	3	-	1	1	6
Plus two other firms	6	3	-	-	-	9
Plus three other firms	-	3	-	-	-	3
Plus four or more firms	-	1	-	-	-	1
Total	8	11	2	3	1	25
WATES (Wates system)						
Alone	2	-	-	-	-	2
Plus one other firm	4	5	1	-	-	10
Plus two other firms	5	-	-	-	-	5
Plus three other firms	1	-	-	-	-	1
Plus four or more firms	1	-	-	-	-	1
Total	13	5	1	-	-	19
CAMUS						
Alone	-	-	-	1	-	1
Plus one other firm	1	-	-	-	-	1
Plus two other firms	1	-	-	-	-	1
Plus three other firms	1	-	-	-	-	1
Plus four or more firms	-	2	-	-	-	2
Total	3	2	-	1	-	6
TAYLOR WOODROW-ANGLIAN (Larsen-Nielson system)						
Alone	1	-	-	-	-	1
Plus one other firm	1	-	-	1	-	2
Plus two other firms	1	1	-	-	-	2
Plus three other firms	-	1	-	-	-	1
Total	3	2	-	1	-	6
CRUDENS (Skarne system)						
Alone	-	-	-	1	-	1
Plus one other firm	1	-	-	1	-	2
Plus two other firms	-	2	-	-	-	2
Total	1	2	-	2	-	5

APPENDIX II

Media Coverage of the High Rise Housing Issue,
1950-70

This section reports in full statistical terms a content analysis for four

selected media sources of coverage of the high rise housing issue, reported in

general terms in section 4.5.

Sources surveyed were:

The Times, surveyed 1950-70 using index under eight headings.

Newham Recorder, surveyed 1965-70 : (weekly local paper in Newham).

Municipal Journal, surveyed 1950-70 : (leading local government weekly magazine,

founded 1893, particularly good coverage of built environment issues).

Housing and Planning Review, surveyed 1950-70 : (bi-monthly journal of the National

Housing and Town Planning Council, particularly good coverage of housing

construction).

High-flat coverage was defined as all items about high rise housing (as assessed

by the reader): plus passages of 90 words or more about high rise but in articles on

other topics. Photographs etc. were included in coverage. Measurement of item

length in column centimetres used following bases:

Times, normal eight column page columns.

Newham Recorder, minimum five column page columns.

Municipal Journal, normal three column page columns.

Housing and Planning Review, normal double column page columns.

Size changes proved a problem only for early 1950s Municipal Journal and the Newham

Recorder: different columns were adjusted to base to yield indications of page

coverage. Page size changed in the Housing and Planning Review in 1964 so pre- and

post-1964 data are not comparable. No comparisons of length across media are valid.

(i) Timing of coverage

(For the Times and Municipal Journal see Figure 4.2). Newham Recorder see Figure II.1.

Housing and Planning Review, see Figure II.2.

Figure II.1: Coverage of the High Rise
Housing Issue in the Newham
Recorder, 1965-70.
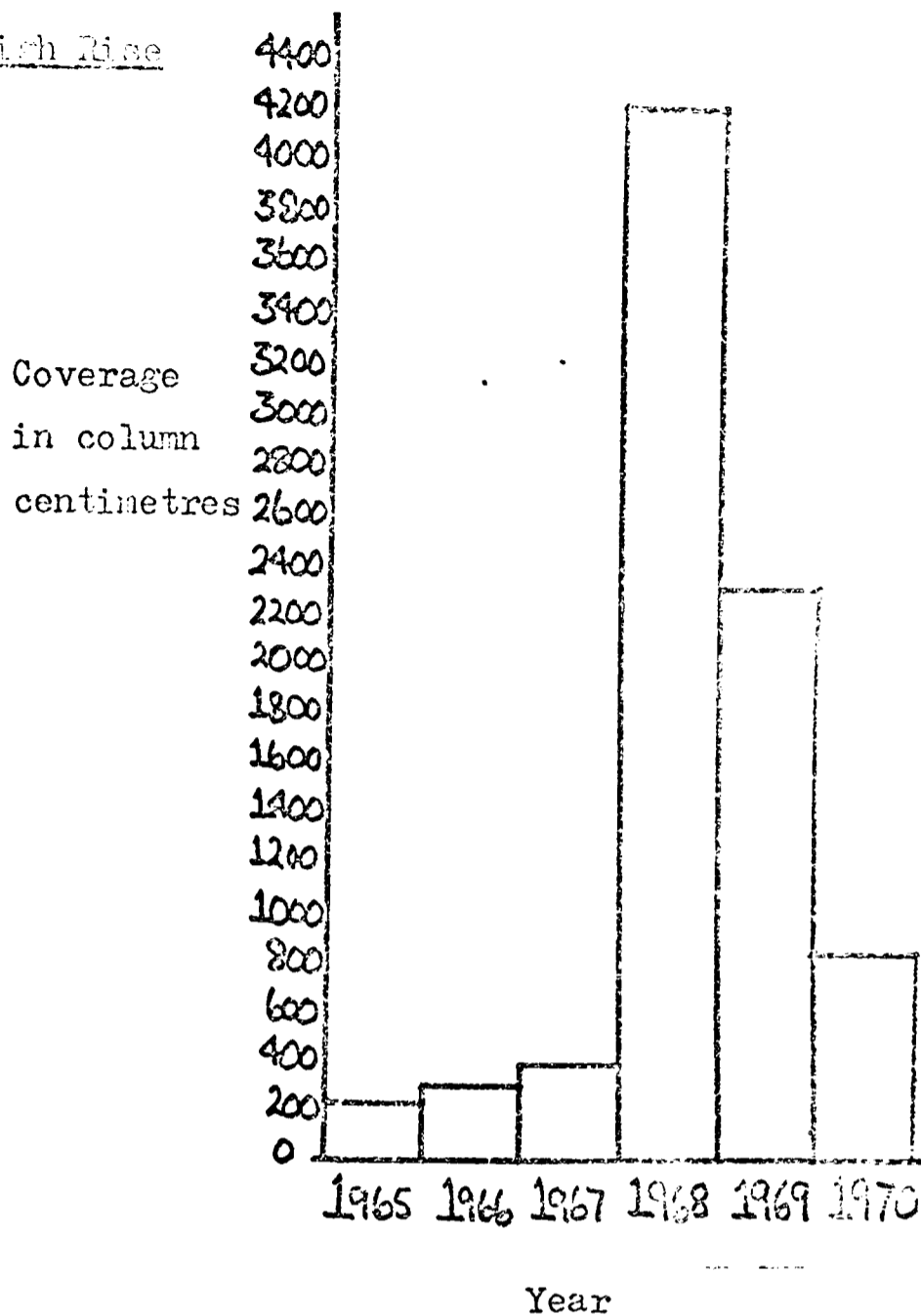
Figure II.2: Coverage of the High Rise Housing Issue in the
Housing and Planning Review, 1950-71.
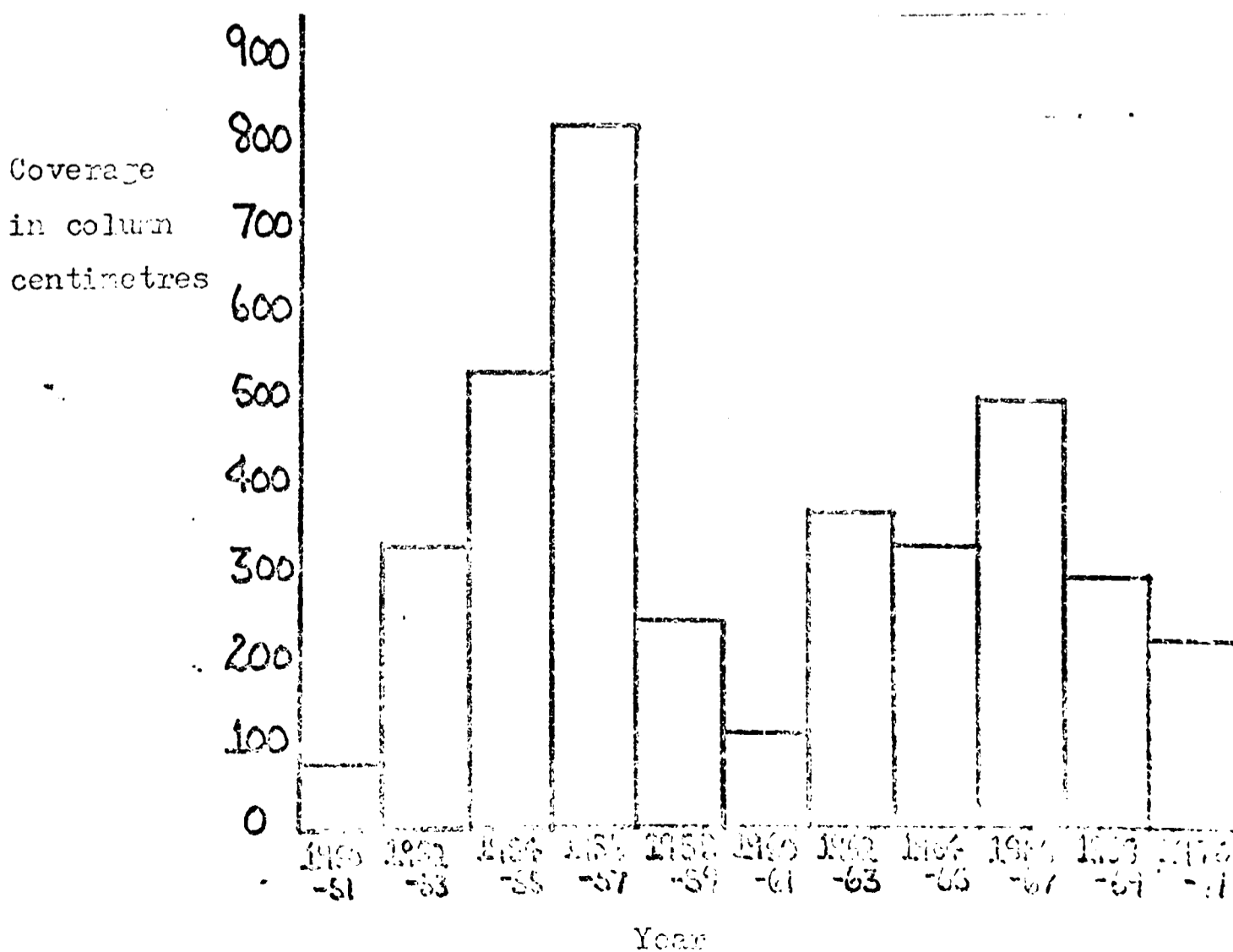
(ii) Attitudes of coverage

The following codes were used:

Pro: item directly advocates increased levels of high rise housing provision or reports such advocacy.

Anti: item directly advocates reduced levels of high rise housing provision or criticizes existing level, or reports such advocacy or criticism.

Neutral: item is neither 'pro' nor anti'.

Table II.1: Newspaper high flat coverage, 1950-70: Attitudes

The Times	Percentage of coverage			Total	Average item
	Pro	Neutral	Anti	Column cms	Length (c.cms)
1950-54	29	57	14	345	20
1955-59	38	56	6	230	16
1960-64	43	33	24	526	23
1965-67	0	51	49	271	27
1968	3	60	37	2,418	31
1969	11	59	30	543	27
1970	4	69	27	423	20
Newham Recorder					
1965-67	55	17	28	906	70
1968	8	53	39	4,224	77
1969	10	46	44	2,304	54
1970	0	34	66	1,027	54

Table II.2 : Local Government Press, High Flat Coverage 1950-70: Attitudes

Municipal Journal	Percentage of coverage			Total	Average item
	Pro	Neutral	Anti	Column cms	Length(c.cms)
1950	20	80	0	404	25
1951	0	94	6	222	25
1952	33	66	1	2,970	149
1953	6	93	1	3,105	148
1954	4	96	0	5,587	224
1955	19	80	1	4,673	187
1956	3	97	0	1,905	136
1957	6	93	1	3,243	147
1958	1	99	0	2,225	111
1959	11	87	2	1,220	32
1960	47	53	0	1,408	40
1961	18	73	9	1,474	48
1962	22	74	4	1,040	27
1963	6	94	0	1,217	36
1964	9	91	0	1,032	37
1965	0	100	0	1,298	42
1966	28	70	2	1,024	30
1967	14	85	1	1,015	17
1968	4	84	12	852	16
1969	0	82	18	1,246	23
1970	1	98	1	762	42

Housing and Planning Review

	Pro	Neutral	Anti	Column cms	Length(c.cms)
1950-55	89	11	0	962	93
1956-61	69	31	0	1,171	90
1962-70	37	46	17	1,718	143

(iii) Focus of coverage

Ten categories of the focus of high flat coverage were defined:

(1) General;   (2) Local;   (3) Social;   (4) Technical;   (5) Personal;

(6) International;   (7) Layout;   (8) Design;   (9) Costs;   and (10) Other.

The last four categories were not used in analysing newspaper

coverage;   items in these categories did not occur.   Industrial or contractual

aspects are classed under the 'technical' heading.

Table II.3 : Newspaper and Local Government Press Coverage of the High Rise Housing Issue, 1950-70: Focus.

Year	Percentage Focus of Coverage:										Total Percentage
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
The Times											
1950-54	11	78	0	7	0	4					100
1955-59	22	66	0	5	0	6					100
1960-64	28	28	26	12	6	0					100
1965-67	44	53	0	3	0	0					100
1968	21	42	0	31	6	0					100
1969	33	44	0	23	0	0					100
1970	12	26	41	21	0	0					100
Municipal Journal											
1950	0	52	0	9	0	29	10	0	0	0	100
1951	0	67	29	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	100
1952	27	8	1	21	0	0	24	16	1	0	100
1953	4	13	0	8	0	3	8	65	0	0	100
1954	4	2	0	0	0	0	15	79	0	0	100
1955	13	2	0	2	0	29	5	47	1	0	100
1956	7	1	0	1	0	0	0	89	2	0	100
1957	0	3	7	2	0	0	10	74	4	0	100
1958	0	12	4	52	1	0	8	23	0	0	100
1959	13	27	1	27	1	5	0	27	0	0	100
1960	2	34	4	37	1	15	6	0	0	0	100
1961	0	65	8	6	0	2	11	8	0	0	100
1962	11	68	7	4	5	0	0	0	1	4	100
1963	0	56	0	34	0	0	0	0	0	10	100
1964	0	70	0	21	0	6	0	3	0	0	100
1965	0	76	2	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	100
1966	2	49	0	26	0	17	0	0	0	6	100
1967	0	75	2	10	2	8	0	0	2	0	100
1968	17	41	15	18	1	0	0	0	1	7	100
1969	0	64	13	13	0	1	0	0	0	9	100
1970	0	55	1	37	0	0	0	0	7	0	100
1950-70	6	24	3	14	0	6	8	37	1	1	100
Housing and Planning Review											
1950-55	87	0	8	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	100
1956-61	50	7	11	12	0	0	0	0	20	0	100
1962-70	0	22	45	20	0	13	0	0	0	0	100

(iv) Origin of Coverage

Eleven categories of the origins of high flat coverage were defined:

(1) Local authorities; (2) Central government and Parliament; (3) Other national bodies; (4) Construction and building materials firms; (5) Architects;

(6) Other design professionals; (7) Housing managers; (8) Social welfare

organizations; (9) News; (10) Foreign; (11) Other Media.

Attributed articles, discussions and letters were allocated by the authors' category; unattributed items were allocated by the likely source of coverage. In Newspapers category (9) was used for all doubtful cases. In the local government press where most unattributed coverage concerned local. schemes, doubtful cases were allocated to category (1).

Table II.4 : Newspaper Coverage of the High Rise Housing Issue, 1950-70: Origins

Year	Percentage Focus of Coverage:											Percentage
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Total
The Times												
1950-4	25	0	4	0	0	4	0	0	60	0	7	100
1955-9	11	16	11	2	21	.6	0	0	15	0	17	100
1960-4	5	6	19	11	14	2	0	0	37	0	7	100
1965-7	0	0	36	0	0	0	0	0	50	0	13	100
1968	7	16	12	6	2	9	0	0	38	0	12	100
1969	24	16	18	0	0	0	0	0	25	0	17	100
1970	28	9	44	7	0	0	0	0	13	0	0	100

Table II.5 : Local Government Press Coverage of the High Rise Housing Issue, 1950-70: Origins.

Municipal Journal

Year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Total
1950	41	4	4	0	13	5	0	0	0	33	0	100
1951	61	0	4	29	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	100
1952	41	1	2	0	57	0	0	0	0	0	0	100
1953	57	0	3	13	23	0	0	0	0	3	1	100.
1954	83	0	0	0	9	0	0	6	0	0	1	100
1955	35	3	8	2	48	0	0	0	0	4	1	100
1956	23	1	0	0	68	1	0	0	0	0	2	100
1957	43	3	4	2	43	5	0	0	0	0	1	100
1958	22	1	7	52	15	3	0	0	0	0	1	100
1959	51	1	2	26	1	14	0	0	0	5	0	100
1960	58	3	0	14	4	5	0	0	4	11	0	100
1961	72	2	3	13	0	2	0	7	0	2	0	100
1962	61	5	4	15	7	9	0	0	0	0	0	100
1963	28	0	0	66	3	0	0	0	0	3	0	100
1964	22	9	0	41	9	17	0	0	2	0	0	100
1965	71	5	0	19	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	100
1966	53	0	2	14	0	0	8	0	0	23	0	100
1967	76	2	0	10	1	4	0	0	0	8	0	100
1968	52	2	8	22	15	1	0	0	0	0	0	100
1969	74	0	0	0	0	3	13	0	8	0	1	100
1970	59	5	2	0	0	34	0	0	0	0	0	100

Housing and Planning Review

Year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Total
1950-55	5	0	23	0	27	45	0	0	0	0	0	100
1956-61	0	0	1	0	56	15	11	0	16	0	0	100
1962-70	19	0	15	13	0	13	13	0	12	17	0	100

APPENDIX III

Influences on the use of High Rise Housing in Newham

Table III.1 presents the results of an analysis of ward data for the London Borough of Newham, in which an attempt was made to assess the influence of a number of variables on local authority housing, in terms of the propensity of the local authority to opt for a particular kind of housing mix. The major results of this analysis can be summarized as follows:

1) The housing character of a ward is the best predictor of the local authority's housing mix in that ward. Partial correlations indicate that the residual influence of ward environmental character (i.e. the indices measuring the proportion of ward areas allocated to residential, industrial and vacant land uses), once housing character variables have been controlled is slight.

2) The influence of net residential densities at the ward level appears to be markedly less than aggregate data for the London Boroughs would suggest (see section 2.2).

3) There is a high degree of co-variation of the houses and high rise indices, apparently reflecting the influence of the West Ham and Newham Council's policies of using these building forms in tandem.

4) The indices showing high rise housing as a percentage of all housing, and the proportion of ward populations living in high rise flats (i.e. the objective importance of high rise as a living environment in the wards), display a much more pronounced pattern of influences. The greater the role played by the local authority in providing housing in a ward, and the greater the net residential density, the larger the numbers of people who live in high rise.

5) Variables measuring the wards' character in terms of land use should be treated with caution at this level of analysis. For example, open space may be included within one ward but mark the boundaries of several others. Similarly industrial areas may affect wards other than their own. This having been said, the data does not suggest that high rise has either been

used in areas with easy access to open space or has in any significant
way helped to create open space. High rise is more common in areas of
low amenity.

Table III.1 : Pearson Correlation Values for Influences on the Housing Mix in Newham's Council Housing, 1971

Type	Percentage of Council housing in:			Percentage of Ward Population in High Rise Flats	High Rise as percentage of all dwellings
	High Rise	Low Rise	Houses		
Council Rented Households	0.30	-0.45	0.40	0.81	0.83
Owner Occupied Households	-0.16	0.35	-0.42	-0.61	-0.77
Privately Rented Households (Unfurnished)	-0.37	0.29	0.05	-0.53	-0.54
Privately Rented Households (Furnished)	-0.11	0.30	-0.43	-0.41	-0.40
Percentage of Ward area in Residential Use	-0.27	0.08	-0.45	-0.27	-0.26
Percentage of ward area in Industrial Use	-0.02	0.09	0.23	0.15	0.12
Percentage of ward area Vacant land	0.14	-0.29	-0.35	0.36	0.35
Public Open Space per 1,000 people (1971)	-0.38	0.39	-0.13	-	0.12
Net Residential Density, 1966	0.27	-0.36	0.27	0.61	0.63
Net Residential Density, 1971	0.38	-0.42	-0.19	0.66	0.68
Gross Population Density, 1966	0.27	-0.06	-0.36	--	0.02
Gross Population Density, 1971	0.31	-0.08	-0.37	-	0

Sources: K. Lund, The London Borough of Newham: a Study of Post War Development (London, London Borough of Newham, 1971-3);
            Office of Population Surveys and Censuses, Census 1971, Ward Tables (available in Stratford Library, Newham).

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