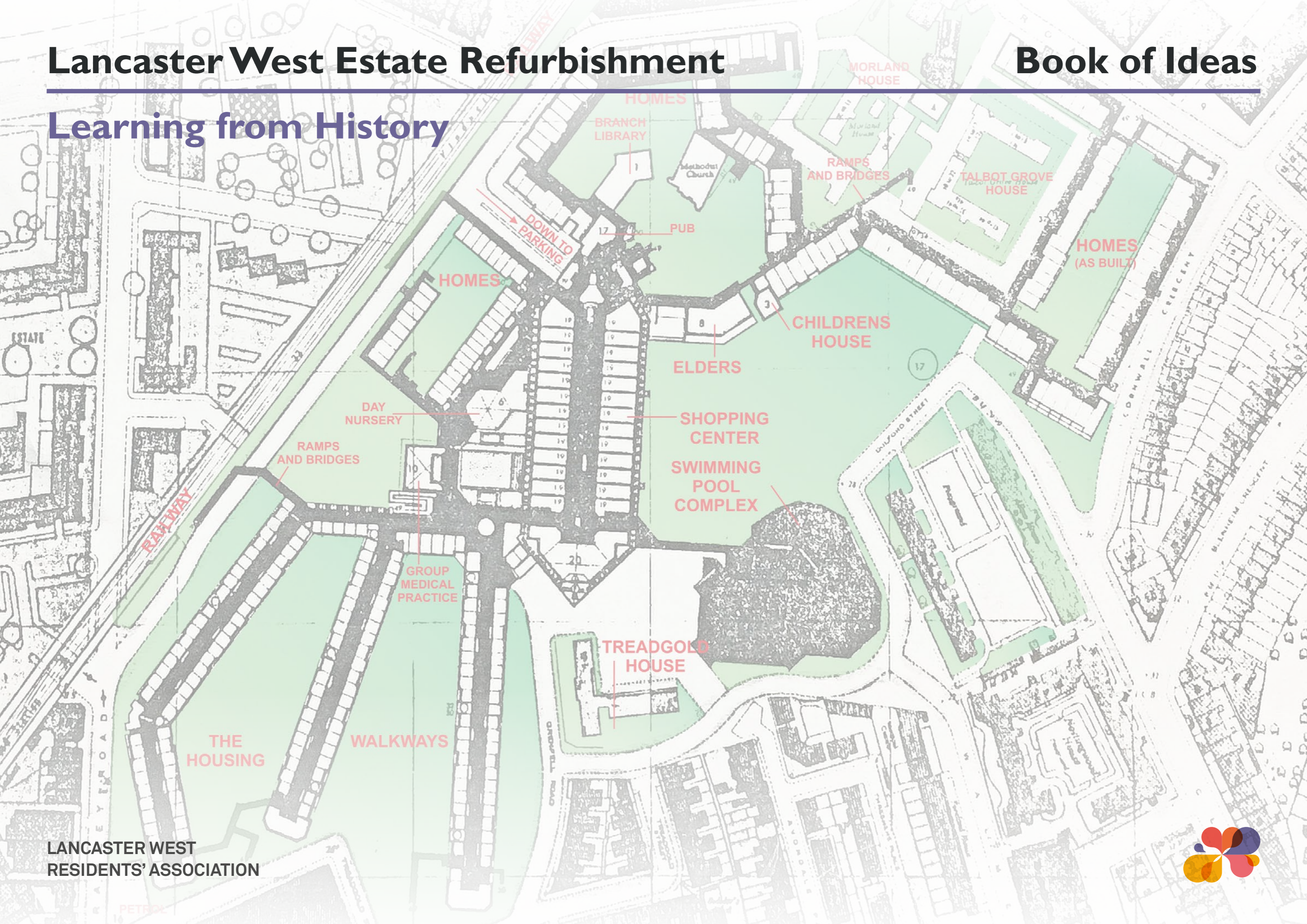


Learning from History



Introduction

A short history of the Lancaster West estate in North Kensington.

A video of 'Lancaster West.A brief History' can also be found on YouTube using link: <https://youtu.be/6-yQYQu3pac>

Map Of 1870

This is one of the early maps we have of the area from 1870, before any of the Estate was built. It had been farmland not long before. The first major intervention was the Hammersmith and City railway that slashed way right through the landscape in 1867.



Learning from History

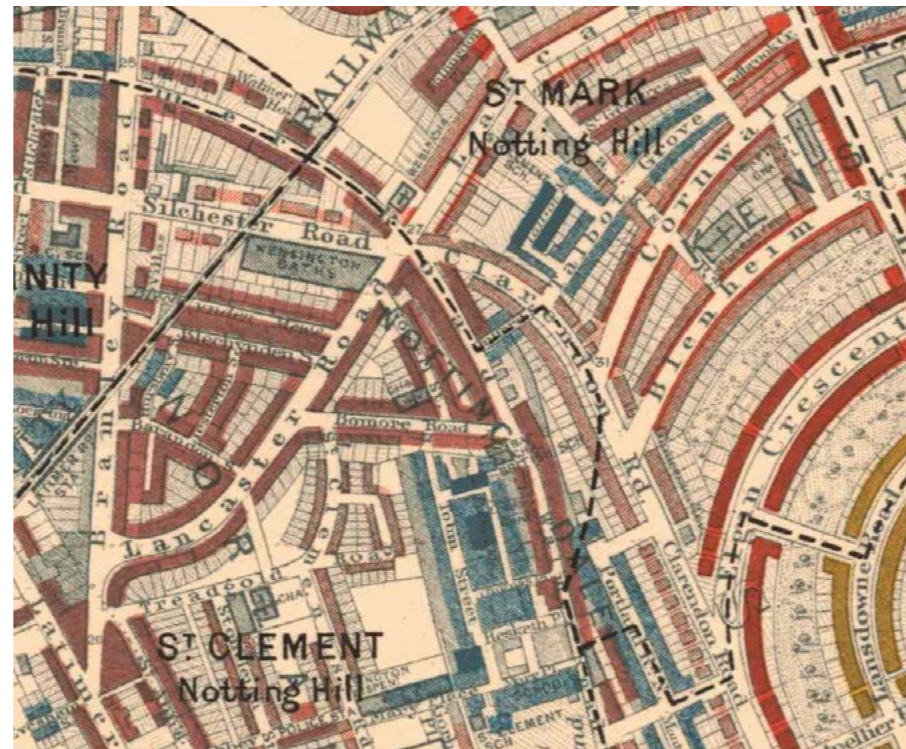
Dense Streets in 1910

The Public Housing movement began out of the dramatic urban expansion of the Victorian era. Towards the end of the 19th Century, philanthropists, reformers and religious groups were recognising the overcrowding, poverty, sickness and immorality in the inner cities.



Charles Booth Map

Charles Booth recorded the conditions by colour-coding houses in maps like this one of 1889. We see on the left, the dark blue homes of the very poor, near Bramley Road, through to the brighter coloured yellows of the houses on the hill around St John's Church. Booth recorded "terrible hardship just a few hundred yards west of the wealth that radiated outwards from Lansdowne Crescent".



Kensington Baths

By the end of the 19th Century we see one of the Borough's first steps to improve these conditions - the Kensington Baths at Lancaster Circus – the meeting of Clarendon Road, Silchester Road, Lancaster Road and Walmer Road. The Academy school now occupies the site of the baths.



Lancaster Circus

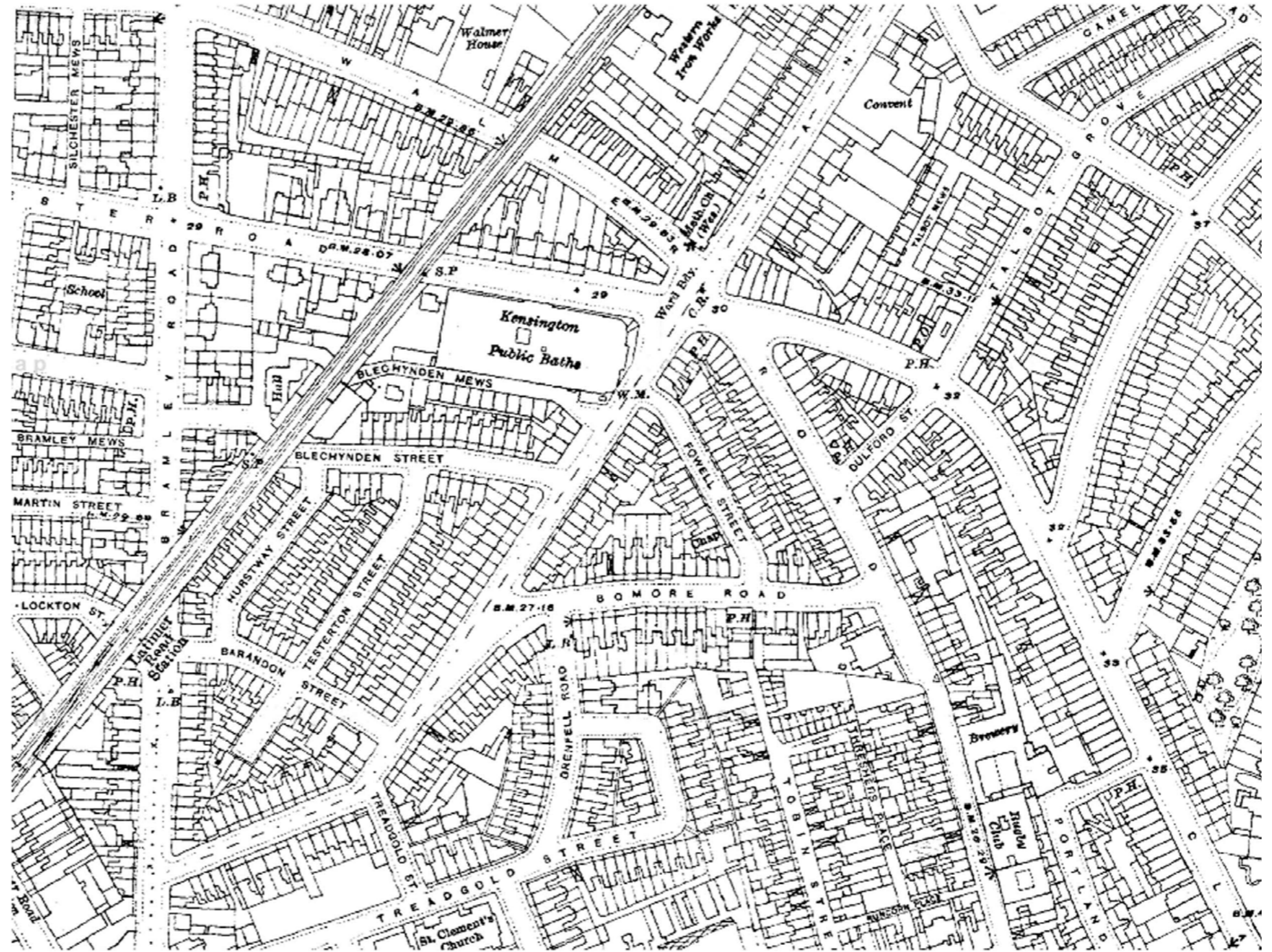
At the forecourt of the baths was a busy junction where there were many shops, a pub, and a church - now the Methodist Church. Until March 2018, on 14th of each month the Grenfell candlelit vigil has begun at this point – outside the church - the geographical core of the estate.



Learning from History

Map of 1910

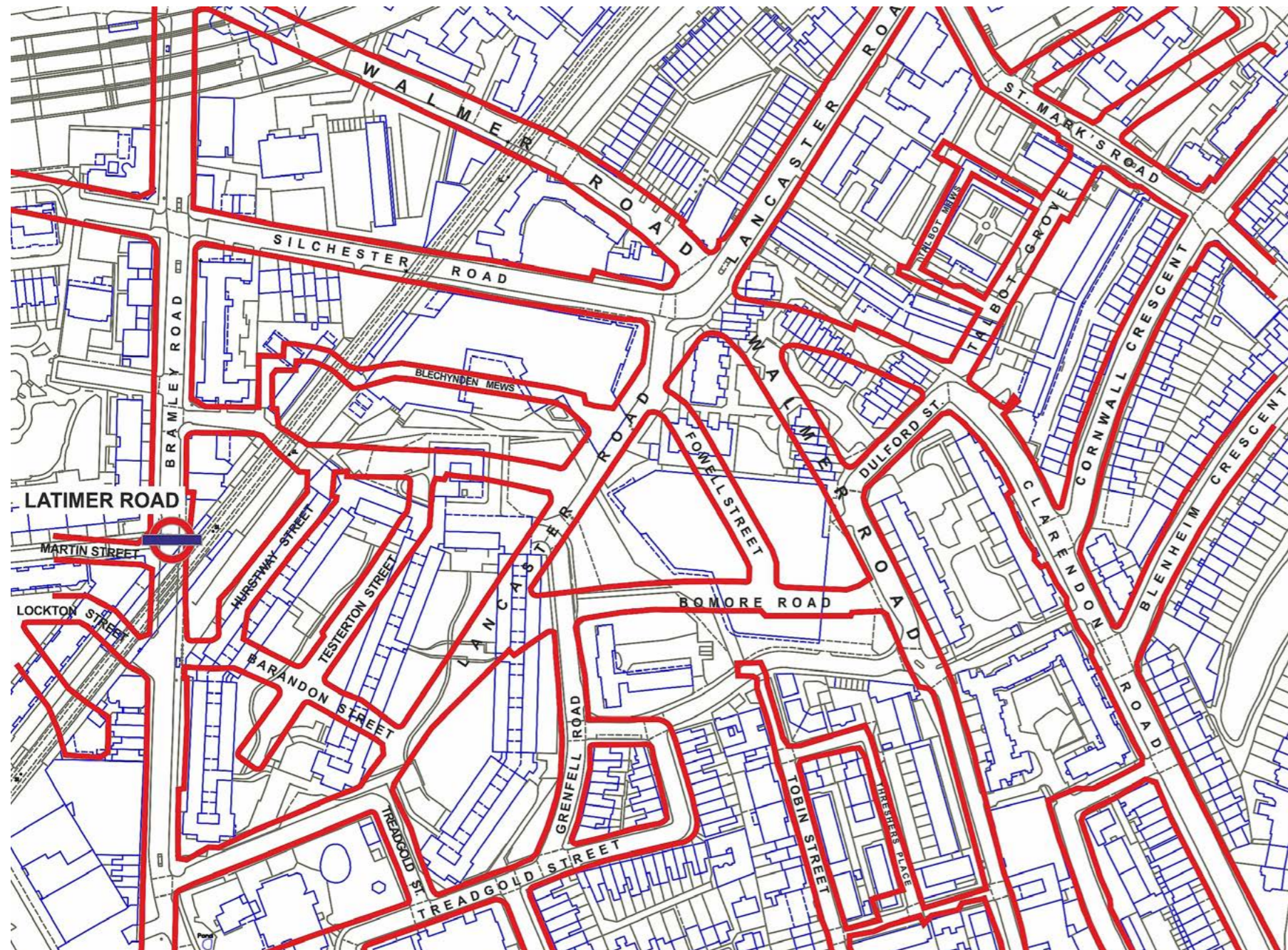
We can see the major junction of Lancaster Road and Walmer Road meeting at the baths. The density of streets to housing was quite different from now and the different parts were well connected. The names of the present Walkways - Hurstway, Testerton and Barandon were originally Victorian streets and the tower was named after Grenfell Road.



Learning from History

Lost Streets

To put this in context, this map shows the lost streets from 1910 overlaid on the current buildings on the estate. See how Bomore Road has shifted down so as to wend its way around Treadgold House, and what is now Talbot Grove House.



The efforts of the Victorian philanthropists such as George Peabody, Charles Booth and Octavia Hill (Notting Dale) encouraged the Government to legislate. The Housing of the Working Classes Acts of 1885 permitted Local Councils to borrow central Treasury funds to build homes and also empowered them to force responsibility on rogue landlords to either improve their houses or demolish them. A further Act of 1890 allowed them to actually buy these properties.



George Peabody

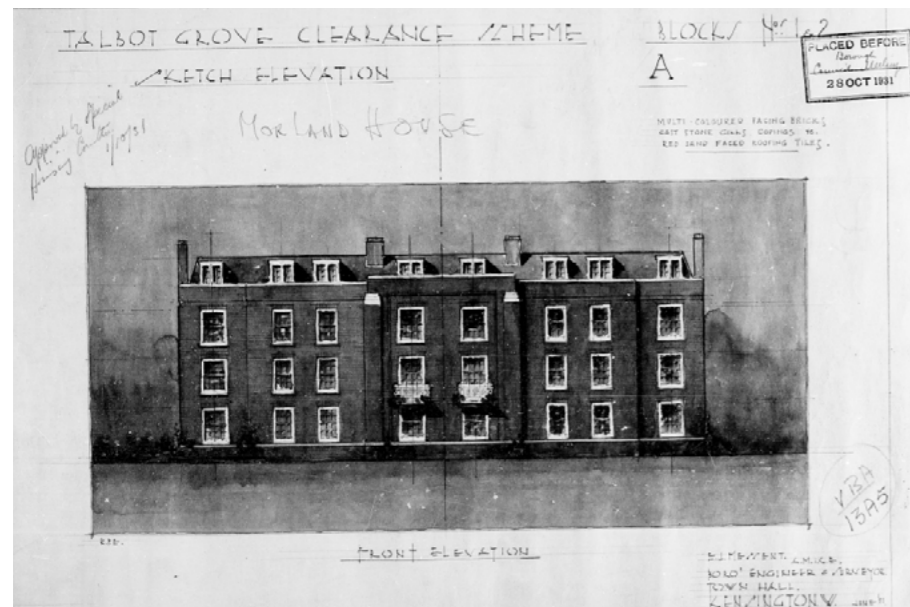
Octavia Hill

Charles Booth

Learning from History

Morland House

Morland House of 1931, Talbot Grove House, 1932 and Bramley House designed in 1936, (but not built until after the war) were some of the earliest public housing blocks to go up in this group. This drawing by the borough engineer is titled Talbot Grove Clearance Scheme and is of the façade of Morland House. The building has a simple but dignified appearance, with Georgian style windows and a slight nod to modernism.



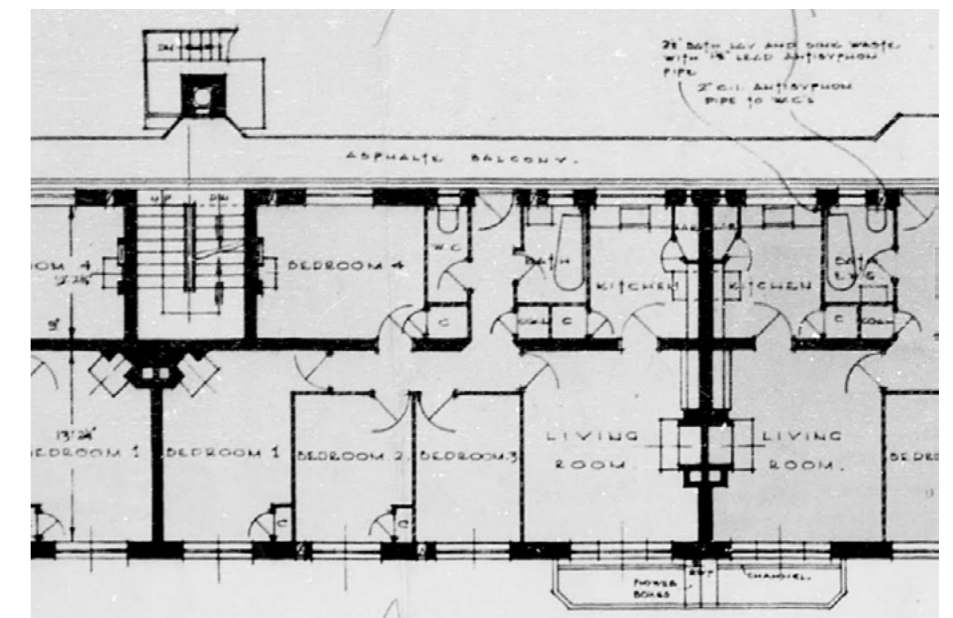
Talbot Grove House

Talbot Grove House was a proud Georgian style palace fronting onto Talbot Road. Its exotic gardens are now hidden from the public street within the group surrounded by Camelford Walk and Clarendon Walk



Bramley House

Bramley House was the third in this group. It took up the site of two large semi-detached houses with over-large gardens, at the corner of Silchester Road, Bramley Road and the Railway. We read ecstatic descriptions from people moving out of slums, they felt they were 'in paradise'. Flats had flower boxes, gas, electricity, baths, indoor W.Cs, organised waste collection, coal storage, warmth and privacy.



Learning from History

Grenfell Road

There was no building between 1939 and 1945. The war had left many more families in poverty and homeless. This plan from 1953 shows the area (lower right) where, a bomb in 1944 had devastated a number of homes around Bomore Road and Grenfell Road.



The prefabs in Bomore Road

Around 32 temporary prefab homes were built on the bombsite immediately after the war – seen here in this 1947 aerial map. Nearby Estates, Barlow House Allom House and Henry Dickens Court were built in the 1950s. By the late 50s, the council was already planning a huge compulsory purchase of the properties in Grenfell Road, Hurstway and Testerton Streets but Lancaster West's next post war building was in the triangle of land just south of Bomore Road.



Southam Street

Alan Johnson's autobiography of his early years in North Kensington gives as a very realistic picture of the lives of the not so well off. He lived at first in the Southam Street near what is now the site of Trellick Tower, moved to Walmer Road and eventually met his wife in Camelford Crescent. There are vivid descriptions of the tensions between classes and ethnic groups in Notting Hill in the post war period. This photo of Southam Street illustrating street life in N Kensington is by Roger Mayne in 1956 when Johnson was around 6 years old.



Learning from History

Bomore House (now Treadgold House)

Partly covered by prefabs and with some houses likely to be damaged by bombs, the first site to be cleared was the area around Grenfell Road where Bomore House – now Treadgold House was put up around 1960. With five storeyed balcony access and large windows it was the epitome of crisp modernist design.

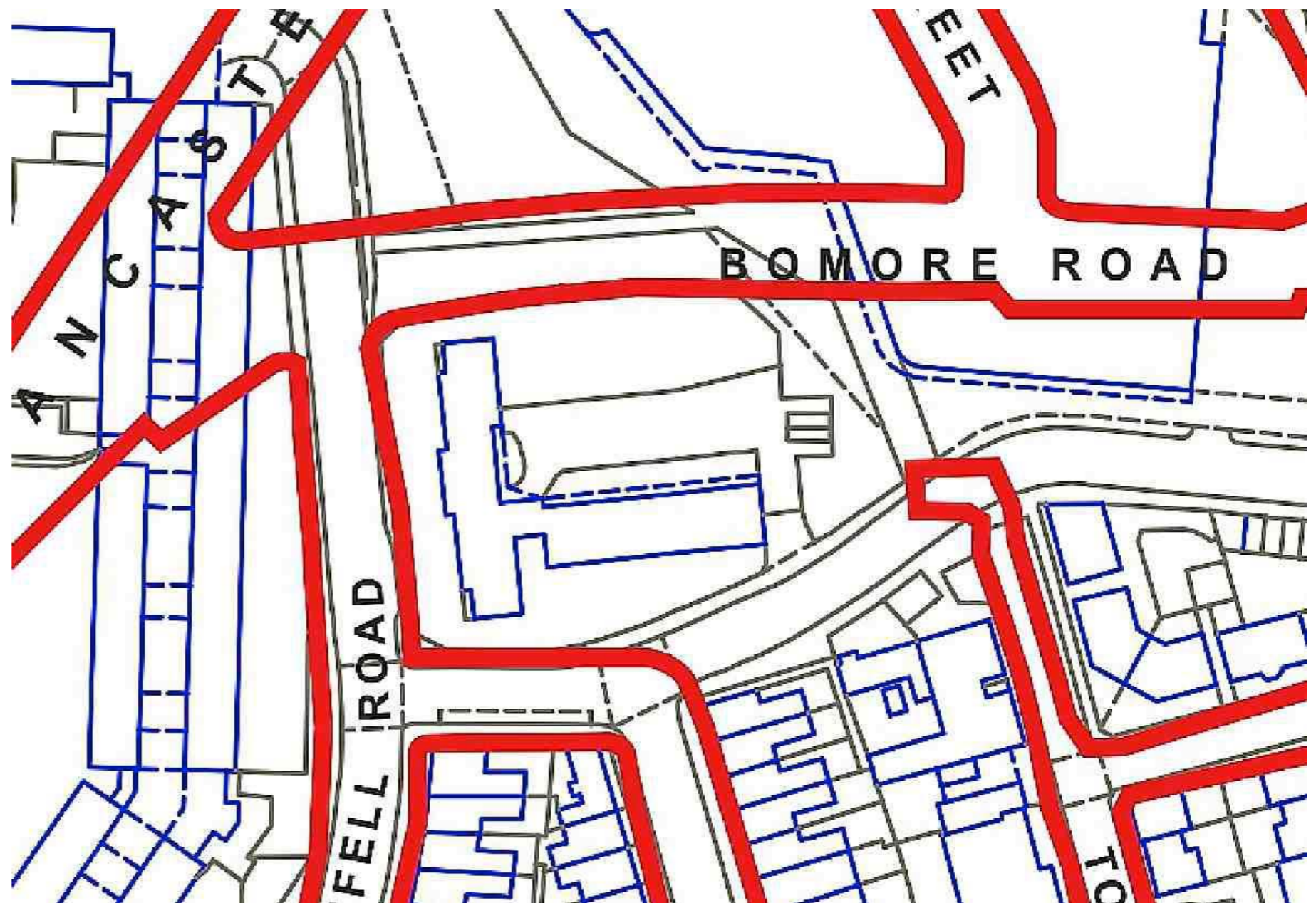


Originally it was entered from the North, from Bomore Road, but now it is approached via a rather unceremonious side-gate because Bomore Road was relocated to the South of Treadgold House.



Lancaster West Estate Refurbishment

We can see the L shape of the building and the 1910 street in red to the north of it. Moving the road was to clear away a huge site for the much larger plan to include the new baths, the Walkways and Grenfell tower.



Learning from History

Notting Hill Housing

Rillington Place is located where the infamous Christie murders took place— just opposite the present garage in St Marks Road. A crowd of onlookers gathered at the end of the street as police search house number 10 on 25th March 1953. After the bombing of the Second World War, the already poor conditions had deteriorated further, and there was rationing in Britain.



Kelso Cochrane

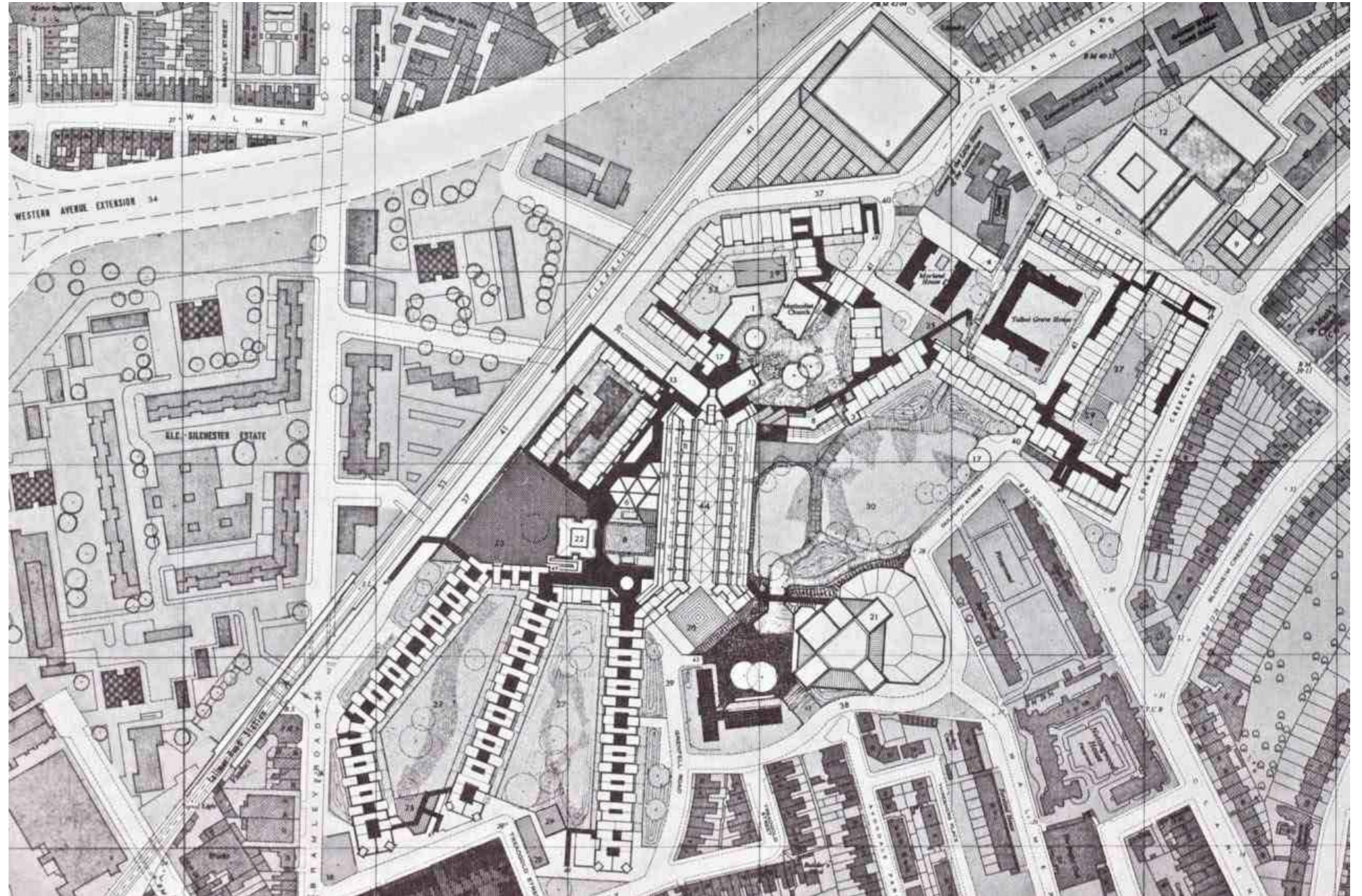
In 1958 Notting Hill became the focus of race riots, both locally and at this Downing Street demonstration in the aftermath of West Indian Kelso Cochrane's murder. Oswald Moseley stood in the general election in Kensington North in 1959 but got only 8% of the votes.



Learning from History

Masterplan 1968

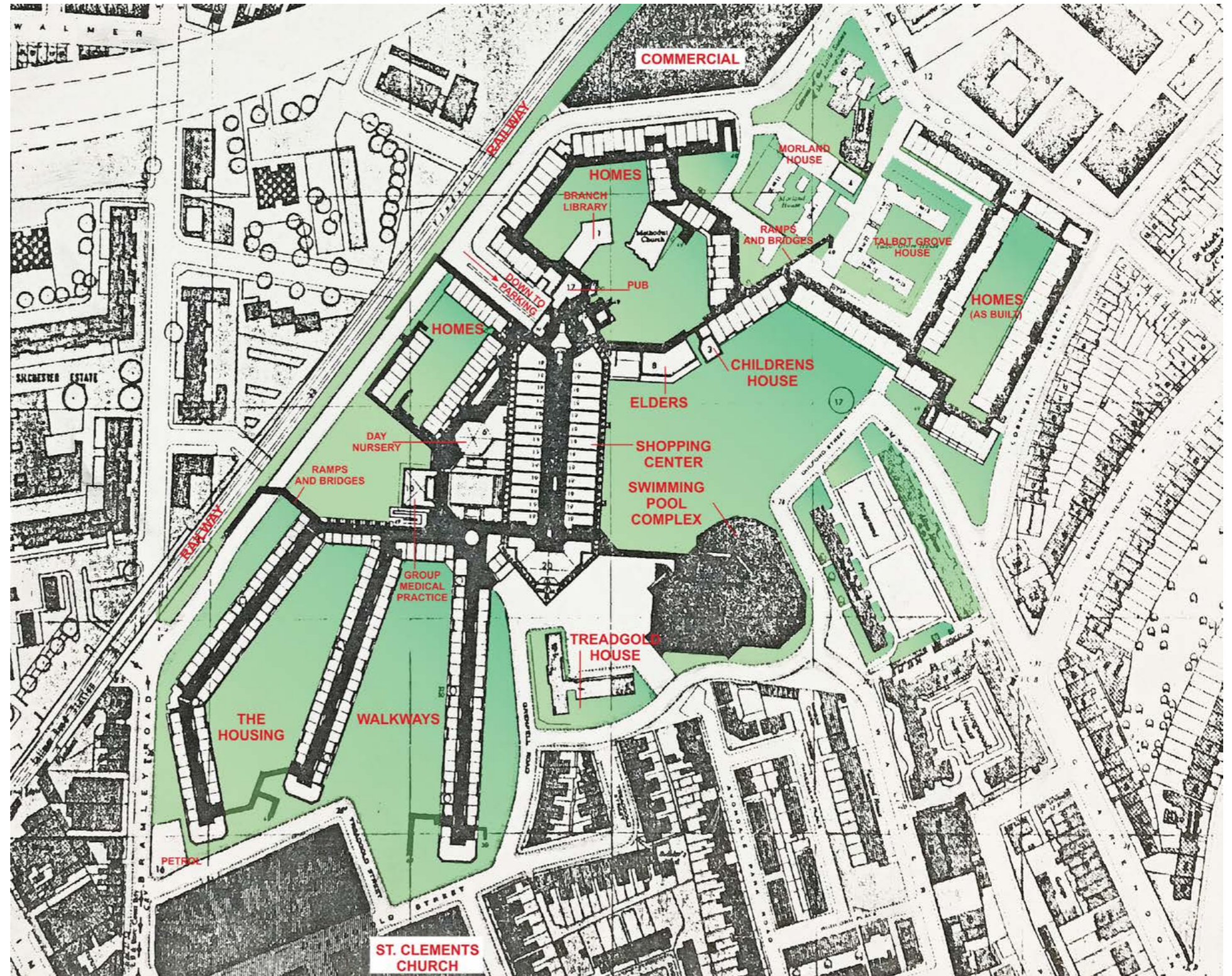
Work began in the late 50s on the design of Grenfell tower, the Walkways, and the Camelford Crescent and Clarendon Road end of the estate. Planning was granted in 1970 and building began in 1972. The process was slow because there was still a lot of clearance to be done. The master plan of 1968 was truly groundbreaking in scope.



Learning from History

Key to Masterplan 1968

The idea was to segregate vehicles to the perimeter of the site and to underground car parks. The master plan proposed housing, a shopping centre, offices and pubs as well as a swimming pool complex, post office, nursery, elderly people's home, a library, a children's home, and a petrol station. All facilities were to be linked by raised integrated walkways centred around a public open space and, in front of the Methodist Church – what the designers called 'church piazza'.



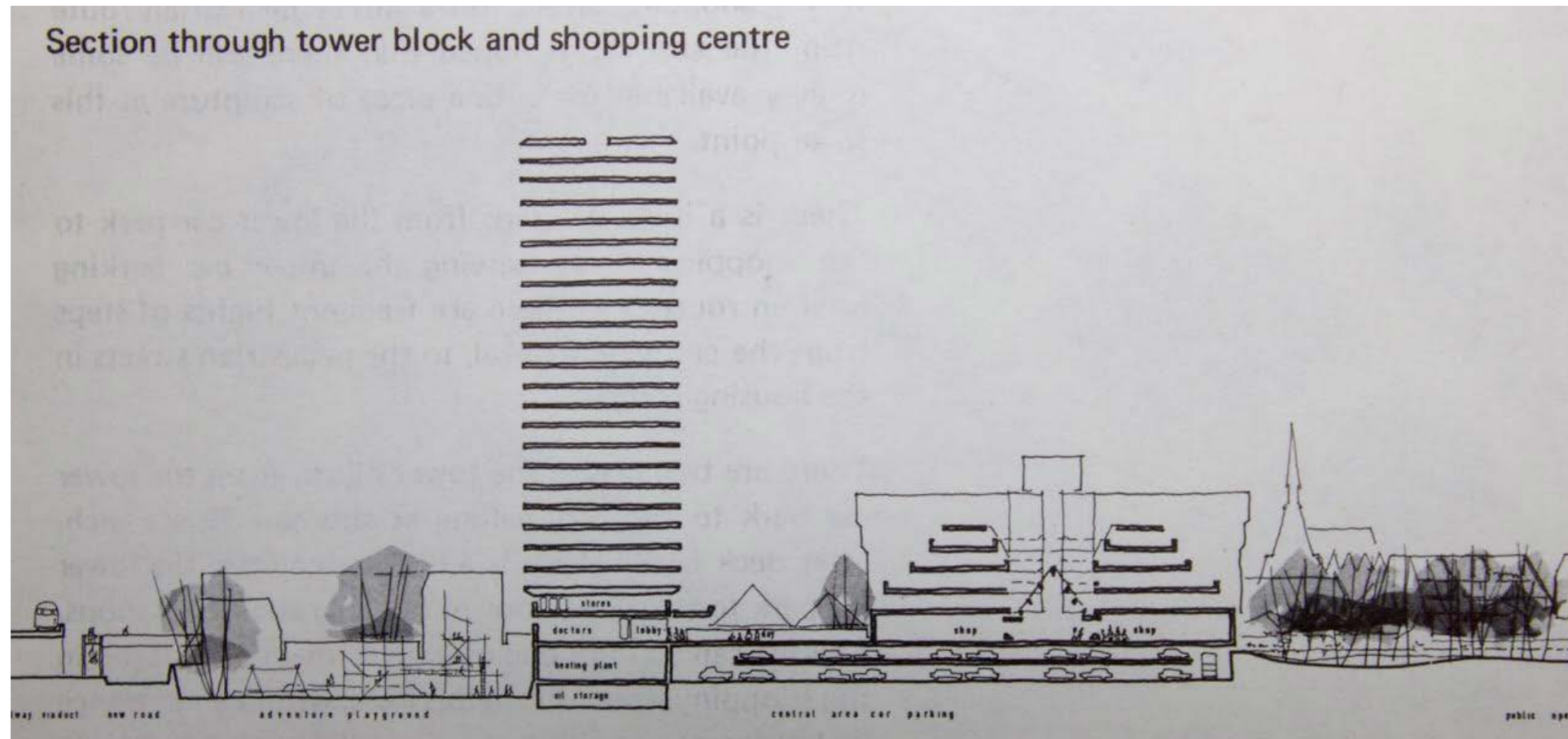
Learning from History

Long Cross Section

We must remember that when this group of buildings was designed, there was a strong post-war movement towards demolition and rebuilding of town centres - a reaction to the perception of a "slum" neighbourhood. More recently we've come to know that this was largely due to overcrowding and extortion from profiteering landlords such as Peter Rachman, and not the building design. This cross section by the master-planners, Clifford Wearden and Associates, shows playgrounds, Grenfell Tower, the shopping centre with car parking below and on the right, the Methodist Church - one of the few old buildings to remain.

Shopping Centre

One architect for the group, Derek Latham, recently told his part in the story. As a young architect, he worked with Clifford Wearden and was disappointed when the Council's Borough Engineer and Surveyor took over the construction after the Tower and Walkways had been completed. Gradually the council dropped the key elements of the scheme. Clifford Weardon himself was not keen to build the tower and wished to keep the development low-rise, as tall buildings were already becoming unpopular in the early 70s.



Learning from History

Habitat 67

Mr. Latham had been to Expo '67 in Montreal with colleagues. They were very excited by this Canadian exhibit – to our eyes now, perhaps an odd pile of boxes, but then, a much more interesting solution than the tower block model. Moshe Safdie, the architect, wanted each flat to have a balcony that wasn't overlooked. Mr. Latham's team tried to take something from this and also offer all flats a view of gardens.

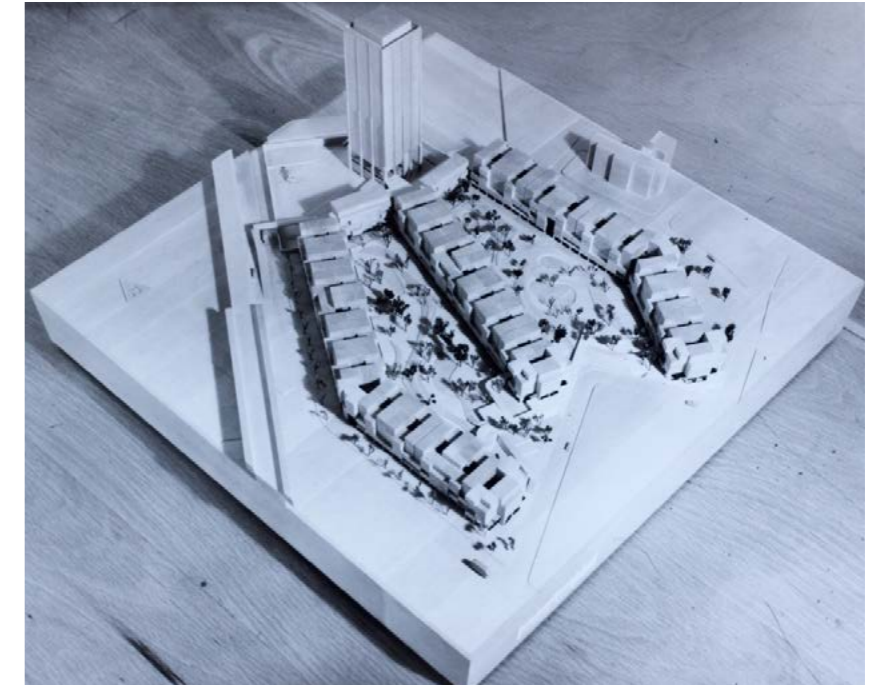


Sketch of Walkway Garden

Unfortunately, little was built but the housing, though it was unusual, sensitive and quite original. In this design for the Walkways they rationalised the box scheme they'd seen in Montreal and laid it out in the form of three terraces, but made it more to the scale of a Georgian Street. There was also reference to the private Notting Hill Squares in the way the spaces between were managed with trees in the centre. This illustration shows the original vision for the garden spaces.

The Masterplan Model

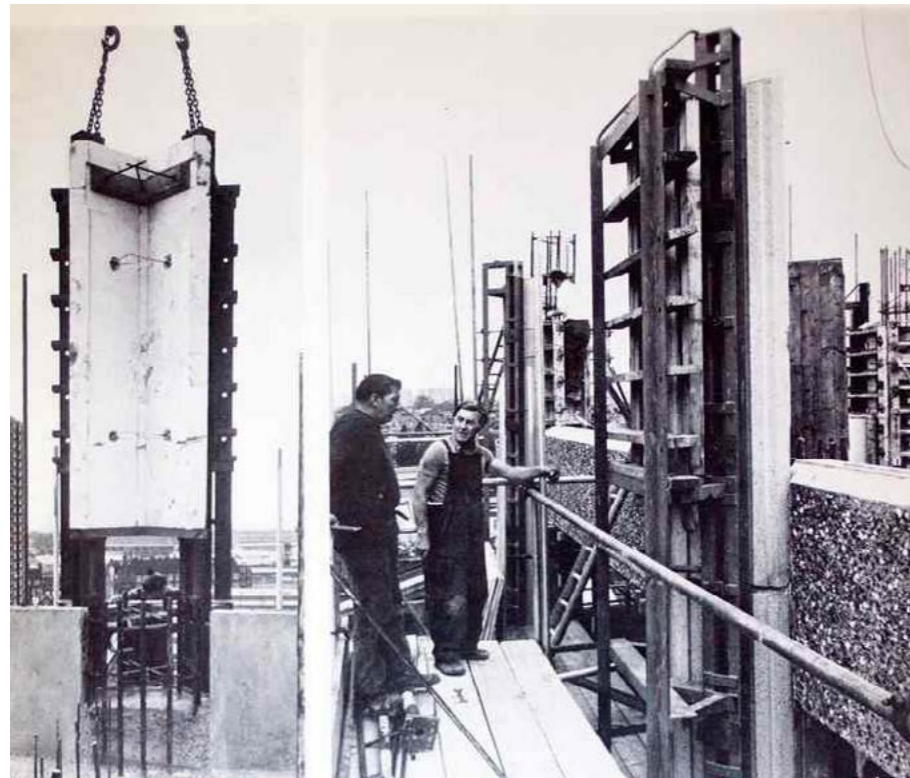
In this 1960s model, we can see how the top transverse flats bridge over the Walkways, leaving gaps between to allow natural light and weather into the raised streets below them - later to become troublesome. The original brief was to make four tower blocks – like those in the Silchester Estate. However, the architects succeeded in getting this more responsive scheme passed. They fought hard against the Council for this, also arguing for 'gradual renewal' of the area – not wholesale demolition.



Learning from History

Grenfell Tower

The tower was the first part of the development - 80 one-bed flats and 40 two-beds. At 24 storeys, it was bulkier and taller than the slightly earlier four towers on the GLC's Silchester Estate next door. The central boiler for the entire development was in the basement. In situ-concrete columns, slabs and pre-cast beams tied the building together. Heating was to be on for 30 weeks a year. There were gas supplies, many electrical points for a cooker and fridge, and a fuse board, usually in a hall cupboard. It was a world away from the housing that many residents had come from at that time.



The Walkways

The architecture is in a style we now call 'Brutalism', though it was anything but brutal. Warm red brick cavity walling is built between expressed concrete floor slabs. Aluminium windows are generous in size and the flats have a well thought out layout – most looking out at leafy streets or gardens.



Masterplan Model

The next part of the site to be constructed was the northern end the group around Talbot Grove House. In this model of the Masterplan of 1968 we can see the towers of Silchester Estate at the top, Grenfell to the left and, in the foreground, Talbot Grove and Morland Houses, around which the next phase was to be built.



Learning from History

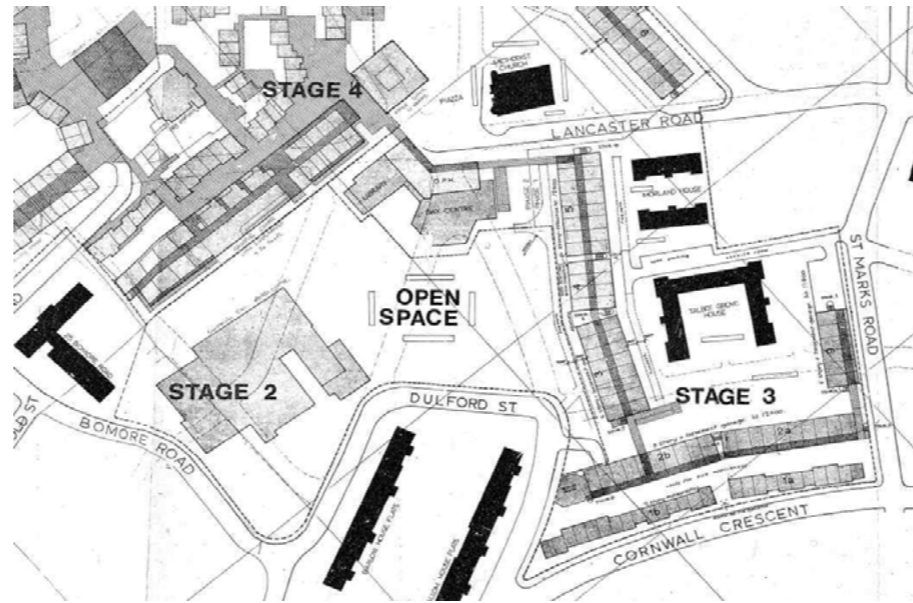
Westway

The Westway was opened in 1970. Splitting the communities in North Kensington.



Stage 3 Plan

The C shaped building marked in the centre of the Stage 3 is Talbot Grove House. The blackened buildings - the Methodist Church, Barlow House flats, and Bomore House, were all that was left in what is reported to have been an enormous muddy building site. By the mid-70s the council's Engineers and Surveyors department had taken over most projects including the groups in Cornwall Crescent and Lancaster Road.



Talbot Walk

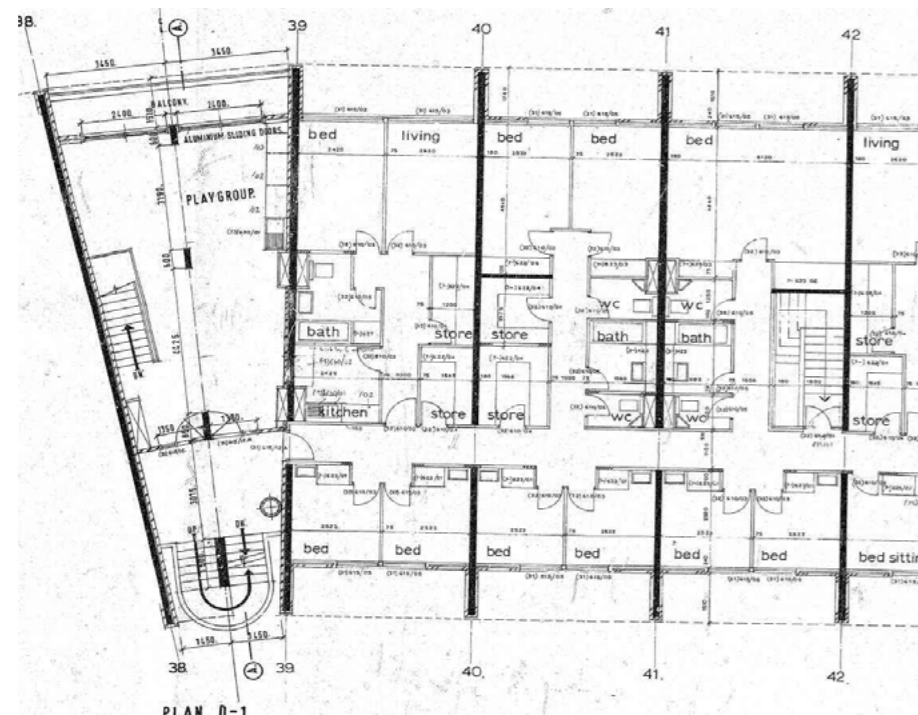
This is one example, typical of this Stage 3 group - Talbot Walk on St Mark's Road. The buildings were a mixture of maisonettes, on two floors, and flats. There were two corridors, external on the first floor level and internal on the third floor level. The basements again were used mostly as underground car parks. The construction was concrete slab with brick facing and cavity walls below the ribbon windows.



Learning from History

Childrens Home

Stage 3 was a large group including Camelford Walk, Camelford Court, The Clarendon Walks and Talbot Walk. This plan is the special children's home built within Upper Clarendon Walk. Small kitchens and bathrooms were each shared between four generous bedrooms. These opened up to a play-space attached to each floor. The planning of this group was similar to that of The Walkways with rather overlong internal streets that led off to flats on each side. Some of these flats have a good East and West aspect.



LWTA Newsletter 1976

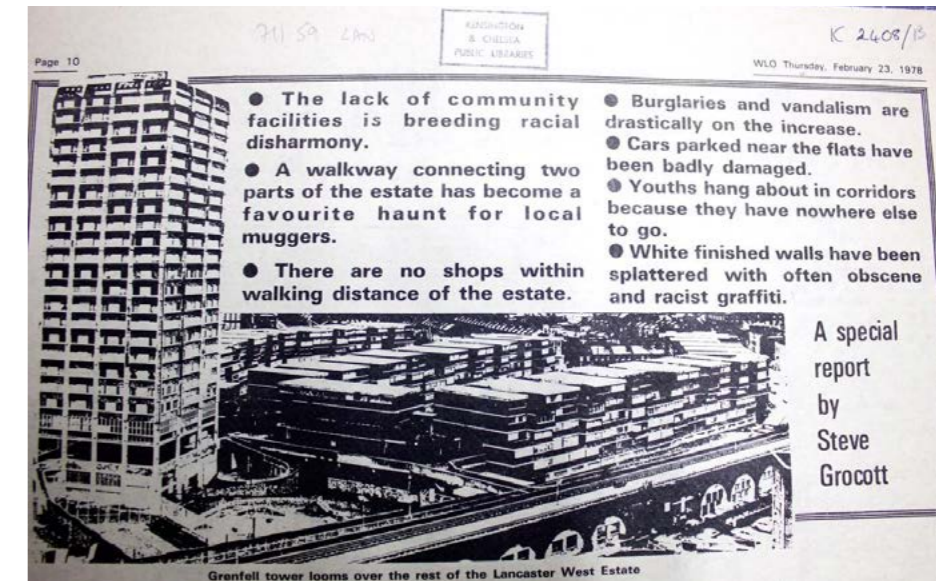
Although the buildings were only partly occupied by the mid 1970s, almost immediately there were complaints - some temporary but others would persist.

This cartoon from the residents' newsletter of 1976 satirises the state of the building site. Postmen and even the residents were already finding it hard to locate their flats, hence the St Bernard's "dog donated by the Council". The baths were still lying empty and unused and there were miles to carry shopping trolleys. "Never give up" is the caption here. The church is depicted as a first aid post. Exasperated shoppers found "only one shop and it's closed". Getting furniture into the flats was a problem and it appears that the lift (only in Grenfell Tower) was already broken.



West London Observer

By 1978, the West London Observer was reporting more serious and endemic problems on the estate, including racial disharmony, mugging, car theft and damage, racist graffiti and general want of something to do. Many of the residents were relatively poor, and apart from the children's' playgrounds and the pool, there was little for the youths to do. Against this, we must remember the Notting Hill Carnival, which had been a regular annual event since 1966, and this went some way towards improving the white population's appreciation of Caribbean culture.



Learning from History

Aerial View 1978

This aerial photograph taken from the tower in 1978 shows the chaotic state of the area. Just to the right of the church we can see the Clarendon Walks complete and occupied, but surrounded by noisy and muddy building sites. To the left of the church, the pitched roof low-rise blocks of Wesley Square, as yet without windows - and to the right, the foundations of Verity Close. In the foreground, the Victorian baths, derelict for decades and not to be demolished for another year. They were nearly saved by an attempt at listing, but the council found them to be too expensive to restore, and the Kensington New Pools close by, were already open.



Phase 4 Verity Close

There followed a primary change in the way houses were being built in the estate. There had been a reaction to modernism as a style, and flat roofs were not installed on the new buildings. The works programmed as Phase Four included St Andrews Square, Wesley Square (by Farrell and Grimshaw) and Verity Close.

Pitched Roofs

All those and Camborne Mews in this picture, have traditional pitched roofs. These were even added to the entrances to Camelford Court, an otherwise rectilinear concrete flat roofed structure. Verity Close and Camborne Mews were the last housing blocks built on the site by 1980.

Improvements

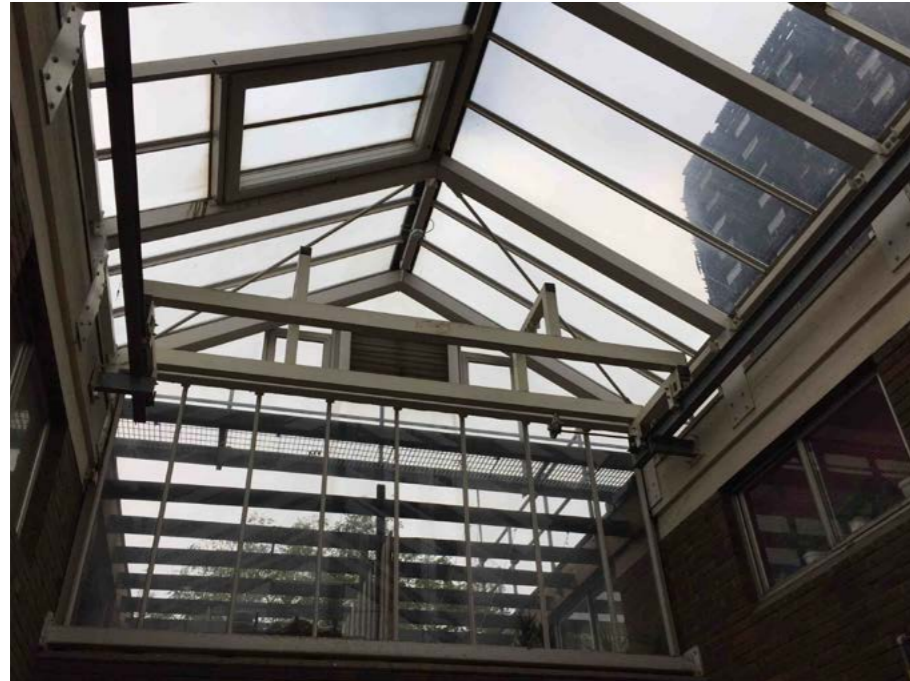
During the 1980s and 90s, much was done to improve the security of the buildings throughout the estate, in response to complaints. Enclosed porches were added with entry-phones.



Learning from History

Roofing over Walkways

The Walkways were roofed over and partitions installed to break up the long corridors. Cockroach infestations in 1982 were tackled and a lawsuit was issued when asbestos was discovered in the Tower.



Converted Basements

Basement car parks below Barandon Walk were converted into business studios to let, and similarly for self-storage units below the Camelford group because the garaging was not secure.

New Pool

In January 2015 the new Leisure Centre by LA Architects was opened, and shortly following that, the Aldridge Academy by Studio E Architects, the latest building in the group.



Learning from History

Academy

On 14th June 2017 there was a fatal fire at Grenfell Tower. The Academy was, until March 2018, still temporarily closed and the Tower enveloped in hoardings.



Image from: <https://www.e-architect.co.uk/london/grenfell-tower-in-west-london/attachment/grenfell-west-london-building-design-x140617-1#main>

Model

So much of what was originally intended did not come to pass. There is now an opportunity to create a new vision for the estate, learning lessons from what has worked and not worked in the past, featuring shops, playgrounds, green spaces and other amenities, along with flats where the services are brought up to modern standards and are well maintained. The challenge is to create a shared vision for a neighbourhood which residents can be proud of, as part of a thriving and valued community.

Further information:

Website: www.lancwestrefurb.com

This document is available to read in other languages. To request a translated copy of this book or for more information please contact NewmanFrancis on:

Freephone: 0800 644 6040 (free from landlines)

Office: 020 8536 1436

Email: lancasterwest@newmanfrancis.org

A hard copy of this book can be found at Baseline Studios and with your block representative. Please use the contact information above to find out who your block representatives are.

To contact Kensington and Chelsea Council on any issues related to the Estate, please:

Email: LancasterWestOffice@rbkc.gov.uk

Or visit them at: Unit 2, Baseline Studios, Whitchurch Road.

Version number: 1

Created on: 09/04/2018

English

Information from this document can be made available in alternative formats and in different languages. If you require further assistance please use the contact details below.

French

Les informations présentées dans ce document peuvent vous être fournies dans d'autres formats et d'autres langues. Si vous avez besoin d'une aide complémentaire, veuillez utiliser les coordonnées ci-dessous.

Portuguese

A informação presente neste documento pode ser disponibilizada em formatos alternativos e em línguas diferentes. Se desejar mais assistência, use por favor os contactos fornecidos abaixo.

Somali

Macluumaadka dokumentigan waxaa lagu heli karaa qaabab kale iyo luuqado kala duwan. Haddii aad u baahan tahay caawinaad intaas dhaafsiisan fadlan isticmaal xiriirka faahfaahinta hoose.

Spanish

La información en este documento puede facilitarse en formatos alternativos y en diferentes idiomas. Si necesita más ayuda por favor utilice la siguiente información de contacto.

Arabic

يمكن توفير المعلومات التي وردت في هذا المستند بصيغ بديلة ولغات أخرى. إذا كنت في حاجة إلى مزيد من المساعدة، الرجاء استخدام بيانات الاتصال الواردة أدناه.

Farsi

اطلاعات حاوی در این مدارک به صورتهای دیگر و به زبانهای مختلف در دسترس می باشد. در صورت نیاز به کمک بیشتر لطفاً از جزئیات تماس ذکر شده در ذیل استفاده کنید.