

that do not distinguish between public and private housing—and shared entrances are also a stated prerequisite now in terms of design. However, there is often a fine balance to strike between the individual requirements of a community compared to those of a planning authority: ‘parents want safe spaces but planners often want more open spaces—although you have to comply with policy you have to look at what local people want’, says Andy Fancy of Countryside.

The durability, texture and details of materials are all very significant in adding and retaining character, and in helping to build a sense of ownership and value and a coherent identity; with the addition of new homes on estates in particular, there are often concerns that an influx of new residents will adversely affect a sense of community that already exists. Robustness is essential for the purposes of maintenance. Much new public housing has been built in what has become known as the ‘new London vernacular’: well-proportioned brick or brick-clad homes taking inspiration from historic typologies. (The architecture critic Rowan Moore has called this ‘an updated Georgian that is at best handsome and dignified, at worst inoffensive’,⁶³ while architect Sir Peter Cook has criticised what he has called the ‘biscuit boys’—architects who ‘enjoy what I call the grim, biscuit-coloured world’.⁶⁴) But this may not work in all parts of London, especially outer areas where the ‘vernacular’ may be quite different in character. At the launch of NLA’s ‘London Boroughs Report in 2018’, the Head of Planning at Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, Lisa Fairmaner, said Kingston was ‘right at the start of its journey’ in housing delivery, with ‘fear’ about this style of architecture, and a different perception among some outer London communities about what they see as appropriate.⁶⁵

NLA’s 2018 research ‘Factory-made Housing: a solution for London?’ investigated how modern methods of construction are starting to find favour again with London boroughs charged with demanding programmes of housing delivery. Today, homes constructed offsite can be built up to 30 per cent more quickly than traditional methods and with a potential 25 per cent reduction in costs. The use of modern precision-manufactured components, materials and systems can bring other advantages, including superior quality control, better energy performance, reduced numbers of site deliveries, and lower levels of noise, pollution and disruption for residents. Lewisham Council in particular is highlighting the application of high-quality and well-designed modular structures not just for temporary accommodation in such projects as PLACE/ Ladywell but also permanent schemes. However, the embedded perceptions about the legacy of system-built failures remains strong and others remain more cautious about a greater take-up of factory-made construction for public housing.

Maintenance and management

Overall management of public housing has historically been the responsibility of local authorities, but huge pressure on budgets and staff cuts mean that—even with high-quality design—repairing and maintaining homes in good condition over the long term is yet another key challenge for boroughs. The experience of housing associations, which have been responsible for managing large estates and other homes over decades (if not longer), provides valuable precedents. For new build, management and maintenance strategies can be built at an early stage through the use of durable materials, as mentioned above, and through

bringing in from the start the teams charged with maintenance regimes to understand requirements, feasibility and specifications: ‘we have been working with our maintenance teams early on especially for mechanical and electrical services such as lifts and heating systems to ensure they are fit for purpose’, says Fiona Fletcher-Smith, Group Director for Development and Sales, L&Q. Investigating the approaches used in other building types, such as offices, can also be useful, she points out: the lobbies, lifts and other communal areas in the average city commercial building experience heavy wear and tear with thousands of people coming and going each day. As the application of Building Information Management (BIM) becomes more widespread, automated monitoring of energy performance and other systems may help to deliver efficiencies in maintenance and management. Agar Grove, designed by Hawkins\Brown with Mae for London Borough of Camden’s Community Investment Programme, for example, will provide 493 affordable homes with Passivhaus certification, designed to optimise energy efficiency and significantly reduce bills for residents. However, a hands-on, site-based and permanent team is always essential, not least from the point of view of residents feeling safe, secure and valued: ‘having a visible presence on our developments is key’, says Sandra Fawcett, Executive Director of Operations, Swan Housing, which employs its own caretaking and cleaning staff on site.

Effective stewardship of public housing on a large scale is especially complicated by the fact that, with the effect of Right to Buy over nearly 40 years, almost all estates are a mix of tenures, as are new housing developments because of the cross-subsidy funding model. Local authorities and housing associations now have to think about ‘service design’ strategies—for cleaning communal areas, for example—early on in the development process; and appropriate and affordable levels of service charge are an especially problematic issue to resolve. Services have to reflect the often different expectations of new and existing residents, while also being as integrated as possible. Serving what may become a hugely diverse resident base is often a ‘question that is not given enough thought’, says Paul Quinn, Director of Merton Regeneration, Clarion Housing Group, responsible for the delivery of 3,000 new homes in Merton. Instead, as many suggest, community development trusts—along the lines of that pioneered by Coin Street Community Builders on the South bank—can provide a useful model to follow. Community development trusts are non-profit, independent, and community-owned; they are responsible for managing not only housing but commercial, retail and community facilities, the surplus income from which can be recycled into long-term sustainable management of an estate. This can fund elements such as skills, training and employment programmes for local people. A similar example is found in Croydon, where Brick by Brick builds homes for Croydon Affordable Homes, a charitable partnership established by the council to which it leases publicly owned land on a 40-year term. The council is able to set rents, with the goal of at least 340 local homes costing a maximum 65 per cent of the usual private rent to borough residents by 2020. As the homes are owned by a charity, they are not subject to Right to Buy, and residents gain assured shorthold tenancies lasting between one and three years.⁶⁶ The charity is also able to commission the council to manage and maintain the homes. Such innovative approaches represent the increased flexibility and adaptability that third-sector and charitable organisations can offer in the management of new housing, while also ensuring long-term affordability and high-quality living space for residents.

Right:
Agar Grove, Hawkins\Brown,
2026



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Agar Grove

Address: Wrotham Road, NW1—LB Camden
Completion: July 2026

The largest of Camden's community investment projects, this masterplan provides 493 homes for new and existing tenants. Phase one, completed in May 2018, delivers 38 social rented homes built to Passivhaus standard, promoting a 'fabrio-first' approach to energy performance and human comfort. As well as homes, a new community centre, offices for the tenant management organisation and two retail units complete the project. Once the whole masterplan is complete, the scheme will be the largest Passivhaus development in the UK.

Client: LB Camden | **Architect:** Hawkins\Brown | **Masterplan Architect:** Hawkins\Brown with Mae | **Landscape Architect:** Grant Associates
Planning Consultant: CMA Planning | **Structural Engineer:** Peter Brett Associates
M&E, Sustainability Engineer: Max Fordham | **Passivhaus Assessor:** WARM
Passivhaus Consultant: Max Fordham | **Project Manager, Cost Consultant:** Arcadis
Developer: LB Camden | **Development Advisor:** Savills, Urban Splash
Contractor: Hill Partnership



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Alperton House

Address: Bridgewater Road, Wembley, HA10—LB Brent
Completion: June 2021

Delivering a thriving, mixed-use development in the Alperton Growth Area, this scheme provides 474 new dwellings, with a substantial percentage of affordable housing. Together with homes, 1,400 sqm of affordable workspace, office and retail space form part of a mixed-use, active ground floor plane. The proposal also re-provides the existing public housing on site which, combined with a new public realm strategy that aims to maximise the site's canal-side location, create an improved and inclusive space for the local community.

Client: (JV) Redrow & Peabody | **Architect:** Stephen Davy Peter Smith Architects
Structural Engineer: Conisbee | **Landscape Architect:** Turkington Martin
Planning Consultant: Barton Willmore



Alton Road

Address: Alton Road, Roehampton, SW15—LB Wandsworth
Completion: July 2021

Overlooking Richmond Park, in the Alton East conservation area, this scheme redevelops a 1960s building, originally designed for blind and visually impaired residents. As the original building is no longer suited to residents' needs, the new scheme proposes 41 extra care flats for elderly people and 54 intermediate tenure flats comprising a mix of shared ownership and London Living Rent. Three residential pavilions are set around a courtyard to encourage interaction between elderly residents and those of working age, creating a self-sustaining intergenerational community.

Commissioning Client: Optivo | **Architect & Lead Designer:** jmarchitects
Project Manager, Quantity Surveyor: Gardner Partnership
Structural & Civil Engineer: IESIS
Landscape Architect (to Planning): MacFarlane + Associates
Planning Consultant: Quod | **Transport Consultant:** Caneparo Associates
Main Contractor: to be confirmed



Bacton Estate Phase 1

Address: Cherry Court, Wellesley Road, NW5—LB Camden
Completion: June 2017

The transformation of the Bacton Estate in Gospel Oak is a community-led project which LB Camden sees as an exemplary model for new estates in the borough. The first phase delivers 67 homes (69 per cent social rent and 31 per cent market sale) out of a 314-home masterplan with well-defined public routes and a landscaped courtyard garden. The scheme has been informed by extensive engagement with an active resident group who were involved from the outset of the project through to construction.

Architect: Karakusevic Carson Architects | **Landscape Architect, Public Realm:** Camlins
M&E, Sustainability Engineer, Structural Engineer: Rolton Group
Planning Consultant: Quod
Project Manager: Developing Projects (on behalf of LB Camden)
Cost Consultant: Arcadis | **Contractor:** Rydon



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Battersea Exchange

Address: Battersea Park Road, SW8—LB Wandsworth
Completion: January 2020

A residential led mixed-use redevelopment on a site of 1.8 hectares, the scheme consists of 290 new residential units (20 per cent affordable), a new two form entry primary school and 3,475 sqm of commercial space. Organised around a pedestrian-friendly public realm network—including a new street linking two railway stations, a new public square and the refurbishment of viaduct arches—the project is integrated into its wider context at a range of different scales.

Client: Taylor Wimpey Central London | **Lead Architect:** Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios
Structural Engineer: Pell Frischmann
M&E, Sustainability Engineer: Ingleton Wood/ SVM Consulting Engineers
Planning Consultant: DP9 | **Project Manager, Cost Consultant:** Rider Levett Bucknall
Contractor: Midgard, Bennett Construction | **Landscape Consultants:** Planit IE



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Becontree Avenue

Address: Becontree Avenue and School Way, Dagenham, RM8
 LB Barking & Dagenham
Completion: July 2019

BeFirst, Barking and Dagenham Council's regeneration company, plans to deliver 50,000 new homes in the next 20 years. As a pilot for future development in terms of both delivery and construction, this project provides 21 affordable homes in the inter-war Becontree Estate. While conceived to deliver a contemporary building, the design takes its cue from the existing garden city layout and character of the cottage estate. The development is conceived as a carpet of greenery on which two large suburban villas are placed.

Acoustic Consultant: KR Associates | **Architect:** Archio
Building Control: Stoma Building Control | **Client:** LB Barking & Dagenham
Civil Engineer: Wilde Carter Clack | **CLT Consultant:** Eurban | **Cost Manager:** Baily Garner
Ecological: PJC Consultancy | **Landscape Architect:** Spacehub
Planning Consultant: BeFirst | **Services Engineer:** Butler & Young Associates
Structural Engineer: Wilde Carter Clack
Sustainability Consultant: Low Energy Consultancy | **Transport Planner:** Steer Group



Regent's Park Estate

Address: Regent's Park Estate, NW1—LB Camden

The Regent's Park Estate scheme is a series of infill projects over eight plots, identified by LB Camden to rehouse locals being displaced by the path of High Speed 2. The primary aims of the project are to retain residents' sense of community and to provide high quality new homes in places that are sensitive to the surroundings. Given the current housing situation in London, it was essential to utilise space in the most considered and efficient way possible.

New homes, public gardens and the new community hall were designed by Mae, who were appointed by LB Camden after several resident consultation events. During consultations, architects reassured residents and nearby communities that careful consideration had been given to the designs and that the buildings would respond sensitively to surrounding contexts. Through continued dialogue it was also possible to identify areas in which residents felt their homes could be improved upon in order to create a lasting place that was comfortable to live in and which residents could call home.

Initial analysis of the immediate context revealed that there were two interesting building types in the surrounding area. To the north and east, LB Camden housing blocks display chequerboard elevations, concrete banding and terracotta coloured render. Peabody Estate buildings to the west of the site have stepped back upper floors punctuated with generous windows. Proposals for plots were developed in reference to the inherent urban grain of the original 1950s neighbourhood, with addition of new public squares and spaces framed by the new buildings.

The landscape improvements to the area create a generous public realm with wider pavements. Access improvements have been made from the existing residential block to create a tiered suite of communal gardens. Within the gardens, raised planters with comfortable seating edges create a shared public space for the neighbourhood.

With resident consultation and client engagement throughout the design process, the architects were able to adjust to the specific needs of the residents whilst refining the scheme to deliver cost effective, robust and sustainable schemes within a tight budget.

Viewpoint:

Working closely with residents from the outset was fundamental to this project. The feedback we gained from consultation sessions with residents gave us vital insight, allowing us to create a place that was an improvement to the buildings they were moving from, and a lasting place for future generations. This helped us meet a tight delivery timetable and achieve a high level of design quality and tenant satisfaction.

Alex Ely, Principal, Mae

Project team:

Client: LB Camden
Architect: Mæ and Matthew Lloyd Architects
Planning Consultant: Tibbalds
Landscape Architect: East
Structural Engineer: Campbell Reith
M&E Engineer: TGA
Project Manager: Arcadis
Client Advisor: Ikon



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