



Historic England

# Domestic 4: Modern Houses and Housing

Listing Selection Guide



# Summary

Historic England's twenty listing selection guides help to define which historic buildings are likely to meet the relevant tests for national designation and be included on the National Heritage List for England. Listing has been in place since 1947 and operates under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. If a building is felt to meet the necessary standards, it is added to the List. This decision is taken by the Government's Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). These selection guides were originally produced by English Heritage in 2011: slightly revised versions are now being published by its successor body, Historic England.

The DCMS' *Principles of Selection for Listing Buildings* set out the over-arching criteria of special architectural or historic interest required for listing and the guides provide more detail of relevant considerations for determining such interest for particular building types. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/principles-of-selection-for-listing-buildings>.

Each guide falls into two halves. The first defines the types of structures included in it, before going on to give a brisk overview of their characteristics and how these developed through time, with notice of the main architects and representative examples of buildings. The second half of the guide sets out the particular tests in terms of its architectural or historic interest a building has to meet if it is to be listed. A select bibliography gives suggestions for further reading.

This guide, one of four on different types of Domestic Buildings, covers modern houses and housing. The other three Domestic Buildings selection guides cover Vernacular houses, Suburban and country houses, and Town houses.

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## Front cover

82-125 Knightsfield, Welwyn Garden City  
(Hertfordshire). Public housing of 1955-6

by Louis de Soissons, Peacock, Hodges and Robertson.  
Listed Grade II.

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# Introduction

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

Domestic architecture of the twentieth century can claim particular significance. The Arts and Crafts Movement and the Garden City Movement are two international trends of modern times that originated in England, and the private house – the unit of the English suburb – lay at their heart. In the inter-war years, interesting private houses were built in a variety of traditional as well as modern styles, and to an extent this continued in the post-war years. Public housing in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, especially in London, was widely admired worldwide on aesthetic grounds as well as practical ones of sanitation and cost. The modernist house is also represented in England by works of considerable significance. Post-war housing, too, had its international admirers for its imaginative use

of materials, planning and landscaping. This selection guide concentrates on the twentieth century, but looks back to the later nineteenth century in some regards. There is some overlap with the other three **Domestic Buildings** selection guides [Vernacular Houses](#), [Town Houses](#), [Suburban Country Houses](#), in particular those on Suburban and Country Houses and Town Houses.

# 1 Historical Summary

This section deals first with the broad categories of architectural styles associated with modern domestic architecture, and then looks specifically at mass housing (both public and private).

## 1.1 Architectural styles

The Arts and Crafts Movement brought together all the arts and crafts, especially those connected with the home and garden. Its influence was widely felt internationally and this earns it a special significance. Architects of the Arts and Crafts Movement saw it as an art form in which they co-ordinated craftsmen and artists and attention was focused on high quality detailing, both inside and out, as much as plan. Decoration was based on natural elements or old English traditions as exemplified by William Morris's seminal Grade-I listed Red House, Bexleyheath (Fig 1), in the London Borough of Bexley (1859, designed for him by Phillip Webb and decorated by Webb, Morris and their friends). Red or brown bricks and tiles and sash windows were preferred along with clearly expressed construction, such as relieving arches and honest timber joinery. The architecture owed much to the traditional buildings of south-east England of around 1700, the same elements that had inspired the 'Queen Anne' style of Norman Shaw and W Eden Nesfield, precursors of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Leading architects (some of whom produced relatively small numbers of buildings) include the founders of the movement – W R Lethaby, E S Prior, Mervyn Macartney, Gerald Horsley and Ernest Newton – together with A H Mackmurdo and C F A Voysey: most were equally versatile as designers of furniture, textiles and much else besides. M H Baillie Scott



**Figure 1**

Despite its early date, Red House, Bexleyheath, Kent, designed by Phillip Webb for William and Jane Morris in 1859, is one of the well-springs of modern architecture. Considering both practical and artistic aspects, and looking outside of the architectural conventions of the day, it encouraged architects to oppose the standard pattern-book housing supplied by builders at the time. Listed Grade I.





**Figure 2**  
Idiosyncratic architects such as Blunden Shadbolt, Sydney Castle, and Ernest Trobridge developed a romantic individualism in the inter-war period, creating an idealised image of home. Here a traditional-looking house on Slough Lane, Kingsbury (London Borough of Brent), built in 1921 to designs by Trobridge, employed an innovative wooden construction system in an attempt to solve urgent post-war housing problems. Not all modern housing looks modern. Listed Grade II.



**Figure 3**  
The semi-detached house, such as this example of 1913 in Wavertree Garden Suburb, Liverpool, designed by G L Sutcliffe, has come to characterise inter- and post-war suburbia and still provides the homes for many millions of people. Only very rarely are they of sufficient interest (as here) to merit listing. Listed Grade II.

continued the approach well into the inter-war period, though inflected by neo-Georgian influences, by which time some of the features of Arts and Crafts architecture had entered the vocabulary of the mainstream house-builder.

Bodies which promoted the movement included the London-based Art Workers' Guild, founded in 1884, and, modelled on it, the Northern Art Workers' Guild, established in 1896. In addition to the great names there were many local architects who designed exceptional buildings that made a distinctive contribution to Edwardian towns and suburbs. More of these architects continued in the Arts and Crafts tradition through the 1920s. A return to traditional forms and materials characterised one strand of suburban development, which was taking place on a massive scale during this period as cars grew in number. Architect-builders such as Ernest Trobridge created cottage designs in outer London in the 1920s using much unseasoned timber, tiling and leaded lights to create reassuringly organic developments (Fig 2); more commonly, half-timbering ('Stockbroker Tudor', as Osbert

Lancaster quipped) became a standard approach (Fig 3). Fred Harrild's inter-war houses in Devon include particularly good examples of the genre. On a larger and wider scale, the garden suburb and Garden City movements – developments in town planning of the first order – also firmly embraced the Arts and Crafts.

**The Garden City Movement** operated on a much broader scale than the Arts and Crafts Movement, which it embraced, and produced developments in town planning of the first order. Its founder, Ebenezer Howard, tirelessly promoted the garden city as an alternative to unrestrained urban growth but the movement soon expanded to encompass garden suburbs, mostly famously at Hampstead, London Borough of Brent (planned by Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin but with other architects, including Lutyens, from 1906 onwards), and garden villages. Its architecture was characterised by a mixture of low-density, cottage-style housing, more irregular layouts often incorporating cul-de-sacs and closes, green spaces and gardens for even modest housing. Interest here is not only provided by the set-

pieces, such as Central Square, Hampstead Garden Suburb or Parkway, Welwyn Garden City, but the wealth of artisans' houses in twos, fours and eights, such as those by Parker and Unwin (for instance, at New Earswick, York; Fig 4) or the model village built by George Cadbury for his workers at Bournville in Birmingham (1894 into the 1920s, much by W A Harvey). Such developments had a deep influence on low-rise council housing across Britain after 1920, built in considerable quantities following the Housing Act of 1919. But the movement also had an impact on private development, where the term 'garden suburb' was widely adopted with varying degrees of accuracy. The early twentieth century cottage-style housing of the Garden City Movement can possess an understated quality that is easily taken for granted, such as its success and widespread emulation.

**Neo-Georgian and historicist architecture** While Edwardian Baroque dominated public building, a

strong neo-Georgian revival emerged in domestic architecture that owed something to the purity and clean proportions so admired by Lutyens and others in the work of the Arts and Crafts Movement, but also to the classicism of Sir Christopher Wren and the Georgian tradition of the eighteenth century and Regency. Ever-closer study was made of architecture from these periods, and books and periodicals made these details readily available for emulation. A good range of examples can be found in Hampstead Garden Suburb, where the larger individual houses were neo-Georgian (many by J C S Soutar and George Lister Sutcliffe).

By the 1920s and 1930s, Art Deco and a whole range of historicist styles became popular including 'Spanish Mission' and 'Cape Dutch', with their curly gables and neat brickwork emulating colonial architecture from the Americas and South Africa. Versatility was a hallmark of the leading architects: Oliver Hill worked in any style a client wished, including neoclassical, old English or



**Figure 4**  
Built for the Rowntree's Cocoa Company in York from 1902, the New Earswick estate combined the Arts and Crafts approach to architecture with the emerging discipline of town planning to create good living

conditions for the working class. This picture shows a row of four houses on Station Road designed by Parker and Unwin to look more like a large farmhouse than a small terrace. Listed Grade II.





**Figure 5**

One of the most stunning and stylish houses of the Modern Movement, St. Ann's Court, Chertsey (Surrey), by Raymond McGrath of 1936-7, was built in a remodelled eighteenth-century landscaped garden

and takes great advantage of the site. Of its unusual plan, the architect said it was like 'a big cheese, with a slice cut out for the sunlight to enter the whole house.' Listed Grade II\*.

Modernism. This latter style was in part a reaction against this stylistic eclecticism, but eclecticism was also in part an alternative to modernity – a search for synthesis that incorporated references to traditional elements whilst enabling homes to be as functional and comfortable as possible. Alongside progressive modernism was a parallel strain of domestic architecture more closely rooted in the past, led by Raymond Erith, Claud Phillimore and Quinlan Terry. Each story has claims to note.

**The Modern Movement** Although a small number of modernist buildings preceded it – Edgar Wood was designing houses with most of the seminal Modern Movement traits before the First World War, such as Upmeads of 1908, on Newport Road, Stafford (Listed Grade II\*) – many consider the Modern Movement's true arrival in England came in 1929 with Amyas Connell's house High and Over at Amersham (Buckinghamshire; listed Grade II\*), with its concrete walls, flat roofs and unmoulded window openings. Modernism in

the 1930s was chosen wherever an avant-garde and scientific image seemed appropriate – for laboratories, factories and zoo buildings – and for private houses for adventurous clients (Fig 5). The vanguard of modernist architects was made up largely of émigrés from both central Europe (Erich Mendelsohn, Walter Gropius and Berthold Lubetkin) and the Dominions (Connell, and his subsequent partner Basil Ward, from New Zealand; Raymond McGrath from Australia; Wells Coates from Canada). The influence of Swiss-born architect Le Corbusier, whose key 1923 text *Towards a New Architecture* was first published in translation in 1927, was considerable.

Much of the best work (both houses and flats) was small and compact and exemplified a modern way of living which discouraged clutter and promoted new labour-saving technologies, thereby encouraging style and sociability among young urbanites: this approach was reflected in planning, fixtures and the overall approach to design in the Machine Age. Le Corbusier's



best-known dictum 'The house is a machine for living in' captured this eloquently. His five key elements - the raising of the building on pilotis, a roof garden, free plan, strip windows and a free facade - influenced young architects working in Britain but, by the middle of the 1930s, they were broadening the language of modernism and producing work of international importance. Some responded to the damp British climate by eschewing concrete finishes in favour of stone or brick, thus ushering in an altogether more subtle dialogue between modernity, materials, tradition and place. The trend away from purist modernism was hastened by the realisation that modern construction and finishes were less resilient against weather and decay than more traditional materials. By the late 1930s, modern houses could even have pitched roofs, as demonstrated at Overshot, Hinksey Hill, outside Oxford (Valentine and Harding, 1937; listed Grade II), which proved widely popular in the decade after the Second World War. The planning of this house, however, with its separate rooms set off a corridor, rather than with spaces flowing into each other, was conservative and the 1930s saw the gradual move towards a single large living room – derived from the example of Frank Lloyd Wright that gradually became the norm after the Second World War. Patrick Gwynne's *The Homewood*, Esher, Surrey (listed Grade II\*), of 1937-8, is a good example of this, where the architect deliberately rejected the idea of having separate rooms for separate functions – only the dining area is differentiated – and where the modernist objectives of light and a strong relationship with the outdoors were triumphantly attained.

**Post-war modern houses** After the Second World War, private house building was limited (until the mid 1950s) by complex controls on building materials and taxes on site development. Because of this, many houses were designed so that they could be built in phases, being added to, when conditions improved. Steel and softwood were in short supply: hardwood less so, resulting in even very small houses having parquet floors and handsome fitted units. The three chief influences on post-war house planning were the availability of large sheets of plate glass, central heating and

the absence of live-in servants which began to encourage greater consideration of the integrated design of bathrooms, kitchens and other functional elements of domestic living.

Contrary to some popular impressions, which characterise the epoch's building supplies as shoddy and manufactured, post-war architects had what has been called a 'reverence for materials' (Alison and Peter Smithson). This included brick and timber, and non-traditional materials such as concrete being used in a 'natural' way, with markings from shutter boarding revealed. There was a fashion for a mixture of materials, inspired by the work of Marcel Breuer and Scandinavian architects, including large plate glass windows, built-in hardwood fixtures like dividing units and shelving, brightly coloured wall panels and contrasting flooring (for instance, slate, tile and timber) to denote different areas of use. This early 1950s eclecticism, underscored by a complementary new approach to furniture and interior design, is commonly known as the 'Contemporary' style, derided by the Smithsons and others at the time but which is now a term used appreciatively. Its best examples are often to be found in houses designed by architects for their own use: here they could make strong design statements, with particularly high levels of detailing and finish being part of the overall result.

Various influences, but particularly that of Mies van der Rohe's *Farnsworth House*, outside Chicago (1946-51), created a fashion for the welded steel frame, something only possible in Britain when steel became affordable in the 1960s. Entirely steel-framed houses are rare and are often particularly elegant in terms of the precision of construction, and the lucid proportions of the overall design; only a handful of architects came to specialise in them. Brick and timber were frequently used elsewhere in domestic architecture, the latter with some exuberance on small projects that did not need to be built of concrete or steel. This interest in materials led in the mid-1960s towards an earthier vernacular as in the work of architects such as Edward Cullinan and Peter Aldington, who adopted a 'hands on' approach and built their own houses at weekends,





**Figure 6 (top)**

The Turn, Haddenham, Buckinghamshire, is a group of three houses by Peter Aldington constructed 1963-4. One, Turn End, is the architect's own house. A good example of the influence of vernacular architecture on modern housing. Listed Grade II\*.

**Figure 7 (above)**

A lightweight family house of 1959 in Hendon (London Borough of Barnet), designed by Geoffrey Chamberlin of Chamberlin, Powell and Bon – an architectural practice more usually associated with mass-housing estates. Large projecting parts of the house, radiating from the solid core of dark brick, are supported on three-inch diameter steel tubes. Listed Grade II.



drawing on local building traditions (Fig 6). Another distinctive group of architects (including Leslie Martin and Colin St John Wilson who taught at Cambridge University) adopted simple brick exteriors that concealed complex plans with double-height interiors and top lighting.

House plans of the period placed a strong emphasis on the imaginative use of space and light (Fig 7). Corridors and conventional room divisions were eliminated, and sometimes separations were marked only by a planting trough for plants. As more money became available for building private houses following the removal of building licences in November 1954, features that became popular included staircases rising from the living room; open-plan living areas (sometimes partly sunken to give extra floor-to-ceiling height); and full-height doors and plate glass windows. Larger houses also embraced the open plan, sometimes including a double-height living room, with more private rooms to either side. Save in the most formal houses there was rarely a separate dining room; entertainment in the post-war period was dominated by drinks parties and buffets rather than sit-down dinners, which returned to popularity only in the late 1970s.

## 1.2 Public and private housing

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

**To 1939** The origins of public housing lie in private philanthropic initiatives. Housing societies such as the Improved Industrial Dwellings Company attempted to combat the mid-nineteenth century scourges of poor sanitation and recurrent epidemics whilst at the same time offering their shareholders a modest dividend. They targeted the wage-earning 'deserving poor' rather than the destitute. The earliest surviving social housing of this sort dates from 1849: Henry Roberts's flats in Streatham Street, Bloomsbury (London Borough of Camden), built through the Society

for Improving the Conditions of the Labouring Classes, a body headed by Prince Albert. The scale of such undertakings increased in the mid-1860s, led by the wealthy American banker, George Peabody, who launched the Peabody Donation Fund in 1862 and who had given over £500,000 by his death in 1869. A trust was later formed by Act of Parliament. The first estate opened in 1864, designed by architect Henry Darbishire, and subsequent examples largely follow a repetitive formula of storeyed blocks around squares such as the Grade II-listed development in Greenman Street (London Borough of Islington). After 1875 housing by these companies proliferated as local authorities offered them slum clearance land at preferential rates. High land values meant that most developments were flats, but some terraces were developed on green-field sites.

Some enlightened employers built housing for their workers: most spectacular are the tenements for the Barrow Iron Shipbuilding Company in Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria (1881-4, Paley and Austin; mostly listed Grade II, some grander blocks II\*; Fig 8); a more suburban pattern can be seen at the Bolsover and Creswell Colliery Company's



**Figure 8** Baroque Street tenements, Barrow in Furness, Cumbria. Designed by Austin and Paley, this is one of a series of tenements built for Scottish workers in the dockyards of Barrow in 1884. An unusual example of a Scottish housing type transported into England. Only Newcastle-upon-Tyne has anything similar. Listed Grade II.



New Bolsover Model Village (1888-93), Derbyshire, designed by Percy B. Houfton, with houses built around three sides of a green – most of which are listed Grade II. The need for housing in the coalfields of Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, and South Yorkshire around 1900 lead to considerable improvements in both design and layout.

England's first local authority housing was built by the Corporation of the City of London (1863-9) and the oldest council housing to be designated were semis designed by J Butterfield for Doncaster Corporation (1867) on Clay Lane (listed Grade II). The 1890 Housing of the Working Classes Act made it easier for local authorities to acquire land and erect or convert dwellings for the working classes and was quite successful in cities like London and Plymouth. Even so, public authority housing accounted for only some five per cent of the total built between 1890 and 1914. The 1890 Act also applied to the countryside, but

was adopted by just eight rural authorities. The earliest rural council housing that is designated is at Ixworth, Suffolk (1893-4), designed by the County Surveyor (listed Grade II). Twentieth-century suburban council and new town housing was influenced by the pioneering work of Parker and Unwin, particularly at Letchworth Garden City (Hertfordshire), with its mix of the formal and picturesque and, particularly, the grouping of cottages in pairs and short terraces with the living rooms facing south. After 1945 the semi became the standard form for rural and suburban housing.

In 1918 the Tudor Walters Committee recommended new standards for working-class housing, based on those of Letchworth (Unwin was on the committee) and the Local Government Board. It recommended building no more than 12 houses per acre, with three rooms per floor, plus a larder and bathroom. The standard informed the Housing Act of 1919, which finally made it mandatory for local authorities



**Figure 9**  
Council housing after the First World War, the result of the 'Homes fit for Heroes' campaign, set the standard for much that came after. This granite example in

St. Michael's Road, Ponsanooth, Cornwall, one of several in the street, was designed by P Edwin Stevens and completed in 1922. Listed Grade II.

to have a housing programme to meet the estimated need for 500,000 new homes. The subsidies it provided for house building were ended in 1921, halting the initial phase of council house building that produced what are sometimes referred to as 'Homes fit for Heroes' estates. Few of these are listed, those on St. Michael's Road, Ponsanooth, Cornwall, of 1922 (Grade II) being rare exceptions due to the special interest of their use of local stone (Fig 9), but some have been designated as conservation areas, such as Muirhead Avenue, Liverpool, planned by F E Badger in 1919.

Economic crisis and high inflation in the 1920s led to shortages of both materials and labour. This stimulated enterprising authorities and private investors to experiment with new building techniques such as steel panels, or revive old ones such as unfired clay 'lump' bricks, chalk, timber, and earth, as used in the experimental smallholders' houses designed in 1919-20 for

the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, along Holders Road, Amesbury, Wiltshire (all listed Grade II). The 'Nissen Hut', designed by Major Peter Nissen of the Royal Engineers and patented in 1916, influenced some public housing near Yeovil, Somerset, constructed between 1922-8 (listed Grade II; Fig 10). This adoption of prefabricated methods became widespread during and after the Second World War but was abandoned in this instance due to escalating costs. Another lasting result of this shortage of materials was the establishment of the metal window as an alternative to wood, pioneered by the family firm of Francis and W F Crittall which displayed its early use in a small estate of innovative flat-roofed semi-detached houses in Braintree, Essex, designed in association with C H B Quennell in 1918 (listed Grade II).

Public housing continued during the inter-war years under a succession of Housing Acts,



**Figure 10**

Many experimental methods of construction were employed after the First World War in an attempt to solve the housing crisis. In Yeovil, Somerset, the local Town Council used a variant of the Nissen hut to speed

up construction and reduce costs. Several remain such as this semi, constructed in 1925 on Goldcroft Road. Listed Grade II.





**Figure 11**

1-35, Lennox House flats, Cresset Road, London Borough of Hackney (1936-7), is one of the more innovative inter-war housing blocks. Its unusual

stepped design created 35 flats with balconies. Designed by U E M MacGregor for the Bethnal Green and East London Housing Association. Listed Grade II.

increasingly focused on slum clearance, very little of which has been listed (but see Fig 11). The original initiative having been made in England, ideas on the design of public housing went to Vienna and Germany, and came back again: Viennese models directly influenced both London County Council (LCC) and Leeds City housing in the 1930s: the former's Ossulston Street estate in the London Borough of Camden (1927-37; listed Grade II) is the clearest embodiment of this.

Social housing was built by private charities and not-for-profit companies ranging from pre-First-World-War co-partnership schemes to inter-war Public Utility Societies and Housing Associations. Although the amount of social housing was much smaller than council housing the developments were more varied in character. Important early schemes included Brentham Garden Suburb, London Borough of Ealing, the first co-partnership development built between 1901 and 1913

following, from 1906, a layout by Parker and Unwin (club house by George Lister Sutcliffe listed Grade II) and Wavertree Garden Suburb, Liverpool, planned by Sutcliffe, Parker and Unwin and built between 1910 and 1914 (houses on Fieldway by Sutcliffe listed Grade II).

**Lodging houses and hostels** Purpose-built lodging houses for all classes of men and women emerged in late nineteenth-century cities and towns as a distinctive building type. For men, these took two forms: comfortable bachelors' chambers, which are not easily distinguished from other middle-class mansion flats, and should be judged on architectural quality; and working men's lodging houses. The largest and most significant of the latter are the London County Council (LCC) lodging houses and the well-known Rowton Houses, developed as a philanthropic venture by Montagu Corry, Baron Rowton from 1892 onwards. While these



'working men's hotels' could be fairly austere, accommodating several hundred to one thousand working-class men, the LCC architects managed to create several striking buildings in line with their mission to bring good design to the masses. Carrington House (1903) in Deptford (London Borough of Lewisham) and Bruce House (1907) in Drury Lane (City of Westminster) are listed Grade II for their architectural quality on such a large scale, as well as their social historical interest. Of the six Rowton Houses built in London, the latest and the largest, in Camden Town (Arlington House, 1905) was listed at Grade II in part for its expressive terracotta dressings and distinctive corner towers that relieve the imposing brick walls. A similar lodging house in Birmingham (1903-4), Parkview House, now a hotel, is similarly listed. Tiled interiors, where they survive, add to the interest of such buildings.

From the 1880s, ladies' residential chambers developed in London to house single, middle-class, women in respectable accommodation befitting their genteel occupations. These buildings, often designed by notable architects, resemble mansion flats in the Queen Anne style, which was deemed suitable for women's buildings. Architectural quality will be the main consideration for listing, although interiors and occasional external plaques identifying the buildings as being for ladies can add interest. The most distinctive example is M H Baillie Scott's remarkable flats for working women, Waterlow Court, in Hampstead Garden Suburb (London Borough of Barnet), built in 1909 and listed Grade II\*. Another building type, purpose-built lodgings or hostels for working women, emerged from 1900 as single women came to work in Edwardian cities and towns. Many of these hostels were well-meaning business ventures, not charities, housing 50-200 women in cubicles or small bedrooms with shared dining facilities. The epitome of the building type, Ada Lewis Women's Lodging House in Southwark, London (1913), is listed Grade II for its remarkable survival of tiled interiors and architecturally proud elevations. Some local authorities tried to fulfil the huge demand to respectably house these new clerks, shop assistants: the municipal exemplar is the

Arts and Crafts Ashton House, Manchester, opened in 1910 and listed Grade II, whilst Sheffield (South Yorkshire) boasts the Men's Hostel, on West Bar (1914), by J R Truelove, the designs for which were exhibited at the Royal Academy.

**Private flats** England had little recent tradition of apartment living prior to the middle years of the nineteenth century. In London, there was the bachelor flat, epitomised by the Grade I-listed The Albany in Piccadilly (City of Westminster) from 1802, an interesting conversion by Henry Holland of the wings of Melbourne House by Sir William Chambers of 1771-6 to provide 69 sets of chambers. Such bachelor apartments continued to be built in numbers in the 'clubland' of St James's in the decades before 1914. Blocks of middle-class flats begin to appear in the 1850s (along with a literature that places the inspiration for them as being Scotland and the Continent). The earliest surviving flats in London are in Carlisle Place, Victoria, in the City of Westminster (1860-1).

Flats became widespread across central London during the last years of the century. They were often promoted by the major estates, redeveloping late eighteenth-century terraces whose leases were falling in, or on sites of large town houses. They became common around Mayfair, Victoria, Regent's Park and Kensington, and particularly grand examples fronted Battersea Park and Hampstead Heath. The generic term 'mansion flat' identified the target market. Planning became sophisticated, with suites of reception rooms and separate servants' areas, which had their own circulation and entrances. The introduction of the lift (developed in the US from the 1850s, and facilitated by the spread of hydraulic power from the 1880s) enabled the construction of higher blocks although the London Building Acts restricted the heights of buildings to around 100 feet until about 1956 when waivers began to be accepted more frequently. Most blocks of mansion flats adopted an ornamented red brick style, articulated by high roofs and oriels; Richard Norman Shaw's Albert Hall Mansions of 1879 (listed Grade II) is a particularly well-known and imposing example.

Flats became more popular in the inter-war years; here, as elsewhere, the influence of Swiss-born architect Le Corbusier was to be discerned, as new ways of living were explored. Most people rented, and flats were ideal for single people and newly-weds who were tending to start their families later. As the numbers of servants declined, so the serviced flat, with facilities from shoe cleaning to a swimming pool, became more popular: Pullman Court, Streatham (London Borough of Lambeth; by Frederic Gibberd, 1933-5, listed Grade II\*) and the former White House (now converted into a hotel), Osnaburgh Terrace (London Borough of Camden), of nine storeys (Robert Atkinson, 1936) are good examples of this trend. The common areas could be quite grand, but in most cases the actual flats were very small indeed, a sort of 'minimum dwelling'. Key modernist buildings like the Grade I-listed Lawn Road flats, Belsize Park, in the London Borough of Camden (by Wells Coates, 1929-34; Fig 12) and the similarly Grade I-listed Highpoint I, Highgate, in the London Borough of Haringey (Lubetkin and Tecton, 1933-5) offered a new approach to middle class living, with their mix of carefully planned apartments and sociable facilities. Others like Highpoint II (again by Lubetkin and Tecton, 1936-8, Grade I), with their larger units and absence of communal areas, were intended for luxury living from the first.

**Wartime housing** The acute shortage of accommodation for farm workers, and the displacement of large numbers of evacuees, led to several rural programmes for low-cost homes actually during the war. Other programmes were a response not only to wartime bombing but to the shortages of accommodation already evident in 1939 and to subsequent internal migration. Churchill promised 'up to half a million' prefabricated houses in 1944: eventually 156,623 single-storey houses or 'prefabs' were built in eleven different styles but all based on a standard government design put out to tender. The resulting temporary bungalows employed a variety of asbestos, concrete, timber or aluminium panels (sometimes manufactured by aeroplane companies, switching from war to peace production). Shortages of materials and skilled labour resulted in the erection of many



**Figure 12**  
Lawn Road flats, Belsize Park, London Borough of Camden. Although with echoes of continental design, this block of 36 flats – designed to be 'minimum' flats for young (and mainly single) professional people – was in fact an extremely original design of 1929-34 by the architect Wells Coates. Listed Grade I.

other types of prefabricated bungalows and semis – 'permanent prefabs' – which are now becoming rare (Fig 13). Many of the building firms which experimented with these houses in the 1940s, such as Wimpey, went on to build the big system-built blocks of flats in the 1960s.

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

The now-demolished Quarry Hill in Leeds (West Yorkshire), the most progressive inter-war housing estate in England (by R A H Livett, completed 1938), introduced facilities including the provision of central (also known as ‘district’) heating in flats for people on low wages, a feature that became important in the post-war period. Such facilities raised expectations – and costs. Powell and Moya’s Churchill Gardens development in Pimlico in the City of Westminster (1947-54, listed Grade II) was a notable post-war initiative, laid out on the German Zeilenbau principle of aligned tall blocks set in parallel.

Under Aneurin Bevan at the Ministry of Health and Housing, the standards for public housing were initially very high, despite the shortages of

materials and rising inflation. Cuts kicked in as early as August 1947 and got progressively worse. In 1951, Harold Macmillan (Minister of Housing and Local Government) introduced a ‘crusade’ to build 300,000 new homes, but compromised on space standards. His two-bedroomed ‘People’s House’ had, by 1960, been superseded by three-bedroomed council houses, but these averaged under 900 square feet. The Parker Morris Report (1961) recognised that full employment and rising real incomes since the war required higher standards of housing provision with more space for more activities: his minimum standards, which were not lavish, quickly became a maximum, but his recommendation that central heating be installed to give greater use to all rooms was gradually taken up.



**Figure 13**

The housing crisis after the Second World War created housing as varied and innovative as that after the First. Amongst the best known are temporary emergency houses, or ‘prefabs’ as they became affectionately known,

such as this example on Wake Green Road, Birmingham, of 1945. Over 156,000 temporary houses were supplied between 1944 and 1948. Designed to last only ten years, most have now been demolished. Listed Grade II.





**Figure 14**

The recent refurbishment of Sheffield's Park Hill (seen here beforehand), one of the most uncompromising Brutalist housing estates, goes some way to demonstrate the ability of buildings of even the most recent past to be loved by their local communities.

Designed by Jack Lynn and Ivor Smith of Sheffield City Council Architect's Department, 1957-60. Listed Grade II\*.

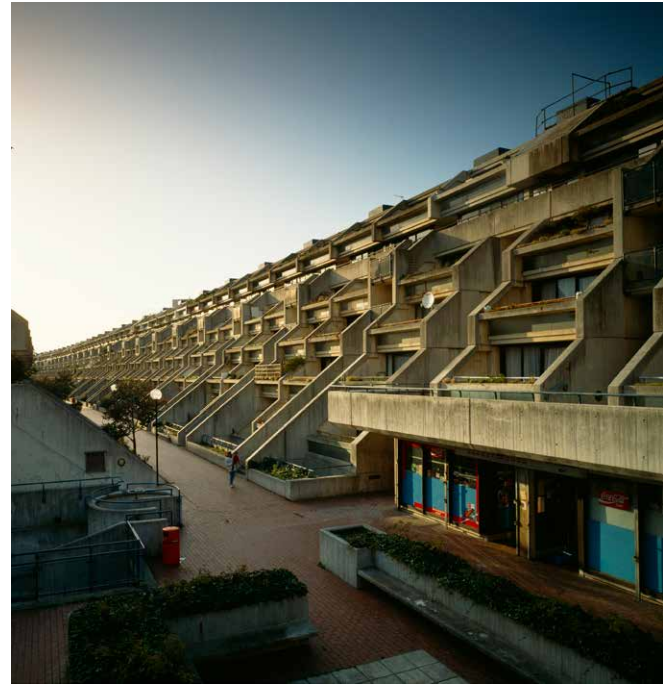
As to funding, most public housing was built by local authorities (or a development corporation in the case of New Towns) and depended upon a combination of long-term loans and grants from central government. This involved close central controls over costs and densities. Funding constraints, always tough, became severe after 1967. The use of prefabricated systems, usually using concrete panels, was encouraged from the early 1960s to help accelerate the housing programme, but the collapse of Ronan Point (London Borough of Newham) in 1968 effectively brought their use in tall buildings to an end. Systems continued to be used extensively for houses, bungalows and low 'slabs'. Despite the iconic image of the high-rise block of flats, funding regimes favoured low rise for much of the period. Also, building activity was not restricted to the cities: before 1958, proportionately more housing (per head of population) was provided in the countryside, the Green Belt Act of 1955 notwithstanding.

Policies of mixed development, mixing houses, bungalows and flats in one scheme, enabled land to be used to relatively high densities, and by mixing cheap but low-density houses and expensive but denser flats an economic balance could be reached. It also satisfied demand from the relatively large number of single and elderly people (including widows with their unmarried daughters), and childless couples, housed by local authorities in the 1950s. With its varying heights and types of dwelling, mixed development changed the appearance of public housing, moving away from the regimented blocks of the nineteenth century, and making it suitable for middle-class families. The idea of public housing as being only for the working class was replaced by a more egalitarian post-war vision.

Building tall was the usual way of providing high densities to keep the population in the city (Fig 14); Frederick Gibberd's Grade II listed The Lawn, Harlow, Essex of 1950-1, was the country's first



**Figure 15**  
The first residential tower blocks in the country, The Lawn, Harlow (1950-1), designed by Frederick Gibberd, clads its ten-storey reinforced concrete frame with a warm red brick. Each floor has two one-bed flats and two bedsitters – all with balconies. Listed Grade II.



**Figure 16**  
London's Alexandra Road estate (1972-8), designed in 1968 by the Camden Architects' Department – is one of the most innovative estates in the country. The architects achieved a very high density of housing for such a low-rise design and prided themselves on the quality of the fine white concrete. Listed Grade II\*.

residential tower block (Fig 15), deliberately built tall to contrast with neighbouring buildings, and to preserve trees. Elsewhere single blocks of flats (or 'point blocks') were sometimes built alone on small or sloping sites. Trellick Tower, in London's North Kensington, by Ernö Goldfinger is a late example of a point block from 1968-72, whilst the Alton Estate from 1952-60 in Roehampton (London Borough of Wandsworth) by the LCC shows a carefully landscaped mixed development at its best (both listed Grade II\*). The peak of high-rise building came in about 1967, with revision of the subsidy regime that had previously encouraged them, compounded by the Ronan Point disaster the following year. Slab blocks and 'low-rise high-density' developments – complex patterns of flats and houses that achieve high densities without rising more than about seven storeys – found favour with some authorities as a cheaper, and to some minds, more humane, alternative to high-rise. The approach became widely adopted following the demise of the tower

block, but it was not a straightforward case of succession. The planning of housing estates became more complex as the need for integral car parking, play areas, shops and boiler houses increased. Lillington Gardens, Westminster (1964-70, by Darbourne and Darke), with its humane use of medium-rise, irregularity of plan and context-friendly dark red brick responding to the neighbouring High Victorian church, is the model for this type of development all round the country (listed Grade II\*). As with much post-war housing the influence of continental models saw the development of more varied housing types and plans such as the patio house, the scissor plan, and the exploration of the concept of 'hill housing'. This was inspired by Corbusier's unbuilt 'Roq et Rob' scheme – using natural, or in some cases, artificially generated, topography to break down the mass of a development into a series of stepped volumes. Integrated landscaping, both hard and soft was often an important feature of post-war schemes.

# 2 Specific Considerations

Houses and housing developments of the period rank among the masterpieces of English architecture, and at their best can warrant very careful assessment for designation. Influence, imagination, scale, ambition and ingenuity together with the quality of craftsmanship or the striking use of materials (not least concrete) are the principal benchmarks. Planning and lay-out, decoration, relationship with setting, reputation of the designer: these too are considerations, as is the extent to which the original design has survived unaltered.

With regard especially to social housing, constraints of funding and legislation need to be understood if the historic significance of a building is to be properly evaluated. Buildings need to be judged against their original brief: their fitness of purpose relates to what was expected of them then, rather than what they are capable of providing now. For enclaves of housing, conservation area designation may sometimes be a more appropriate response than the listing of individual houses or blocks: much depends on whether they attain the special interest required for listing. Because we are dealing with people's homes, it is particularly important that significance is articulated as clearly as possible. Conservation Management Plans can assist in protecting what is truly of significance, while permitting sensible change.

Detached houses and their gardens are particularly under threat from development pressures. The architectural quality of some examples from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was not always fully appreciated when many of the older lists were prepared in the 1970s and early 1980s, so there

will undoubtedly be omissions on the National Heritage List for England.

The following sections offer more specific guidance on houses of different periods and types.

**Arts and Crafts Movement houses** Here much interest lies in their subtle qualities of composition and detailing, requiring sensitive evaluation. Houses by the principal architects of the Arts and Crafts movement are very likely to be already listed although some selection may be required for the more prolific among them, such as M H Baillie Scott who designed many modest neo-Georgian houses with A E Beresford after 1919. Relative date may thus be a consideration: an innovative design of 1900 is one thing; a conventional variant of the 1920s is rather another. While these major architects are well known, regional practices are less so and it is important to gain some overview of their work in order to set individual houses in context. These architects looked to domestic building of earlier epochs, but were also aware of contemporary continental parallels: their work is often extremely accomplished. Birmingham had a strong Arts



and Crafts tradition between 1890 and 1910 that owes much to an indigenous local craft revival (for instance, Joseph Ball, C E Bateman, W H Bidlake); so did Leicester (the Goddard company had many able assistants), Nottingham (Brewill and Baily, Arthur Marshall), Norfolk (George Skipper), York (Walter Brierley), Manchester (Edgar Wood), the Cotswolds (Sidney and Ernest Barnsley with Ernest Gimson) and many more. Architects continued designing both Arts and Crafts and neo-Georgian houses through the 1920s and 1930s.

With houses, simplicity is often a virtue: beauty was implied in the perfection of proportion. Care was taken with local materials, sparing ornament, neatly detailed door cases, picture-rails and cornices, together with fireplaces, and a good staircase, and some limited use of panelling and built-in fittings. Traditional building materials (brick, tile, stone and thatch) were the norm; however, some architects (for instance, Prior and Lethaby) were happy to use steel and concrete as well.

Other common ingredients can be seen in the planning of the house. Long plans are distinctive, with an entrance hall that serves also as a room for entertaining, a large fireplace and perhaps an inglenook; the other principal rooms are set to either side off corridors, with a service wing providing well-lit and comfortable working accommodation. Occasionally the hall contains the staircase, making for a more imposing first-floor landing than is customary. Some houses adopt a butterfly plan around the hall, with angle-set wings enabling maximum light to enter the house throughout the day. Planning interest can be an important consideration.

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

in the work of Sir Edwin Lutyens and Gertrude Jekyll, but a relatively modest architect like C E Mallows can achieve the sublime when allowed to create house and garden together, as at the Grade II\*-listed Tirley Garth, Cheshire, of about 1906 (working here with noted garden designer Thomas Mawson). Such houses – often in affluent suburbs – continued to be built throughout the inter-war period, and later examples deserve consideration as well as earlier ones. ‘Stockbroker Tudor’ could attain real quality, and imaginative and intact examples may warrant listing.

**Neo-Georgian and historicist houses** formed another strand in early twentieth-century domestic architecture. Aiming for dignity and restraint, the results are often deliberately understated. Often possessing a formal, symmetrical, front, they may be carefully planned around generous staircase halls with considered circulation routes from room to room. Key considerations will be architectural quality; inventiveness; degree of survival; and decorative flair. The best examples will also enjoy a strong relationship with their grounds.

**Modernist and post-war houses** There is an extensive literature about modernist and post-war houses in England, and the celebrated houses of the 1930s have long been accorded considerable respect (and have long been listed too). However, many excellent houses remained unpublished, especially for the post-war period. Not all clients wanted their homes publicised and the lack of publication is no reason not to investigate a house. This privacy makes private houses the area of twentieth century architecture where there is most still to discover. Give particular credit where architects are designing for themselves, or for a relative or friend, as here they could express their ideas most freely. The clear reflection of life-styles will endow a house with extra interest.

Exteriors should be little altered. Materials are simple, usually brick and timber, less often concrete especially after around 1962. Look for the unusual, particularly for the post-war period: a steel frame, an ecological grass roof, use of zinc, aluminium or tile hanging. An internal inspection is very important to ascertain the full claims to

significance. Lack of alteration to the principal spaces is a key factor in determining designation, as is plan. Consider how the plan flows: spaces should relate to each other and not be simply rooms behind doors. Joinery, internal finishes and built-in furniture are often extensive and of high quality and/or invention. Wall-height doors or surrounds are a good indicator of thoughtful design. Look at the use of levels – whether there are sunken areas or double-height spaces, the latter often with a balcony.

Garden features, such as related walls, pools and sculpture, may be important parts of the original design. The ideas governing post-war private gardens range from the sense that a house should make as little impact on the surroundings as possible to a strong sense of garden ‘rooms’ coupled with rich plantsmanship.

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

Where of sufficient special interest, hard landscaping features such as walls and steps may be listed with the house as subsidiary features. However, for clarity, freestanding or spatially discrete structures (say a corner summerhouse) may be better listed independently.

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

by new windows, render and other alterations, but those that survive from before 1914 warrant very careful consideration and later examples down to the 1920s may be candidates for area designation.

**Hostels** To merit listing, hostels need a clear historic claim, such as being a very early example; or commercial interest through affiliation with an important company (for example Furnival House in Highgate (London Borough of Haringey) which opened in 1913 to house the domestic workers at the Prudential headquarters and is listed Grade II); or a successful design by a noted architect that compares favourably with other domestic institutional buildings nationally.

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

**Post-war housing** It is particularly difficult to establish criteria for the listing of post-war housing, as an understanding of the resource continues to develop: but benchmarks have been identified. Key considerations will be architectural interest; degree of survival of design; whether the design was influential; or a particularly good example of a development in housing. Standards are set high, and the important factor for any post-war building is whether it fulfilled its original brief. It is important

to know what the original intentions were, and what the estate originally looked like. Public housing is often well documented, illustrated in contemporary architectural magazines and with good surviving council records. Interiors will be very simple, and only the earliest, or model estates such as the City of London's Golden Lane Estate or Barbican, will have internal fittings worthy of mention in a description. This should be made clear in the designation documentation.

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

Larger estates, whether of high flats, low houses or a mixture, lend themselves to a holistic approach. Developments of the late 1940s and early 1950s are generally more generous in their planning and elegant in their detailing than those that came later. Some of the more ambitious developments of the 1960s and 1970s however created high density, low rise, housing through particularly innovative spatial planning. Landscaping (both hard and soft) could be used to link parts of the development, creating a tight urban grain which balances privacy for the individual, with communal spaces. Planning ingenuity; the successful integration of build elements and landscaping; the relationship between the built elements; and the quality of architectural detailing are all factors for consideration. Survival of planning and detail is important, but replacement of original windows is now almost ubiquitous so consideration should be given to how this impacts on the overall character of the development; similar attention should be given to other details – their prominence and the quality and uniformity of the replacements will all have a bearing. Mixed development means that individual elements can be recommended for listing while the estate, as a whole, may be more suitable for area designation. Smaller, or lower density, low-rise developments, whether public or private (notably those by Span

Developments Ltd), are very difficult to assess as their simple virtues are easily taken for granted. As with their larger cousins, to be listable, they have to survive reasonably intact, show special spatial imagination in the layout of roads and buildings, and in their hard landscaping and planting. Elevational treatments can be quite simple but they should be immaculately detailed.

## 2.1 Group value

Individual buildings must be assessed on their own merits. However, it is important to consider the wider context and where a building forms part of a functional group with one or more listed (or listable) structures this is likely to add to its own interest. Examples might include [purpose-built housing or process buildings associated with industrial or military sites, or agricultural buildings associated with a farmhouse]. Key considerations are the relative dates of the structures, and the degree to which they were functionally inter-dependent when in their original uses.

## 2.2 Extent of listing

Amendment to the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides two potential ways to be more precise about what is listed.

The empowerments, found in section 1 (5A) (a) and (b) of the 1990 Act, allow the List entry to say definitively whether attached or curtilage structures are protected; and/or to exclude from the listing specified objects fixed to the building, features or parts of the structure. These changes do not apply retrospectively, but New listings and substantial amendments from 2013 will provide this clarification when appropriate.

Clarification on the extent of listing for older lists may be obtained through the Local Planning Authority or through the Historic England's Enhanced Advisory Service, see [www.HistoricEngland.org.uk/EAS](http://www.HistoricEngland.org.uk/EAS).



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