

A detailed architectural line drawing of a two-story council house elevation. The drawing features a gabled roof with a textured pattern representing tiles. Two chimneys are visible: one on the left side of the roof and one on the right. The ground floor includes a large arched entrance on the left, a central door, and two windows with multiple panes. The upper floor has several windows, some with decorative elements. The drawing is rendered in black lines on a yellow background.

A History of Nottingham's
Council Houses

HOMES & PLACES

Chris Matthews

Centenary Edition
Celebrating 100 years
of Council Housing

Nottingham City Homes

ELEVATION

Red Lion Street, 1919
(Courtesy Nottingham City Council
and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)



Homes & Places

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Research and editorial support by Dan Lucas

Second Edition

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by Nottingham City Homes

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Design by Chris Matthews

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Reviews

“Of local histories, this is undoubtedly the pick of the crop.”

The Guardian, April 2018

“It’s a pleasure to see this fine account of Nottingham’s council housing history. It’s a story well worth telling and one – in Nottingham and elsewhere – that this blog has sought to share. Above all, it is a people’s history, a history of homes and communities but it encompasses high (and low) politics too, architecture and planning and much, much else: a history of concern to anyone interested in the fabric – in the broadest sense – of our society.”

John Boughton, Author *Municipal Dreams* (online)

“The rise of social housing in this country provided what has been called the ‘biggest collective leap in living standards in British history.’”

Rt Hon Teresa May MP, Prime Minister, September 2018

“It tells a compelling story of mistakes and triumphs, missed opportunities and pioneering policies.”

Nottingham Post, December 2015

“Chris Matthews’ concise and accessible history of Nottingham’s council houses is a timely reminder of the importance of social housing on a personal, social and political level. Whilst his book will be of particular interest to readers with a connection to Nottingham, it will hold a broader appeal for anyone with an interest in the politics of housing, social mobility and urban planning ... It would make a useful addition to reading lists for undergraduate housing-related and social policy courses and benefit readers who are seeking a general introduction to the history and role of social housing in the UK.”

Richard Machin, Staffordshire University, May 2016

“I heartily recommend this attractive, well researched book.”

Ken Brand, *Nottingham Civic Society, Newsletter*, January 2016

“Nottingham is a city that has been shaped, developed and grown on these homes.”

Left Lion, February 2016

“A book celebrating a city’s social housing was a surprise Christmas hit.”

BBC Nottingham, December 2016

“Wonderfully put together.”

The Nottinghamshire Historian, 2016

“I know a good local history when I read one and, I promise you, this is good... Truly wonderful stuff which swells the heart and puffs out the chest.”

Robert Howard, former reviews editor for *Local History Magazine*, 2015

“This is such an imaginative endeavour – we probably all think we know about council housing but I don’t suppose the knowledge on this subject has been drawn together before in this way. It’s an important social document and is engaging and entertaining as well.”

Chris Leslie, MP for Nottingham East

“I got it for Christmas and just finished it. Really fascinating and a pretty honest account I thought.”

Tom Copley, London Assembly Member & Deputy Chair of the Assembly’s Housing Committee, 2016

Foreword

Council housing is a valuable asset for the country. In Nottingham we know that a decent, secure, affordable home forms the bedrock for a decent quality of life - somewhere healthy to raise your family, or grow old comfortably in your own home. But much more than that; council housing is good for our economy, building good quality homes that contribute towards the stability and vitality of local communities.

2019 marks one hundred years since the passing of the Housing and Town Planning Act 1919, better known as the Addison Act, after Christopher Addison, the Minister who implemented it. The Act delivered Prime Minister David Lloyd George's pledge that the nation would have 'Homes fit for heroes'.

This book is part of Nottingham's contribution to celebrating that anniversary.

The story of council housing is one of great municipal endeavour. Council housing has provided homes for millions over the last hundred years, and for many has been the only opportunity of a home that is both decent and affordable. The story of council housing in Nottingham holds a mirror to the national picture, and shows the impact of wider policies at a local level.

Early development of council housing in Nottingham delivered people from living in slums, and provided secure homes for many for the first time. Its success led to more and more homes being built. But over the decades, national housing policy, underfunding and poor building decisions led to a crisis in council housing, and the building of new homes ground to a halt.

Today, there's a much bigger crisis thanks to the lack of affordable housing, and the national scandal of homelessness has shown the urgent need for more decent, good quality homes that people can afford. Through Nottingham City Homes, Nottingham City Council is once again building council housing, with genuinely affordable homes built to high design and sustainability standards, learning from the mistakes of the past and creating homes and places where future generations will want to live.

This book celebrates the housing achievements of the City of Nottingham. We hope it faithfully records the endeavours of all those who have contributed to providing a decent home for Nottingham's residents over the years.

We'd like to dedicate this book to our residents, past present and future – since any story of housing is really the story of the people who live in it.

Cllr Linda Woodings

Portfolio Holder for Housing, Planning and Heritage, Nottingham City Council

Nick Murphy

Chief Executive, Nottingham City Homes

Malcolm Sharp MBE

Chair of the Board, Nottingham City Homes



← The Cliff Road Estate, c.1970, with the cliff of the Lace Market in the distance. Roughly the same location as Knotted Alley pictured on page 14. The Cliff Road estate was built following the slum clearance of Narrow Marsh during the early 1930s (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

Author's preface

“But the town’s alright,” he said; “it’s only temporary. This is the crude, clumsy make-shift we’ve practised on, till we find out what the idea is. The town will come all right.”

D. H. Lawrence, *Sons & Lovers*, 1913

In April 2015 Nottingham City Homes asked if I would consider writing a book about the history of council housing in Nottingham. Their aims were ambitious: approximately 15,000 words, 120 images and 1000 printed copies by the September of that year. I was understandably apprehensive but I was also impressed by the motives and organisational commitment. Our agreed brief was for a ‘warts and all story’ that would combine academic integrity with enjoyable prose and good design. More importantly this was recognised as a big story that hadn’t really been tied together, despite numerous focused studies by academics and local historians. If executed well this book could be popular and create a more informed understanding of social housing.

By Christmas of that year the book became a local best seller and had generated a considerable degree of positive publicity. But this feeling of accomplishment was under a cloud of uncertainty, as the latest government housing policies were having a negative impact upon the long-term viability of council housing. In short, the levels of right-to-buy discount coupled with tighter controls on spending were rather perilous. It felt as though there was a risk of writing an obituary.

The tragedy of the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017 may have created a turning point; it seems central government is again seeing the value of social housing for creating a stable civil society. The main examples of a new approach are the scrapping of the ‘borrowing cap’ for local authority housing, permitting a more flexible approach to finance for council housing, and improved rights for tenants.



- 1 Brick built council housing near Glapton Lane, Clifton. Designed to contrast with the neighbouring Wimpey concrete houses and preserve the rural character of the ancient village of Glapton (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)



† A prefab house, Staverton Road, Bilborough, c.1970 (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

The Prime Minister even quoted from the first edition of this book during a speech to the National Housing Federation. Oddly enough, we have been here before. This story has attracted national attention on numerous occasions; from the slums of the 1840s, to the scale of interwar developments and the pioneering right-to-buys of the 1970s.

The first edition of this book has since sold out and recouped the original cost of the project. Demand has outstripped supply, and so it is timely therefore that Nottingham City Homes should commission a second edition on the centenary of the 1919 Addison Act, an Act seen by many as marking a turn in government policy towards building council homes on a large scale. There has been little in the way of relevant local historical articles since the first edition, although John Boughton's 2018 *Municipal Dreams: The Rise and Fall of Council Housing* had provided a new national picture. This second edition is filled with various amendments, an updated final chapter, a new conclusion, some new archive pictures and the inclusion of an appendix of council housing estates in the city.

So it is good that we are celebrating this history, but we shouldn't be complacent. The story is much bigger than these pages can convey: each chapter alone is worthy of a separate book. The academically minded will look quizzically at the timescales in which the first edition was produced, while the local historian will anticipate a much wider field of oral history accounts. But it should be stressed that this is 'A History' and not 'The History', and more studies should come forward and can use this as a framework for new understandings. What is more, if we are now seriously beginning to build council housing with confidence again, what are the key lessons that we can learn from the past? It is the intention of this book to go somewhere towards answering that question, but it is one that requires nuance: even where council housing clearly failed, such as at Balloon Woods, there was something positive about the original idea.



† Cleared land, looking towards Lammas Street in the Meadows, 1973 (Courtesy Bernard And Pauline Heathcote Photographic Collection and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)



Introduction



- † The Balloon Woods deck-access flats (Courtesy Reg Baker and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)
- ← Knotted Alley, Narrow Marsh, 1900 (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

“Me and my brother used to go catching newts behind the flats. In the area now known as Legoland, this was supposed to be Balloon Woods flats Phase Two, but once they made a start on the foundations, the builders discovered everything was sinking in the wet ground. This muddy, puddly labyrinth of small concrete areas was perfect for frogs. We used to take our prizes back to the flat, and play with them like little dinosaurs. One time, a newt disappeared without trace. We were sad because we did look after them. We found it weeks later, dry and shrivelled up inside our mum’s knee-high ’70s boots. Easy to climb the outside of. Impossible to climb out of.”

Martin Rockley (2015)

When this book was first published, Nottingham’s cross-city tram network was nearing completion and billed locally as ‘bringing Nottingham together’: Bulwell to Clifton, Lenton to Hyson Green. The line runs immediately opposite the council offices at Loxley House. The story of council housing in Nottingham also connects the city, through shared experience and the sheer geographic scale. Certain facts speak for themselves: back in 1981 just under half of the population of the city was housed in council homes, of which the city had by that time built over fifty thousand.¹ In Nottingham, council housing is popular and widely recognised as something that at one time or another improved the lives of countless people. It is probably safe to add that council housing marked the biggest collective leap in living standards in British history. What is more, many people liked their council houses so much that they bought them (about 20,000 in Nottingham) since the ‘Right to Buy’ discount was initiated in 1980. In the decade following the introduction of ‘Right to Buy’ fewer than 2,500 homes were built to replace the losses; not only that, central government made it

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increasingly difficult for councils to build homes at all. That resulted in a housing crisis, with prices going through the roof and a market unable to meet demand. The name of council housing has often been dragged through the mud; however, people in cities like Nottingham have long memories. They know that council housing succeeds in all sorts of areas: building new housing, providing a secure rented tenure, adaptable housing for the elderly, affordable rents, good quality housing, healthy housing, less interference from landlords, tenant participation, repairs, insulation, energy conservation, employment, and economic stimulus.

Council housing is now broadly defined as accommodation at below-market rent provided by a local authority. It emerged as a concept in Britain during the late nineteenth century as a means both of replacing slums with sanitary housing and of meeting demand for accommodation when private development was failing to supply it. Yet it was not until after the First World War that central government gave the necessary powers and funds



← Union Street slum housing 1919, near Sneinton Market with standpipe at the centre (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

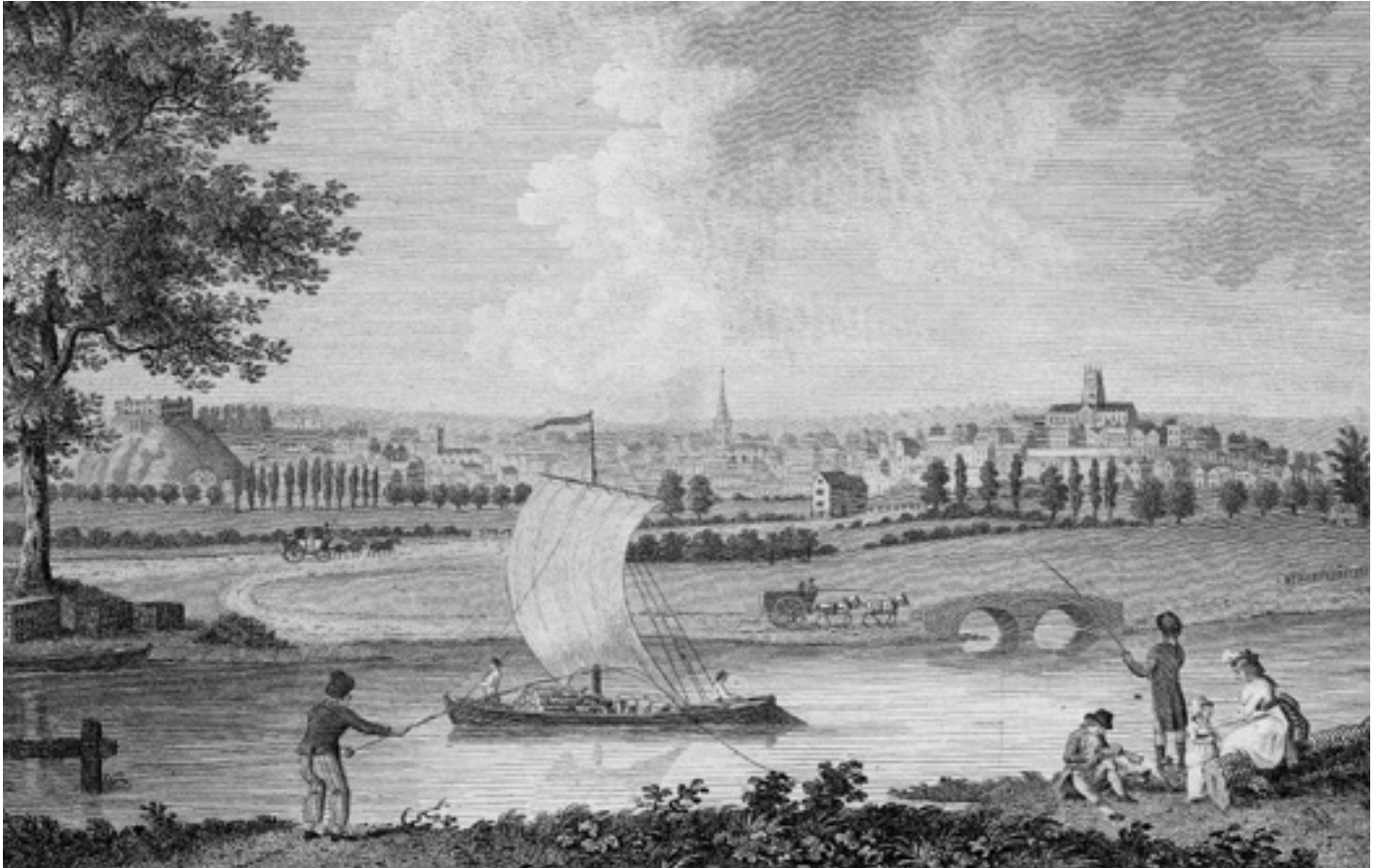
that enabled local authorities to build on a large scale. Throughout this history of council housing, national policy has been governed by the tension between social improvement and private development. The overarching theme has been one of rise, decline and a recent resurrection of confidence. At the turn of the twentieth century, 90% of the British population was living in privately rented accommodation. That figure completely changed with the unprecedented escalation of clearance and redevelopment schemes following both the First and Second World Wars: by 1971, 29% of people were living in council housing and 52% enjoyed home ownership.²

With hindsight it is safe to assume that not only were the 1970s the high tide of council housing, but that the trend towards home ownership has endured. The 1980s Right to Buy discount for council tenants successfully caught the mood of the times; as other policies favoured a housing supply provided by the private sector, council housing was effectively in decline. Meanwhile, smaller housing associations seemed to offer a more personal and flexible approach. At the same time, the wisdom of the old clearance and management strategies was being questioned. By 2013, the statistics for home ownership (63%), housing associations (10%) and private rents (18.5%) had all grown.³ Council housing had declined to 7.6% nationally. However, there have been two major influences since the global financial crash of 2008. The first is the instability of the property market, with home ownership in Britain declining from its height of 69% in 2004. The second is a rising housing crisis, as the growth of demand again continues to outstrip the ability of the private market to supply. Although central government has continued to support home ownership and private landlords, tentative concessions have been made to local authorities in order to alleviate the situation. In short, councils are building housing again, with renewed confidence and vigour yet on a scale that is still smaller than in its heyday in the 1970s.



THE WOLLATON PARK ESTATE.

- † Wollaton Park estate following its radial formal plan. From T. C. Howitt, *A Review of the Progress of the Housing Schemes in Nottingham* (1928)



In Nottingham, a housing crisis first emerged in the late eighteenth century, when the town failed to enclose its neighbouring fields for suitable building land despite a rapidly growing industrial population (Chapter 1). For the working class of that century, demand was met partially through overcrowding and insanitary conditions in the historic town or, for the better off, a flight to neighbouring suburbs and villages. Inequality, social tension, slums and disease were becoming more noticeable – and so too was the social awareness that led to the long overdue expansion of the town following the 1845 Enclosure Act. The building regulations within the Act marked the first real intervention from the local authority. As it took twenty years to implement

† Nottingham and its fields: the view of the Meadows, c.1793 (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

fully, it was clear that by the 1860s this had merely mitigated, not resolved, the housing problem. The *laissez-faire* approach was being questioned. The 1870s marked the beginning of the age of municipal enterprise alongside important national Acts in housing and public health. By 1876 Nottingham had built its first council housing and was one of the earliest local authorities to do so. Unfortunately, it was soon considered a failure and therefore affected the council's willingness to build again. The housing problem was meanwhile being alleviated by more successful municipal activities that supported private housing development. This was through the provision of efficient utilities, the imposition building regulations, and the release of land through the 1877 boundary extension. Yet it was just another mitigation: the slums persisted, and the calls for council housing were growing.

The social consequences of the First World War marked a decisive political shift in favour of council housing (Chapter 2). This was stimulated by the interventionist activities of central government and was also replicated locally: the political force for council housing in Nottingham during the inter-war period was strong, and the designs were acclaimed nationally. Between the wars 17,095 council houses were built. Nottingham was considered among the largest and the fastest builders of council housing in the country. The early-nineteenth-century slums of Narrow Marsh and Carter Gate were swept away and huge peripheral estates were built on the fringes of the city at Aspley, Bulwell Hall, Bestwood and Broxtowe. By the outbreak of World War II many working class people had experienced an unprecedented leap in their standard of living. All new houses were supplied with running water, hot water, a flushing toilet, a gas supply, gardens and electrical fittings - amenities that thousands had previously lacked. The scale and style of improvement were continued at Bilborough, Strelley, Bestwood Park and Clifton (Chapter 3) after the war. In 1957 William Crane marked 38 successful years as Chair of the Housing Committee: an accomplishment recognised by the city.



↑ New council housing on the Aspley Estate, seen looking north from Amersham Rise with Allendale Avenue to the left. The trees marked the onetime Nottingham borough boundary, the alignment of Amersham Rise continuing to preserve this today. (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

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A further boundary extension was granted in 1952 for the development of Clifton. Despite this, the city had by the 1960s lost its appetite for further expansion. A more inner-city approach gripped the council, who built high-rises upon the pre-1845 enclosure neighbourhoods and various peripheral gap sites within the boundary (Chapter 4). The consequences of central government subsidies, which favoured upward over outward expansion, became apparent nationwide. The race between the two main political parties to achieve ever-higher numbers of national new home completions created a culture of powerful contractors and complacent councils. Yet not all high-rise was necessarily bad, with many tenants enjoying the better standards

↓ Clifton estate from the air, 1971
(Courtesy Nottingham Evening Post
and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)



regarding space and heating set by the 1961 Parker Morris Report. Before the decade was out this experiment with high-rise was over; however, the demand for housing and large-scale clearance was still great, perhaps nowhere more clearly exemplified than in Coates' and Silburn's study of St Ann's.⁴ The 1970s were therefore marked by the low-rise redevelopment of the post-1845 enclosure districts of St Ann's and the Meadows (Chapter 5). More successful than in the preceding age, the scale of the factors involved – clearance, displacement, traffic segregation and management – was nevertheless considered too great. Slowly, there emerged a tenants' movement and civic conservationism, both of which were to have powerful long-term consequences.

If the 1960s and 1970s were a hubristic age for the local housing department, then the eighties and nineties were marked by retrenchment (Chapter 6). The changes enforced by central government – including Right to Buy, Housing Benefit, stock transfer, and tightening the Housing Revenue Account – all had a diminishing effect on both the scale and the identity of local authority housing. This was culturally reinforced partly through the demolition of the failed mass-housing schemes at Balloon Woods, Old Basford and Hyson Green: they all seemed to belong to a bygone era. By 2001 the development of council homes had ground to a halt; this was lamentable, as the rebuilding and refurbishment during the 1980s and 1990s incorporated sensitivity and modesty. Many contemporary observers were calling this period the end of council housing, and the consequences of the failure of private developers and housing associations to build enough homes were looming. In Nottingham, council housing has remained popular.

The consequences of minimal building became obvious within the first decade of the twenty-first century. Slowly, it seemed, central government was waking up to the fact that council housing had a viable future. This new era was marked by the Decent Homes Standard for social housing and the Labour government's housing Green Paper of 2001, which allowed housing departments access

↓ Apprentices joining on at the Housing Department, April 1976 (Courtesy Nottingham City Homes)



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to more money if they converted their housing service into an arms'- length management organisation (an ALMO). Some feared this to be a prelude to privatisation while others took it as an opportunity for a degree of departmental autonomy, with the council retaining ownership of the properties. Nottingham City Homes was set up in 2005 and, despite a challenging transition, has been showing renewed vigour in its approach towards municipal housing (Chapter 7). Then, in March 2010, the then housing minister, John Healey, announced that central government restrictions over the Housing Revenue Account were to be lifted: local authorities were able to invest back into housing the money earned from their rents. Nottingham was free to do something it was good at: building council housing. In 2012 Nottingham City Homes proudly announced a building programme of over 400 new houses within seven years. These have principally been situated at various in-fill sites and land made available following the demolition of the Radford deck-access flats and Lenton high-rises. Substantial refurbishments and energy efficiency schemes have also been taking place at Clifton, Bulwell Hall and at the Sneinton high-rises. However, austerity measures, borrowing-limit restrictions and the extensions of Right to Buy have curtailed the scale of the city's ambitions. Currently, the total number of council homes in the city is still in decline, although maintenance and new build are increasing and making a positive, visible difference.

The commissioning of this history shows not only the renewed confidence in Nottingham's council housing; it also celebrates 100 years since the 1919 'Addison' Housing Act. This Introduction has shown how the threads of the key historical changes weave together, illustrating the important relationship between central government policy and local authority activity. We must, though, turn to the following chapters to appreciate the detail of these changes: how the very fabric of the city and the experiences of its people have influenced every successive generation.



† A Vic Hallam design and build bungalow, and Garden Competition winner from the early 1990s (Courtesy Nottingham City Homes)

Endnotes

- 1 P. A. Brown, 'The Development of Nottingham', in S. Brazier, R. Hammond, S. R. Waterman & P.A. Brown (eds.), *A New Geography of Nottingham* (Nottingham, Trent Polytechnic, 1998), pp. 27-39.
- 2 P. Malpass, and A. Murie, *Housing Policy and Practice* (Fifth Edition, London, Macmillan Press, 1999), p. 11.
- 3 Department for Communities and Local Government, *Table 102: Dwelling Stock: By tenure, Great Britain* (gov.co.uk, 2015).
- 4 K. Coates & R. Silburn, *Poverty, Deprivation, and Morale in a Nottingham Community* (University of Nottingham, Nottingham, 1968), pp. 23-32; K. Coates & R. Silburn, *Poverty: The Forgotten Englishmen* (Penguin, London, 1970).

LENTON PARISH



Plan of the TOWN and COUNTY of the TOWN of NOTTINGHAM

and of the several Liberties thereof, viz. the Liberties of the CASTLE, together with parts of the Parishes of LENTON, RADFORD AND SNEINTON, in the County of Nottingham.

From a Survey taken in the Year 1792, and by G. Stansfeld & W. Hill Esqrs.



1 The Old Problem 1787–1914

“In all the parishes there are numbers of streets to be found of the worst construction as regards ventilation, construction of habitation, sewerage, supply of water, paving, and lighting; but as might be expected, these defects are most conspicuous in the older quarters, and in the lower levels, as under the Castle, and down to the Narrow Marsh, Canal Street, Leenside, and in the greater part of St. Ann’s and Byron Wards. I believe that nowhere else shall we find so large a mass of inhabitants crowded into courts, alleys, and lanes, as in Nottingham, and those, too, of the worst possible construction ... The courts are almost always approached through a low-arched tunnel of some 30 or 36 inches wide, about eight feet high, and from 20 or 30 feet long ... They are noisome, narrow, unprovided with adequate means for the removal of refuse, ill-ventilated, and wretched in the extreme, with a gutter, or surface drain, running down the centre; they have no back yards and the privies are common to the whole court: altogether they present scenes of a deplorable character, and of surpassing filth and discomfort. It is just the same with the lanes and alleys ... In all these confined quarters, too, the refuse is allowed to accumulate until, by its mass and its advanced putrefaction, it shall have acquired value as manure; and thus it is sold and carted away by the ‘muck majors’, as the collectors of manure are called in Nottingham.”

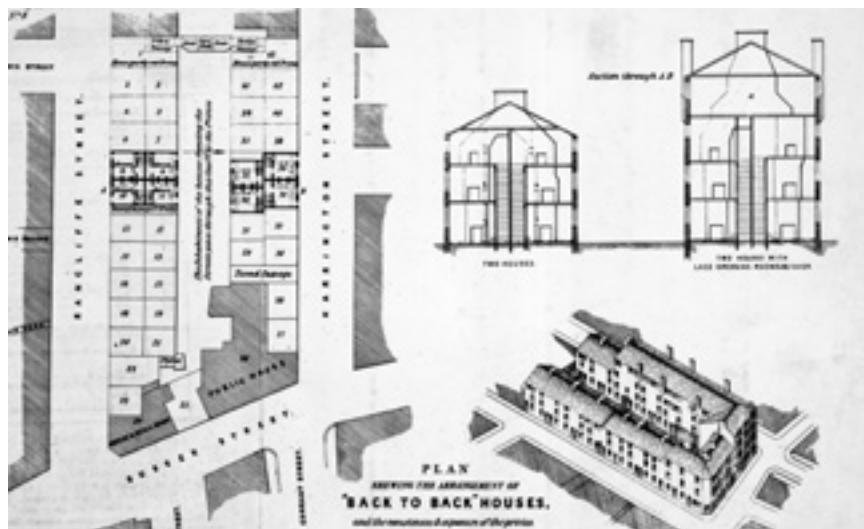
J. R. Martin, *Report on the State of Nottingham and Other Towns* (1845).¹

Why the slums in Nottingham were so bad and persisted for so long was a question repeated throughout the nineteenth century. Even as late as in 1912, the *Nottingham Guardian* was complaining: ‘If the historian of the future should declare the local corporation and Imperial Administration must both have been mad to permit ... our slums ... to exist, there will



- ← Nottingham 1831: lack of political will to enclose the fields was constraining urban development and creating a tightly packed town
- † A view of Nottingham from the north-east in 1850, not far from what would later become Belle View Reservoir. Although a place of recreation, failure to develop housing on these fields had exacerbated the town’s slum problems for over sixty years (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

1. The Old Problem



← An 1843 diagram of Narrow Marsh slum housing, now the Broadmarsh Car Park (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

be no need to quarrel with the statement'.² Yet this was nearly seventy years since the *Health of Towns* commissioners described Nottingham 'as hardly to be surpassed in misery by anything to be found within the entire range of our manufacturing cities.'³ The cause of the slums and their subsequent mitigation lay in the changing nature of the housing supply. This can broadly be divided into three eras – pre-enclosure, post-enclosure, municipal – all of which would have long-term consequences for the development of the city and still reverberate today. It would also create a situation that effectively acted as a springboard for the rush of council house building that followed the First World War.

Despite an unprecedented growth in Nottingham's population from the late eighteenth century, for nearly sixty years between 1780 and 1841 the town failed to supply an adequate amount of land for new housing, which created conditions of overcrowding and jerry-building. By 1841 some 52,220 people were squeezed into the same area that in 1780 had housed only 17,200.⁴ Some of the reasons behind this were due to forces beyond the control of the local authority – such as national population growth and the industrial revolution – and were shared by manufacturing towns throughout Britain. However, another cause



† William Malbon's 1840 painting *Joseph Fenton and his Family* shows the perspective of a landlord opposed to enclosure and enjoying the fields. Fenton was publican of the Black Boy Inn, Long Row (Courtesy Nottingham Castle Museum)

was of a very local nature: the town corporation refused to enclose upon its neighbouring fields despite calls for it to do so as early as 1787.⁵ For opponents of the measure, enclosure was an attack on property, rental values and the right to enjoy the open spaces that surrounded the town. William Malbon's 1840 painting of a local landlord *Joseph Fenton and his Family* was a visual expression of this perspective. Proponents were either enlightened individuals or new industrialists.⁶ Nearby Leicester escaped such congestion by enclosing its South Fields in 1804, with grand houses and squares lining a pedestrian route called New Walk. Such attempts at planning in Nottingham would have to wait while the middle class migrated from the old Georgian streets – High Pavement and Low Pavement – to Park Terrace and the Ropewalk. The more affluent working class was making similar moves to the satellite neighbourhoods beyond the open fields: to Carrington, New Sneinton, New Lenton, New Radford, New Basford and Hyson Green. With few back-to-backs, these districts were billed as 'handsome villages' with three-storey houses, including kitchen, wash house (or scullery), two bedrooms, workshop and attic storage.⁷ They were generally home to successful lace operatives. The poorer framework knitters had to settle for the 7,000 back-to-backs of Nottingham sited generally to the immediate south and east of the old town, from Narrow Marsh to Sneinton, and within the old medieval lanes between Long Row and Parliament Street known as 'The Rookeries'. Most of the back-to-backs had no kitchen, poor ventilation, and as many as forty houses sharing a single privy and standpipe.⁸ The great majority of the 330 Nottingham fatalities during the 1832 cholera epidemic were located in these same back-to-backs. Nevertheless, in a landscape of radicalism, parliamentary reformers, Luddites and Chartists, it was becoming increasingly doubtful if such an *ad hoc* approach to working class housing could be maintained.

The tentative moves towards a more interventionist stance over improvement emerged during the 1830s with the 1835

↓ Thomas Hawksley, water engineer and proponent of enclosure (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)



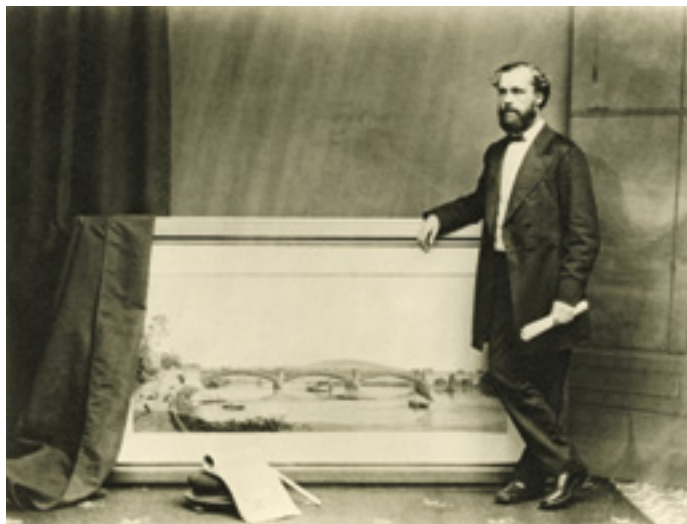
1. The Old Problem



Municipal Corporations Act. Furthermore, there was the successful piping of clean water to shared taps thanks to the private enterprise of Thomas Hawksley. With a more democratic corporation, arguments for enclosure increased, not least because Hawksley was busy making it clear that the council's failure to enclose the fields was having a negative effect on the health of the community.⁹ The 1845 Enclosure Act that followed had positive consequences for urban development, but failed to influence any direct improvement in low-cost working-class housing. The Act released 1,068 acres for housing, factories and institutions. It also forbade back-to-backs by enforcing a detailed building code. This covered a variety of measures, from the thickness of the walls to the provision of drains and sewers.¹⁰ The Sand Field, Clay Field and Meadows, which had surrounded the old town since the middle ages, became lined not only with red-brick terraced housing, semi-detached homes and villas, but also with cemeteries, parks, gardens and tree-lined pedestrian promenades. With the Arboretum, the General Cemetery, The Forest Recreation Park, Corporation Oaks, Robin Hood Chase and Queens Walk, the corporation made a lasting contribution to the city with this first attempt at town planning. However, due to the



- ↖ Middle-class housing on what was the Sand Field then Mansfield Grove near the Arboretum (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)
- † An 1855 etching of the Arboretum, opened only a few years earlier (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)



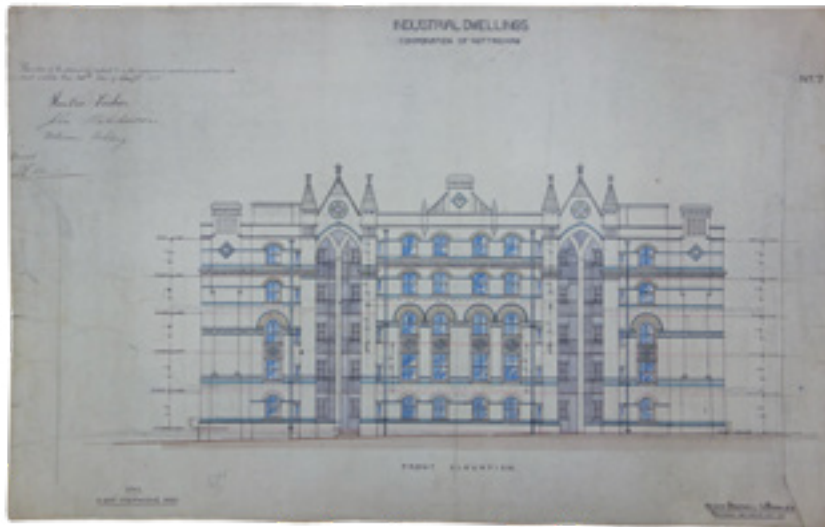
recalcitrance of landowners, the enclosure process took twenty years to complete; the regulations were, because of the duration, misapplied. This had long-term consequences for the future of St Ann's (the Clay Field) and the Meadows. The whole process at first diluted and eventually compounded housing problems: the regulations discouraged low-cost housing, the policing of unsanitary property was tame and the enthusiasm for urban improvement waned.

The 1870s marked the dawn of a more active and municipal age, encouraged by two items of legislation in 1875: the Public Health Act and Artisans' and Labourers' Dwellings Improvement Act. Local authorities gained wider powers: they could enforce stronger building regulations, demolish slum property and take advantage of low-interest loans from central government. In 1870 Sir Samuel George Johnson was appointed Town Clerk, and for the next thirty-eight years drove municipal activities following the example set in Birmingham by Joseph Chamberlain. Johnson appointed to the post of Medical Officer of Health for Nottingham Dr Edward Seaton, who had a more rigorous approach to the regulation of the slums and was an early advocate of a municipal housing programme. This meant that Nottingham, ranking just behind Liverpool,



- ↖ Borough Engineer Marriott Ogle Tarbotton was responsible for a series of municipal works including Trent Bridge and Papplewick Pumping Station (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)
- ↑ The municipal era is underway at the Guildhall, 1888 (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)
- ↙ An early clearance and urban improvement scheme: demolishing Sheep Lane to make way for Market Street (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

1. The Old Problem



became one of the earliest builders of council housing in the country. The first intervention in housing involved the demolition of the Darker's Court slum in Broad Marsh and the building of new housing on Ortzen Street, near the Forest, consisting of forty semi-detached houses with outdoor water closets.¹¹ They were sold to the builders for them to rent out. It is doubtful whether any of the tenants of Darker's Court were resettled here. In the following year (1876) the corporation was busying itself over two much larger schemes: tenement housing for municipal workers in Old Basford and Bath Street. Homes on both sites were to be rented from the corporation. These thus constitute Nottingham's first council housing. Ahead of their time, they were built without government subsidy and were therefore subject to the constraints of local ratepayers. Such positive intentions were not, however, supported by adequate finances. Plans for further building descended into failure and set back any serious consideration of council housing until just before the First World War.

The Old Basford scheme, known as Albert Buildings, was a 64-unit, four-storey block on a one-acre site located off Nottingham Road near the municipal gas works. Although designed by one of Nottingham's most notable architects, Watson Fothergill, the project was fraught with difficulties regarding location, politics, planning and construction. The building quickly proved unpopular and was pulled down in 1891.¹² The Victoria Buildings on Bath Street were less disastrous; instead, they encountered difficulties concerning their

- ↑ The first municipal housing in Nottingham: Victoria Buildings, Bath Street (Courtesy Nottinghamshire Archives)
- Private terraced housing benefiting from building regulations and municipal utilities, Sneinton Hollows (Courtesy Ann Day and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)



- Narrow Marsh slums on the eve of the First World War (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)
- ↓ An 1890s improvement scheme following the demolition of 'The Rookeries', King and Queen Streets. King Street also became the home of the Housing Department, from the mid-1970s to early 1990. (George L Roberts and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)



financing, management and maintenance. Yet the scheme had many qualities: based on the Farringdon Road building in London, this was a five-storey, 82-unit block, with flats containing water closets, a scullery, living room and a shared reading room. The local architects were Bakewell and Bromley, who gave the staircases their distinctive gothic towers.

By the 1880s and '90s it was clear that the council had lost its appetite for municipal housing. Not only were officials under pressure from local rate-payers to tighten their finances, but also the various municipal improvement schemes under way were having a positive effect on the development of private housing. These included: a new Trent Bridge (1871), a school board (1871), gasworks (1874), the Leen Valley Sewerage scheme (1877), art gallery (1878), waterworks (1879), Stoke Bardolph Sewage works (1880), the boulevards (1880s), a university college and library (1881), the Guildhall, magistrates' courts, police offices and fire station (1886-8) and the electric light works on Talbot Street (1894).¹³ In the midst of

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all this, in 1877 the borough boundary was extended, taking in Sneinton, Lenton, Radford, Basford and Bulwell. These areas became lined over the next thirty years with rows of good quality, regulated terraced housing made accessible by a tram system, itself municipalised in 1901. On one occasion the corporation did reluctantly build council housing on Hunger Hill Road after the private developer pulled out of a re-housing scheme.¹⁴ These one hundred red-brick terraces on Hungerhill Road, Chandos Street and Cromer Road were atypical only in that they were supplied with an indoor water closet. The various improvement schemes of the 1890s set an example: clearing 'The Rookeries', creating King and Queen Streets,¹⁵ and joining Parliament Street with St Ann's Well Road. Twelve hundred poorly-built houses were also demolished to make way for Victoria Station. The Great Central Railway Company built 300 houses on Hungerhill as replacements, but these were too expensive for the uprooted families.¹⁶

By the First World War it was clear that the demand for housing had abated for the time being. The slums had not gone away: 7,000 homes in Nottingham were without piped water, adequate ventilation and sanitation.¹⁷ The city still had 30,000 pail closets (a steel bucket for a toilet), which exacerbated infant deaths from diarrhoea during hot summer months.¹⁸ The complex pattern of *petit bourgeois* slum ownership and logistical difficulties over rehousing did little to encourage the council's activities over clearance.¹⁹ Yet by 1914 it was clear this inertia was being eroded,²⁰ as serious clearance and development schemes were drawn up for Narrow Marsh and Carter Gate, only to be abandoned because of the demands of war. The old ways of doing things were no longer working, but the future would be built upon the lessons of the past.



¹ Photograph taken to highlight bedrooms above pail closets, Sun Street near Sneinton Market, 1912 (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

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2 Inter-war Success 1919–1939

“The strange luxurious house with its own concoction of new smells now belonged to us. The four of us living together again would be like the time we spent in the rambling house on Portland Road close to the city, which had come down in the world from the time when it was a middle-class residence, a house of empty rooms because Mam and Dad were too poor to furnish all of them. This new house on the Broxtowe estate was a second chance, a new beginning. In the early spring of 1939, I was only seven years old, my pragmatic, sensible sister a year younger. We joined the exodus of families, most of them from the old slum areas, to the new estates west of the city. Nottingham had an admirable record of slum clearance and re-housing from 1919 until well into the twentieth century. Broxtowe Estate was an expression of that pioneering energy. It was built of ugly red brick, but designed with good intent, plotted and planned for a new way of life. Elliptical in pattern, its layout bewildered the stranger. Walk one of its streets without turning a corner, and you would always return to the spot you started from.”

Derrick Buttress, *Broxtowe Boy*, 2008.¹

During the inter-war period the 17,095 council houses built in Nottingham became a source of achievement, civic pride and social improvement. The city was considered among the largest and fastest builders of council housing in the country, erecting more houses per head of population than most of the big cities outside London.² For an experienced local journalist Nottingham’s inter-war council estates were the ‘pride of the Empire’.³

Newspapers regularly noted visitors from other municipalities and central government, such as Lewis Silkin, Chairman of the London County Council Housing Committee, and Walter Elliot, Minister of Health.⁴ By critics of architecture, the housing estates were admired near and far.

← At the junction of Aspley Lane and Broxtowe Lane, looking south (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

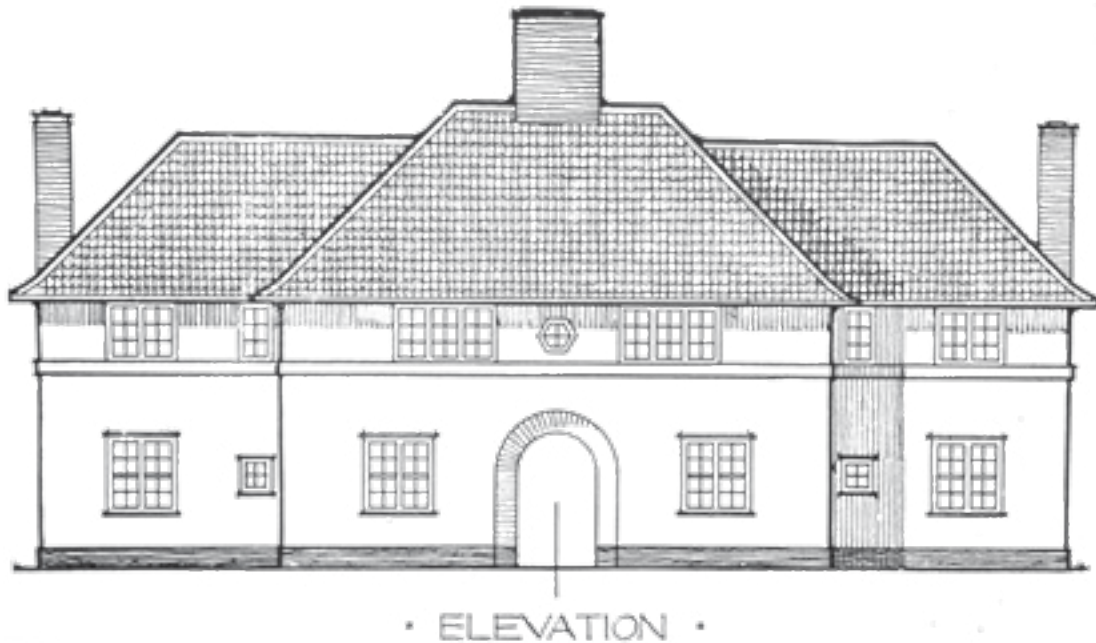
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Raymond Unwin, master planner of the first garden city at Letchworth, praised: 'The City which gave the opportunity and the architect who made such good use of it are alike to be congratulated on the result of their collaboration', going on to state that Nottingham had shown 'how much can be done by the steady and consistent exercise of careful thought and skilled imagination'.⁵ The American public housing advocate Catherine Bauer argued that Nottingham's local authority housing was 'some of the best housing in England'⁶ and residents such as Derrick Buttress had, on the whole, experienced a significant increase in their standard of living.

Politically, after the First World War there was a decisive shift in approach from central government towards unprecedented subsidies for municipal housing following the Addison Act of 1919.⁷ There were a variety of reasons for this renewed desire to tackle urgent housing problems, including a fear of social unrest in the wake of the Russian Revolution and the declining profitability for landlords that provided working class housing following rent controls introduced during the war. This, coupled with a housing shortage, encouraged Prime Minister Lloyd George to make his historic promise of 'habitations fit for heroes who have won the war'.⁸ The Tudor Walters Report created new high standards in

↓ Designs for council houses on sloping sites A18 & A18A/1. From T. C. Howitt, *A Review of the Progress of the Housing Schemes in Nottingham* (1928)



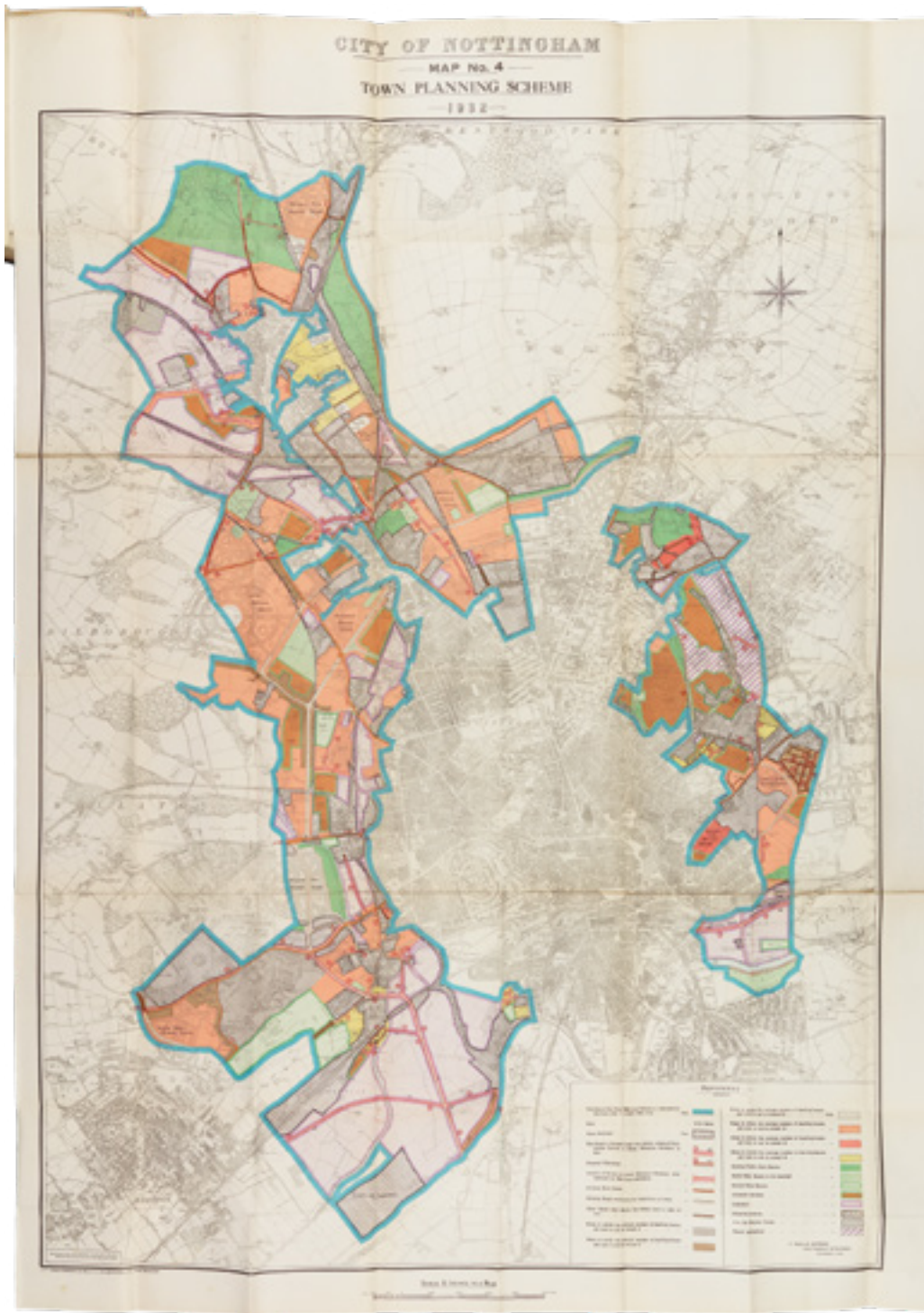


both layout and design; local authorities were to follow the garden city principles of low density, green space and the arts and crafts style.⁹ Central government tried to influence not only the physical form of council housing, but also its social and economic function. Because of this, the inter-war period can neatly be divided into two eras. Generally, throughout the 1920s council housing was for general needs and directly competed with private development for the more affluent sections of the working class. During the following decade the council's view on housing was given a subsidiary focus: that of addressing the more costly task of tackling the needs of overcrowded families and slum clearance, leaving private house builders to meet the needs of the wider population.¹⁰ Both phases had their respective effects on Nottingham, while the speed, scale and architectural quality of the houses were due to very local circumstances.

In 1919 the Nottingham Housing Survey calculated that there was a shortage of 3,700 working-class dwellings in the city,¹¹ due partly

† Designs: type B28. From T. C. Howitt, *A Review of the Progress of the Housing Schemes in Nottingham* (1928)

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← Plan by T. Wallis Gordon showing how the breadth of council estates was by 1932 pushing at the limits of the 1877 boundary. From City of Nottingham, *Reports Presented to the Council 1932-33* (Courtesy East Midlands Collection, University of Nottingham)



- ← Back-to-back private housing during clearance, Colwick Street, near Sneinton Market, 1935 (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)
- ↓ Colwick Street after redevelopment and renamed 'Brook Street' (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

to a rising population, high building costs and the abandonment of construction schemes during the First World War. Throughout the inter-war period there was significant opposition to municipal house building from within the council; such arguments were slowly being defeated by the realities of the housing shortage and the course of events during the 1920s. The first of these happened in 1920, when central government rejected the city's bid (probably because of significant opposition from the city's neighbouring authorities) to extend its boundaries, partly because of the city's poor housing record. This was a huge blow to the corporation's self-esteem, which could be remedied only by grand civic gestures. A consensus was therefore emerging between the local Conservative and Labour leaders, Bernard Wright and Herbert Bowles, to enable the swift execution of capital projects. As both a councillor for a safe Tory ward and a businessman in the building trade, William Crane had the necessary background to chair the Housing Committee from 1919. He was also an energetic enthusiast of council housing – so much so, in fact, that some Labour councillors were 'at a loss to understand why Mr Crane is in the Tory Party'.¹² However, given his preference for private builders and suburban development, he had



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← Cliff Road Estate, built 1934, replacing Red Lion Street and Narrow Marsh slum housing (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

↓ Light, space and greenery: garden city council housing with mansard roofs, Aspley (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

definite conservative views. Nevertheless, Crane had to fight his corner, especially against the 1923 Housing Act, when government subsidies for local authority housing were removed and given to private builders. For a short time it seemed as if Crane had been thwarted; the results of this Act were, however, underwhelming, and it was effectively reversed in the following year. Under the 1924 'Wheatley' Housing Act the political tide turned back in favour of state-financed municipal housing and the city 'witnessed an explosion in local authority building levels unmatched almost anywhere else in the country'.¹³

During those tentative years of the early 1920s, the type of housing built by the corporation reflected the local political tensions. Ratepayers and property owners were interested in reducing scale and encouraging the use of gap sites within the city.¹⁴ They succeeded in locations such as the Meadows (Mundella Road, Woolmer Road, Wilford Grove), Sneinton (Barnston Road), St Ann's (The Wells Road) and Dunkirk (Highfield Road). Woodville Drive (numbers 5–11) in Sherwood was the first of these small schemes and at least two (Kennington Road and Bobbers Mill) were financed entirely by private development then sold to the corporation.¹⁵ Municipal housing enthusiasts were supporters of huge





- ← Nottingham City Council housing, Langdale Road, Bakersfield, 1932, (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)
- ↓ A Crane concrete house at Wollaton, from T. C. Howitt, *A Review of the Progress of the Housing Schemes in Nottingham* (1928)

peripheral estates, due to the economy, speed and scale of building, and the ambitions of the transport service. At 33 acres and 224 dwellings, Stockhill Lane was the first of these big estates, with construction work beginning on 24th October 1919.¹⁶ A much larger development at Sherwood soon followed – at first 127 acres siting 500 houses – although this was the last of the large peripheral schemes until confidence resumed in 1924 with the building of the Wollaton Park estate (422 houses). Wollaton Park would be defined by William Crane’s ingenious building system: essentially, concrete walls supported by a steel frame. Developed in order to reduce building costs, the speed of construction was a considerable success – an entire estate was complete within two years. Nevertheless, the use of concrete proved controversial. With a decline in building costs in the latter half of the 1920s, the use of traditional materials was resumed. Before the decade was out, estates such as Lenton Abbey (880 homes), Bulwell Hall (808), Aspley (2,838) and the re-housing of 1,496 Narrow Marsh



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- Constructing the bridge on Western Boulevard, 1932 (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)
- ↓ The radial layout of Aspley Estate with William Crane School at the centre (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)



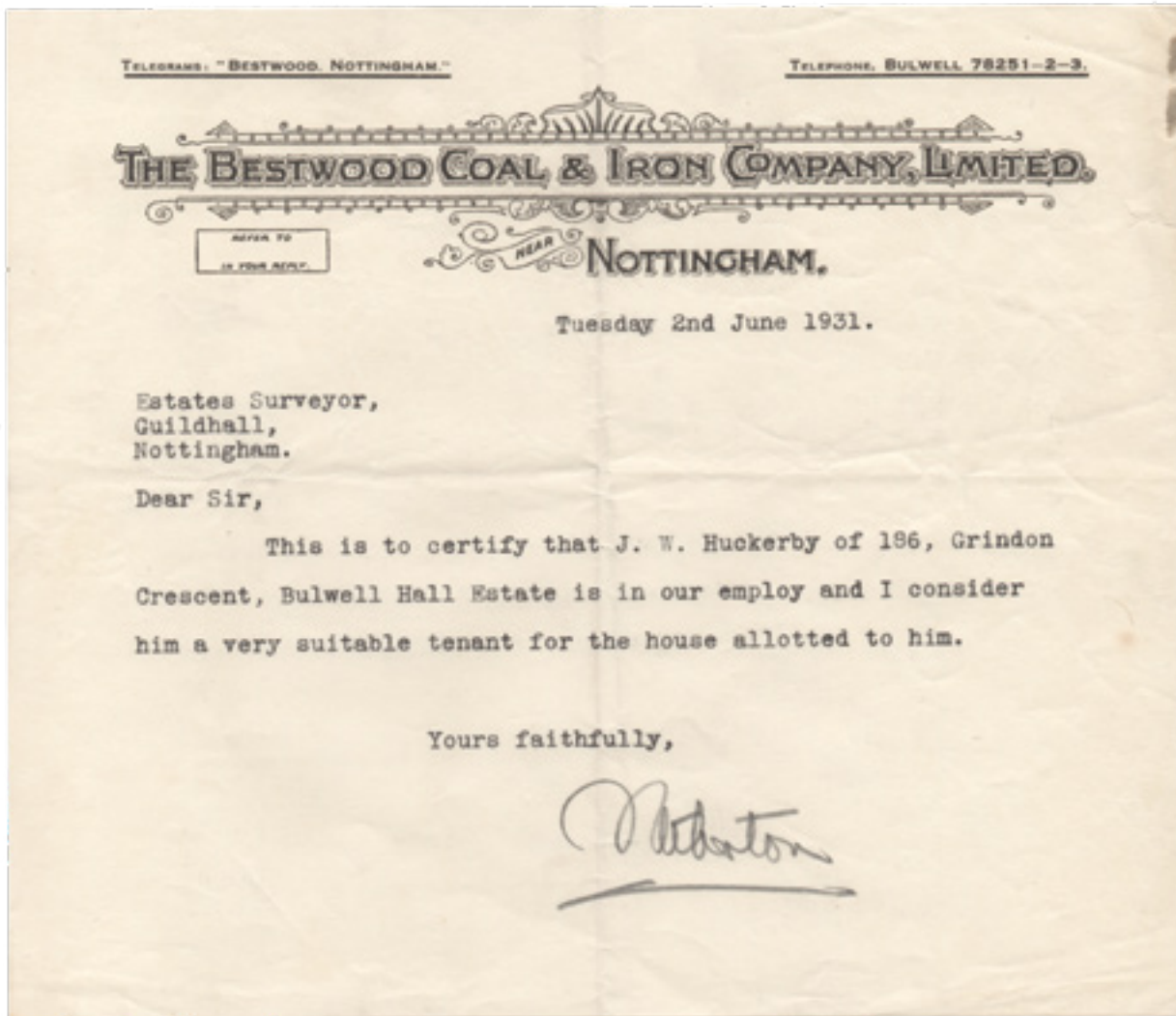
residents were under way. The 1930 Housing Act encouraged further clearance schemes and the building of a greater number of peripheral estates at Sneinton Dale (489), Edwards Lane (650), Heathfield (564), White-moor (584) and Bells Lane (922).¹⁷ In the midst of these successful developments the city's boundary was finally extended in 1932, taking in Strelley, Bilborough, Bestwood and Colwick. The 1933 Housing Act reduced the quality and diversity of the big estates built in the latter part of the decade – Bilborough (686), Broxtowe (1,558) and Bestwood (1,137) – as government subsidies were no longer directed at general needs, but solely at slum clearance, rehusing and overcrowded families.¹⁸

Generally, a private contractor built the houses, while the roads and utilities were laid by municipal direct labour following the plans of the city engineer who, until 1935, was T. Wallis Gordon. These outer estates were connected with the city's main arterial routes *via* the construction of a new ring road. After the 1924 Wheatley Act the city's municipal

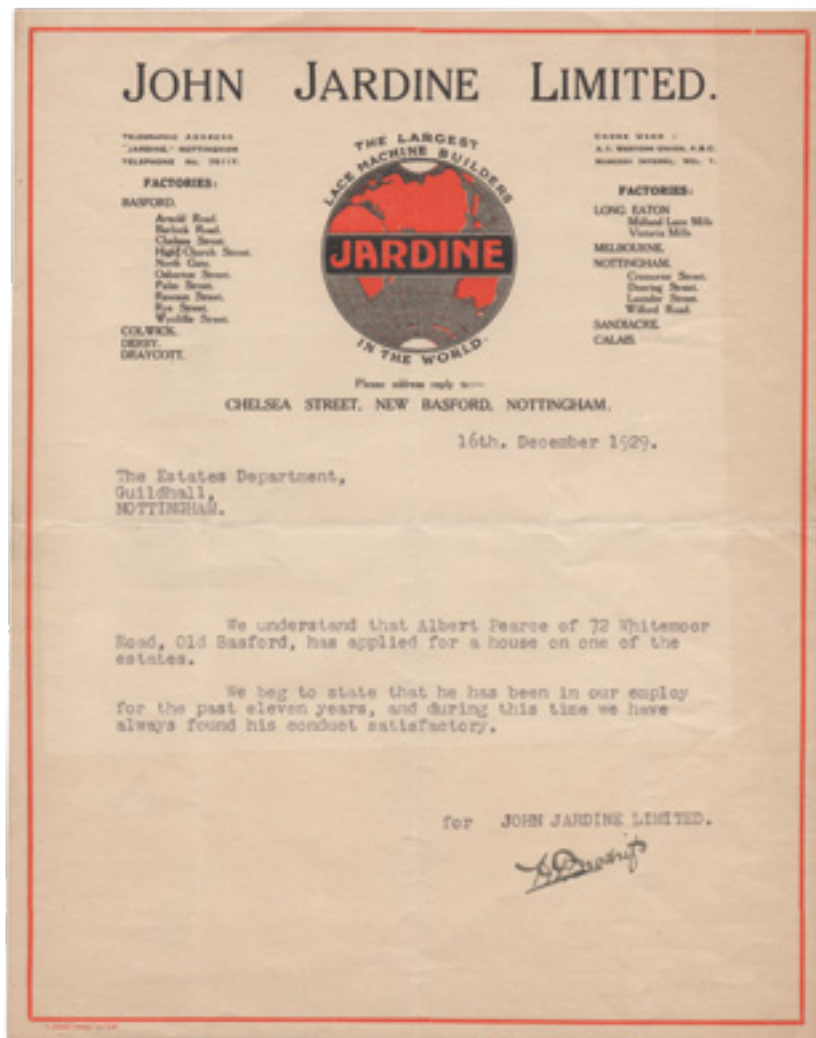


† Outdoor nursery, fresh air and the garden city ethos, William Crane School, 1936 (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

architect T. C. Howitt no longer shared the design work with a variety of private architects; instead, he and his department took centre stage. Howitt sought to create variation within a formal setting, the red-brick housing based on the traditional countryside cottage, designed with considered proportions and planned around geometric radial routes. To prevent monotony, estate layouts were given differences, with semi-detached, blocks of four or six, cul-de-sacs, narrow drives, greens, facing gables and mansard or hipped roofs. In some instances, schools were placed at the centre of these new neighbourhoods, defined as these were by playing fields, fresh air, wide roads and low densities. Here would see 12 homes to the acre compared with 50 per acre in the post-1875 terraces. All houses were supplied with gardens, entrance hall, bathroom, a hot-water supply, electric fittings, water closet, larder, coal store, linen store, recessed cupboards, open shelves and a fireplace. Spaces were reserved for a gas cooker in the kitchen and for washing tubs in



- † A letter from the Bestwood Iron & Coal Company for a prospective council tenant. Bulwell Hall Estate was just a short walk away from the pithead



† References were required in the early years of council housing so that local authorities could verify if a prospective tenant could pay the rent, get on with the neighbours and keep the house in good order

the scullery. Where possible, the parlour (large living room) was arranged at a suitable aspect for the evening sun and had through ventilation. The special narrow-fronted non-parlour houses were designed to provide lower-cost rental accommodation for ex-servicemen; they were fitted into the smaller gap sites within the city boundary.

By most accounts the response from tenants was positive: this new accommodation created a significant improvement in their standard of living. A Broxtowe resident would later recall:

“We were a large family and [had] an outside toilet. A standpipe in the backyard served four homes. Then one day it changed. My parents were allocated new houses on Beckley Road, Broxtowe. There was the sheer luxury of four-bedroomed houses with inside flush toilet. And there was a really big bath, which we used day and night because we never had one before!”¹⁹

Nearby, Derek Buttress was only seven years old when he moved with his mother, father and sister into a new council house on Frinton Road after his father had fallen into rent arrears at Hyson Green:

“‘Come look at this!’ Brenda shouted from another room. I ran to her. This room was smaller even than the attic I knew so well. Fixed to the wall by the window was a hand basin with two shining chrome taps. Brenda was wrestling with the cold tap, trying to turn it on, but lacking strength. ‘A sink in the bedroom!’ she said awestruck. I knocked her hand away and turned the tap on. We watched the water swirl around the small basin, then gurgle noisily away. After the one-tap houses we had lived in before, such a facility in a bedroom seemed a reckless extravagance. I turned the tap off and we scampered, excited, into the third bedroom.”²⁰

Despite the excitement, luxury and affordability, for some people such as Derek’s mother the low density and peripheral location of the estate created a degree of isolation:

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“Mum was restless for a long time. Broxtowe was remote, an island of isolation far from Hyson Green. She missed the bustle of people with familiar faces who crowded the shops of her home ground: the general store called “Staddons” where you could buy everything from a chamber pot to a new rig-out for Saturday night; the fishmongers’ and butchers’ shops with their small cloud of flies always in attendance. Most of all she missed the pubs where you have a sing-song and see a fight at the same time. Broxtowe estate she looked upon as her bad luck place.”²¹

In some respects this was the result of the council’s ‘top-down’ approach, common in local authorities at that time. Tenants were often allocated on the basis that they could get on with their neighbours, would suit the house, have a sufficient standard of cleanliness and regularly pay the rent.²² Nevertheless, there were some community initiatives, such as the Nottingham Housing Estates Garden Competition, run by the City Council from the 1930s.²³ Many residents were inexperienced gardeners and had to make do with very little, yet despite these challenges the gardens were often well kept.²⁴ In 1953 one experienced Aspley resident, John Poole, wrote *The Housing Estate Garden*, a practical guide for other council tenants.²⁵ Overall, by the outbreak of the Second World War it seemed that the scale and quality of Nottingham’s council houses were a huge success, but the rumblings over the amenities, layout and the limits of the northern periphery would continue.



- ← Covers of the 1937 and 1940 brochures advertising the Garden Competition for council house tenants. Points were awarded for:
1. General arrangement
 2. Flowers and shrubs
 3. Privet fences
 4. Vegetables & fruit
 5. Neatness & cleanliness
- (Courtesy Nottingham City Homes)

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3 Post-war Rebuilding 1945–1959

“It was a mud bath, but I didn’t care.”

Edna Dearman¹

Council house building in the immediate post Second World War period shared many similarities with the inter-war years, particularly in terms of national policy, local government, scale and the garden city ethos. However, there were subtle differences when it came to modernity, state intervention, town planning and how people experienced the new housing. As in the inter-war period, national policy in the first fifteen years of peacetime was concentrated on reducing the severe housing shortage through subsidies for high-quality general needs council housing. A change in direction towards slum clearance and a reduction in the general needs subsidy were heralded by the 1954 Housing Repairs & Rent Act. Significant clearances were indeed underway by the late 1950s, yet the enforcement of this Act was effectively postponed until the 1960s, due to the scale of the demand for housing.² Furthermore, the 1944 Dudley Report shared many similarities with its 1919 predecessor, although it stipulated higher building standards and more spaciousness.³

Where the immediate post-war era clearly differed, however, was in central government’s approach to social security, full employment and to the nationalisation of coal mining, the railways and the health service. Electricity and gas followed suit; the Indian summer of municipal enterprise was over. Some of those changes might have come to pass under a Conservative government in 1945. They failed, though, to capture the public’s desire for a more equitable experience than in the 1930s, thus the path was opened for a Labour election victory.⁴ The successful Conservative governments of the 1950s did little to alter this popular social-economic

← Clifton Bridge, designed by the City Engineer R. M. Finch and built in 1958, as seen in 1962 (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)



3. Post-war Rebuilding



† Unrealised plans for a new civic centre. From *Report of the Reconstruction Committee on Post-war Development in the City of Nottingham, October, 1943* (Courtesy Nottingham City Homes)

framework yet they did correctly identify the growth of consumerism and working-class affluence.⁵ This confidence was identified in Alan Sillitoe's novel, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958), where the central character Arthur Seaton enjoys the fruits of Nottingham's strong manufacturing economy to the point of mayhem.⁶

The local Labour Party of the time was more successful than it had been previously, but there remained a close contest with the Conservatives: the inter-war consensus endured.⁷ Compromise was the order of the day: ambitions for a grand municipal civic centre and inner ring road were delayed by the needs of new council housing. There was also little change in the direction of the Housing Committee, led by William Crane until 1957. Furthermore, throughout the 'forties and 'fifties the City Engineer was R. M. Finch, who had been in the same position since 1935. Therefore, the planning of the post-war estates would be an incremental development upon the inter-war experience, rather than a radical change. In place of the geometric plan of the old estates, the new layouts would be a less formal arrangement: each neighbourhood would have its own centre, defined by shops, churches, youth clubs and public houses. This was clearly realised at Bracebridge Drive (Bilborough), Southchurch Road (Clifton) and in some ways at Flamsteed Road (Strelley).

Despite these subtle developments in planning, some radical solutions were unavoidable because of the necessities of the late 1940s. The most important of these was found in the severity of national post-war shortages in housing, labour and materials. These problems could not be tackled by persevering with local brick building methods, thus new technologies in concrete and prefabrication were employed. A number of systems were encouraged by central government's offering of special grants. This approach had its greatest impact upon the Bilborough Estate (1947-52), where 2,676 houses were built using a variety of methods.⁸ There were, for example, steel houses erected by the British Iron and Steel Federation (BISF), whose factory-made

component parts could be assembled on site within a week.⁹ Former Transport Policeman Dennis Thompson recalled moving into his BISF house on Hoylake Crescent:

“I came from a working-class family and buying a house was out of the question, I had come out of the Army and had three young children and a wife to support. There were 3,000 on the waiting list for one of these houses, but thankfully my mother put my name down for a council house before the war. I really love living here. It’s the neighbours who make living here a pleasure. The metal contracts in the winter and expands in the summer, creating gaps between the walls and doors and it can be quite draughty.”¹⁰

These BISF houses were principally located along the eastern fringe of the new estate at Wigman Road, in contrast with the prefabricated concrete ‘Tarran Newland’ houses on the western side around Cockington Road. Both types of houses were semi-detached. The bungalows offered a much cheaper, smaller and quicker approach: aluminium at Beechdale and Bilborough, and precast concrete at Beechdale, Cinderhill and Nuthall Road. Perhaps the most successful of the non-traditional methods were the Wimpey ‘No Fines’ poured-concrete houses, which first



- ↑ Prefabricated bungalows, Bilborough (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)
- ← BISF steel housing off Staverton Road, Bilborough (Courtesy Nottingham City Homes)

3. Post-war Rebuilding

appeared on Birchover Road in Bilborough and continued at the Clifton estate.¹¹ It seems, however, that this flirtation with concrete was a stop-gap before a return to brick-built housing, which had already by the late 1940s begun to appear at Bilborough and would constitute the majority of Wollaton Vale, Strelley, Ainsley and Bestwood Park. With both front and back gardens, all of these houses seemingly continued the basic premise of the inter-war garden city model. Howitt's traditional motifs were later abandoned in favour of modernity as porches and rooflines became simplified.

It was clear by the 1940s that the city was developing unevenly, as its council estates were generally located to the northwest of the city.¹¹ This was stretching both commuter travel and public utilities. Pressure was growing within the council to extend the boundary southwards of the Trent. At Bestwood Park, development was tied to the local coal-mining programme; it had to be put on hold due to concerns over subsidence. As early as 1943 a site was identified on agricultural land at the parish of Clifton-cum-Glaption, only three miles from the city centre. This led, however, to a degree of conflict with the city's neighbouring local authorities, who prolonged the development and influenced its final appearance. The proposed housing estate at Clifton meant a loss of rates, agricultural land, beauty and prestige for Nottinghamshire County Council and Basford Rural District Council.¹³ Conferences, heated arguments and a public inquiry ensued. The Minister of Town and Country Planning Lewis Silkin, rejected the development in 1948 on the grounds of the city's lack of co-operation. This was a severe blow for Nottingham; two years later, in 1950, a second application was successful, thanks both to the determination of William Crane and to a more co-operative approach from the city. The result was that the Clifton estate retained as far as possible the rural essence of the area. This was achieved through a low-density development, surrounded by a green belt, allotments and playing fields, with houses that burned smokeless fuel and no noxious industries.¹⁴

↓ Garden Competition winners, 1950. Prizes were awarded to winners from most estates; trophies were endowed by city dignitaries and prominent local firms (Courtesy Nottingham City Homes)





← Clifton College, 1961 (Courtesy George L Roberts and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

↓ Clifton Bridge, 1958 (Courtesy Nottingham Evening Post and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

The Clifton estate, with 30,000 residents and 6,828 houses built within seven years between 1951 and 1958,¹⁵ was an unprecedented achievement by the corporation. Also, it reflected the vogue for New Towns in post-war Britain. The estate was divided into five distinct neighbourhoods, each having its primary schools, local shops and parks within walking distance. Secondary schools were to be located on the periphery, while a busy shopping parade and tree-lined pedestrian route would cross the centre. The existing trees and woodlands would be retained. Glapton village was given its own identity through its brick-built housing, lower density and by keeping a few of its old cottages.¹⁶ This ensured a degree of diversity within the overall layout, which was largely dominated by some 3,000 white Wimpey 'No Fines' houses. Despite this more enlightened approach to planning, the early Clifton residents were beset by a number of problems that made life on the estate daunting. The most immediate of these was the relatively high rent, the expensive smokeless fuel and the distance from town. In its early years the Clifton estate was a building site that had few shops and infrequent public transport. A cinema was planned for Clifton then the rise in TV rentals made such an enterprise too risky. A general feeling of isolation grew.



3. Post-war Rebuilding

Newspaper advertisements showed people wanted to transfer out of Clifton, and in 1958 an ITV documentary branded the estate 'Hell on Earth'.¹⁷ To make matters worse, Clifton was being criticised not only by the sensationalist media, but also by more academic quarters:

"In appearance it is monotonous. As a community it is almost solidly composed of the lower-middle and lower income groups; sources of employment are lacking and apart from education, social provision is still inadequate. While we may sense a lack of inspiration and social vision in the planning of Clifton, the Corporation can at least claim that compared with only a few decades ago its ratepayers are decently housed. Yet, I submit, it takes more than mass-produced housing to make a desert blossom."¹⁸

In time, however, the life of the estate grew in strength, with churches, social groups, a health centre and elderly persons' homes. The shopping parade was busier, the bus service more frequent, and the building of Clifton Bridge in 1958 made it quicker to get into town. It was also certain that, for the most part, the new houses were an improvement on what residents had experienced before. Edna Dearman spent five years on the waiting list while living in a 'two-up, two-down' in the Meadows:

"I jumped for joy. I thought it was beautiful. It was a mud bath but I didn't care. We had our first house of our own."¹⁹

Similarly, Mrs Randall was a young mother when she arrived with her husband:

"Well, I thought it was nice and it was a relief to get a house of your own after being in a flat, you know, and living with relations. And it was rather messy because there were no roads, it was just mud from here to the house across the road, you know. No road, no hedges, no barriers around your garden or anything, you didn't know how much garden you'd got. Plus I'd got a month-old baby at the time when I moved in so that was my main interest and I'd only been finished work about three months, you know



↑ Shops on Varney Road, Clifton, Nottingham, 1962 (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

← Wimpey housing and Southchurch Court along Farnborough Road, 2007 (Courtesy Nottingham City Homes).

... so everything was new to me. There was only one shop and that was Forbuoys.²⁰

Miriam Quail, moved to Clifton from Sneinton in 1952 and later recalled the pioneering spirit:

“[B]ut I liked it, as a matter of fact. I thought and I can't think of anywhere else that I would like to live ... I like the style of the house and as I say I like the neighbours, they are neighbourly without being interfering ... When we first came up here it was little bit bleak, we moved in October and it was cold ... the house did take a lot of keeping warm, but we like it and you know, so we stuck it out ... The only bus service there was, was the one that came from Huntingdon Street and went straight down along the main road to Gotham and Loughborough and that. There is a tree, I don't know whether the tree's still there, but there was on the main road and we used to put notices on it for, you know, if we wanted anything, passing round sort of thing, and it was always called 'the tree' - you know, if you wanted anything, go and look on the tree.”²¹



- ↑ Brick-built housing in Clifton (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)
- ← Neo-Georgian proportions and a modern canopy, Orford Avenue Shops, Clifton, Nottingham, c.1950s (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

3. Post-war Rebuilding



Photographs showing family life on Havenwood Rise, Clifton (Courtesy Wendy and Kevin Sheldon):

- ↖ Dad, Mr Ronald Sheldon mowing the lawn in the front garden, c.1950s
- ↑ Mum, Mrs Elsie Sheldon, outside her home, 1963. Elsie was the first tenant of the house when it was new. The family still live there today
- ← Son and daughter, Kevin and Wendy Sheldon on the day of Wendy's Christening in 1964

As time wore on community life became firmly embedded into the very fabric of the Clifton estate. Wendy Sheldon recalls the Silver Jubilee street parties of 1977:

“The Queen's Silver Jubilee was approaching so one of our neighbours got an idea to do a street party, so she went round the whole street and collected about one pound a week from the residents until she thought she had enough ... My late mother [Elsie] made all the buntings on her hand sewing machine, she used any bits of material that were coloured red, white and blue ... We had the late Dennis McCarthy from BBC Nottingham come judge our street for the best dressed and decorated competition in Clifton, our street came second ... We made the oldest female resident the Queen of the Street, she wore a long silver dress, a silver crown and sash ... The food was placed on tables specially ordered for us to cater for about 100 children and adults ... The atmosphere was brill, everyone singing old songs, laughing and dancing... It was a party I will never forget ...”²²

Many council tenants of the 1950s, such as Edna Dearman, Miriam Quail, Mrs Randall and Wendy Sheldon's mother Elsie, would have met neighbours of similar age, which was generally under thirty years old. Furthermore, because of the general needs subsidy, the council estates of Billborough, Ainsley, Clifton and Bestwood Park had a higher percentage of residents in skilled occupations than did those estates built in the latter part of the 1930s.²³ The 2,871 houses on Bestwood Park were largely built in the 1960s although it was begun in 1959 thus represents the last of the post-war peripheral estates for general needs.²⁴ By this point the council decided that a balanced age structure was necessary in order to reduce under-occupation, so it was built with more one- and two-bedroomed homes. As at Clifton, certain woodlands were retained; a site at Beckhampton Road was earmarked for a neighbourhood centre. However, the Bestwood Park estate did not necessitate a boundary extension. Having been stung by the protracted boundary negotiations at Clifton, the housing department began to look inward and upward.

Endnotes

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- 6 Sillitoe was born in 1928 in a council house on Lenton Abbey estate. Today a blue plaque marks the location, at 38 Manton Crescent.
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- 8 City Estates Surveyor, 'Appendix VI Nottingham's Housing Record', in K. C. Edwards, *Nottingham and its Region* (British Association for the Advancement of Science, Nottingham, 1966), p. 537.
- 9 Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, *The Ten Year Plan* (17 minutes, 1945), BFI.
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- 11 The Wimpey No Fines house was a construction method developed by the George Wimpey company to Ministry of Works specifications after World War Two. It was designed to help mass-produce homes. 'No Fines' refers to the type of concrete used, concrete with no fine aggregates
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- 13 Basford Rural District was made up of two detached parts, to the north and south of Nottingham City. The Nottingham suburb of Basford was not part of the rural district, having been added to Nottingham in 1877. It ceased to exist with the re-organisation of local government in 1974.
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4 Clearance & High-Rise 1960–1969

“I had an indoor bathroom, beautiful kitchen. It was paradise, absolutely paradise. The lounge was L-shaped. I had no furniture to put in it when I first moved in. Oh, but the potential was amazing. It really was.”¹

Colleen Murden (on Hyson Green Flats)

The 1960s marked a new era for council housing in Nottingham, both architecturally and politically. As the city embarked upon high-rise developments, the local political consensus was breaking down, and the council lacked the old certainties of direction. These problems were intensified by the activities of central government, where both the Labour and Conservative parties competed over the number of new homes each would promise to deliver. High-rise was seen as a good way of reducing not only the waiting list and urban sprawl, but also under-occupation, by providing accommodation with fewer than three bedrooms. The subsidies offered to local authorities therefore specifically encouraged flats rising over six storeys.² Meanwhile, the 1961 Parker Morris Report required improved standards in space and heating for each new development – yet the limits placed on expenditure by the Housing Cost Yardstick failed to match these requirements.³ It was therefore an impossible situation and it is not surprising that desperate local authorities were so easily persuaded by pre-fabrication, contractors and volume builders to take rash decisions. In a BBC documentary examining the failures of a range of system-built pre-fabricated flats, Nottingham’s former Assistant Chief Architect, Gordon Stobbs (1964–74), recalled how Basford and Hyson Green Flats were approved:

“I can remember very well taking them to Committee and both schemes going through in something like two minutes flat and a £2,000



← Highcross Court, Radford, 1963: a concrete wall-framed block containing 112 maisonettes and built on a clearance site (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

† Highurst Court, the first high-rise in Nottingham, complete November 1961 (Courtesy G Oldfield and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

4. Clearance & High-rise



← Basford Flats, Stockhill Lane
(Courtesy of George L Roberts and
www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

↓ Just before high-rise and system
building took hold: Scandinavian
modern flats, Montfort Street,
Radford. Built in 1959 (Courtesy
Nottingham City Council and [www.
picturenottingham.co.uk](http://www.picturenottingham.co.uk))

scheme for something like a toilet block was probably discussed for something like half an hour... [I]t's ingrained in my memory that these two schemes were disposed of so quickly by Committee, not that I expected Committee to do any more. I remember it well ... a reflection of the mood of the times. Get it built as quickly as possible, then think.¹⁴

The problems faced by Nottingham were replicated throughout the country. There were, though, notable success stories of where local councils had the necessary political will, for example, in Sheffield, Southampton and in various London boroughs. Nor were all of Nottingham's high-rises a dead loss: a number have provided accommodation for generations and continue to do so, with certain locations deemed very desirable. If implemented properly, blocks of flats provide a clean and efficient urban life, by reducing utility costs and protecting the green belt. Despite these nuances, the experience that ensued did serious damage to the reputations of modernism and of the architectural profession. The Ronan Point disaster in 1968 is often cited as signalling the end of the high-rise era, when a block of flats in London partially collapsed following a gas explosion.⁵ Central government policy turned a corner and as a result of the 1969 Housing Act,





№ 0675

2

YEAR 1968-69

CITY OF NOTTINGHAM

RENT CARD 53

Shared No. _____

Name *W.A. & J.A. Marshall*

Address *67 Abbey Court*

Date of Birth _____ Monthly Value £ *4.15*

WEEKLY RENT _____

City of Nottingham Housing Department
 41 Grosvenor Street, Nottingham, Notts. N1 2JH
 Hours: 9.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Friday
 Telephone: 422222 (4 lines) or 422223 (2 lines)
 THE CITY HOUSING DEPARTMENT
 City Hall, Nottingham, NG1 2EP
 Hours: 9.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Friday

№ 1373

2

YEAR 1967-68

CITY OF NOTTINGHAM

RENT CARD 53

Shared No. _____

Name *W.A. & J.A. Marshall*

Address *67 Abbey Court*

Date of Birth _____ Monthly Value £ *4.15*

WEEKLY RENT _____

City of Nottingham Housing Department
 41 Grosvenor Street, Nottingham, Notts. N1 2JH
 Hours: 9.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Friday
 Telephone: 422222 (4 lines) or 422223 (2 lines)
 THE CITY HOUSING DEPARTMENT
 City Hall, Nottingham, NG1 2EP
 Hours: 9.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Friday

- ↑ Rent Cards for W.A. & J.A. Marshall, tenants at 67 Abbey Court, Lenton Flats (Courtesy Nottingham City Homes)
- ← Lenton flats and the adjacent Church Square shopping precinct, 1977 (Courtesy George L Roberts and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

subsidies for tower blocks were reduced. The optimism of the early 1960s – full employment, pop music, motorways – gradually gave way to the uncertainties of low growth, traffic and the country's failure to join the European Economic Community.

In 1959 it was clear that the city was embarking on more controversial era of local politics when Nottingham hit the national headlines over the 'Popkess Affair'. This centred around the Labour council's refusal to give local Police Chief Constable Athelstan Popkess control of the city's traffic wardens. In response Popkess investigated the council regarding possible charges of corruption and reported this to the press. Popkess was suspended. The charges proved to be

4. Clearance & High-rise



† The inner motorway that never was: Huntingdon Street looking north (Courtesy The East Midlands Collection, University of Nottingham)

unfounded, but the subsequent press coverage contributed towards Labour's defeat in the 1961 local election.⁶ The incoming Conservative administration was promising to abandon the plans for the new Playhouse Theatre, although the funding was subsequently secured from the Gas Trust Fund – an income derived from the nationalisation of the municipal gas industry. Labour offered a more modest programme when the party regained control two years later. The political pendulum swung back in 1967, when the Conservative-controlled authority encouraged the sale of council houses to the city's tenants.⁷ In the period 1959-1967 the housing department therefore lacked the consistency of political direction it had previously experienced. The old consensus was already wearing thin during the 1950s when disagreement emerged over the scale of demolition and of private development. As longstanding Chairman of the Housing Committee, William Crane preferred a more piecemeal approach towards the Denman Street clearances; he was deposed in 1957.⁸ Three years later the long-serving City Engineer, R. M. Finch, announced his retirement and was replaced by F. M. Little, who produced a traffic plan widely criticised for its aggressive treatment of the historic townscape.⁹ This was being proposed just as the bleak reality of Maid Marian Way was dawning. Meanwhile, the city belatedly appointed a City Architect, David Jenkin, in 1964. He was not, however, highly regarded within the profession.¹⁰ For the local writer and broadcaster Ray Gosling it seemed as if the city lacked imagination, so in 1963 he ran – unsuccessfully – in the local elections under the slogan 'Vote for a Madman':

"Electors of Nottingham – wake up – travel to Leicester, Coventry, Birmingham and see new buildings rising up – come back to this, by tradition, the Queen of the Midlands – one of the richest, most advanced and civilised areas in the world, and you see a shambles where it shouldn't be – a city ripe and ready to develop and move into the 1960s, but swimming in its own slime; shambling along in the 1960s without imagination, guts or go ...



- ← Clearance underway at Willoughby Street, Lenton (Courtesy George L Roberts and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)
- ↓ Piecemeal demolition and rebuilding work at Denman Street, Radford (Courtesy George L Roberts and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

I was fifteen, and had never been here, when I first heard of the houses off Wilford Road, a boy at school I was told of the slums, the bad housing that is still in 1963 – The Meadows.”¹¹

Gosling tapped into a local mood that many other would-be councillors were experiencing – complaints from residents concerning the city’s poor housing. The 1951 census confirmed that 43% of houses in the city had no baths,¹² while it was safe to assume that most pre-1918 housing had neither indoor flush toilets nor piped hot water. Although the 1947 waiting list of 12,000 had been almost halved by 1962, only 3,000 houses had been demolished; at that rate, it would take fifty years to complete the clearance programme.¹³

Where the clearances were taking place depended upon the nineteenth-century history of Nottingham. The worst pre-enclosure housing was eradicated in the 1930s, and attention had by the 1950s turned to the once-aspirational working-class houses in the old satellite neighbourhoods at New Lenton, New Radford, Sneinton, Hyson Green, Carrington, Basford and Bulwell. Over 11,000 houses were considered unsatisfactory, with the most urgent cases at Denman Street, New Radford – where the first high-rise flats were built in 1961.¹⁴ Both Highurst Court and



4. Clearance & High-rise

Clifford Court were constructed by Rostance: essentially a concrete frame with brick panels. At eleven storeys high, each contained 45 two-bedroomed maisonettes, which could be accessed from five decks and two-person passenger lifts.¹⁵ Water was supplied from a roof tank and heating provided by an oil-fired boiler on the ground floor. Neighbouring this were blocks of low-rise flats, garages, parking spaces and a children's play area. A similar but much larger scheme followed two years later at nearby Highcross Court – a concrete wall framed block containing 112 maisonettes built by Bison (Northern) Concrete. The Lenton flats were another Bison wall frame building, this time contracted by Gregory Housing Ltd and one of the first schemes designed by David Jenkin. Begun in 1965, these five point-blocks at seventeen storeys tall contained 480 dwellings and were set beside Willoughby Street, amid a park and shopping precinct.¹⁶ The same Bison wall frame system was also used to erect four towers at Basford and one at Hyson Green – only the last would survive into the

↓ '1001' Wimpey high-rises, Sherwood; Woodthorpe and Winchester Courts (Courtesy Nottingham Evening Post and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)



twenty-first century (transferred into private ownership in 2006 and redeveloped as flats for sale). Of all the Nottingham high-rise builders, those by Wimpey would be the most prolific and longest-lasting. Generally, there were two types; the first was a sixteen-storey '1001' block containing 90 flats, made of a concrete frame and brick panels – a total of six were built in Sneinton, Sherwood and Colwick.¹⁷ Excluding Greater London, Wimpey built between 20-35% of all high-rises in Britain; Wimpey's strength lay in cities whose councils were half-hearted about prefabrication.¹⁸ The second type was also a mix of one- and two-bedroomed flats, usually a little taller and lacking the symmetry and brick panels of its predecessor. Clifton and Sneinton had one each,¹⁹ while Radford had four positioned in a cluster around Hartley Road; these were sited beside a car park and a series of low-rise flats that extended across towards Ilkeston Road as part of a wholesale redevelopment of this part of Radford. More unusual, however, were the Victoria Centre Flats by Taylor Woodrow; they



← The Victoria Centre Flats nearing completion (Courtesy Nottingham Evening Post and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

4. Clearance & High-rise



- ← Balloon Woods, 1972
(Courtesy Reg Baker and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)
- ↓ Connaught Gardens, Radford
(Courtesy Reg Baker and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

are essentially a concrete frame above a shopping centre. Completed in 1972, these 464 flats were designed by the architect Arthur Swift, who envisaged this complex as part of ‘a new city centre’.²⁰

Often neighbouring the new high-rises were multi-storey deck access complexes erected by the same builders, such as those at Old Basford and Hyson Green. They contained hundreds of flats in a mix of blocks ranging in height. Beside the Radford towers built by Wimpey were Denman and Connaught Gardens: a group of interlinked blocks north of Ilkeston Road that held 300 flats, all built by Laing. There was also a series of concrete blocks built by the Yorkshire Development Group (YDG) at Balloon Woods, a peripheral site in Wollaton Vale. This project began in 1966; eventually, it contained more than 600 dwellings. YDG was a consortium of local authorities – Hull, Leeds, Sheffield and Nottingham, similar to the Nottinghamshire-based CLASP system – set up to align the public sector with progressive building methods and





← Restaurant for residents, Alexandra Court, a block for women only, Mapperley (Courtesy Nottingham Evening Post and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

revive British industry.²¹ It was centred on the steel industry of Sheffield, which was home to similar deck-access schemes (such as Park Hill, Hyde Park and Kelvin Flats) and keen to establish a new building tradition.²² High up on the Wells Road in Nottingham was an in-house design at Kingsthorpe Close and Kendale Court: a series of red-brick blocks with a mix of dwellings ranging from one to four bedrooms.

Of the 8,500 or so council homes built in Nottingham during the 1960s only a third were high-rise, and compared to Liverpool or Birmingham, the city built relatively few such buildings.²³ Most of the homes built by the council were suburban semis (as Clifton and Bestwood Park neared completion), deck-access or low-rise developments. The first of these were completed at the beginning of the sixties; they were the brick-built, Scandinavian-style modern flats of Moorgate Street in Radford, and also at Alexandra Court in Mapperley (a block for women only). However, most of the 1960s low-rise schemes that followed were system-built

4. Clearance & High-rise



houses which, like the deck-access homes, were specifically encouraged by the National Building Agency of central government. The newly-patented industrial building techniques promised quick assembly with their factory-made component parts, such as cast concrete, hung tiles and timber panelling. These ranged from maisonettes, three-storey terraces and three-bedroomed houses to one-bedroomed bungalows.²⁴ In some instances it was possible to employ the services of local builders: for example, at Ilkeston Road, Alfreton Road and Sneinton Road the choice was William Moss, and at Leen Valley it was Vic Hallam. However, in most instances it was only the large national firms who could meet the high demand: George Wimpey at Crabtree Farm and Top Valley, Rowlinsons at Bulwell and Highbury Vale, and Bison Concrete at Park Lane.²⁵ The success of these larger firms, particularly George Wimpey, would influence housing in the 1970s.

When it came to life in high-rise and deck-access homes, Martin

† Deck access flats at Crabtree Farm, (Courtesy Nottingham City Homes)

Rockley remembers that the optimistic ethos was not lost on its residents:

“Living in Balloon Woods flats was brilliant. I loved the constant hum contained within each area. These large and individual open spaces were each defined by their own playground, grassy knolls and trees. Every balcony witnessed a constantly changing scene. It felt new. The ramp. The rubbish chutes. The long meandering walkways which, while remaining level, became ever higher from the ground as you ventured from Beeley, to Nidderdale, to Peak.

Balloon Woods flats was always exciting. There was the fun and naughtiness to be had in the lifts, stairs, odd little spaces and, best of all, the woods themselves. The whole place was an elaborate playground full of all kinds of new possibilities for fun – like playing football on the roof six floors above. Then there was the close proximity of others’ mysterious lives – as a child I was exposed to a myriad of individuals and families I would never have normally encountered. Balloon Woods was unique and unforgettable.

Ours was a maisonette. 113 Beeley Walk. On entering the front door we faced my bedroom, my mum’s bedroom and to the side, the bathroom, where we happily huddled together candle-lit during the 1974 power cuts. Then, even more bizarrely for my non-flat friends, you walked upstairs to the kitchen and huge living room, complete with balcony and wall-to-wall windows. To the side, my brother’s bedroom and a toilet. An upside-down flat. To us, it felt like the future. It was warm, modern, loving and happy.”²⁶

Perhaps the best documented were the inner-city flats. Paul Waplinton’s Nottingham paintings often capture the moment following the shock of the clearances when people began to re-evaluate the Victorian terraces. However, in *May Day Hyson Green* he also draws attention to the same community spirit that Deborah Burton remembers:

“None of us had anything, we didn’t have a pot to pee in, as they say, but looked



† Childrens’ play area outside Balloon Woods flats, 1982 (Courtesy Reg Baker and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

4. Clearance & High-rise



↑ *May Day Hyson Green* by Paul Waplington, 1978 (Courtesy Sheffield Museums and Paul Waplington)

out for each other and we all looked out for each other's children."²⁷

Similarly, Diane McNeil grew up in Radford and Lenton. She lived at Buckland Court, one of the '4Bs':

"It was a community all the way through the '80s. Just before the student era took over ... because we had at the heart of that community Cottesmore School. Everybody who was brought up round there knew somebody who went there and everybody's parents knew each other, with the streets being so closely linked."²⁸

Given their inner-city locations and access to busy shopping streets, the flats at Radford, Hyson Green and Lenton had many qualities. They also became a focus for the black community who, having begun to arrive in Nottingham in the 1950s, found themselves near the bottom of a long waiting list for housing. By the time these flats were available many felt they had been stigmatised by the allocation process. Yet there was also strength in shared experience and the outer peripheral estates felt too remote. For Marcia Watson (now a city councillor), as a young black woman growing up in the inner city, she could recognise these different perspectives, but ultimately loved her high-rise flat:

"High-rise was popular. People weren't fussy back then. The view was beautiful. Absolutely beautiful. I loved it. I had a veranda and could go out at Highcross. Everything was in walking distance ... Everybody thought the flats were horrible anyway ... but for me, moving in and living there, it was the first home of my own."²⁹

The flats were also a cultural melting pot; the Nottingham reggae band The Natural-ites flourished at the Hyson Green complex, achieving a BBC radio John Peel slot in 1983. With everyone knowing everyone, complaints about loud parties were rare. In retrospect Hyson Green flats are less well remembered for where the Natural-ites wrote *Picture on the Wall* than for their problems with crime and the 1981 riots. Such a location could



← Wimpey-built flats in Radford, previously nicknamed the '4B's', officially Buckland Court, Bladon Court, Bampton Court and Broadway Court. Renamed 'The Woodlands' following Estate Action refurbishment in the 1990s (Courtesy Reg Baker and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

4. Clearance & High-rise



easily be sensationalised in the media. A 1978 report by ATV warned viewers that here 'the knuckleduster and knife settle more arguments than words'.³⁰ Council housing became associated with the 'inner city problem', which was in reality a by-product of post-industrial change. As factories and local shops began to close, the effect on the communities concerned was immense. It was nevertheless a community branching out, with young parents aspiring to give their children a better education, just as previous generations had sought to do. Research carried out for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in Hyson Green in the late 1990s found that many people expressed the view that the sheer scale, size and uncompromising architectural features of the flats had served to stigmatise the area with a reputation it was hard to shake off.³¹ Stigma of this sort tainted the reputation of council housing in general and created a climate in the 1970s that would have far-reaching repercussions for the future.

† 'Pedways' and the deck access blocks of Hyson Green Flats, 1973 (Courtesy Reg Baker and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

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5 Clearance & Low-rise 1970–1979

“I moved into this one, which is an end house, 1970s, I like it, my mother likes it. We’re happy there.”

Robert Morrell (The Meadows)

Political controversy between the local parties had intensified by the 1970s and this had an impact on how council housing developed in the city. The swings in policy were influenced by the activities of central government, the most noticeable being the rejection of high-rise and the introduction of ‘General Improvement Areas’ following the 1969 Housing Act.¹ Supported by grants, these area schemes helped to modernise older housing, offering an alternative to demolition. The funds came to be used energetically in Nottingham to improve many Victorian and Edwardian homes in older parts of the city.

Nationally, there was growing resentment over the damage that slum clearance had done to communities, thus a new, conservationist approach was born. Civic societies and Conservation Areas would colour the decade, but so too would the growth of housing associations encouraged by government support from 1972. It was hoped that these private non-profit organisations would create a diversity of lower-cost accommodation. Nottingham City Council worked with small charitable housing associations to help them secure older housing to take on and improve, or develop small sites. This would form the basis of partnerships that would see many more housing association homes developed in the city in years to come. Rent structures were also changing: in most cases, council housing before and after the Second World War was for the better-off working class, then throughout the 1970s pressure was placed on councils to set ‘realistic’ rents for those who could afford them alongside rebates for the poorest.² The increased government intervention was taken a stage further



- ↑ Meadows demolition (Courtesy Bernard and Pauline Heathcote Photographic Collection and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)
- ← St Ann's nearing completion during the early 1970s (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

5. Clearance & Low-rise

through the 1977 Homeless Persons Act, which placed new duties on councils. There were thus implications for how council housing would be allocated. All of this was set against an uncertain economic background of the oil crisis, industrial unrest and rising inflation – the post-war socio-economic consensus was breaking down. By the middle of the 1970s public expenditure on housing was being controlled by a system of annual local authority ‘bids’.

In Nottingham, therefore, it seemed as if the council was losing autonomy. This was particularly the case after the 1972 Local Government Act. The Act relegated the city from the status of County Borough to that of District Authority and meant it relinquished control over the police, fire, highways, education and social care to the County Council. This loss of prestige and power was one of the few political issues on which the main local parties could agree during what was otherwise an age of argument.³ There were huge reversals in the political cycle: the comfortable Conservative majorities of 1967-72 and 1976-79 were interrupted by an equally powerful Labour administration. Local media and committee meetings were enlivened by the activities and arguments of the main political leaders, John Carroll (Labour) and Jack Green (Conservative). Long-serving Councillor Malcolm Wood was elected during the late 1970s and recalls how local politics differed compared with the present:

“It was far more frenetic. I used to spend three or four hours justifying the housing investment programme in front of the District Labour Party. That doesn’t happen today. It just gets done. From a political perspective we were held to account.”⁴

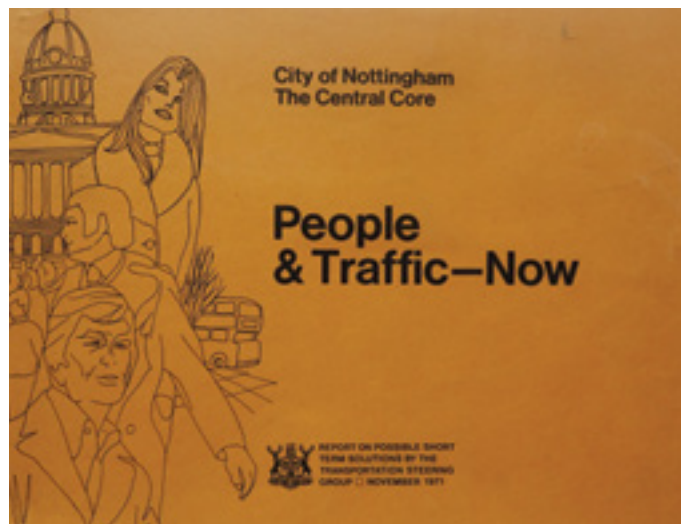
The most contentious issue, however, was related to the sale of council houses by the Conservative administration in the late 1970s. For Jack Green, the city led the way and the sales figures were an affirmation of a successful policy designed to increase owner-occupation: 1,635 houses were sold by May 1977.⁵ For John Carroll this was an injustice to people on the waiting list who were enduring sub-stand-



† The 50,000th Nottingham council house being opened at 18 Kirkewhite Court, Eugene Gardens, Meadows, January 1976. Constructed by Rowlinson. Left to right; Councillor Ivy Matthews, Lord Mayor; Councillor Bert Littlewood, Chair of the Housing Committee; Rt Hon Anthony Crosland, Secretary of State for the Environment; Councillor John Carroll, Council Leader; John Haslam, Nottingham City Council Director of Technical Services; Councillor Gerry Elliot, Sheriff; Councillor Len Maynard, Deputy Council Leader (Courtesy Nottingham City Homes)

ard accommodation. The story made prime-time viewing on 2nd November 1978 when it featured on TV Eye's *The Great Council House Sale* broadcast on ITV. The documentary revealed how it was possible to buy a council house within a day of arriving in the city despite a waiting list of 8,000.⁶ It presented the cruelty of overcrowding beside spacious, empty council houses and showed an ebullient Jack Green asserting, 'We hope to sell the lot if we can.'⁷ At the following Committee meeting Green was furious, accusing the programme of left-wing bias, and the contributors of dishonesty.⁸ Perhaps more worrying for Green were the activities of central government, which reduced the agreed sales figures and viewed the selling as a loss-making activity.⁹ With hindsight, the policy can be seen as a bold precursor to the Right to Buy, introduced as a national policy in the next decade. It was a policy that would transform housing tenure across the country in years to come. Despite all of the arguments of the 1970s there were also many achievements. The 1972 Traffic Plan, pioneering car restraint techniques and integrated public transport, was a remarkable reversal of the failed 1964 scheme.¹⁰ The city was also improving the inter-war estates, embarking on a new Concert Hall and developing a series of conservation areas stretching from the Lace Market to Clifton village.¹¹ The district heating system, which began operation in 1974, would have a long-term impact on the city: a major scheme that sought to heat thousands of homes and various city-centre buildings by incinerating local refuse. However, its initial application was less than thorough, and it would long plague the council with engineering problems. In many ways the district heating system was a symbol of 1970s Nottingham: a city of energy and positive intention, but also of controversy and poor implementation.

More council homes were built in Nottingham during the 1970s than in any other decade. Most developments were a mix of older persons' complexes, low-rise flats, semi-detached and terraced houses, divided almost equally between one-, two- and three-bedroomed accommodation.¹² Of



- 1 The city changes its approach towards traffic (Courtesy The East Midlands Collection, University of Nottingham)



the 14,800 houses built, about half were in various developments begun in the 1960s: Bulwell, Highbury Vale, Radford, Hyson Green, Victoria Centre Flats, Cranwell Road and Top Valley estates. Another 2,300 were erected in gap sites throughout the city and on the periphery of existing estates, such as at Snape Wood and Nobel Road in Clifton. Further large-scale schemes at Assarts Farm and Seller's Wood were abandoned by Jack Green's Conservative-run council in the late 1970s, while new and unoccupied council-built homes at Garrett Grove in Clifton were offered for sale under the council's sales policy.¹³ However, it would be the 5,500 homes built in the new clearance districts of St Ann's and the Meadows that would leave the greatest impression on Nottingham during the 1970s. Again, the location of the clearances was dictated by the city's Victorian development; after the pre-enclosure satellite areas, attention now turned to housing built after enclosure. The first of these, St Ann's, had been earmarked since 1952; by the late 'sixties the

† System-built council housing at Westminster Close, St Ann's, 1975, using the Wimpey 'No Fines' system (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

situation was becoming increasingly urgent. Ken Coates' and Richard Silburn's *Poverty: The Forgotten Englishmen* was the result of a number of years spent studying St Ann's through surveys and various quantifiable methods. For Silburn, it was an implicit study of the local authority's approach to housing:

"I just thought they were complacent and set in their ways and unimaginative... It seems to me that all the way through [the book] there is a suspicion about the commitment and integrity of the local authority and its councillors, none of them really to be trusted and you had to put pressure on; if you want to get anything done you have to put pressure on and the skill is knowing what sort of pressure and on whom and for how long in order to get things done. I think that was very unfair and, you know, there were some very good people doing their best in quite a difficult situation."¹⁴

Coates and Silburn revealed that most houses in St Ann's lacked both an inside flush toilet and a bath, and as many as 53%



- ↑ *Poverty: The forgotten Englishmen*, by Ken Coates and Richard Silburn
- ← Pym Terrace, St Ann's, showing its age, 1971 (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)



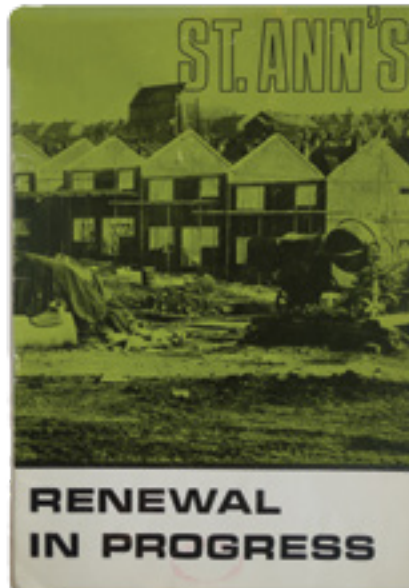
were managing without a hot-water system.¹⁵ The accompanying photographs provided by Coates and Silburn drew attention to poor-quality brickwork and structurally unsound buildings, a logical consequence of the *ad hoc* post-enclosure regulations. Their report emphasised the perception that only around half of the residents surveyed considered their house to be in a bad state of repair, a detail that gave rise to some local controversy during the subsequent clearances.¹⁶ This was a point made by Ray Gosling and Nottingham Civic Society, who together called for a more closely integrated policy of conservation, improvement, clearance and renewal.¹⁷

There was criticism of the corporation's early plans, which featured a by-pass cutting

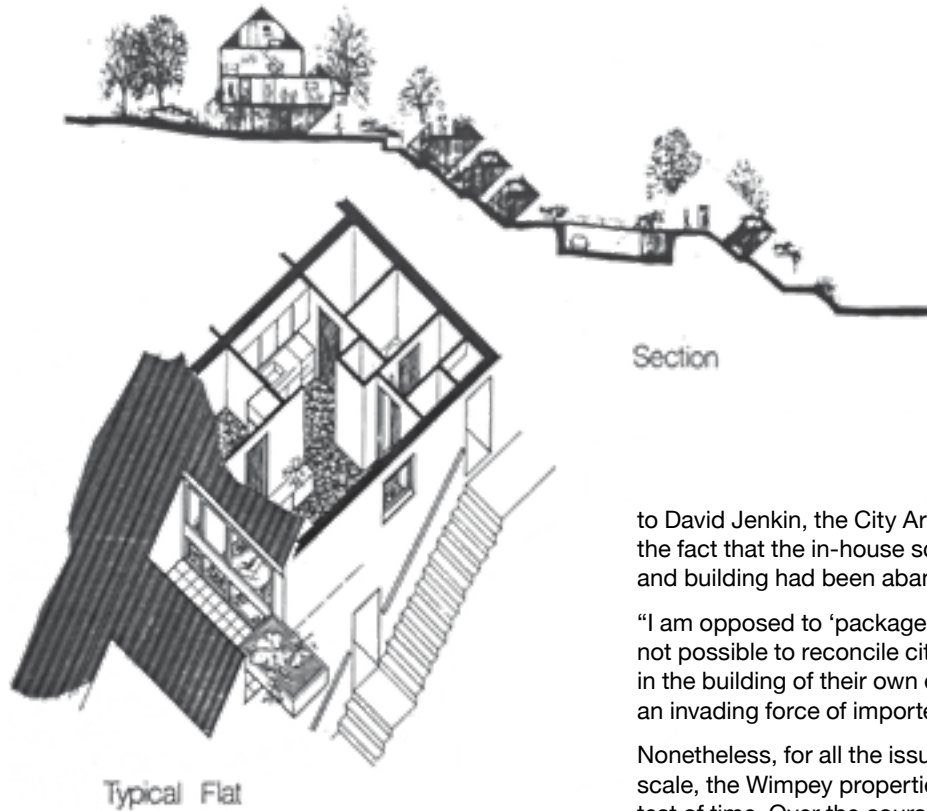
† Victoria Centre rising up while St Ann's comes down, Marple Street, 1975 (Courtesy Nicholson Family Archive and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

through the new estate in St Ann's. Following strong local opposition, the by-pass was abandoned in the early '70s, although the council's approach towards housing was changed by the incoming Conservative administration of the late 1960s. Rather than follow an in-house design to be constructed by a series of builders, a package deal with Wimpey was favoured. Wimpey had a track record and had already erected concrete panel-system estates elsewhere in the city. However, St Ann's was different in that the scale of clearance in Nottingham was unprecedented: it involved the demolition of around 10,000 houses, the re-housing of 30,000 people and the building of 3,000 new homes.¹⁸ More imaginative and site-specific designs were drawn up for Caunton Avenue and Cheverton Court, where the sloping nature of the local topography offered tremendous views. Caunton Avenue was a deck-access development of over 100 flats of differing sizes that overlooked the open land at the Coppice. Cheverton Court was designed by the John Stedman Design Group and was popular in local architectural circles. It was also a little larger than Caunton Avenue, with mainly one- or two-bedroomed apartments.¹⁹ Neighbouring Cheverton Court was Marple Square – an in-house design based around a small shopping precinct, it held around 50 flats. Phase 10 at St Ann's Way was also designed by John Stedman, following the cancellation of the by-pass. Unfortunately, these schemes could neither soften the regimented appearance of the new St Ann's, nor appease an aggrieved community.

Upset was already rife before the clearance; many were critical of the blight caused by the planned demolitions and the way the area was being talked down in the media. Further uproar occurred when the Wimpey package deal was confirmed; residents felt there had been a real lack of consultation and were joining the St Ann's Tenants and Residents Association (SATRA) in order to get their voices heard.²⁰ In February 1969 Allen Cunningham, assistant architect to the city council, submitted his resignation letter



← *Renewal in Progress*, A publication by the City Planning Department, 1970, advertising the facilities of the new houses and the phases of development (Courtesy The East Midlands Collection, University of Nottingham)



Typical Flat



† Cauton Avenue (Courtesy Housing Strategy, Nottingham City Council)

to David Jenkin, the City Architect, critical of the fact that the in-house scheme for design and building had been abandoned and stating:

“I am opposed to ‘package deal’ housing; it is not possible to reconcile citizen involvement in the building of their own environment with an invading force of imported ‘packages’.”²¹

Nonetheless, for all the issues of design and scale, the Wimpey properties have stood the test of time. Over the course of eight years, from 1968 to 1976, St Ann’s was developed in eleven phases, most of the work accomplished by Wimpey. It began with St Ann’s Well Road and finished with Phase 11 at St Matthias Road. SATRA were successful in getting the by-pass axed, saving Cromer Road and making sure that the re-housing process of Phase 10 ran to schedule. Throughout, SATRA created a forum for local democracy and citizens’ advice, but ultimately could do little to halt the sheer scale of clearance and development – the decisions had already been made. When the new residents arrived, people generally preferred the new houses, but missed the shops and neighbourliness of the old streets.²² In some ways these massive post-war schemes were successful: after redevelopment all residents had hot water, structurally better houses, room for new consumer goods, more

green space, and a healthier environment. The locally unique, innovative district-heating scheme was ahead of its time but its teething problems had to be ironed out with subsequent upgrading. Some of the lessons learned during the redevelopment of St Ann's would affect how the city approached the next clearance district, the Meadows.

The Meadows was redeveloped under a different political administration; to Betty Higgins, former Labour council leader, St Ann's was largely the product of a Conservative-controlled council.²³ In contrast, the Meadows site was redeveloped differently. A new in-house and more gradual approach was decided upon, with a diverse range of brick-built housing and some retention of the old Victorian terraces. The extension of the district-heating scheme through the new Meadows estate was abandoned, yet the two estates were clearly similar in their diverse communities and town planning. For Catherine Ross, the aspirations of black people living in the Meadows and St Ann's are too often under-appreciated:

“Council housing was a step up from renting rooms in late Victorian houses, which was all the newly arrived Caribbeans could get in the '50s and '60s. My family was lucky as my father worked for British Rail and he had four children so we had a railway house on Blackstone Street, in the Meadows.

Eventually when Caribbeans became eligible for council housing it was not just a step up in the quality of housing but living generally. Accommodation became home, settling into the community was easier and people were able to make a real contribution to their neighbourhood socially. Many stayed in rented council accommodation for a very long time as it gave them time to save money and send 'back home' to help friends and family. As many people only meant to stay for five or so years in England, by not acquiring property in the UK they could save to buy land back there so on their return they would not only have a job working on the land but a new home too. Having a stake in bricks

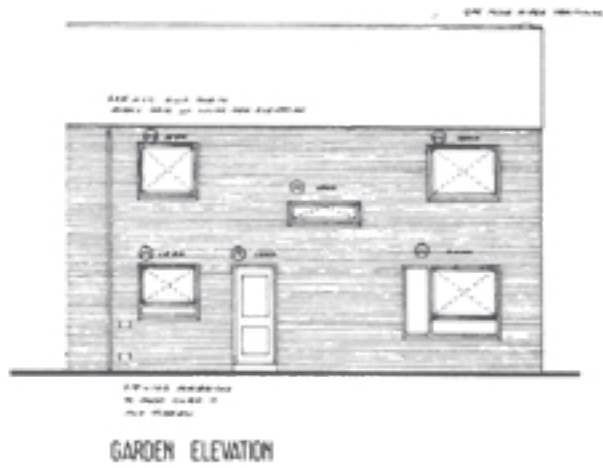
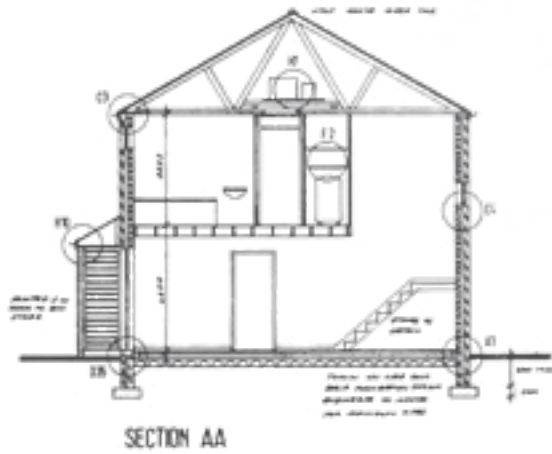


↑ St Ann's system-built flats
(Courtesy Nottingham City Homes)

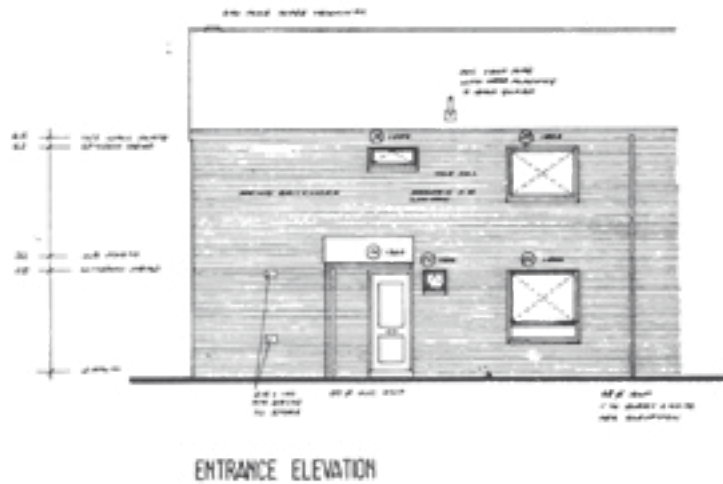


← Mrs Mackintosh and child arrive at Balloon Woods on being rehoused from a clearance site, February 1975 (Courtesy Nottingham City Homes)

5. Clearance & Low-rise



1:10
 1:10
 1:10



1 Sketch designs for city house types, 1975, by the Director of Technical Services (Courtesy The East Midlands Collection, University of Nottingham)



← Radburn planning in the Meadows
(Courtesy Reg Baker and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

↓ The Meadows being cleared during the 1970s (Courtesy Bernard and Pauline Heathcote Photographic Collection and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

and mortar was never the plan for most Caribbeans, but being in a safe environment was after the race riots and the general lack of welcome they experienced. To watch each others' backs they chose to live near those who understood them best and so the areas now associated with Caribbeans were born."²⁴

The Meadows, like Top Valley and St Ann's, was planned according to the principles outlined in the Buchanan Report, which sought to separate vehicles from pedestrians by using subways, cul-de-sacs, green space, precincts and ring roads.²⁵ This was to help address the traffic problems on the busy shopping streets at St Ann's Well Road and Arkwright Street. By the 1960s these had become busy through roads for commuters living in the relatively new and affluent suburbs. The 'Radburn' approach resulted in a clean, green, low-density and peaceful environment, although the layout could be confusing to outsiders. Meadows tenant Robert Morrell lived in the old Meadows, where he experienced the clearances, and was pleased with the quality of his new house:

"Some of them were very bad; mine where I lived was in quite a reasonable state of repair. Not every house in the Meadows was a semi-slum by any means, and some quite large properties along Queens Walk and along London Road, they were villas, and at one stage what you might say middle class. Mine was a terrace with a back yard and I was one of the few that had a bath. It was damp and cold, which was in contrast to the new house, which had central heating."²⁶



5. Clearance & Low-rise



Morrell was also referring to the difficulties of demolishing such a huge site, during the course of which the council had begun to re-evaluate its approach. All Saints, next to the Arboretum, was the next post-enclosure district to be considered for clearance; by the 1970s the housing was contravening the standards set by the 1957 Housing Act. However, demolition was at this point so unpopular that it led to the 'Raleigh Street Public Inquiry'.²⁷ Part of the All Saints area was one of the first neighbourhoods to undergo significant refurbishment through the combined efforts of the council and housing associations. These programmes were under way when Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Party swept to power in May 1979. The role of council housing was now to be questioned, while it was also buckling under the weight of its past mistakes.

- † Fly-tipped rubbish near homes on the Broxtowe estate in the late 1970s. By this time there was a growing public debate about whether councils were successfully managing everything for which they had responsibility (Courtesy Councillor Graham Chapman)

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6 Right to Buy, but No Right to Build 1980–2004


“People couldn’t believe it when Right to Buy come in. I know my parents couldn’t, my Dad were an ex-miner. They went ‘How much! Hold on, let me just get me redundancy, here tek that, go on.’... My Dad paid three-and-a-half grand for his house.”

David Anthony, Bestwood Park¹

“But a lot of people I’ve spoken to wished they hadn’t bought their house... there are that many jobs need doing.”

Sue Stevenson, Aspley²

For the City Council the 1980s and 1990s would be spent undoing the mistakes of the recent past and defending the very role of the local authority from forces beyond its control. The most pressing of these was the change in political direction within central government, which brought to an end the post-war social and economic consensus. The change was based on a vision that involved a very different role for the state, both locally and nationally. This would bring about major changes in public services, the deregulation of financial services and the privatisation of public assets. A new economic model for the nation was being formed, based on the power of the City of London and the growing service sector. Alongside this went the demise of many parts of British industry. Local government was also coming under attack with the abolition of the Greater London and metropolitan county councils. The largest privatisation of Margaret Thatcher’s incoming Conservative government of 1979 was that of housing, a transfer of asset ownership greater than all of the industrial privatisations.³ The ‘Right to Buy’ discount, enshrined in the Housing Act 1980, offered existing council tenants the right to purchase their homes at a discount from the market



← A prefabricated Vic Hallam bungalow being lifted onto the footings of the old post-war aluminium bungalow it replaced, Beechdale, early 1980s (Courtesy Housing Strategy, Nottingham City Council)

**THE RIGHT TO
BUY YOUR OWN HOME**

**A NEW GUIDE FOR COUNCIL
TENANTS**

Since 1980 Council tenants have had the Right to Buy their homes at a discount, provided they have been secure tenants for three years.

★ **NOW In 1984** — there are **IMPORTANT CHANGES** you should be aware of.

★ **COUNCIL TENANTS NOW HAVE THE RIGHT TO BUY AFTER TWO YEARS TENANCY**, (rather than three years).

★ **DISCOUNTS** — now start at **32% after TWO YEARS tenancy** rising to a **new top rate of 60%** after 30 YEARS tenancy.

The following examples show what this could mean to you:-

ADDRESS	VALUATION OF HOUSE	DISCOUNT	THE PRICE YOU PAY
2 bed terrace	£14,400	32%	£9,792
3 bed semi	£16,000	60%	£6,400

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO BUY THE HOME YOU RENT

IF YOU LIVE IN A HOUSE YOU BUY THE FREEHOLD

IF YOU LIVE IN A FLAT YOU BUY A LEASE

† Leaflet by the Nottingham Conservative Party informing tenants about Right to Buy (Courtesy Nottingham Central Library)

other post-industrial cities such as Leicester, the council became a political buffer against the wishes of central government. Throughout the decade, the two largest defensive actions undertaken by the city council were in relation to transport and housing. The former, known locally as 'the bus wars', was a response to the 1985 Transport Act.⁷ Betty Higgins' Labour council refused to privatise the bus service and saw off competition from rival firms – later putting this success down to the loyalty of the drivers.⁸ It was an event that would have huge implications not only for the council's revenue stream and transport planning, but also for the standing of municipal enterprise. However, the largest battle the city faced was in regard to council housing: by 2005, 20,761 council houses in Nottingham had been sold under Right to Buy, with 65% of this figure taking place during the 1980s.⁹ Only 3,200 new council homes were built during the same period,¹⁰ though the city successfully refused to transfer all of their stock to housing associations regardless of government incentives to do so. By the mid-1990s the Chair of the Housing Committee was Councillor Dave Liversidge, who described the prevailing mood at the time as 'trying to hold the fort'.¹¹ In order to do so effectively, however, the city would have to undo some of its own earlier mistakes; it would achieve this through undertaking demolition, replacement, renewal and management. Despite the Conservative government's lack of enthusiasm to support the construction of new council-owned homes, there was a recognition of the need to tackle some of the design failures of the past. Funding streams like Estate Action were secured by the housing department and used on a variety of improvement projects.

Perhaps the first visible sign of the new age was seen in the individual exterior alterations to those former council houses that were now owner-occupied. For purposes of efficient maintenance, the council had historically avoided using a variety of finishes; instead, it favoured a limited range of simple bold colours like green, blue, red, white and yellow for front doors. This was a common gripe among

6. Right to Buy, but No Right to Build



↑ An early Right to Buy house: notice a new brick wall, window, door and the faux stonework (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

↓ Balloon Woods demolition under way, 1984 (Courtesy Reg Baker and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)



tenants and Right to Buy provided an opportunity for creative freedom. The results and opinions varied. Betty Higgins deplored the lack of maintenance and ability to manage an estate when, for example, former council homes moved from owner-occupation into the ownership of a variety of private landlords such as has happened at Lenton Abbey. Yet for local Conservatives such as former City Councillor and Nottingham South Member of Parliament Martin Brandon-Bravo, the new garden walls, porticos, bays and rendering were a marvel of the Clifton estate.¹² Labour councillor Malcolm Wood, who had been Chair of the Housing Committee at the time, could see both points of view. He would later reflect that Right to Buy had offered a broader social mix at some of the city's more peripheral estates, although stressed that the scheme's weakness was one of a failure to use the funds raised in order to increase the provision of new housing.

However, the clearest signal that the council was changing its ways lay in the demolition of the deck-access and high-rise flats, which had become both unpopular and uneconomical to repair. There were often a variety of contributing reasons, such as construction problems, black spot mould, poor insulation, and policy issues over management and lettings. It was a nationwide problem that by the 1980s was seen as a housing disaster. Given the size of council-housing waiting lists in the 1980s, and the reduced levels of new building, Councillor Malcolm Wood felt that demolition was a difficult decision to take, but that there was simply no alternative given the problems with some of the buildings and the effect they had on residents.¹³ Balloon Woods flats were the first of these to be brought down in 1984, closely followed by Basford flats and, later, the deck-access blocks at Hyson Green. Less symbolic although similar in scale was the bulldozing of Denman and Connaught Gardens in 1991, Cauntton Avenue in 1994 and both Marple Square and Cheverton Court in 2005. In total this amounted to a loss of a further 2,700 houses at a time when the council was trying to 'hold the fort'. Redevelopment of the sites was often shared between the city council and

- Traditional-style housing with modern facilities at Bridlington Street, Hyson Green, built in 1982 (Courtesy Housing Strategy, Nottingham City Council)
- ↓ Foxton Gardens frail elderly complex, Beechdale. (Courtesy Housing Strategy, Nottingham City Council)



housing associations. The subsequent brick built replacements were more popular and reliable, yet they lacked the imaginative ethos of their 'sixties predecessors. This almost certainly reflected the more cautious spirit of the era. Nevertheless, most of these new houses were either a continuation of the designs used in the Meadows, or a new model developed in 1984. This was an in-house redesign of standard house types following a RIBA *Homes for the Future* report and a survey, carried out through a questionnaire, of city tenants. The new houses were a mix of semi-detached, terraced, bungalow and low-rise flats, fitted out with full central heating, elevation detailing (bays, eaves and oriels), front living room and UPVC windows with top lights.¹⁴ The 1984 designs were used on city-wide bungalow sites such as at Bala Drive in Bestwood Park, Westminster Close, Hungerhill Road and Hutchinson Green in St Ann's, Stanwick Close at Bilborough, and redevelopment locations at Balloon Woods, Old Basford, the Hyson Green flats and a 1992 frail elderly complex at Foxton Gardens.

More than 1,000 of the new houses built were bungalows that replaced the post-war prefabs at Beechdale, Bilborough and Cinderhill. The first of these, at Beechdale (1978-82), were remarkable in that they simply substituted one type of prefab bungalow for another. These were a timber-framed structure with Celuform panels by Vic Hallam, a local building company able to erect the new homes on the concrete footings of the previous one. For each tenant the process had a turn-around time of around

6. Right to Buy, but No Right to Build



← Replacement brick bungalows, built in 1995, Hollington Road Beechdale Road (Courtesy Nottingham City Homes)

six weeks; also, because the layout was identical, the furniture simply slotted back in.¹⁵ Also using Celuform panels were the Wimpey brick-built bungalows supplanting the old aluminium homes at Bilborough (1982-1984), while the Tarran prefabs were later (1992-2001) replaced by brick bungalows. All of these types were very popular, particularly with the elderly and disabled, because they were so adaptable and easy to manage.¹⁶ The layout and design of homes and estates built as emergency accommodation at the end of the Second World War had clearly stood the test of time.

Furthermore, because of the perimeter fencing and hedgerows, bungalows were also equipped with 'defensible space', a term coined by the geographer Alice Coleman, whose ideas had a significant impact on town planning during an era of rising crime. Coleman argued that huge council estates with high-rise, deck access and hidden alleyways contributed towards criminal activity. This had a great effect on various places in Nottingham, from the fencing off of shared grass areas to



↑ 'Unrestricted access into poorly observed parking court': the problems of unobserved space mentioned in *Community Safety Design Guide in Residential Areas*, 1998 (Courtesy Nottinghamshire Archives)



the conversion of deck-access flats into maisonettes and houses, also known as 'de-topping'.

Many of these changes followed the city's successful applications for Estate Action funding from central government, which went towards the refurbishment of Austin Street, Bulwell, the Sneinton high-rises, Crabtree Farm estate, the Tarran bungalows and parts of St Ann's and the Meadows. With cladding, de-topping, Secure by Design and external street works, Estate Action projects delivered many improvements. Perhaps the most noticeable was the overhaul of the Radford high-rises on Norton Street, renamed 'The Woodlands'. It was felt that, unlike at Balloon Woods, the repairs justified the cost, thus they were kitted out with new heating, security systems, double-glazing, communal gardens and new exterior finishes, transforming these prominent buildings completely. The £18 million spent on The Woodlands high-rises was particularly successful, resulting in a significant drop in crime and an increase in demand.¹⁷

† The Woodlands high-rises, a flagship 1990s refurbishment by the City Council (Courtesy Nottingham Evening Post and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

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Also making a difference was Operation Clean Up, which sought to encourage private investment and community self-help through a series of urban renewal projects including housing, commercial premises and public areas.¹⁸ This had a particularly noticeable impact on areas such as Sneinton, which had been privately built during the late nineteenth century and would have been next in line for the wrecking ball had not the vogue for clearance been halted. While the rhetoric of government in the 'eighties and early 'nineties was about shrinking the role of the state, these were busy times for the council's housing department: working on projects with housing associations to ensure the building of new affordable housing, addressing homelessness through housing advice and partnerships with the voluntary sector, as well as delivering improvement projects on existing council estates and in areas of private-sector housing. The council would increasingly use funds to help adapt homes across all tenures so that people with disabilities, or the frail elderly, could live independently in their own homes.

The city council had to re-think its approach in terms of housing management, particularly in regard to maintenance, crime and allocations. The council was faced with a whole barrage of issues, some the conse-

Converting the deck-access flats into maisonettes with Estate Action funds at:

- † Springhead Court, Crabtree Farm, Bulwell (Courtesy Housing Strategy, Nottingham City Council)
- - and at Austin Steet, Bulwell (Courtesy Housing Strategy, Nottingham City Council)





- ← Adaptations to the 1930s housing stock to allow those with mobility difficulties to continue living in their own homes (Courtesy Nottingham City Homes)
- ↓ Bricking up the council-owned 1950s Newland pre-cast concrete housing around Cockington Road, Bilborough (Courtesy Nottingham City Homes)

quences of wider social trends, and others mistakes made by the previous generation, such as asbestos removal, insulation, district heating and general repairs.¹⁹ Many tenants, including Margaret Pugsley at Bilborough, were fed up with the ‘you should be grateful for what you get’ approach from the housing department when the quality of the repairs was not up to scratch. Meadows resident Robert Morrell recalled the example of his broken fence:

“Repairs used to be very slow. I had a fence, it fell down, I pushed it up and tied it, reported it of course ... ten years later it was still unrepaired, then suddenly out of the blue I received a note that they were coming to mend the fence.”²⁰

A broken fence might sound like a small issue, but it was the sort of problem that – if allowed to spread – could damage the reputation of an entire neighbourhood. Perhaps most damaging, however, was the rising crime rate. Many feared for the future of estates like Bestwood and Broxtowe. This was a problem nationwide, and locally it seemed to be exacerbated by an historic lack of co-operation between police, schools and the council. For the then Council Leader Councillor Graham Chapman it was an issue that had to be overcome, possibly not without a tougher stance on evictions,



6. Right to Buy, but No Right to Build



← A tradition continued: Garden Competition and Good Neighbour winners 2002. With Councillors Dave Trimble, Ali Asghar and Des Wilson (Courtesy Nottingham City Homes)

especially when a single household terrorised an entire neighbourhood.²¹ For long-standing residents the whole experience was a contributing factor towards the decline of community spirit and increasing levels of what they felt was stigmatisation. No longer was renting a council house aspirational, and for many people in estates like St Ann's, residents would have to adopt a defensive position.²² Much of the decrease in contentment was a consequence of the declining number of council houses coupled with a needs-based rationing of allocations.²³ During this period the council had to deal with issues of race, too; it seemed to some that the allocations system disproportionately resulted in black people being housed in deck-access and high-rise flats, often seen as less desirable.²⁴ On the whole it appears that tenants were demanding a more democratic, sensitive and bottom-up approach.



↑ Management briefing: vandalism at Trippett Court, Marmion Road estate (Courtesy Nottingham City Homes)

Endnotes

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7 To Build Again 2005–2019

“I think this Decent Homes – it’s given such a lot of people a better quality of life.”

Sue Stevenson, Aspley¹

“We achieved considerable economic success from the 1980s, 1990s, onwards, which hugely advantaged the young, the educated and the entrepreneurial. We neglected that bulk of the population being left behind and living in post-industrial towns where their living standards were static or falling. And the new globalised economy, the rules-based order, the digital revolution meant nothing to them. People want scapegoats: they blame foreigners and immigrants. You know, for Trump, it’s all the fault of the Mexicans. For the British, it’s all the fault of Brussels. Now, I blame the political class to which I belong – the establishment, of which I was undoubtedly a member – for failing to see this coming.”

Ken Clarke, MP and former Chancellor of the Exchequer, *The Guardian*, 2019²

The past fourteen years have been defined by fluctuating hope and uncertainty. As ever, the changes within the wider economy and central government have provided a basis for how council housing functions within Nottingham. The largest issue has been a series of national recessions following the global banking crisis of 2007–8, a situation exacerbated in Britain by the deregulation of finance since the 1980s and an over-reliance on private property investment rather than on new industry. This exacerbated a housing crisis already apparent before the crash, as rising property prices, particularly in London, made it increasingly difficult for many people to afford housing. Furthermore, council housing as a percentage of tenure has declined to 7.2%, while the private rented sector has risen to 19.6%, figures not seen since the inter-war period.³

← The new Lenton Green development on the site of Lenton Flats, Godfrey Lane. In 2018 Lenton Green was shortlisted in the RIBA Regional Awards (Courtesy Chris Matthews)

7. To Build Again

The incoming coalition government in 2010 justified public expenditure cuts by blaming the previous Labour government for causing the financial crisis by overspending on public services. The consequences were significant reductions in expenditure on housing and social security. For example, housing investment plans were scaled back and, in social housing, controversial policies like the 'Bedroom Tax' were implemented.⁴ By 2015, the new Conservative government was announcing policies that would present further challenges. For Councillor Jane Urquhart, former Nottingham City Council Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing, when it comes to housing, the differences between central government and the local authority could not be starker:

“Clearly, our philosophy about council housing is incredibly different from the current government's. We think it is a good thing, we'd like to build more of it, we think it is a good and sensible tenure to be available to everybody. So in that we are completely different from a government that seems to believe that it is a tenancy of last resort.”⁵

In 2015 the Conservative government announced changes to the benefits system, council rents and the Right to Buy as well as an intention to remove the security of tenure traditionally associated with council housing. The effects of this were forecast to create a decreasing revenue for Nottingham City Homes.⁶ The 2016 European Union Referendum and General Election the following year slowed down the development of policy and legislation.

However, some national policies have had positive impacts on council housing. The Labour government's Housing Green Paper of 2000 set minimum standards for social housing with the Decent Homes Standard. All homes were to be brought up to a good state of repair, with modern kitchens, bathrooms and heating systems to ensure thermal comfort. More controversial was the requirement that councils needing extra funds to meet this standard could obtain them only by converting



† Tenants outside their new council house, Dennett Close, St Ann's (Courtesy Nottingham City Homes)

their traditional council housing services into new 'arms-length' management organisations (ALMOs), companies wholly owned by councils, to run their housing services. The council would retain 'strategic' housing functions such as an overview of all tenures, and the responsibility to help vulnerable people such as the homeless. If councils opted to go down this route it would unlock from government substantial sums that would go towards improving social housing across the country.

In 2010, Labour's housing minister John Healey announced that the much-criticised annual housing subsidy settlement for councils' Housing Revenue Accounts would be reformed. These reforms would allow councils and ALMOs to plan for the long term, including planning for significant new building programmes.⁷ Later the same year, the proposal's implementation by the new Coalition housing minister, the Conservative MP Grant Shapps, showed political consensus in this area.

However, it seems it has taken tragedy to force the biggest shift in direction in government policy in 40 years. In 2017 a severe fire at Grenfell Tower in North Kensington, London killed 72 people, and made headline news throughout the summer months and beyond. The harrowing images of Grenfell tower ablaze and the devastating death toll have had a profound effect on the housing sector. Nottingham City Homes is one of the many supporters of the 'Never Again' campaign launched in memory of the victims to improve fire safety in residential high rise blocks. Although not a legal requirement, Nottingham City Council decided straight away to fit sprinklers in all the tower blocks it owned. Although the cause of the fire at Grenfell Tower was a faulty refrigerator, many have seen the ensuing disaster as a consequence of the deregulation of health and safety laws and ultimately, an institutional neglect of social housing. Sadly, it often takes a disaster to change official policy: in the summer of the following year the

↓ A Nottingham City Homes garden competition winner (Courtesy Nottingham City Homes)



- ↓ The 2018 Housing Green Paper
'A New Deal for Social Housing'



government published a Housing Green Paper 'A New Deal for Social Housing'.

“There has been a stark failure to recognise and celebrate the best examples of community spirit in social housing in the same way that people take pride in the NHS. We agree that we should take pride in the best of our social housing and that this Green Paper offers an opportunity for a change in the way social housing residents are treated viewed and respected.”⁸

Words such as these have been followed by some notable actions. In November 2018, the borrowing cap for local authorities was lifted, enabling many councils to consider building council homes on a scale not seen since the late 1970s. This announcement, made by Theresa May at the 2018 Conservative Party conference was widely welcomed. In January the following year, three former government ministers teamed up with the housing charity Shelter to publish a report that called for 3.1 million new social homes to be built over the next twenty years.⁹ The government had already announced U turns on proposals in the Housing and Planning Act 2016 that would have forced councils to sell off so called 'higher value' council homes, and issue new, shorter term, tenancies to new council tenants.

Nottingham's council tenants, along with others across the country, helped shape the Housing Green Paper. After a special tenant conference, the city's tenant representatives wrote to and met with the then Housing Minister Alok Sharma MP. Key demands from Nottingham tenants can be seen referenced in the Green Paper, such as challenging the stigma attached to being a council tenant, and in the subsequent announcements allowing councils to build more homes.

In the recession following the 2008 financial crisis, Nottingham suffered rising levels of unemployment and a noticeable downsizing of businesses such as Capital One. The loss of Imperial Tobacco in 2014 and BmiBaby in 2019 had a similar effect upon economic confidence. The public sector was cut back during the coalition government of 2010-2015, with job losses in the City Council

↓ How the ALMO was balloted
(Courtesy Nottinghamshire Archives)



and the closures of the East Midlands Development Agency and the government regional office. Despite all of this, Nottingham has shown resilience and imagination, particularly in the biomedical sciences and creative industries, both of which have been sustained by the growth of the two universities.¹⁰ There have been significant public achievements, such as the remodelling of Old Market Square and the station, the establishment of the Nottingham Contemporary art gallery, the extension of the tram network and the success of the bus service. Municipal enterprise is back on the national agenda; the spirit of Joseph Chamberlain hangs in the air, with serious talk of devolution to cities and regions.

Back in 2005, when the ALMO option was being considered in Nottingham, the tension between hope and uncertainty was a running theme within the housing department. The council seemed to have little option: change and take the money, or don't change and do without. With a desperate need to upgrade the housing stock, many feared this could be a prelude to privatisation and create unnecessary layers of administration. Councillor Dave Trimble was Portfolio Holder for Housing at the time and recalls this as a difficult decision:

“The choice of options stimulated a huge debate and this was healthy too. There was a large amount of consultation: big, well attended events, and this conveyed a strong feeling for retaining council ownership of the homes which the ALMO model permitted – and ensured there was a proper ballot – which of course was not required by the government, who would have accepted a ‘test of opinion’, but we wanted to give tenants and leaseholders a real say.”¹¹

For many tenants such as Bestwood resident Anne Dean, it seemed as if they had little choice:

“It was sold to us ... if you don't vote for it, it won't get better, but we also wanted some assurance that we would

7. To Build Again

be listened to. We didn't want stock transfer to some fly-by-night."¹²

The debate reaffirmed the potential for council housing to do things with which the private sector struggles, such as comprehensive estate management, adaptable housing (particularly for the elderly and disabled), secure tenure, affordability and local democratic ownership. The setting up of Nottingham City Homes offered a new direction with a separate identity, administration and communications. It was an organisation with a purpose that people could rally around: to transform neighbourhoods and secure a wider availability of quality, affordable decent homes in mixed communities of choice.¹³ It was a more autonomous organisation, and being offered positions on the board of the company, many tenants and leaseholders felt that they could finally have their say. Nottingham City Homes would become one of 47 ALMOs across the country and one of the biggest, managing over 28,000 properties for Nottingham City Council. Director of Housing Lynne Pennington would oversee the creation of the ALMO and the establishment of a separate strategic housing service at the City Council. However, the early transition years were not easy: in 2006 the organisation was little more



← New bungalow on a small site at Geraldine Close in Bestwood (Courtesy Nottingham City Homes)

✓ Re-clad and better-insulated housing in Clifton (Courtesy Nottingham City Homes)





than a year old when it lost out on funding following a one-star rating given by the Audit Commission.¹⁴ In February the following year Chris Langstaff began his new role as Chief Executive. Speaking prior to his retirement in 2011 he commented on those early days:

“Morale was low. People saw the one-star rating and were looking to the leadership and management of the organisation to help them move away from that. That leadership had pretty much disappeared at the time. Despite all the difficulties Nottingham City Homes had been through, there was a real hard-core of people that wanted to make it work. I thought if I had the raw material, anything was possible.”¹⁵

The turn-around was achieved by Christmas 2008, which saw a two-star rating and ‘excellent prospects’. Nottingham City Homes was now able to go ahead with its ‘Secure Warm Modern’ Decent Homes programme: improved heating for 19,700 homes, 15,300 new sets of windows, 17,000 new kitchens, 12,700 new bathrooms, 4,480 lofts insulated, 14,900 electrical upgrades and 567 new roofs.¹⁶ For Sue Stevenson, disabled with osteoporosis, the improvements were sensitive to individual needs:



- ↘ A modern Nottingham City Homes kitchen installation under way (Courtesy Nottingham City Homes)
- ↑ Re-branding: the council’s housing department becomes Nottingham City Homes (Courtesy Nottingham City Homes)

“I love my house, I really love my house. All right, I’ve had a few adaptations, because what was nice was, when we had this Decent Homes, Nottingham City Homes came in with a surveyor from Savills and said, ‘how do you want your layout in your kitchen?’ You wasn’t told. And I says, ‘I’m worried because I’ve never had a wall cupboard before, not one’, and I said ‘can I have my cupboards lowered, please?’, and they said ‘of course you can’. Everything was done to suit my needs.”¹⁷

Often reticent at first, neighbouring owner-occupiers were becoming supportive as they watched the standard of the neighbourhood and property values improve. Behind the scenes, innovations were also being developed, such as a new choice-based allocations system (Nottingham HomeLink), better disability awareness, improvements through better-planned maintenance and multi-skilled repair staff. Tenants and leaseholders were getting their voices heard through their own Congress, by volunteering as inspectors and on panels in customer excellence, scrutiny, complaints, communications, and equality and diversity. With increased rates of participation and satisfaction, Nottingham City Homes was displaying vigour and confidence.

This renewed hope quickly disintegrated into familiar worry, though, when the new Coalition government’s 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review threatened to cancel the Decent Homes programme. However, the success of Nottingham City Homes and its tenant representatives had unleashed a powerful democratic force. Angry at the injustice of the situation, a tenant-led protest movement called ‘It’s Nott Decent’ rallied strong local support (including that of the Nottingham Evening Post) and delivered a 1,000-signature petition to 10 Downing Street.¹⁸ The government took note and the city received the biggest funding allocation outside London. The outcome of this campaign can be seen across the city’s estates, where the proportion of council homes meeting the Decent Homes Standard rose from 66% in 2005 to 100% by 2015, while over the same period

Bombshell on council homes cash

Homes fight is
taken to No 10

MPs back campaign
to save home repairs

Homes upgrade
change ‘unfair’
say city tenants

¹ Nottingham Evening Post headlines during the ‘It’s Nott Decent’ campaign (Courtesy Nottinghamshire Archives)



overall tenant satisfaction increased from 61% to 87%. Not only were tenants pleased with the Secure Warm Modern programme, a new customer call centre was opened and 300 apprenticeships created. Since the inception of Nottingham City Homes, the rate of anti-social behaviour cases resolved at first intervention rose from fewer than a fifth to over 80% by 2015. In financial terms, a deficit of £1.9m in 2009/10 had become a surplus of £1.2m by 2013/14, with significantly lower rent arrears and reduced times taken to relet properties. These successes did not go unrecognised by the professional bodies: Nottingham City Homes won Sustainable Landlord of the Year at the UK Housing Awards 2013, as well as the Investors in People Gold Award 2013 and again in 2015.

The most obvious difference Nottingham City Homes has made to the city's landscape has been in demolition, rebuilding and sustainable energy. The freedom to plan for the long term, granted by the reforms to the Housing Revenue Account, meant that

† New housing in St Ann's (Courtesy Nottingham City Homes).

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Nottingham City Homes looked carefully at the future prospects of all of its housing. It was deemed uneconomic to retain and maintain some of the housing stock and the decision was made to demolish 973 properties by 2017.¹⁹ Total stock stands at 27,000 in 2019, and continues to decline. Most of the demolitions have been blocks of high-rise flats deemed uneconomical to maintain, such as those at Radford (Highcross, Highurst and Clifford Courts) and Lenton (Willoughby, Newgate, Digby, Abbey and Lenton Courts), while other flats such as the Meadows 'Q blocks' were earmarked for demolition because they are unpopular. Compared to what happened in the 1970s these clearances are gentle, but they have not been without debate and disagreement.²⁰ This is perhaps not surprising, as there has been something of an intellectual and cultural reappraisal of modernism, high-rise and council housing in recent years. The Lenton flats featured in at least three major British films between 2006 and 2011: *Control*, a biopic of the Joy Division lead singer Ian Curtis; *Weekend*, a gay love story, and *This is England*, Shane Meadows' film about young skinheads during the early 1980s.²¹

Hand in hand with the demolition is an impressive building programme, a source of pride for both Nottingham City Homes and the City Council, billed as the biggest in a generation with over 500 new homes to be completed by late 2018.²² It is not always about numbers; for Councillor Alex Ball, Nottingham City Council Executive Assistant for Housing at the time construction was underway, it is also about the quality and the type of accommodation:

"The quality of what we build, and the wider impact that has, is really critically important ... We're not just about building boxes, this is about good quality design, good space standards and the right type of property in the right location to try to effect the social change we want to bring as well. So the choices that we've made at the Lenton site, for instance ... that's because we want to make a wider social change in that place, to try to bring families back into that part of the city."²³



- † In 2016 Palmer Court won the best new social housing development in the country at the Local Authority Building Control Building Excellence Awards (Courtesy Chris Matthews)



Taking on the role of Nottingham City Homes Chief Executive in 2011, Nick Murphy was able to build on the achievements of previous years. As well as completing the investment programme to bring all existing council housing up to the Decent Homes standard, the company embarked on building new homes with a premium on good design and space standards, learning the lessons from the past to create homes that would stand the test of time. Most of the new homes will be family houses, while there is also a mix of independent living schemes, bungalows and flats, scattered on various sites throughout the city. There is a range of approaches in terms of design: Dutch-style town houses in Radford, suburban semis in the Meadows and

- † Preserving green space on the site of Lenton Flats: the new Lenton Green development, Godfrey Lane (Courtesy Chris Matthews)

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continental modern in Lenton. Family homes and bungalows are also replacing under-used council garages that often attract anti-social behaviour – sites where it is not profitable enough for the private sector to build. Examples include sites at Trinstead Way in Bestwood, Hopedale Close in Radford and Colwick Woods Court. By 2019 Nottingham City Homes was proudly reporting the completion of 500 homes since 2005, with notable recent schemes including Strelley Court (Aspley) and Winwood Court (Sherwood) for the elderly, and various family homes on gap sites throughout the city, as well as the complete redevelopment of the Lenton high rise flats site. These tower blocks were replaced with new social housing, including Palmer Court which was named the best new social housing development in the country in 2016.²⁴

Perhaps the most municipal and progressive achievement has been the sustainable energy improvements to the existing housing stock. This includes the Nottingham Greener Housing scheme,



- ↑ New council housing with solar panels on the site of the former shopping precinct for Lenton Flats. (Courtesy Chris Matthews)
- ← New dutch-style council housing in Radford near the site of the former high-rise flats: Highcross, Highurst and Clifford Courts (Courtesy Chris Matthews)



- ← Better than new: re-cladding and insulation work nearing completion at the Sneinton high-rises. Notice the balconies have been glazed in to create more living space (Courtesy Chris Matthews)
- ↓ Rooftop solar panels on the Broxtowe estate (Courtesy Nottingham City Homes)

which when complete could benefit up to 18,000 city homes with better insulation and energy savings.²⁵ Both Bulwell Hall and Clifton estates are now 'Super Warm Zones', where the re-cladding work also gives the estates an improved appearance. The Bulwell Hall project reduced residents' energy bills by 40%.²⁶ Similar insulation work followed at the Sneinton high-rises (Bentinck, Manvers and Kingston Courts). Here, heating is provided by an extended district-heating system, now cheaper than market-priced energy; it forms the basis of Nottingham's outstanding record in sustainable power.²⁷ Further insulation schemes are currently underway in the neighboring maisonettes of the Windmill Lane Estate (such as Byron Court). Broxtowe estate now has one of the highest concentrations of rooftop solar panels in Europe, while 2,300 have been fitted to council homes citywide. A more subtle approach has come in the form of a Neighbourhood Improvements Design Guide that picks up on contemporary approaches to landscape design.²⁸ Working within the context



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of each estate, the guide sets out enhancements to street furniture, public gardens, boundaries, shared surfaces and parking bays. It is through these small but creative measures that Nottingham City Homes can improve areas and foster stronger communities.

For young people growing up with declining estates as the norm, it is quite something to see a significant change for the better. In 2011 the young Jake Bugg from Clifton rose to fame with *Trouble Town*, a Bob Dylan-esque musing on his home turf. Since then, the extended tram network and housing improvements have made Bugg's 'speed bump city' a little out of date.

The wider benefits of house building and refurbishment have been huge: less damp and mould means a healthier population; lower fuel bills lead to an increase in local spending; more secure homes equates to fewer burglaries and more cohesive neighbourhoods; with less noise there is better mental health, and with more jobs and training the local economy becomes stronger. A recent study by the Nottingham Business School showed that every £1 spent on the Decent Homes programme generated £1.36 that went back into the local economy.²⁸

National policies persist in raising challenges for council housing and those involved with it, yet the local achievements by Nottingham City Homes and its tenants are causes for optimism. The history shows that, alongside other tenures, council housing can and does transform lives, providing a solution to a wide range of housing problems. Nottingham City Homes, as the council's housing manager, has placed tenants and residents at the heart of what it does in a way that is part of a longer tradition of democratic accountability stretching back over a century. There is no question that Nottingham needs good-quality homes at prices people can afford. This has been the guiding motivation for those who have been responsible for the council's housing and it will continue to be so for their successors. In order to build a better Nottingham, we must understand how the lay of the land has been marked by our forebears.



† New-build open day in Radford
(Courtesy Nottingham City Homes).

Endnotes

- 1 Interview with Nottingham City Homes Tenants: Sue Stevenson, Janet Storar MBE, David Anthony and Dave Lockwood (3/8/2015).
- 2 *The Guardian*, 'Ken Clarke: Brexit is like a parody version of student politics.' (15/4/2019).
- 3 Department for Communities and Local Government, *Table 102: Dwelling Stock: By Tenure, Great Britain* (gov.co.uk, 2015).
- 4 The 'Bedroom Tax', or 'Spare Room Subsidy' as the government prefers to call it, serves to reduce Housing Benefit payments to working age households in social housing who have more bedrooms than the Benefit regulations deem them to require. This can happen, for example, when children leave home.
- 5 Interview with Councillors Jane Urquhart and Alex Ball (12/8/15).
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- 7 W. Wilson, *The Reform of the Housing Revenue Account* (House of Commons Library Standard Note, SN/SP/6776, 2011).
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- 16 *Nottingham Evening Post* (23/1/2009), Nottingham Central Library, L33.04, Box 4; Nottingham City Homes, *Value for Money Story* (2015).
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- 20 Failed Architecture Workshop, *Nottingham's Lenton Flats* (27/11/2012), www.failedarchitecture.com; Inside Housing, *The End of the Q* (8/05/2012).
- 21 For the intellectual re-appraisal see J. Grindrod, *Concretopia: A Journey Around the Rebuilding of Postwar Britain* (Old Street Publishing, London, 2013); O. Hatherley, *A Guide to the New Ruins of Great Britain* (Verso, London, 2011); J. Meek, 'Where will we live?' in *London Review of Books*, No. 1. January, 2015.
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- 25 Nottingham City Homes, *Value for Money Story* (2015).
- 26 Nottingham City Council, *Nottingham Energy Strategy 2010-2020* (2010).
- 27 Nottingham City Homes, *Nottingham City Neighbourhood Improvements Design Guide* (Draft Edition, February, 2015).
- 28 A. Jones, N. Valero-Silva, and D. Lucas, *The effects of 'Secure Warm Modern' homes in Nottingham: Decent Homes Impact Study* (Nottingham City Homes & Nottingham Business School, 2016).



Conclusion: 100 Years Since the Addison Act

“I think there is no dispute in any quarter that this matter is of the utmost importance, from the point of view not only of the physical well-being of our people, but of our social stability and industrial content. We are dealing just now with an actual shortage of houses, and with what I may further describe as a concealed shortage.”¹

Hansard, Statement by Dr Addison MP, 1919

What conclusions can be drawn from this long history, and what are the key lessons? In some ways it is difficult to take on the experiences of a former age and apply them to the present. For example, the economic climate and needs of the population are very different today compared to the 1920s. However, it is possible to propose some general ideas, particularly when it comes to government policy, the interventions of the local authority and the response from its tenants and citizens. The following points should be taken with a pinch of salt: housing is a complex subject that requires a sensitivity to nuance and adaptability for changing circumstances.

For central government, housing is a difficult problem and often a priority with the electorate. Mitigating the issue with a laissez-faire approach eventually leads to huge social problems, such as those experienced after the First World War and more recently at Grenfell Tower. Like the NHS, the social and economic value of council housing deserves to be embedded in government policy. The trauma of the First World War and the pioneering spirit of 1919 Addison Act should not be forgotten. Quite simply, the experience in Nottingham during the inter-war period proves that council housing created an unprecedented collective leap in living standards. Moreover, the recent activities of Nottingham City Homes and the Nottingham Business School show



- ← Life in the slums of Narrow Marsh of the eve of clearance, 1931. The location is behind common lodging houses, No's 99 and 101 Red Lion Street (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)
- ↑ Highbury Vale, Bulwell during the 1920s, showing the newly built council housing. Notice the tram lines visible in the foreground (Courtesy R B Parr and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

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how this mode of housing, when delivered well, creates a virtuous cycle that benefits all. The implementation of the 'Secure Warm Modern' Decent Homes Programme is a case in point. Indeed, a stronger case can be made for delivering council housing for general needs, as opposed to just those in greatest need. For example, it is arguable that those council estates in Nottingham that were built for general needs, such as Wollaton Park, Sherwood, Bilborough and Clifton, were often among the most desirable and most cohesive, going on to be desirable communities that have remained sought after neighbourhoods.

It also appears that over the last fifty years central government has increasingly been criticised for failing to deliver on all that it has promised. Examples include the failed pre-fabricated housing schemes of the 1960s, and the difficulty many people have of being able to afford good housing after nearly forty years of policy designed to prioritise home ownership. The perspective of history allows us to see alternatives to this arrangement. Britain led the way in municipal enterprise from the 1870s right up until the outbreak of the Second World War. The municipal achievements in Nottingham during this period are a case in point. During the early 1920s the city successfully implemented the Addison Act and built many homes to the standards set by the Tudor Walters Report.

Local authorities can also be complicit in the errors of central government, but the quality of their ability to deliver is also dependent on their own clarity of direction. For example, in Nottingham the William Crane era (1919–1957) offered greater certainty for the Housing Department than was experienced during the 1960s and 70s. Similarly, the Labour majorities of the 1990s until the present day have afforded confidence in long-term planning. The Crane era has also bestowed us with another lesson: that architectural quality creates civic pride in social housing. This was particularly the case with the T.C. Howitt houses of the 1920s, such as those at Sherwood, Wollaton Park, Lenton Abbey and Aspley.



† T. C. Howitt was the City Architect directly responsible for the design of 9,000 council houses during the inter-war period. During the 1920s Howitt lived in a council house on the Sherwood Estate at 2 Staunton Drive (Courtesy Howitt Partnership and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

It is a shame the same could not be said for the modernist schemes of the 1960s and 70s. Although there are some notable exceptions, Nottingham did not compare favourably with the likes of Sheffield, Newcastle, Coventry, Southampton and the London Borough of Camden. Unfortunately the city has little to compare with the likes of Alexandra Road Estate in London, or the Byker Wall in Newcastle. That said, the St Ann's district heating scheme was very enterprising, while the design of the Meadows in the 1970s displayed good improvements in design by the Housing Department. In some ways, a similar ambition has been applied by Nottingham City Homes to its energy sustainability schemes; such as those in the Broxtowe Estate, Clifton and Sneinton. With the necessity for green technologies likely to grow, it will be propitious for the city to be involved in their development. More recently, the Lenton Green development has received recognition for design quality, and shows promise for the future of housing in Nottingham.²

Over the past 100 years, the tenants and citizens of Nottingham have taught us the value of bottom-up approaches and the need for greater flexibility when it comes to meeting the needs of its tenants. Some of these approaches were pioneered by Housing Associations from the 1970s and have been embraced by Nottingham City Homes. Most people are not dogmatic when it comes to their choice of tenure: home ownership is desirable for many, but so too is the option of renting from a social housing provider. Similarly, many residents prefer to live in the busy inner city, while others prefer the relative quiet of the suburban estates.

This brings us to a final point on the planning and future development of the city's council housing: if the population is projected to continue growing, then how can the city meet its housing needs? If further suburban council estates are built within the Green Belt for example, then the experiences of the 1930s in Broxtowe and 1950s in Clifton emphasise the importance of public transport connections and amenities such as shops and schools. But



† Shortwood Close, Cliff Road Estate, a short distance from where the same lodging houses once stood that are on page 116 (Courtesy Nottingham City Council and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

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as in the 1960s, will the inefficiencies of green field development be questioned? Will we have to return to the inner-city schemes that were so derided by the 1980s? England, and not just Nottingham, has an uneasy history with such ideas. The difficult experience with Victoria Buildings was a huge setback for the council in the 1870s, while William Crane disapproved of tenements throughout his leadership. Yet the evidence suggests that when done well, high density housing can be highly successful. In Nottingham the successful recent refurbishments of high rise flats and maisonettes may be pointing to the future.

In Britain, on the centenary of the First World War there has been a great deal of pride and symbolism to commemorate the events of 1914–1918. More could have been made of its causes and consequences, particularly the social unrest and economic uncertainty of the immediate years.³ This was a climate of economic dislocation, unemployment, strikes, influenza, inflation, poor housing, cynicism and the exhaustion of liberal democracy. Some failed to grasp that the war had been a revolution and that a 'return to normality' would prove delusional. Yet others also understood the need for a new interventionist approach: government departments became ministries where experts shaped policy and new areas of official encouragement guided science and industry. The Unemployment Insurance Acts confirmed the social obligation of welfare, the political franchise became more equitable and the 1919 Addison Act established housing as 'a social problem to be tackled on a national scale by getting houses built'.⁴ Over the following 100 years Nottingham's experience demonstrated areas where this approach succeeded and where mistakes were made. More importantly, it shows that council housing is key to a more equitable, resilient and dynamic society. Its contribution towards a modern civil society is of the utmost significance.



← The demolished Hyson Green flats, c.1973. This was an inner city deck access housing complex of 593 dwellings (Courtesy Reg Baker and www.picturenottingham.co.uk)

↓ Improving the energy efficiency of local homes at Keswick Court maisonettes, Sneinton (Courtesy Chris Matthews)



Endnotes

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Appendix: Council Housing Estates in Nottingham

The Total category includes the number of council homes purchased from the private sector, as well as homes since demolished. Where there is no information in the Constructed category the houses were built by the private sector and later purchased by the local authority. Information copied from Nottingham City Homes. Totals vary over time.

Estate	Location	Constructed	Total	Beds	Dwelling	Building
Abbey Bridge	Dunkirk & Lenton	1922, 1928, 1935–38, 1954–65, 1966	227	1–4	Flats, Houses	Detached, Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Ainsley	Beechdale	1948–1950	223	3–4	Houses	Semi-Detached, Terrace
Albert Buildings	Basford	1876 (demolished)	46	–	Flats	Tenement
Alexandra Court	Mapperley	1960	145	1	Flats	Medium Rise
Ashwell Gardens	Hyson Green	1977–78, 1982	65	1–4	Flats, Houses	Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Aspley	Aspley	1930–33, 1935–39, 1944–48, 1954–58, 1967, 1971, 1975, 2013	3423	1–4	Bedsits, Bungalows, Flats, Houses, Maisonettes	Detached, Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Austin Street	Bulwell Forest	1947–48, 1951, 1968–9	133	1–3	Flats, Houses, Maisonettes	Deck Access, Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Bakersfield	Bakersfield	1921, 1928–31, 1934–38, 1958–59, 1976–78	565	1–4	Bedsits, Flats, Houses	Detached, Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace

Estate	Location	Constructed	Total	Beds	Dwelling	Building
Basford	Basford	1920, 1933, 1939, 1954–55, 1968–69, 1975– 78, 1985–88	516	1–4	Bungalows, Flats, Houses	Detached, Low Rise, Semi- Detached, Terrace
Basford Flats	Basford	1967 (demolished)	395	–	Flats	High Rise, Deck Access
Balloon Woods	Wollaton	1966 (demolished)	647	1–6	Flats	Deck Access
Beechdale	Beechdale	1935–37, 1947– 52, 1955–59, 1966–68, 1978, 1991, 2010	1101	1–5	Bungalows, Flats, Houses	Detached, Low Rise, Semi- Detached, Terrace
Beechdale Bungalows	Beechdale	1946–47, 1955–56, 1980–83, 1969, 1991–2001	673	1–3	Bungalows, Flats, Houses, Prefab	Detached, Low Rise, Semi- Detached, Terrace
Bells Lane	Cinderhill	1932–35, 1937– 39, 1948–49	1326	1–4	Bungalows, Flats, Houses	Detached, Low Rise, Semi- Detached, Terrace
Bestwood	Bestwood	1937–40, 1946– 9, 1974–75, 1983	1273	1–4	Flats, Houses	Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Bestwood Park	Bestwood	1953–55, 1959– 70, 1973–76, 1988, 2013	3176	1–5	Bungalows, Flats, Houses, Maisonettes	Deck Access, Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Bilborough	Bilborough	1947–52, 1959– 62, 1966–72, 1982–84	2904	1–5	Bungalows, Flats, Houses	Detached, Low Rise, Semi- Detached, Terrace
Bobbers Mill	Bobbers Mill	1975–6	43	1–3	Flats, Houses	Low Rise, Detached

Estate	Location	Constructed	Total	Beds	Dwelling	Building
Braidwood Court	Hyson Green	1970	112	1	Flats	High Rise
Broxtowe	Broxtowe	1937–40, 1945–54, 1975	1758	1–4	Bungalows, Flats, Houses	Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terraced
Bulwell Hall	Bulwell Hall	1929–31, 1934– 36, 1958–59	860	1–3	Bungalows, Flats, Houses	Detached, Low Rise, Semi-Detached
Burrows Court	Sneinton	1967	130	1–2	Flats	High Rise
Canning Circus	New Radford	1959, 1962, 1965, 2015	147	1–3	Flats, Houses,	Detached, Low Rise, Semi-Detached
Cantrell Road	Bulwell Forest	1930–31, 1933, 1947, 1950–51, 1966, 1984	171	1–3	Flats, Houses	Detached, Low Rise, Semi- Detached, Terrace
Capitol Court	Wollaton	1967	45	2–3	Flats	Low Rise
Cardale	Bakersfield	1927–29, 1934–5	379	2–3	Bungalows, Houses	Semi-Detached, Terrace
Carrington	Carrington	1951–54, 1969	69	1–5	Flats, Houses, Maisonettes	Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Caunton Avenue	St Ann's (demolished)	1968	111	1–3	Flats, Maisonettes	Deck Access
Central Bulwell	Bulwell	1928–30, 1936– 9, 1948–50, 1957–58, 1962, 1967, 1971–79, 1987, 2010	1522	1–5	Bungalows, Flats, Houses, Maisonettes	Deck-Access, Detached, Low Rise, Semi- Detached, Terrace
Cheverton Court	St Ann's	1978	112	1–2	Flats, Houses	Low Rise, Terrace
Cinderhill	Cinderhill	1946, 1990–2001	100	2	Bungalows, Houses, Prefabs	Detached

Estate	Location	Constructed	Total	Beds	Dwelling	Building
Cliff Road	City Centre	1934–38, 1980–81	183	1–4	Flats, Houses, Maisonettes	Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Clifton North	Clifton	1950–62, 1965, & 1969–71, 1984, 2014	3741	1–5	Bungalows, Flats, Houses, Maisonettes	Deck-Access, Detached, Low Rise, Semi- Detached, Terrace
Clifton South	Clifton	1950–62, 1965– 68, 1971–76, 1984, 2010	3801	1–5	Bungalows, Flats, Houses, Maisonettes	Deck-Access, Detached, Low Rise, Semi- Detached, Terrace
Colwick	Colwick Road, Sneinton	1927–28, 1937–38, 1949	160	1–3	Flats, Houses,	Deck-Access, Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Colwick Woods Court	Colwick	1966	90	1	Flats	High Rise
Clifford Court	Radford	1961 (demolished)	45	2	Maisonettes	Deck Access, High Rise
Crabtree Farm	Cinderhill / Bulwell	1968–70, 1987–93	826	1–4	Bungalows, Flats, Houses, Maisonettes	Deck-Access, Detached, Low Rise, Semi- Detached, Terrace
Cranwell	Strelley	1970–71	311	1–3	Flats, Houses	Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Denman & Connaught Gardens	Radford	1969	300	–	Flats, Maisonettes	Low Rise, Deck Access
Edwards Lane	Basford / Daybrook	1936–38, 1969–75	783	1–4	Flats, Houses	Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace

Estate	Location	Constructed	Total	Beds	Dwelling	Building
Fernwood	Wollaton Vale	1951–55	387	1–3	Bungalows, Houses	Semi-Detached
Forest Fields	Forest Fields	1934–36	126	1–5	Houses	Detached, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Grotto Farm	Wilford	1975	105	1–4	Bungalows, Flats, Houses	Detached, Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Heathfield	Basford	1930–32, 1984–5	701	1–4	Bedsits, Bungalows, Flats, Houses, Maisonettes	Detached, Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Hempshill Vale	Bulwell	1974–78	37	1–3	Bungalows, Flats, Houses	Low Rise, Semi-Detached
Highcross Court	Radford	1963 (demolished)	112	–	Maisonettes	Deck Access, High Rise
Highurst Court	Radford	1961 (demolished)	45	2	Maisonettes	Deck Access, High Rise
Hollydene	Cinderhill	1974–76	39	2–3	Bungalows, Houses	Detached, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Hyson Green	Hyson Green	1921, 1927, 1957, 1964, 1976–1982, 1990	730	1–5	Bedsits, Bungalows, Flats, Houses, Maisonettes	Deck-Access, Detached, Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Hyson Green Flats	Hyson Green (partly demolished)	1966/67	593	–	Flats, Maisonettes	High Rise, Deck Access
Kildare Road / Kingsthorpe	Wells Road, St Ann's	1921–23, 1969–69, 1992–93	230	1–4	Bedsits, Bungalows, Flats, Houses, Maisonettes	Deck-Access, Detached, Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace

Estate	Location	Constructed	Total	Beds	Dwelling	Building
Leen Valley	Arnold Road, Basford	1945–49, 1952–53, 1969–71, 1974	605	1–4	Chalet, Flat, House	Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Lenton Abbey	Lenton Abbey	1924–29, 1938	887	1–5	Bedsits, Bungalows, Flats, Houses	Detached, Low Rise, Semi- Detached, Terrace
Lenton High Rise	New Lenton	1966–67	480	1–2	Flats	High Rise
Lenton Green	New Lenton	2018	142	1-3	Flats, Bungalows, Houses	Detached, Low Rise, Semi- Detached, Terrace
Lenton Sands	Ilkeston Road, New Lenton	-	15	2–4	Houses	Semi-Detached, Terrace
Mapperley	Mapperley	1920–22, 1932–38, 1952, 1957, 1960–61	290	1–4	Bedsits, Flats, Houses	Detached, Low Rise, Semi- Detached, Terrace
Mapperley Park	Mapperley	1964, 1970	64	1–4	Bedsits, Flats, Houses, Maisonettes	Detached, Low Rise, Semi- Detached, Terrace
Marmion Road	Thorneywood	1921–23, 1938–39, 1953, 1971–78	505	1–4	Flats, Houses, Maisonettes	Detached, Low Rise, Semi- Detached, Terrace
Marple Square	St Ann's	1974–78, 1986 (demolished)	456	1–4	Bedsits, Bungalows, Flats, Houses, Maisonettes	Deck-Access, Detached, Low Rise, Semi- Detached, Terrace
Meadows	Meadows	1938, 1955, 1977–84	1901	1–4	Bungalows, Flats, Houses, Maisonettes	Deck-Access, Detached, Low Rise, Semi- Detached, Terrace

Estate	Location	Constructed	Total	Beds	Dwelling	Building
New Basford	New Basford	1925–26, 1935, 1940, 1954–1957, 1969, 1984–6	277	1–5	Flats, Houses, Maisonettes	Detached, Low Rise, Semi- Detached, Terrace
New Highbury Vale	Highbury Vale	1969–74	533	1–3	Flats, Houses	Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Nobel Road	Clifton	1976–79	588	1–4	Bungalows, Flats, Houses	Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Oliver Terrace	Arboretum	1982	22	1–5	Bedsits, Flats, Houses, Maisonettes	Detached, Low Rise, Semi- Detached, Terrace
Old Basford	Old Basford	-	19	1–3	Houses	Terrace
Old Highbury Vale	Highbury Vale	1922–1931, 1951, 1972, 1978, 1984	646	1–3	Bedsits, Bungalows, Flats, Houses	Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Old Meadows	Meadows	1921–29, 1969–70	401	1–5	Flats, Houses	Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Old Sneinton	Sneinton	1922, 1930, 1937–40, 1949–50, 1969– 1975, 1983	246	1–4	Flats, Houses, Maisonettes	Low Rise, Terrace
Pearmain Drive	St Ann's	1933, 1940–41, 1970–71, 1976–78	273	1–4	Flats, Houses	Deck-Access, Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Penn Avenue	Lenton	1926–28 by Boots Co.	49	2–4	Bedsit, Maisonettes	Deck Access
Pear Tree Orchard	Ruddington	1974–6 by Spinrock	25	–	Flats	Low Rise, Terrace

Estate	Location	Constructed	Total	Beds	Dwelling	Building
Porchester	Thorneywood	1921, 1925–26, 1932–33, 1938, 1951, 1956, 1973–76	85	1–3	Bungalows, Flats, Houses, Maisonettes	Detached, Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Radford	Radford	1935, 1938, 1949, 1970–71, 1979–85, 1993–94, 2014–15	457	1–5	Bungalows, Flats, Houses, Maisonettes	Detached, Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Radford High Rise	Radford	1961–6, 1966	202	2	Maisonettes	High Rise
Robin Hood Chase	St Ann's	1961, 1971–1978, 1991	644	1–4	Bungalows, Flats, Houses, Maisonettes	Deck-Access, Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Rodwell Close	Beechdale	1945	54	2–4	Bungalows, Houses	Detached, Semi-Detached, Bungalow
Sherwood	Sherwood	1920–28, 1936–40, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1956, 1975–76, 1983	1163	1–4	Bungalows, Flats, Houses, Maisonettes	Detached, Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Snape Wood	Bulwell	1977–78	810	1–4	Bungalows, Flats, Houses	Detached, Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Sneinton Dale	Sneinton Dale	1928, 1934–35, 1939	405	1–5	Flats, Houses	Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Sneinton High Rise	Sneinton	1964–66	270	1	Flats	High Rise
Southchurch Court	Clifton	1967–69	130	1	Flats	High Rise
Southwold	Radford / Wollaton	1926–28, 1933, 1938, 1950, 1954, 1979–1984	533	1–4	Flats, Houses	Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace

Estate	Location	Constructed	Total	Beds	Dwelling	Building
Squires Avenue	Bulwell	1946, 1964–65, 1971–79, 1983–86	366	1–4	Bungalows, Flats, Houses, Maisonettes	Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
St Ann's Valley	St Ann's	1970–72, 1976, 1990–91	655	1–4	Bungalows, Flats, Houses, Maisonettes	Detached, Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
St Ann's Well Road	St Ann's	1936–38, 1949–52, 1958–59, 1972–76, 1986	814	1–5	Bungalows, Flats, Houses, Maisonettes	Detached, Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
St Matthias Road	St Ann's	1921–23, 1932–33, 1975–76	279	1–4	Flats, Houses	Detached, Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
St Peters Street	Radford	1938–35, 1970, 1983–85	371	1–4	Bungalows, Flats, Houses	Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Stockhill Lane	Basford	1920–1922, 1974–75	227	2–4	Bungalows, Houses	Detached, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Stonebridge	St Ann's	1970–75, 1980–82, 1986, 2012	568	1–4	Flats, Houses, Maisonettes	Detached, Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Strelley	Strelley	1946–55, 1966–67	716	1–4	Bungalows, Flats, Houses	Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Top Valley East	Bestwood	1970–79, 1987, 2013	2022	1–5	Bungalows, Flats, Houses, Maisonettes	Detached, Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Top Valley North	Bestwood	1970–1981	516	2–5	Bungalows, Flats, Houses	Detached, Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace

Estate	Location	Constructed	Total	Beds	Dwelling	Building
Top Valley South	Bestwood	1970–1976	239	1–5	Flats, Houses	Detached, Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Top Valley West	Bestwood	1973–74	525	1–4	Bungalows, Flats, Houses, Maisonettes	Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Victoria Buildings	Bath Street	1876	84	–	Flats	Tenement
Victoria Centre	City Centre	1972	463	1–2	Flats	High Rise
Whimsey Park	Bakersfield	1973–78 by private firm	113	2–3	Flats, Maisonettes	Low Rise
Whitemoor North	Whitemoor, Basford	1932–33, 1946, 1964, 1971, 1974, 1994–1999, 2001	660	1–4	Bedsits, Bungalows, Flats, Houses, Prefabs	Detached, Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Whitemoor South	Whitemoor, Basford	1932–33, 1947, 1971–78, 1983, 1985	248	1–4	Bungalows, Flats, Houses	Detached, Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Willoughby St	New Lenton	1922, 1938, 1968–1970	127	1–5	Flats, Houses, Maisonettes	Deck–Access, Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Windmill Lane	Sneinton	1928–30, 1947–50, 1952–1957, 1961–63, 1969–71, 2013–14	799	1–4	Bedsits, Bungalows, Flats, Houses	Deck–Access, Detached, Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Wollaton	Wollaton	1948, 1975–1980	93	1–4	Flats, Houses	Deck–Access, Detached, Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace

Estate	Location	Constructed	Total	Beds	Dwelling	Building
Wollaton Park	Wollaton	1924–1937, 1975	431	2–3	Bungalows, Houses	Detached, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Wollaton Vale	Wollaton Vale	1949–50, 1956, 1987	286	1–4	Bungalows, Flats, Houses	Detached, Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
Woodborough Road	St Ann's	1971–76	729	1–4	Bungalows, Flats, Houses	Detached, Low Rise, Semi-Detached, Terrace
The Woodlands	Radford	1968	375	1–2	Flats	High Rise
Woodthorpe / Winchester Court	Sherwood	1965	180	1–2	Flats	High Rise

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Picture Nottingham

Many of the images in this book have been supplied by Picture Nottingham, a website with an extensive collection of photographs, postcards, glass plates and engravings from the archives of Nottingham City Council's libraries.

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Palmer Court, Heath Close, 2019
(Courtesy Chris Matthews)





Homes & Places:
A History of Nottingham's Council Houses
Chris Matthews

Centenary Edition, Celebrating 100 years of Council Housing
Revised & Expanded

Council housing in Nottingham is an essential part of the city's history and identity. The slums of the nineteenth century laid the foundations for the surge of construction activity in the twentieth. Between the wars, Nottingham was recognised as one of the largest and fastest builders of council housing in the country, with huge garden city estates pushing at the city boundaries. During the 1960s and 1970s attention turned to the inner city, and by 1981 around half of Nottingham's population lived in council tenancies. The Right to Buy discount of the 1980s heralded a new era of decreasing stock, massive sales and modest rebuilding, then the birth of Nottingham City Homes in 2005 opened a new chapter in the story of Nottingham's council housing. Since 2010 Nottingham City Homes and Nottingham City Council have been building council housing again with renewed vigour and confidence.

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